How To Save a Life
by Daria24

Summary

Skye is searching for her parents:

“I don’t care who they are, I don’t care why they left me, I just need to know if they are a match, because if not…” Skye paused and took a deep breath and whispered the confession that she only thought to herself in the silence of her mind, “If I am to die, I want to live the rest of my life on my own damn terms.”

Pairings to be added as I add chapters.
Chapter 1

“You have been lying to me and this team since day one. You either tell me now what you are really doing here, what you are hiding or we are done.” Coulson said with disappointment in his eyes as he stared at her waiting for her response while May just stood silently in the corner.

Skye looked away and down at her feet because for the first time in a very long time she felt shame and regret for her actions on how she went about this. She had never meant to allow herself to get attached to anyone on this team, they were were suppose to be just a means to an end in her search to survive. But their opinions mattered to her and that realization startled her because it had been a very long time since she cared what anyone thought of her. If you didn’t care you couldn’t get hurt. It is one of the first harsh lessons she had learned in the very early years in the foster system and even years later the lesson still stuck with her.

This team were the good guys, the people who stood in the shadows and did everything they could to fight the monsters and in a way she had betrayed them. The hollow feeling from that realization was making her feel sick. She must have taken longer to answer than she thought, lost in her own twisting thoughts because she heard Coulson sigh.

“May..”

“Wait,” she said as she looked up and sighed before reaching into her shirt and pulled out the SD card from her bra and handed it over.

“What is this? Is this everything you have on us?” Coulson said his voice cold looking at the card then at her both his and May’s face impassive as they stared at her.

“No, it is everything on..me” she said as her hands fidgeted at her sides. Closing her eyes she took a deep breath trying to calm herself because what was on that little card was everything to her and not having it near her was making her feel open and raw. Another deep breath and she was fighting trying to gain control of herself it had been years since she had a full on panic attack.

One breath, two breath, she was losing this battle with her panic. ‘Screw it she thought they already think the worst of me’, she thought as she bent over with her head between her knees. She knew they thought she slept with Miles when he had actually been checking her for wires when they found them, the paranoid bastard he was. No one had seen her back when she was standing there only in a bra, only her arms which made her look like a junky but oh well. She sensed movement but held up her hand to keep Coulson away because she knew it would be him since May seemed to hate her. “Don’t touch...will make it...worse” she said between breaths.
“Skye I need you to look at me” Coulson said from next to her his voice gentle and she couldn’t help but turn her head towards him. “There we go now copy me” he said as he took a deep breath in and waited till she copied him then let it out. A few minutes passed “I am going to check your pulse now,” he said before he slowly reached towards her wrist and glanced at his watch. He nodded and let go of her wrist before he backed away giving her space.

Skye slowly straightened and felt the familiar twinges of pain in her hip and back from her scars, she would be sore in the morning but that was nothing new. She watched as Coulson walked over to the couch in his office and sat down on the coffee table next to it while he pointed at the couch and said “Now sit down and we will all talk.”

Sighing she walked over to the couch sitting down and watched May move closer towards them but now she leaned against the front of Coulson’s desk and not for the first time Skye wished she could tell what was going on in the woman’s mind.

Coulson cleared his throat before holding up the SD card “Now what is this Skye?” he asked gently.

“It is everything I have on me, it is why I am here. A redacted SHIELD document in the orphanage file where I was originally dropped off at as an infant is the only lead I have on trying to find my parents,” she whispered before looking down into her lap.

“You are looking for why you were left there?” he asked trying to understand.

“No, I came to the conclusion years ago they didn’t give a damn about me. But I still need to find them or any family member I can find because it is the only way I might survive the next time I go out of remission,” she whispered bitterly and with tears in her eyes she looked up into Coulson and May’s shocked faces as they took in the information.

“Cancer?” Coulson asked with pity in his eyes and Skye sighed, she hated the pity people looked at her with when they found out.

“Leukemia,” she corrected “I’ve already had to do two rounds of chemo and chemo’s worked but they said it’s only a bandaid this time. I’ll need a bone marrow transplant next time and there are no matches in the national database. It is find my parents or…” she paused shrugging but had to look away from both of them. Despite the bubbly persona she wore like a mask she was really just a scared little girl and though she had a panic attack in front of them, it didn’t mean she felt weird about being so exposed in front of them.
“How long have you been in remission?” asked May, her soft voice surprising Skye as she sensed the woman coming closer to them as she also sat on the coffee table.

“First time it took two years to get into remission but that lasted almost three years. This time it took another two years and it started a few months before I joined up with the team. I won’t survive another two years of chemo, I barely survived it this time” she whispered the last bit, still looking away from them and trying to not think on the pain or depression she went through this last time. Of the hours she spent wishing silently that she could just give up and quit but she was too stubborn to do it. Shaking her head she tried to clear her mind and took a deep breath before looking to the two people that now literally held her life in their hands. And that was a very scary thought for someone who grew up learning to not depend on people otherwise they would hurt you.

“How long have you been in remission?”

“I owed him, we were chemo buddies. He was the one who taught me to hack to distract me from the pain when we were just kids. Otherwise I wouldn’t have, trust me what he did goes against everything he taught me that Rising Tide stood for. He is also the person who hid me when the system decided it was time for me to move again and I didn’t think I’d survive another two years of placements.”

Skye watched as May and Coulson looked at her then each other, silently having a discussion with each other with just their looks and not for the first time she was sure there was something more there than knowing each other for a longtime. She almost said something but thought better of it because she didn’t need to piss either of them off again. The look of pity in their eyes was surprisingly better than having them look at her with disappointment.

“Okay here is the deal. First thing first Simmons is going to give you a work up, no arguments” he said when she went to protest “I want to make sure you are okay for now at least.” Skye sighed and nodded her consent.

“Second, Phil and I will look into this and we will let you know what we find but no more digging. Let us tug on those strings you found and see what happens, we can protect ourselves, you can’t.” Skye sighed and closed her eyes nodding again. “Skye, look at us,” May said and Skye forced herself to open her eyes and look towards them. “It’s not just for your safety but the teams safety. Also you might not like what we find, you need to be ready for that.”

“I don’t care who they are, I don’t care why they left me, I just need to know if they are a match, because if not…” Skye paused and took a deep breath and whispered the confession that she only thought to herself in the silence of her mind, “If I am to die, I want to live the rest of my life on my
own damn terms.”

“I think we can both understand that,” Phil said as he stood up and went over to his desk and pulled out a box. “Now third you wear this,” he said as he walked back over and opened the box to a silver bracelet at her confused look he sighed. “This will monitor what you do with any electronic device and stop you from using it if you are doing something you are not suppose to. Wear this and show you can be a team player, earn our trust back and we will talk about removing it. This is your choice, if you want to stay on this team, then we are going to train you like the team. If not we will drop you off somewhere to get settled and May and I will still look for the information you need.”

Skye looked at the bracelet with a bit of trepidation it was like a damn nanny cam, but she had to admit to herself she did fuck this all up. She could go and they would still help her, they were the good guys and it is what they do but the thought of leaving this place sent a surprising shot of pain in her chest.

She had allowed herself to get attached, but a part of her that she thought she lost years ago after years of abuse in the system wanted to care, wanted to belong. Sighing she reached for the box and put the bracelet on to her right wrist and fought hard not to smile at the look of pride that was in both of their eyes as she made her decision.

Moments later she was following behind Coulson as they made their way into the lab catching Fitzsimmons arguing loudly again over some new invention they were working on. The two scientist so passionate about the argument that they didn’t even realize that they had come into the lab. Skye watched as Coulson smirked before clearing his throat, when that didn’t work May rolled her eyes and whistled loudly. Skye couldn’t help the laugh that escaped as she watched Fitzsimmons jump and turn towards them blushing.

“Sorry Sir, Agent May. Can we help you with anything?” Simmons said as she came towards them.

“I need you to give Skye a full medical workup, her medical file is now on our closed server under the name Daisy Johnson. Please go over it and let me know if we need to pick up anything at our next stop at a SHIELD facility. Now I am going to go talk to our guest,” Coulson said as he glanced to May having another silent conversation with her and she nodded. Coulson left the lab heading towards interrogation while May leant against one of the walls, face once again impassive. She was staying to make sure Skye complied with the conditions of her probation and that was fine with her, maybe May will keep Simmons from mother henning her.

“Alright Fitz out and hit the blinds on the way out for me,” Simmons said not even looking up as he left as she looked down at a tablet that probably had her medical records now on it. Skye knew when Simmons came up on the emergency room admission form from when she was fourteen because her
body stiffened and her face darkened.

Simmons looked up about to say something but Skye shook her head and just said “Keep reading, till the end.” Simmons, bless her just nodded and went back to reading her files as a look of pity came across her face. At that point Skye looked towards May whom had an eyebrow arched questioning but she knew her question would be answered in a moment if Simmons had her strip for the exam.

“Oh, Skye why didn’t you tell us?” Simmons asked with concern in her voice and Skye turned back towards her and was surprised that the woman seemed to care for her even after her betrayal.

“I’m in remission and I am use to fighting my battles alone,” she said shrugging. It wasn’t really an answer, at least not one she knew Simmons was looking for but it was the only one she could give without admitting she was afraid of being turned away, rejected.

“Well not anymore,” Simmons said pulling a gown out of the drawer and tossing it to her and then glancing towards May, “I’m sorry but I need you down to your underwear for the exam and I’ll need to take pictures as well.”

Nodding Skye just quickly removed her shoes and pants. Taking a deep breath she closes her eyes, hesitating for a minute before taking off her shirt in one quick movement like she is ripping off a bandaid. She can hear the gasps from the two women in the room as they get a look at the scars on her back but a part of her is afraid to see their reactions. This is the part she hates the most about letting anyone see her without a top, the look of pity and sometimes of disgust that people can’t quite hide when they look at her back.

“Skye,” says May’s voice, it is that deadly calm but yet almost soft and it is close.

“It is fine, it happened a lifetime ago,” she says opening her eyes and not looking either of them in the face.

“What happened?”

Skye thought for a moment about not answering the question, May could just read the report in her files later or even now if Simmons gave her a tablet to use. But she asked the question instead of going that route giving Skye the tell her, to trust her and looking at the woman for a moment behind the mask she saw anger but not at her. No, May wanted to go kill whoever did this to her and it caused a strange sensation in Skye’s chest when she realized it.
“Foster family for age fourteen, they didn’t like that I fought back when their son tried to rape me. Damn near killed me and they would have but I somehow got away and made it to the neighbors who called for help,” she said trying to not let the tears fall or the panic to take over because even though it happened over a lifetime ago, it still haunted her. Tonight was going to be a night of nightmares, from the trips down memory lane she was having.

“Ironically they actually saved me,” she laughed bitterly at the look of shock on both women’s faces. “When I was in the hospital for the beating is when they found the cancer.” The two women stare at her like she grew a second head before Skye sighed and jumped up onto the exam table.

A moment passes before Simmons shakes her head and starts to get her supplies in order breaking eye contact and Skye can tell she is trying to gather herself mentally for the task at hand. Turning towards May she realizes the woman is within reaching distance, face blank but eyes that say more than anything. It is a look that makes Skye want to reach out and say that everything is okay but she doesn’t. That person is not Skye and she has no idea how to be like that and she doesn’t think May would appreciate the attempt.

The exam doesn’t take long with her going over her medical history verbally with Simmons while she checks her out and takes pictures of all the scars. At one point she asks “Why didn’t anyone take care of the scaring a good plastic surgeon could have at least fixed the worst of it? I understand they couldn’t do it during the chemo but after it they easily could have fixed it.” Simmons, sweet Simmons so innocent Skye hates killing a part of that innocence so she doesn’t answer ‘Because no one cared’ instead she just shrugs as her answer.

The last part of the exam is Simmons taking blood to run tests on and Skye tries to hide her phobia of needles. Apparently she doesn’t hide the panic well enough to fool super spies because the next moment May is next to her. “Skye look at me,” she commands and Skye can’t help but follow the order before thinking better about it. “Are you afraid of needles?”

“Pathetically ironic isn’t it? Almost five years of chemo and I am still afraid of needles,” she says laying her head back on the upright exam table and looks up and away.

A moment passes before she feels a hand gripping her own. “Not pathetic, only human which is a good thing,” May says distracting her as Simmons starts the blood draw and through it all May’s hand is in her own a steady presence helping her anchor herself from the panic.

“Alright that is all I need, drink some juice Skye and rest for a few hours to play safe” Simmons says before she starts running her tests.
“Got it Lady Vampire” Skye teases as May removes her hand and steps back to give Skye room to stand up.

“Simmons let us know when you have the test results so the four of us can go over them” May says as she leaves the lab back to being as impassive as ever. Skye sighs and gets dressed as well and heads towards her bunk, she needs a nap. Blood work always left her feeling drained and ill for hours afterwards.
Jab, jab, cross. Jab, jab, duck. Cross, duck, uppercut the movements are a part of her. Breathing even as she worked her way around the swinging bag, trying to lose herself in the need to beat something even if it was just a punching bag. She sensed Phil moments before on the catwalk but continued to ignore him till he said what she knew was on both of their minds. Eventually he walked down the stairs and sat on the bottom steps but didn’t say anything just yet. ‘Guess he is going to wait me out, this time’ she thought ‘Or he is just that lost in his own thoughts as well. Light knows between Skye’s files and Jemma almost dying..’

She shakes out the thoughts and goes back to the routine, trying to lose herself in it. Jab, jab, cross. Jab, jab, duck. Cross, duck, uppercut but despite the routine though she couldn’t fully let go of her thoughts of everything she read in the files Skye had given them access too. Moved from foster home to foster home and each placement had been almost always worse than the last.

At age five the foster parents highly religious people thought the child possessed so she had been locked in a closet for days before the school called the social worker because she hadn’t been to school. It explains the light on in her bunk at all hours, I thought she was just up goofing off but her files with social services had read: ***Severe fear of the dark, now present***. ‘No shit sherlock’ she thought, jab, jab, jab, jab before she shook her head and went back to the routine.

At age seven she had been placed with a well off family and things had looked like they might be looking up for the young girl. That was until the two older biological kids had pushed her into the deep end of the pool and she almost drowned. She had been removed the next day at the request of the parents afraid their children would kill the poor child. After that incident ***Severe fear of water, now present. Child can not learn how to swim.***

At one time SHIELD and Fury had given Phil and her the truly broken cases to try to put them together to make a semblance of what an Agent of SHIELD was meant to be. Phil and her last rookies were case in point on how well they had worked with broken individuals but that had been before she earned her moniker. Till she had become truly and fully broken inside and had left Phil with a broken heart as she thought he deserved better.

After the Bahrain mission she had returned a shell of the woman she was, haunted by memories that she still struggled with. Despite pushing him away Phil had never signed the divorce papers, no he had just shook his head and kept being there for her. She left the field after Bahrain but whenever he was in New York for a few hours, he would come down to the bowels of admin and bring her tea. Just sitting there with her till she took a sip of the tea with a “You’re an idiot” that he would just smile at and answer “I know.”
His presence had slowly brought her back to herself, not quite who she once was before Bahrain but as close as she could let herself be. Then New York happened and after the end of the world alien battle was over and done with she had been told by two of their friends Clint and Natasha that Phil had died before the battle protecting the Helicarrier. Clint, lost in his own grief had given Melinda his gun to shoot him for his part in Phil’s death but she couldn’t do it, because a part of her knew that Phil wouldn’t want it that way. That he loved both Clint and Natasha as two of the siblings he never had and she had told them that holding them as they cried because in all honesty they were all the family any of them ever had that mattered.

A part of her died that day but she had to be strong for Clint and Natasha because Phil and her had promised each other long ago that they would always watch over the two younger siblings. It was a few days later that Clint and Natasha had left to deal with SHIELD things but neither of them wanted to leave her. She promised them she would be okay when in all honesty she had felt dead inside. They probably saw past the lie but Fury was calling and none of them needed tall, dark and piratey to be pissy with them.

Once they had left though Melinda had hit the vodka with a vengeance and it was two bottles and several hours later when her last rookie before Bahrain, had shown up in the dark of night. Maria had come in without knocking and without saying a word grabbed the go bag that Melinda always kept packed despite not being an active field agent anymore and escorted her out of the building and into a waiting SHIELD SUV. If Melinda hadn’t been drunk off her ass she probably would have fought Maria or even asked where the hell they were going but a part of her couldn’t care. Maria never said a word, just gave her water bottle after water bottle trying to sober her up on the drive that took hours.

That was when she had been taken to a hidden bunker that wasn’t on any SHIELD database and escorted into a room where Phil was hooked up to machines looking like he always did when he slept. It took minutes longer than what she would have liked to admit, probably due to the copious amounts of alcohol she had still flooded in her system, for her to realize that he was alive. That was when Maria had caught her around the waist and lowered her onto a couch in the room. Holding her as she finally balled her eyes out and started to let go of everything.

Maria had held her and told her how he had been legally dead for a day with no discernible signs of life before he had scared the ever living shit out of the SHIELD coroner about to do the autopsy when he realised that Phil’s wound was healed. At first they didn’t understand it but then they realized his body was giving off low levels of Tesseract energy, so they kept up the charade that he died and moved him here. He hadn’t fully woken up but even after dying and coming back to life he had kept saying her name in his sleep.

Melinda had taken “bereavement leave” while Phil continued to recover. Fury and Maria kept Natasha and Clint so busy they could only talk to her on the phone or skype on the computer occasionally. Fury wanted to keep Phil’s recovery under wraps because he didn’t want a bigger target on Phil than already was but soon Phil was ready to start working again. Fury put out that Phil had actually survived but had been hidden recovering but only to level 8 agents and above.
Both Phil and Melinda hated lying to Clint and Natasha but they had their orders and so Melinda went back to working in “Administration” but really had joined Phil’s merry band of misfits pretending to hate it but secretly feeling like a part of her was back that she thought lost after Bahrain. She didn’t realize she had stopped punching the bag till Phil said “Quarter for your thoughts?"

“You always overpaid for them” she said back the old tired answer as she grabbed a towel and sat down on the stair next to him.

“Nope I think I got quite the deal” he quipped back and it was for a moment just like old times when they were newly married, but she shook away that thought. That thought led down a road to a loss so great that even Phil didn’t fully recover from it, they were equally broken when it came to that event. Sighing she took the water bottle he offered to her and waited for her to drink before saying “I’m taking it you finished Skye’s files?”

Closing her eyes she nodded and tried to banish the images out of her head from the original police report or the now scar tissue that was the skin of her back. Skye had seen hell and back and just like Clint, Natasha and even Maria. Phil and her had put those three back together once upon a time but a part of her wondered if she could do it again. Though a part of her wanted she thought long dead wanted to try because Skye needed to be shown that someone was in her corner.

Someone in SHIELD had thrown her to the system and it had failed her time and time again. Despite everything Melinda knew the girl tried to do what was right but didn’t quite understand it, like she was never shown it properly and truth was she probably wasn’t. Skye seemed to be a mish mash of Clint, Natasha and Maria’s issues all rolled into one. She hid behind humor and snark like Clint, had the broken emotions of Natasha and the trust issues that Maria has.

Melinda felt Phil put his arm over her shoulder and for a moment wanted to fight the comfort but she stomped down on that part of her and sighed as she leaned against him. “Yes I did and I now have an even longer list of people I wish to kill. I know the foster system is screwed up but she fell through every damn crack in it and kept paying the price for it.”

“I know,” he said his hand rubbing her shoulder “that is why I want you to be her S.O. and not Ward. Ward is good but he has the emotional range of a teaspoon, Skye doesn’t need that.”

“And I don’t have the emotional range of a teaspoon?” she asked in all seriousness.
Phil sighed before squeezing her shoulder “No because you still feel Melinda, you still care. You just hide it better than others now and you know how to work with someone like Skye. Or do I need to remind you of our makeshift family?”

“No and reading her files made me think of them as well,” she paused sitting up and taking another drink from the water bottle. “I know we can’t bring Natasha and Clint in on this because of Fury and you still being dead to them. Which by the way I know orders and all but eventually something is going to slip and those two are going to find out and be pissed and you know Natasha’s temper. So can you poke the bear and see when he plans on letting the damn cat out of the bag.”

Phil groaned “Don’t I know it, Natasha and her knives and Clint using us for target practice unless we can convince them it was all Fury’s fault, which it is but they might not see it that way...but that is only two out of the three.”

“Maria, I want to bring her in on this. We need her clearance levels to look into that redacted file Skye gave us and honestly she might be another good influence on Skye if we can arrange for them to meet.”

“Agreed and you can talk to Maria tomorrow” Phil looks down at his watch “Well actually today, we are being recalled to the HUB to meet with Agent Hand about a mission. She said she would be there and asked if she had time to see us.”

“Good, I better go reset the course and get us heading there now, I’ll give you an eta once I get us on our way” she said standing up but before she could walk past him on the stairs he also stood and grabbed her hand. Melinda looked down at his hand and then back to his face that she knew how to read like a book. “Phil.”

“I know,” he said before he leaned over and kissed her softly on the lips and then her forehead. He went to kiss her again before his phone went off and he sighed reaching for it.

“You turned on the cubby monitors?” she asked shaking her head as they walked up the stairs and into the empty lounge area.

“Do you blame me? I wouldn’t be surprised with the last few days if someone had a nightmare and needed to talk”

“No I don’t” she said. It was one of the unwritten rules ‘you don’t let someone suffer nightmares”
alone'. “Who was it?”

“Skye” he said looking around the lounge as if she would pop out at them any moment.

“Check the kitchen and bar. I'll check the shower and cockpit and change our course.” She watched him go before quickly making her way to the showers everyone shared no one was inside so she made her way to the cockpit. She heard tears through the door and quickly text Phil “Found her, cockpit. I got it.” and silenced her phone.

Stepping inside the cockpit she saw Skye sitting in the co-pilot chair the arm that had the bracelet was behind her as far away from the instruments as she could get it. “You can relax, the bracelet won’t affect the planes instruments” she said and watched Skye slightly jump in the chair hastily wiping away tears.

Melinda sat in the pilot chair and grabbed the headset and saw as Skye made to leave. “Stay” she said and watched as Skye’s face showed the internal battle for a moment before sighing and sitting back down in the chair. Turning back towards the view out the window as she curled into herself and Melinda realized how small the young woman was.

Shaking away the observation Melinda quickly dropped them in a SHIELD frequency “This is SHIELD 616 to tower, requesting permission to change course to HUB, over.”

“Tower to SHIELD 616, course change approved to HUB. Flight plan uploaded, over”

“SHIELD 616, copies, over” she said as she looked at the new flight plan and quickly set them onto their new course before engaging the autopilot again.

Hitting the intercom stud that went directly to Coulson’s office she waited a moment before she heard “Go ahead May.”

“ETA to HUB is a little over seven hours,” she said watching curiosity play across Skye’s face.

"Understood see you in the morning” he said cutting off the intercom.
Melinda leaned back into the seat and looked over towards Skye "Peaceful isn't it?"

"Yes" she whispered and Melinda thought that was all she was going to say but she heard a sigh before a whispered "I just needed to see it, sometimes it is the only thing that helps when I wake up."

Melinda was surprised at first that Skye had opened up to her but with everything happening lately she understood it. Admitting the truth and exposing herself to rejection had to be a hit to the carefully crafted walls Melinda knew Skye had built over time to protect herself. Then Jemma almost dying yesterday must have been another hit to those walls, Melinda had seen Skye quickly wipe away tears when Jemma and Ward had come back onto the plane. Skye cared, that much was evident but she was either too scared to show it or just didn’t know how to.

She knew this conversation could go numerous ways but instead she decided to give something back, “I’m the same way. When you do this job long enough, you will need to find that moment of peace."

Skye nods and moments pass before she says “You think I can be an agent?”

“Yes, I think you can be an agent but I think you can be anything you want to be. I will admit Coulson saw it first but I see it now. You actually remind me of younger versions of a few I know” Melinda says watching from the corner of her eye as Skye seems to straighten up in her chair. “That is why I told Coulson I am going to be your S.O."

“Why would you want to help me...I thought you hate me” Skye says studying her. Melinda bites back a sigh as she turns in her chair and looks directly at Skye.

“I don’t hate you. We might find each other annoying as hell at times, but that is from living and working in such close quarters. Hell even Coulson drives me nuts at times more than you” she says smirking at the shock look on Skye’s face as she gets up. She telegraphs her movements as she puts a hand gently on Skye’s shoulder. “As for why I would want to help you? It’s time someone was in your corner and that will be Coulson and I, if you let us.” Melinda squeezes the shoulder and then lets go walking to the door.

“Try to get some sleep Skye, training starts at 0600,” she said before leaving the young woman to her thoughts. Slowly she made her way to her bunk but at the last minute instead went to Phil’s room, opening the door she was greeted by the dark and could hear the even breathing of Phil sleeping. Shutting the door she walked over to the bed, pulled back the covers and crawled into bed. Placing her head on Phil’s chest she heard his heart beating and felt herself relax as he pulled her closer even in his sleep.
Chapter 3

Melinda woke up to the steady thump thump of Phil’s heart and the realization she hadn’t woken at anytime to nightmares. Stretching she felt vertebrae realign and muscles loosen and she let out a moan from the pleasurable feeling. She feels and hears Phil’s chuckle of “I'm glad I still have that effect on you” and she smacks him in the chest. “Ow!”

“Don’t you start” she said as she snuggled closer into his chest not yet ready to face the day.

“Can you blame me with the sound you just made?” he smirks and she rolls her eyes as she jabs a finger into his ribs. “Ow, damn it alright I’ll play nice,” he said kissing the top of her head. They laid like that for a few minutes putting off getting up and starting the day. “Did you sleep okay Mel?”

“Better than most nights,” she admitted. It had been months since they shared a bed in any way, not because of him but because of her and her doubts. Phil never pushed though always letting her make the first move giving her the time and space she needed. She knew it hurt him but he never complained he just took it in his stride and was forever patient with her.

This plane was pushing them back together slowly making the pieces fit again in the puzzle that they had become over the years. Just like she admitted to Skye last night he annoyed the hell out of her at times but she still loved him. It was starting to get to the point again that she couldn’t picture not seeing him everyday and knew they were slowly finding their way back to each other and this time she was determined not to fight it.

Sighing she leaned on an elbow and quickly kissed Phil on the lips “I have to get up and check our flight status, call Maria and then go train Skye.” Kissing him again she smirked “Get some more rest, you know you will need it for dealing with Hand.”

“Don’t remind me, I hate to see what she has for us this time. Remember Panama?” said Phil with a groan.

It was Melinda’s turn to groan as she rolled out of bed, “I thought we decided never to mention Panama again.”

“That was you and Nat, but no I’m talking about the actual mission. Not afterwards when you and Natasha almost got us arrested”

“Not how I remember it.”
“Of course not, you two were three sheets to the wind celebrating” Phil chuckled as he laid on his side watching her finish stretching he was being obvious with his staring at her ass. Rolling her eyes at him she walked out the door.

Quietly she made her way down the hallway stopping in her bedroom for the extra watch/heart monitor that she kept stashed away and brought it with her after changing into a fresh pair of workout clothes. In the lounge area she spotted Skye sprawled on her stomach across the couch and partially hanging off of it. The young girl’s face looked peaceful and unguarded as she laid there sound asleep. Melinda almost felt bad that she had to wake her but she wanted to get Skye into the habit of waking early for training.

Looking at her own watch she saw it was only 0515 and decided she could get the other things done before waking the young woman so pulled out the extra watch from its box and set the timer. Putting a note next to it, she grabbed the throw blanket off the back of the couch, covering up Skye. Looking for a moment at the young woman she shook her head and walked away ignoring the momentary pain in her chest. ‘It’s not good to dwell on what is lost, keep moving forward’ she thought.

Groaning Maria blindly reached towards the bedside table trying to find her phone as fumbling fingers finally found the damn thing and without checking the caller ID she groggily answered what could be construed as “Hill”.

“Rookie it’s 0520 why ain't your ass up already?” Melinda May’s voice ordered.

Maria felt herself for a moment panic as she thought she once again a rookie agent and got caught oversleeping by her S.O. but then reality clicked into place. “Bite me Melinda,” she grumbled out as she rolled onto her back and listened as her oldest friend laughed. She couldn’t begrudge her friend’s amusement at her expense because anything that got Melinda May to laugh like that anymore was a good thing.

“You know you are lucky you were my S.O. otherwise you’d be on latrine duty for a month for waking me up for not an ‘Oh Fuck the world is ending’ issue,” Maria said sitting up in bed when Melinda finally stopped laughing.

“Sorry Maria” Melinda said still chuckling and not even bothering to hide her amusement “but I was told you are at the HUB this week?”

“Yes, I am at the HUB doing combat assessments. Aren’t you due here today? Care for a sparring session?”
“That might work,” Melinda said and Maria could almost see the wheels turning in her S.O.’s head she just didn’t know what the hell was going on.

“What might work? Care to share with those of us still waking up?” Maria asked yawning as she rubbed at her face.

“Remember the hacker that we picked up a while back?” Melinda asked and Maria wondered where this conversation was going.

“Yeah the one we have zero to no information on that even had Fury scratching his bald head in puzzlement” Maria chuckled at the memory of a truly stumped Fury.

“Fury couldn’t even find anything?” Melinda asked and Maria heard a bit of pride in her mentor’s voice.

“Nope, and that is why he let Phil keep her because as he put it ‘If she can hide her identity this well from even me then she must be damn good and I wants that talent where my good eye keep an eye on it.’” But what about her Mel?” Maria asked with curiosity in her voice.

“Check your email rookie” Melinda said and Maria got the message as she quickly grabbed her laptop and navigated to a secure email that she had set up when she had been a rookie under Melinda and Phil. ‘Okay this conversation is starting to get interesting’ Maria thought before she opened the email that had a lot of files but no explanation for them but one caught her eye as it opened up and she swore.

“What the hell is this Mel? There is a level 9 classified document in here” she asked as she realized it was way before her time as an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D but it still it was something no one should have, especially if it was that damn redacted. There were also documents on a Mary Sue Poots from child services, police reports and then medical reports for her and a Daisy Johnson.

“That Maria, is the life story of our resident hacker and my newest rookie,” Melinda said before hanging up without any other explanation.

Maria stared at the phone for a moment before putting it down. ‘The hacker is her new rookie? What the hell is going on?’ she thought again ‘It must be something if Mel is taking on a rookie again after refusing for years. Hell she almost sounded like she use to.’
She now knew as the Deputy Director that Melinda and Phil had a reputation of taking on the truly lost souls, the people that had been used and abused by everything and everyone. Maria Hill had been one of those people years ago, she had been three bottles of scotch into a binge when Phil and Melinda had shown up to her motel room to recruit her to SHIELD. The Marine Corp had just “honorably discharged” her ass, her life had been turned upside down and everything she had worked years for had been ripped right out from underneath her.

It didn’t matter that a then Captain Maria Hill had saved the life of a US Senator when his convoy was attacked, nope all that had mattered was that they couldn't use her as a poster girl when it came to light that she was a lesbian. How the hell they found out Maria still didn't know because it wasn’t like she had a girlfriend to get caught with, she had been in country for years as part of embassy security. None of it mattered though because even though they had no evidence, even the hint at that time and you were discharged. So they got rid of her like yesterdays trash and the whole incident had left a very nasty taste in her mouth.

She had been angry and hurt by the rejection, add in all the other baggage she had carried around from her childhood and she'd been a mess. It had been mainly Melinda who had put her back together after she had joined SHIELD and she knew it wasn't easy, she had been rough around the edges and closed off but Melinda had slowly dragged her out from the walls she put up and showed her how to live again. Maria would be forever thankful to Melinda and Phil because they had taken a very young and angry Maria Hill under their wings and gave her purpose again.

Then Bahrain had happened she had watched as the two people she almost thought of as parents but never had the guts to tell, as they were destroyed from within. Whatever had happened on that mission had killed a part of Melinda, she had come back a shell of the woman she had been almost like she was afraid to let herself feel, to be human. Her inability to connect emotionally with anyone hurt her but also tore apart Phil who was absolutely dedicated to her. Once Melinda was cleared medically she had given up being a Specialist and had left for a desk job in Administration.

At that time Clint and Natasha had taken over her training in an effort to help their friends but it wasn’t long before Maria was a Specialist in her own right and was working missions on her own, or sometimes as a team with Clint and Natasha. She shook her head trying to clear her trip down memory lane, here she had files that needed reading from Melinda and she was woolgathering.

Sighing she glanced at the documents and knew she wasn’t going to like what she read in them. If the hacker Skye truly was a lost soul that Melinda and Phil decided to take in then reading this probably warranted a cup of coffee or three, getting up she went to the coffee maker in the kitchen and was thankful she had set the timer the night before when she had stumbled into her quarters.

Taking the cup of coffee back with her, she started reading through the documents starting with the
oldest document, the SHIELD classified level 9 document that was almost fully redacted except for the name of an orphanage and the intake of an unknown baby Jane Doe now to be named Mary Sue Poots. ‘Poor kid being saddled with a name like that’ she thought.

Maria sat in silence as she read, a feeling of horror increasing with every document, this wasn’t just a life story it was a damn greek tragedy. When she reached the police report for when the girl was 14 she truly wanted to throw something at a wall in anger. Instead she opened a drawer in her desk and grabbed the scotch pouring a little into her coffee. 'Its 1700 somewhere’ she thought without remorse for the decision and kept reading.

‘She’s a fighter’ Maria thought as she finished the last medical report from the Oncologist because she now understood why Melinda had her read everything and could guess what her S.O. was going to need. Pinching the bridge of her nose she sighed because this could get messy. The young woman's parents could be anyone and light only knew what she'd find in the file that document belonged to. But it didn't matter because a young woman's life was at stake and for once this woman needed someone in her corner. The system meant to protect a child had failed and it was SHIELD that had placed her in that system.

Moments passed as thoughts ran through her head, images danced in front of her eyes. Maria knew what it meant to live with the scars, to be reminded daily about a past you sometimes wished you could forget. Making her decision she dialed Melinda’s number and was greeted with a "Hold on Maria. Skye go ahead and hit the shower."

“Already done with morning training? Are you going soft in your old age boss?” teased Maria.

"Shush you, or I might just go a round or two with you, and show you old” Melinda said with a threatening tone but Maria could tell she was being playful back. It had been a very long time since she saw this side of Melinda and didn’t care what brought it out she was just thankful for it.

"I'm in,” she said but continued hoping Melinda got her message “with Nat away with the Avengers I haven’t had a decent sparring match in months” Maria said stretching.

“I thought you were doing combat assessments?” May asked

“Hence I haven’t had a decent sparring match in months. Hard to find a challenging partner when trained by Melinda May and Natasha Romanoff” Maria answered deadpanned and heard Melinda chuckle.
“Poor rookie. Alright we will have to meet up, can’t let you get rusty now sitting behind a desk. I’ll let Phil deal with Hand and we’ll go a few rounds” Melinda promised.

“Good, come to training room three when you get here I’ll be there waiting,” Maria said before she hung up her phone not waiting for Melinda’s answer. Standing up she stretched one last time before heading back to her room to get dressed, she had a case file to begin tracking down before she met with Melinda.
Skye fell to the floor as she reached blindly for the object making the offending noise on the coffee table. She pulled the object down and quickly turned the damn thing off before it could wake anyone else up as she looked at the piece of paper that fell down with it.

“WAKE UP ROOKIE! Put on the bracelet and some workout clothes and be in cargo hold by 0600.

-M”

Groaning she flipped onto her back getting tangled in the blanket that someone had put on her in the night. ‘Probably May’ she thought to herself surprised again that the agent seemed to care about her. Rubbing at her face she yawned and stretched before getting up to face the day and not wanting to piss off May on the first day of training.

“You know you already got a nanny bracelet on me” Skye said as she came down the stairs to the training area a few minutes later in her workout clothes. She held up the bracelet by a finger as it dangled between her and May.

“This one isn’t a nanny bracelet. It is important to maintain control when in stressful situations. This bracelet monitors your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels. It also can be used to signal that you are in distress and that you need backup, it has a gps tracker in it so if anything happened we could find you using it,” May said as she grabbed the bracelet and put it on Skye’s wrist. “Don’t take it off ever.”

“All that in this little bracelet?” Skye said looking a little dubiously at the bracelet now on her wrist.

“Yes all of that, in that little bracelet. Sit we are going to have a talk before we start training.” May said as she sat down on the mats. Skye yawned as she sat down across from May trying to get comfortable and finally gave it up as a lost cause as she just pressed the bottom of her feet together stretching out her legs. Skye looked up to find a smirk lightly gracing May’s lips and was glad someone was amused this early in the morning.

“We are going to talk about the rules I have for you to follow for me to train you. Rule number one:
Trust me and trust Coulson. I know you have little to no trust in the system and with your history that is totally understandable but for this to work you need to trust at least us. We might not always be able to tell you everything but you need to trust us to know we will tell you what you need to know.”

“Rule number two: If we tell you to do something, do it. This is part of the whole trust thing. If you can trust us then you need to understand that we won’t ask of you anything we wouldn’t do ourselves. This is an imperfect world and eventually you will have to do something in order to survive or get a mission done that you will not like but you have trust us to know that we will have your back. Coulson and I will be there if you need us; we’ve been there, done that and gotten the scars to prove it. Can you do that, can you trust us?”

Skye closed her eyes and thought for a moment, by what May had said it was apparent her and probably Coulson had finished the files she had given them. Part of her didn’t want to give them everything but knew she had to if they were going to help her find the information she desperately needed and trust them in a way not to use it against her. That brought her back to the question, could she do that? Trust Coulson and May to give her the information she needed? It wasn’t like they were asking her to trust the system, deep down she thinks that would be an almost impossible task.

But trust the two older agents that were giving her a second chance, that hadn’t kicked her out of the first place she truly felt like she belonged…It would be hard there was no doubt about it, and she knew she’d slip but the look May was giving her was one Skye could only call patient understanding. Taking a deep breath she nodded “Yes, I believe I can do that.”

May nodded before continuing, “Rule number three: If something is wrong be it physically, emotionally and or mentally you need to tell myself or Coulson. We read everything in your files.” May paused and Skye watched as anger flashed into the agent’s eyes before she closed them as she took a deep breath and let it out. Dread filled Skye as she thought that she somehow had angered May already, that May was disappointed in something she had read and Skye could only guess what it could be. Her files from the orphanage and many foster homes were one long list of screw ups by Skye after another.

But then May opened her eyes again and Skye was stunned to realize that May was angry for her and not at her. It was a surreal feeling to realize again that these people actually cared about her and wanted her here with them, otherwise they would have tossed her away instead of giving her a second chance. “We know of the emotional and physical scars you carry now with you. We will help you with those, teach you ways to cope better with them but you have to be honest with us and yourself in order for it to work. It will not be easy, but we will be there with you every step of the way, if you let us.”

“And rule number four: If you screw up and make a mistake tell myself or Coulson. Do not hide it. The consequences if you try to hide a mistake will be more severe than if you owned up to it in the first place. I promise this to you, the punishment will fit the offence.”
Skye could only nod as she tried to process the odd feelings that she was having this morning but without a base line she had no idea what it was or how to act. Here was stoic Agent May that hardly ever talked, a woman of few words taking her time to train her, to talk to her, and try to help her. It almost felt to good to be true but she stomped down on that feeling hard but she **needed** this too much. The lost little orphan girl that she hid from the world behind a bubbly happy personality and humor only wanted to belong, to have someone give a damn, to have someone tell her what was right and wrong and here it was and she knew she didn’t deserve it but she’d take it.

“Good now stand up, this morning we are going to start off with Tai-Chi to get you warmed up. It will also help your balance and help you to begin to control your thoughts and emotions.” May said as she stood turning on music that Skye knew she used for Tai-Chi. “Now come on and follow me, don’t stress too much about getting it right. I want you to concentrate on clearing your mind and just moving to wake up your body.”

Skye nodded as she stood as well and tried to mimic May’s movements as she slowly lost herself in the music. Time passed and she hardly noticed it till May’s phone started ringing and she stopped not before rolling her eyes and muttering “Damn Rookie and her timing” under her breath. Answering the phone with a “Hold on Maria,” she paused and looked towards her “Skye go ahead and hit the shower.”

She was up the stairs half way up before she realized she followed the order without question and that curiosity hadn’t quite killed the cat this time. Maybe she could do this, maybe she could be an agent. Smiling the last thing she heard before leaving May in the cargo hold was a "Shush you, or I might just go a round or two with you, and show you old."

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Skye could feel the building under her feet as it vibrated with the fast paced activity that seemed to fill its halls. The energy of the Agents as they zigged and zagged their way around each other in suits and tactical gear to attend to their duties was almost something she could reach out and touch but it also was enough to set her nerves on edge. She knew there was a smile on her face as she partially listened to Coulson as he said the group was separating to get things done but she could also feel as she clenched and unclenched one hand trying to distract herself from her panic.

When you grew up in foster homes, orphanages and group homes you learned to be hypervigilant of everything going on around you because you never knew who was going to try to hurt you. That hypervigilance was always there but any new areas or large crowds made it so much worse and if you combined those together it was enough to set her on edge. A hand gently pressed on her lower back and she knew it was May as she guided Skye down another hallway that seemed less crowded and then into a small gym area that was empty.

Skye could feel her body begin to relax once they were in the empty gym but she was still guided to sit down on a bench as May crouched down in front of her. The display was activated on the heart monitor and Skye saw that her pulse was up to 85 beats per minute, which she knew wasn’t normal.
“Rule number three, Skye,” May said keeping her hand on Skye’s wrist as she looked up and arched an eyebrow at her.

She closed her eyes and leant back against the wall trying to create some space between her and May. Early on in life she had learned to hide her true emotions and reactions because no one cared or they used it against you. It was now a little unnerving to have people in her life that seemed to care and could read her so well. ‘Damn super spies’ she thought to herself but not really meaning it.

“Skye, I can’t help if you don’t tell me what is wrong. I know it goes against everything that you ever grew up believing but I am not going anywhere and neither is Phil” May said with a slight squeeze to her hand. That simple gesture anchoring her to the moment and Skye felt herself relax further.

“Growing up in the system you become hypervigilant of large crowds or new places it has been a long time since I have had such a strong reaction. I don’t know why it affected me more than usual, I usually have better control” she said as she took a deep breath.

“It has been a stressful few days,” May said and Skye snorted at that understatement but May ignored her as she continued talking. “But we will work on the large groups and new places.” A few minutes pass in silence as Skye just focuses on her breathing. “Okay you are back down to 65 beats per minutes, very good Skye.”

Slowly she opened her eyes and couldn’t help but smile at the tiny bit of praise from May. But that was when she noticed for the first time the tall short hair brunette that was leaning against the opposite wall wearing a tactical suit that left little to the imagination.

“You’re late,” May said with humor in her voice as she stood turning to face the other woman but then she sighed “Change of plans?” The woman nodded but stayed where she was. “Skye go get changed into your workout gear” May said looking back at her. Skye looked between the two women and nodded leaving them to go get changed.

Maria watched the smaller woman go into the attached locker room before she pushed off the wall and waited as Melinda crossed to her. “Sorry I’m late but I had to deal with Hand, then Fury this morning after your call and I am now due to head out to go deal with an..issue that came up” Maria said grimacing she hated lying to her mentor because not telling her was putting her and Phil at risk but it was only Fury and her at the moment in the know that something was ‘rotten in Denmark’.

“That’s alright Maria, I know how the job can be” Melinda said pulling the woman into a hug.
“Good to see you too Boss” Maria laughed as she hugged her mentor back. “Look keep an eye on Hand, the mission she has pulled your team for isn’t the greatest thought out plan but it has to be done. Be ready to improvise, okay?”

“Phil and I already figured we’d have to watch her, after Panama we don’t have much confidence in her extraction plans. She is too much like Fury when it comes to acceptable casualties” Melinda deadpanned and Maria chose to ignore that last bit because a part of her agreed. Right now her and Fury were playing russian roulette with the information they were sitting on.

“Also I have a lead on what we talked about earlier but I’ll chase it down in a day or two after I confirm with the actual original file and not what is on the server” she said as her phone beeped. Taking a deep breath she pulled it out “Hill...yes Sir leaving now. Once I am airborne I’ll give you an eta.”

Maria hung up her phone and grabbed her go back from the floor. “Look, I shouldn’t say this but...Mel watch your back and trust no one but family” she said hugging her mentor again before walking towards the door.

“Maria,” Melinda called out and she looked back to the woman that she thought of like the mother she never knew, “Watch your six.”

“Of course Boss” she said and she was gone out the door. Off to meet with Fury to discuss what the hell they were uncovering and try to make a plan to contain the problem but she feared it was going to be a case of a little too late.

Melinda watched Maria leave with a sense of dread like something bad was going to happen, the feeling leaving a hollow space in her chest. Sighing she tried to shake the feeling but it stayed and knew it was more because of what Maria said to her but she trusted the woman. If trouble was coming despite orders she knew Maria would warn her and Phil and she had a feeling that was exactly what she just did. ‘I’ll need to let Phil know as soon as possible’ she thought as she heard Skye exit the locker room behind her.

“Okay Skye treadmill time. We are going to have to build up your endurance. I want you walking for ¼ mile and jogging for a ¼ mile and then back again. Lets see if you can do two miles that way. I need to go talk to Coulson if anyone comes in here that is not one of our team don’t mention his name. Understand?”

“Yes May. What should I do if I finish before you get back?” she asked starting to walk on the treadmill as Melinda watched her smiling because that just confirmed that Skye was really trying to take this at least a little bit seriously, that maybe Melinda and Phil were getting through to the young
woman.

“After your run stretch out then start doing Tai-Chi til I can get back” she said leaving the room to go find Phil to give him Maria’s warning.
Chapter 5

Phil sighed as he stood at the end of the bus’s ramp looking out at the setting sun, the stars would be coming out soon and something told him that tonight was going to be a long ass night. The Berzerker staff had caused havoc all across Europe and had led them all on one hell of a merry chase. Now though as the dust was settling and the situation under control he had two agents that were holding onto themselves emotionally by their fingernails.

He could hear Simmons fuss behind him as she tried to get Melinda and Skye into medical to get checked on since they had been exposed to the Asgardian artifact. At least he wasn’t having to fight to two women into the med bay for Simmons to look over. Melinda knew that Skye needed checked and she couldn’t force the younger woman to do it and not do it herself so they were both getting checked out without him having to make it an order for once.

Sighing he pulled out his phone as it rang, “Coulson”

“Coulson what is the situation?” Fury asked.

“The artifact has been contained and is ready for transport. I had two agents exposed to the Asgardian artifact they are right now getting checked out but I’d like to stand down for at least 24 hours to give them a break.”

“How nasty are we talking Coulson and who was exposed?” Fury asked

“The Berzerker staff causes rage in the person that holds it by using their darkest memories and both Melinda and Skye held it. Light only knew what they both saw, they both have enough dark memories to be pure cannon fodder for it to pick from” Coulson said pinching the bridge of his nose. “I’d recommend the Sandbox Sir till we can either destroy it or give it to Thor to take back off Earth” he said looking up at the darkening sky and the stars that held so much fascination for him as a young boy.

“Stand down for 36 hours Coulson, I don’t want May flying that plane till then so stay put. Hill will meet you there sometime tomorrow morning,” Fury said before hanging up. Phil looked at his phone and wondered why Maria was coming to meet them, he was worried about the cryptic warning that Maria had given Melinda only a week ago and wondered not for the first time what the hell was going on.
He was also worried about Melinda, they were soulmates and he loved her with everything he was but they shared a dark past and today was one of those dates that killed both of them. He knew Melinda calm facade was just a mask for the screaming anger and sorrow that was simmering just below the surface. Like he had told Skye just a few days ago the Melinda before Bahrain was different from the Melinda they knew now. The woman was still there just so deeply hidden that it had taken them years for them to be like this again and he hoped this didn’t cause her to push away from him again. If it did he would understand but it still hurt like hell when she pushed him away.

Though almost just as bad was the smiling puppet that Skye had turned into since she first touched the staff because her eyes were dead and empty. He’d seen eyes like that before on Natasha after particularly bad missions and when she had first been brought into SHIELD, it was the look of seeing way too much in too little of time. He knew what was in Skye’s files but not for the first time he wondered what wasn’t in the files Skye had given them. He honestly didn’t know what to do with them he could try to be there for them but he was only one man. Phil would be happy to see Maria maybe he knew she’d at least try to help with the two women.

Taking a deep breath Phil squared his shoulders and made his face go back to his “Agent” face and went back inside the plane. He could hear Fitz and Ward bickering over god only knew what near the cars as he went into the labs. Both Melinda and Skye tensed when he came in the room but slightly relaxed when they saw it was only him.

“Simmons what is the prognosis?” he asked.

“They have a few bumps and bruises from their fighting with the staff but as far as I can tell they are okay other than still slightly elevated pulses and levels of adrenaline in their systems. When the adrenaline comes down they are going to crash hard so I’d recommend a few days of rest before they go back out in the field to make sure Sir” Simmons said doing her best to ignore the glares both women were giving her.

“Well it is good then that Fury has us standing down for 36 hours then,” he said ignoring the arch of an eyebrow from Melinda, he’d have to tell her about Maria and his suspicions later. Phil looked between the two women and didn’t like what he saw. Skye looked like she was fighting the urge to ball up into the smallest size she could all at the same time looking like she could kill someone and not think twice about it and Melinda wasn’t much better he saw the signs that soon the mask she wore would break.

He knew how to keep a Melinda melt down on pause though to give him time to get his plan in action, he’d give her something to do or worry about so he said “Alright May and Skye go get cleaned up you earned it.” Hopefully his gamble would work till he could get her alone in what had become their room.
He watched as Melinda glanced towards the other woman and he could see her worry increase as well. They had been working with the young hacker but it had only been a little over a week since they got a glimpse into the life of Skye had before she came to them. Both of them suspected there was more than what was in the files she gave them, not because she hid it because it wasn’t documented. “Come on Skye,” Melinda said gently as she helped Skye down off one of the lab tables. Phil watched as the two women as they left the lab and headed for the stairs Skye lightly leaning on Melinda as she favored her right hip.

“Sir, I’m worried about Skye. I’ve never seen her this quiet and the physiological effects of the Berserker Staff couldn’t have been good on her bodies already stressed system” Simmons said dry washing her hands.

“I know Simmons, we will just have to watch her levels more carefully for a while” he said putting his hand on her shoulder and giving it a reassuring squeeze before he motioned for him to follow her out into the cargo hold. Thankfully Fitz and Ward had stopped bickering when they came out of the lab.

“Fury has ordered us to stand down for 36 hours, which means you three are now on leave till lets say..” he glanced down at his watch seeing it was already 2000 on a Monday night. “Wednesday at 0900. I don’t want to see you three back on this plane unless we get recalled till then, that is an order.”

“Are you sure Sir, I should probably stay here in case anything medically comes up” Simmons said.

“I’m sure, you guys all deserve some time away to decompress. We have been going non-stop for the last few months. Anyways I know that both you and Fitz have family near by, go see them, family is important” he said smiling gently at the two scientist. He waited for them to look at each other and share a silent conversation, they weren’t a soul-mated pair but their relationship was so close to it they got mistaken for one all the time.

“Thank you Sir,” they said as they went towards the stairs to probably pack a bag and head out.

“Are you sure you don’t need me for security Sir?” Ward asked and Phil looked at the young specialist. Grant Ward was a lone wolf and good at what he did but something about him that months later after meeting him still felt off. He was only on the team because Fury had shot down all the specialist he had requested for this team and he was the next best.

“I’m sure Agent Ward, we are on a SHIELD base parked, I doubt even we can get into that much trouble. Go see the sites, take a break. Trust me all work and no play makes you lose your hair
faster” Phil quipped pointing towards his own lack of hair.

“Yes Sir,” he said with a slight smirk that didn’t quite meet his eyes before he also disappeared up the stairs. Phil sighed once he was alone and walked back outside of the bus and looked at the stars. He was glad he was able to get a stand down order for at least 36 hours from Fury, his team needed it after the last few months of nonstop cases.

Though the stand down order also made it easier for him to give Melinda and Skye the space they needed to come down and out of whatever they had experienced without the risk of the others seeing. The young hacker and Melinda were similar when it came to not letting anyone see them show emotion when they were hurting so he wanted to give them as much privacy as he could.

A shooting star shot by in the night time sky and he felt a tear escape as he watched it. ‘Happy birthday Rayne, Mommy and Daddy miss you so much.’

“Alright May and Skye go get cleaned up you earned it” Phil said and she noticed that he was mainly looking at Skye. Melinda glanced towards the other woman and she felt her worry increase as Skye didn’t even acknowledge what Phil had said. Dead eyes stared out of a blank face as they stared off at some point in the distance and a part of her wondered what horror Skye was facing in her mind.

Phil and her suspected there was more horrors in Skye’s past than what she had given them, not because she had hid it but because it wasn’t documented. There just wasn’t any time recently to sit down and just talk with the young woman to see if they could confirm their suspicions, with 36 hours to stand down it would finally give her the opportunity and she would make sure the questions got asked. The Berzerker Staff gave her the perfect opening because Skye would need to talk about it or have it consume her. Hell Melinda knew she would have to do the same with Phil because she couldn’t go backwards, not now when she had someone depending on her to show them the way out of the darkness.

“Come on Skye,” Melinda said gently as she went over towards Skye and helped her down off the table. Placing a hand on the small of the young woman’s back she slowly guided her through the lab doors and towards the stairs. With every step though she could see that Skye was favoring her right hip which was an old injury that didn’t heal correctly after being almost beaten to death and having to have a bone marrow biopsy that just aggravated it.

It would be a tight fit up the stairs going two at a time but she’d make it work as she pulled one of Skye’s arms over her shoulders and wrapped an arm around her waist. She felt Skye’s body stiffen in her arms but then the woman relaxed as she put her head on Melinda’s shoulder as they got up past the stairs and into the lounge.
Ushering both of them both past their rooms Melinda helped Skye get to the common bathroom and wished that they had a tub to soak in but at least the showers came with seats that could be used. Maneuvering Skye into a shower stall Melinda pulled down one of the seats and sat her down on it before kneeling in front of the woman. “Skye rule number three” she asked watching for any reaction a flicker of eyes, tightening of facial muscles anything to tell her that Skye might be cognizant of what was going on around her but there was nothing.

Melinda sighed squeezing Skye’s hands as she stood up to go get their shower stuff and clean clothes for each of them but before she stepped away there was a slight pressure on her hands back. Looking down she saw silent tears slowly escape eyes that were not so dead but now showing a sorrow that had Melinda reaching out to wipe away the tears. They start coming faster and Melinda gives it up so she can sit next to Skye on the bench and pull the younger woman to her chest.

A hand grips her tactical suit as Skye’s small body shakes with silent sobs like she is afraid to make a noise in her sorrow. Melinda knows it is probably something she learned as a child in the system and Melinda just holds her tighter. She doesn’t say it will be okay because she can’t promise that but she can whisper is “Let it all out Skye, I’m here.”

The sobs gain noise with that small act of compassion and it has an almost animalistic quality of a wounded animal and it rips Melinda’s heart apart. She remembers times when that type of sound had come from Clint, Natasha and Maria, it had torn her heart in pieces then as well. They might not be her children but they were her family and it killed her to see any of them in so much pain and Skye was quickly becoming a part of her and Phil.

Today though the pain is just that more potent because it was the happiest and darkest day in her and Phil’s shared past. Today was like a raw open wound on her skin rubbing wrong every time she moved but with the effects of the Berzerker Staff it was so much worse and with Skye’s pain pulling at her she could no longer hold her iron grip on her emotions any longer and she cried letting the pain and sorrow out.

Melinda didn’t know how long they sat like that just crying fully clothed in the shower stall but she knew that Skye was now silent against her chest and she suspected the woman was asleep. She was loathed to wake her up because she had a feeling that sleep was a precious rare thing for the young woman. She heard the bathroom door open and watched as Phil came around the corner that hid the showers from view of the door, wearing his old SHIELD sweats as she came in carrying not only her and Skye’s showers caddies but also her and Skye’s ‘medbay bag’.

Phil had made the team pack the bags and he kept them in one of the common closets, the bags were an overnight bag that was suppose to hold at least a pair of pajamas and a change of clothes for any stays in Medical. The ‘medbay bag’ came into existence after Phil had to go get clothes for Natasha and Clint after a mission that both had ended up in medical and he had found more than he ever wanted to see in their drawers.
“Saw this in the room and figured you might need it,” Phil whispered as looked towards her and Skye giving Melinda that small sad smile of his as he moved around quietly putting everything down and pulling out clean towels and placing them on the racks. Coming back to her he crouched before them and looked into her face for a few moments like the was looking for something. Silently she wondered what he was looking for when he looked at her like that but he must have found it because he knelt down and tapped one of his knees.

“You’re an idiot,” she said as she lifted her booted foot to his knee. She watched as Phil slightly shivered but still smiled that lopsided smirk of his as he removed one boot then moved her other leg to his knee and remove the other boot. Sliding over she watched as he gently removed Skye’s shoes trying not to wake the sleeping hacker before he stood up looking at her with a look in his eyes.

“I know, but I am your idiot,” he said giving her a gentle peck on her lips and it was her turn to shiver. Their soul words to each other had become their way to say that they loved each other. It was a ‘I love you’ and a promise of ‘You’ll never be alone’ all rolled into one.

“Yes you are,” Melinda smiled gently back to Phil. Her emotions were open and raw, she could feel the horrors of her memories just sitting waiting for her to close her eyes but she didn’t feel the overwhelming need to push him away to protect him from her darkness and she knew that was progress.

“How do you want to do this?” he finally asked breaking her out of her thoughts. She knew they should try to wake Skye and if she didn’t wake that they could get her washed up she just didn’t want her waking half way through frightened and embarrassed.

“Skye time to wake up” Melinda said as she shook her shoulders.

“Five more minutes Sister Agnes it’s Saturday” Skye mumbled into Melinda’s chest, nuzzling her face further in and she heard Phil snort. Rolling her eyes at him she gently smiled down and kissed the top of Skye’s head before looking to her mate. “Istanbul?”

Phil thought for a moment and nodded as he reached down and lifted a sleeping Skye into his arms before he stepped out of the stall. Melinda stiffly got up and followed them out as she quickly stripped out of her clothes and turned on the shower to get warm. Turning back she gently started to undress Skye as she leaned back against Phil’s chest asleep.

They had done this once before after a particular bad mission back in Maria’s rookie days. By the
time that Maria had made it back to the safe house she had been on autopilot and damn near catatonic. It had taken both Phil and her to get the woman in the shower to wash off the blood and asses her injuries to find very little of it was hers. They had washed her and got her changed before sandwiching her between them on the bed. She knew after that incident Phil and her had started to see Maria as a daughter and that had been a bitter sweet revelation to the both of them. But they had never said anything to Maria because it meant..

“Mel, come back to me” Phil said gently as he touched her cheek and she leaned into his touch. The adrenaline high they had been riding all day since they had touched the staff was starting to cause her to crash and she knew they needed to get Skye and her washed off before that happened.

“Sorry I’m starting to crash,” she said as she finished undressing Skye and quickly checked the water temperature. Nodding to Phil she watched as he lifted Skye again into his arms and sat her back on the shower bench and moved out of her way. Getting in she gently washed Skye’s hair and body before doing her own quickly as she felt her body start to fight to concentrate.

Turning off the water she grabbed the towels that Phil had just thrown over the shower stall door and started to dry Skye then herself. Opening the door again Phil stepped in and lifted Skye out as they got her dressed and Melinda ran a comb lightly through Skye’s hair to at least untangle it. Getting dressed she put on her own old pair of SHIELD sweats and threw her hair into a ponytail to deal with after they got Skye to bed.

Melinda was followed by Phil carrying Skye as they made their way to her bunk. Shaking her head at the mess she cleared off the bed and pulled back the covers stepping back out of the way for Phil to come in and put Skye down. She watched as he gently kissed her forehead and she did the same as she pulled the covers up and tucked her in. Sighing she remembered to keep the light on as they exited the bunk, deciding to leave the door open as well a crack.

A pair of arms pulled her into a warm hard chest and she took a deep breath of the scent of her mate as she pressed her face into his neck. She felt a gentle kiss pressed to the top of her head as he quickly bent down and picked her up. Cradling her to his chest she couldn’t find the strength to protest as she finally felt the weight of the adrenalin crash hit her like a ton of bricks. She fought against drooping eyes as she was placed in their bed and he got in behind her holding her tight.

“Rest Mel, I got you.”
Chapter 6

Fog clung to the ground hiding the ground and it swirled around her legs as she walked down the edge of the airfield making her way towards the BUS. If she wasn’t so damn tired she’d probably be amused by the sight she must be in the early english morning but she’d been awake for almost 48 hours straight on a one woman mission to gather information. The information they had uncovered in the last few months pointed to several dirty agents of different ranks and departments and at the moment Fury was only trusting her with the damn information.

They needed more manpower to figure out if it was an organization behind the dirty agents or if it was just a case of the agents lining their pockets and selling SHIELD secrets and tech. But Fury was overriding her and telling her to keep her mouth shut and just be ready for it all to go to shit. She had a funny feeling it was going to all going to shit if they didn’t get a fucking clue on it soon and was thankful she was able to somewhat able to warn Melinda and Phil.

Since the investigation she felt herself become even more paranoid than she usually was with her personal safety but at least she hadn’t hit the level of Fury’s paranoia just yet. She had gotten the call from Fury to meet Coulson here only a few hours ago and she was to accompany them to the Sandbox, making sure the Berzerker Staff was placed in the dark archives under a false description. Sighing she rolled her shoulders and as she walked into the cargo bay and she got another reminder of why she was here.

The Berzerker Staff used your worst memories to cause rage in its holder and both Melinda and Skye had been exposed to it and by the look of it Skye was still dealing with the effects. Blood smeared on the punching bag as Skye went at it without wraps on her hands and Maria couldn’t help but wince at the memory of old pain because she knew that was going to hurt once the woman stopped. She dropped her bag on the ground not trying to be quiet about it but the woman didn’t acknowledge her presence.

Frowning slightly Maria walked towards the woman placing her hand on her shoulder saying “You are going to break your hands that way”. It was in a blur of movement that the woman turned and attacked, taking Maria by surprise with a strike to her jaw that sent her spinning. “What the fuck agent, stand down” she yelled rubbing her jaw looking at the woman but that was when she realized the glazed over eyes.

‘Oh Fuck me, with a capital F, she is having a flashback and I’ve stepped right into it. Good job Maria, you need to end this without hurting the young woman or Melinda will have your ass’ she thought to herself as she ducked another swing from a bloody fist. Taking a step back she quickly looked around and saw the mats stacked up against one of the far walls of the cargo hold. Running over to them she tossed them to the center of room towards Skye and watched as the woman knocked them to the ground in her bid to get at Maria.
The pads weren’t exactly where she needed them but she would make it work as she circled around ducking and taking some minor blows to avoid worse hits. Maria wasn’t sure if it was the Asgardian weapon still giving the woman strength but she sure did pack a hell of a punch as one hit landed on her right shoulder. The hit landing only because she got distracted by kicking one of the pads towards another to make a more larger protected area. Shaking out her arm from the tingly feeling she stepped onto the mat and tried to think through how she wanted to do this.

Something told her that just putting the woman on her back wasn’t going to snap her out of it, so that meant probably getting in a tossle on the ground. She was confident in her ground game, she was trained by Melinda May and Natasha Romanov for light’s sake but she was exhausted. Her tank was running on empty after being up for 48 hours straight and little to no sleep over the last few months was finally catching back up to her.

Skye got another lucky hit to Maria’s ribs when she was distracted by her thoughts and knew she was going to a hell of a bruise in a day or two. But it was the fact she was distracted that meant she had to finish this sooner rather than later. Maria took a deep breath and felt the twinge in her ribs before she stopped reacting to what Skye was doing and finally made a move.

Maria crouched low and swept her leg out knocking Skye off of her feet and she fell with a loud thud but it didn’t stop the woman as she growled getting back up. Skye attacked her again getting in a blow to Maria’s kidney and another hook to the jaw. Spitting out blood from a cut in her mouth she thought ‘Fucking Asgardian weapons.’

Closing the distance Maria again grabbed the woman’s arm and flipped her over to once again land on her back with another thud and Maria winced because the woman wasn’t bracing her falls and she was going to have a nice assortment of bruises after this was done. Once Maria realized this she knew she had to follow through onto the ground to try to use her longer limbs, strength and training to try holding the woman till she calmed down.

They wrestled on the ground and Skye got another couple blows in before Maria finally got the upper hand by getting control of Skye’s back. Wrapping her arms under Skye’s arms she laced her fingers behind the woman’s head while her legs wrapped around Skye’s legs pulling them apart so she couldn’t get leverage to flip them.

Pulling tight she stretched out Skye’s body and held the position as the woman beneath her growled struggling to break the hold. Even though she was working more than she should have needed to to hold the position she finally was able to catch her breath.

“Skye, I want you to listen to my voice. What you are seeing is not real, it can not hurt you, I promise you потеряли одного you are safe with me” she said still holding the struggling woman. Maria didn’t know why she had used the russian word for lost one but the title fit, it was what she
had heard Nat call their little motley group that had been saved by Phil and Melinda.

“Come on Skye, follow my voice. The last thing I want to do is hurt you, May would kick my ass if I hurt you” she said and felt the woman slightly pause at the mention of Melinda. “You don’t know me yet but I am Maria. I was once lost like you are now and it was May and Coulson that put me back together. They will help you too but first I need you to follow my voice and calm down.”

“Whatever you are seeing it is not real, you are safe, I got you” she said over and over again as Skye struggled less and less underneath her. Soon the struggles stopped and were replaced by sobs that tore at Maria’s heart but she still held her grip to a count of twenty before she let go of her hold on Skye’s legs. Rolling onto her back she pulled the smaller woman with her as she ignored protesting muscles bringing them into a sitting position with Skye between her legs.

“Shh, it’s okay, I got you” Maria whispered as she finally let go of her hold of the other woman’s arms. Skye turned around and sobbed into Maria’s chest, holding onto the front of her white t-shirt like it was a lifeline. Rocking back and forth Maria just tried to be there for her like Melinda had been there for her all those years ago. She knew how it was coming back from a flashback, overwhelmed by the emotions that the images dragged up and scared that you had done something you couldn’t take back while not yourself.

Soon the crying stopped but Maria still held Skye running a hand slowly up and down her back in what she hoped was a comforting gesture. Skye’s body still shook as she came down from the intense emotions but she didn’t make a move out of Maria’s arms and Maria didn’t mind. Though the last thing she thought she’d hear out of the woman’s mouth was, “Ugh. My bruises are going to have bruises, aren’t they?”

Her mind came to a screeching halt and totally jumped off the Helicarrier at max velocity as she thought ‘No fucking way, but what are the fucking chances?’ Quickly thinking back she realized when they had met at the HUB they hadn’t spoken to each other and just now Skye had been in the grip of a flashback when she first spoke with her…

Maria looked down into the dark slightly slanted eyes that seemed to hold so much in them, she had always been a sucker for a pair of eyes. These eyes weren’t going to be any different but she had to be sure. She was beautiful, tear tracks and all and Maria felt her heart speed up.

“When I first came in I said something to you but you were in the grip of a flashback…” Maria paused taking a deep breath and like ripping off a band-aid quickly asked “Do you have the words ‘You are going to break your hands that way’?”

“Oh my God, I hurt you…” she said with a look of horror on her face as she started to cry once again.
“Shh it is okay. I know you didn’t mean to hurt me” Maria said as she tightened her hold and pulled the smaller woman into her lap rocking them both. Closing her eyes she placed her nose into Skye’s hair and breathed in the scent of her mate. She held them like that till Skye cried herself to sleep in her arms and Maria couldn’t find the strength to move them somewhere more comfortable.

Looking out she could see the sun rising and hoped that Melinda would come down soon for her morning Tai-Chi. Closing her eyes again Maria’s mind was going in a hundred different directions all at once as she struggled to process the fact that she finally had found her soulmate and what it exactly meant.

A noise from above caught her attention and made her open her eyes as she watched Melinda running down the stairs to them. “Maria what happened?” she asked as she knelt next to them eyes checking and cataloging injuries.

“I found her punching the bag with bloody hands when I said something trying to get her attention and I touched her. I didn’t realize she was in the middle of a flashback, I did my best not to hurt her restrain her till I could talk her down. Both of us are going to be sore as hell in a few hours and not the good kind of sore” she sighed as she looked down at the woman asleep in her arms.

So lost in her emotions and thoughts she didn’t realize she had been silently crying till she felt a gentle finger brush away tears from her cheek. “Maria, I need you to look at me” Melinda said gently, as fingers were placed under her chin lifting her face to look away from Skye.

“Oh Light Maria, I’m so sorry, if I had known….I wouldn’t have given you those files,” she said softly.

“I know...I..” she paused taking a deep breath trying to get control of her emotions and her thoughts. This beautiful creature in her lap was her soulmate, a woman who had been beaten and broken, been on deaths door and still fought to live this life when it had only been cruel to her.

“Mel, I can’t lose her,” she said her voice barely above a whisper. “I was going to just give you the information I was able to find and let you run with it, it wasn’t much but...I think I have to do this for her myself.”
“I know Maria, but if you need help you know I will have both of your backs,” Melinda said as she stood up and walked over to the intercom.

“Phil can you come down to the cargo bay” she said not waiting for an answer. “I guess it is a good thing that Phil gave the rest of the team leave while we are grounded” Melinda said as she came over behind Maria as she ran her hand through Maria’s short hair.

Maria leaned back into the touch and took the quiet support that Melinda was giving her. Melinda knew how much she had struggled with herself being a lesbian and then the long years she faced alone waiting for her soul mate to cross her path.

Phil came down the stairs a few minutes later and before he could say anything though Melinda said “You’re an idiot.”

She watched at Phil took in Melinda’s words and then looked over at Maria before his eyes widened as Maria nodded at him. Smiling softly Phil turned to Melinda and said “I know, but I am your idiot.”

Maria rolled her eyes at the pair but still was smiling softly at them and their antics. “Not meaning to interrupt the moment but I need to get her somewhere a little more comfortable and I have to make a call” she said as Melinda and Phil exchanged a look over her head that she didn’t miss and knew that they had taken her cryptic warning to heart.

“Alright Maria lets get you two to my office there is a couch in their that is quite comfortable and you can make your call in there” Phil said as he and Melinda each grabbed her arms from behind and lifted her. Neither of them moved to take Skye from her arms and it took a few minutes for her legs to agree to stay upright. At this moment she was running on pure adrenaline and sheer force of stubbornness as she made her way up the stairs.

“Can someone grabbed my bag for me? I’ll be needing it when we get to your office” she called back not waiting for them to follow her. Even though she was stubborn she knew she would soon be crashing from exhaustion and the shock from the bond starting to form.

She got to the lounge area when Melinda caught up to her with her bag and went on ahead towards Phil’s office probably clearing the path. While she felt Phil’s presence behind her probably making sure she didn’t fall or need help and she smiled fondly at their mother henning, it was something familiar she needed to anchor her in the moment.
Maria collapsed onto the couch as soon as she was in Phil’s office and took a few deep breaths and winced at the burning sensation, “Maria are you okay?” Melinda asked sitting next to her and once again checking her over for injuries.

“Yeah Skye just got a shot to my ribs that had a good wallop behind it and now the adrenaline is wearing off from the fight I am starting to think they might be cracked instead of bruised” she said closing her eyes and laying her head back as Melinda started to press and check them. She tried to sit still and not jump when Melinda pressed on a particular sore spot “Yep definitely cracked,” she quipped.

“Mel can you look in my bag and find my phone and a green box?” she asked and heard as Melinda quickly did what she asked.

Maria opened her eyes when the objects were placed on the coffee table in front of her. “Please shut the door Phil and Mel inside the green box is a cube pull it out and press the two red buttons at the same of time,” she instructed.

“Maria what the hell is going on?” Melinda asked as she did as she was instructed and a blue light came out of the cube blanketed them room in it.

“I have to call Fury, if I can get him to let me tell you I will. I’ll need you to hold the phone out for me,” she sighed as she took a deep breath to steady herself as she pressed her thumb to a button on the phone and felt a familiar prick. “Commander Maria Hill, Shadow Condition Bravo, call Fury, speaker phone.”

“Hill what’s your status and who else is there with you?” Fury said all business and ready to leap to her aid.

“Mel and Phil are here with me” Maria said nervousness in her voice because with everything going on, with what they were starting to suspect...they were all in danger and by being her soulmate, Skye just got a larger target painted on her back.

“And the reason for the Condition Bravo?” he asked and she could totally tell he was not amused.

“‘My bruises are going to have bruises, aren’t they?’” she said knowing that he would understand what she was saying.
“Maria you have got to be fucking kidding me? Are you sure?” he asked.

“Yes Sir I am. I haven’t seen her words yet…we didn’t meet under the best of circumstances and she is currently passed out in my arms since the touch part of the bond has already started to form.”

“Maria I swear to all that is good in this world you have the world’s worst fucking timing” he said sighing and she silently agreed with him. “Phil I am guessing this is one of your team?”

“Skye our hacker” Phil responded his voice calm but Maria could see the worry in his eyes, he knew something was going on but not what as he kept looking between Melinda, Maria and Skye.

“Great! The unknown hacker I couldn’t find a damn thing on” Fury said in an annoyed huff. Maria looked towards Mel and Phil arching an eyebrow in question, they shared a look and nodded.

“Not quite unknown Sir, she gave Mel and Phil some files. I’ve read them. She doesn’t even know who she is. She was left on the doorstep of an orphanage as an infant by a SHIELD agent before she was KIA. What I have I’ll have to send to you but we need to figure out who she is and once you read the files you will understand why Sir.”

“Send me those damn files. Phil and Melinda make sure she they get some damn rest,” Fury ordered.

“Of course Sir” Phil said.

“Permission sir, I need them to know so they can protect her…” Maria said leaving off the rest of her sentence.

A minute, then two minutes pass before she hears Fury say “Granted” before he hung up. Maria sighed and closed her eyes again burying her face in Skye’s hair.

“Maria,” Melinda whispers as she feels a hand against her cheek. “If you can stand up we can get you two into my cabin which has a bigger bed.” Opening her eyes was a fight just on its own but she nodded as Melinda pulled her up off the couch and led her to another room just down the hall. Inside Phil just finished tucking in clean sheets as they came into the room and Maria sat down on the edge of the bed with more force than she meant to. A whimper came from Skye but quieted almost
instantly when Melinda pressed a hand to her cheek.

“Come on lets get you ready for bed” Melinda said taking off Maria’s boots as Phil came over giving both her and Skye a kiss on the forehead before he left the room. Once her boots were off Melinda helped her position Skye on the bed next to her as she laid on her back.

Maria breathed a sigh of relief “Thank you”

Melinda just smiled gently in answer as she pulled up the covers, she kissed Maria’s forehead and then Skye’s before leaving the light on and leaving the room as well. Maria closed her eyes and was instantly asleep.
Skye slowly woke up to the sensation of being held in a pair of strong arms with her face pressed into the crook of a neck. The events of this morning slowly came back to her as she realized the warm body she was laying against must be her soulmate, a soulmate who was awake by the gentle fingers running through her hair. “Please tell me you at least got the license plate of that bus?” Skye groaned as she tried to stretch.

“Nope sorry, totally missed it” Maria said as she couldn’t help chuckling and agreeing with with the sentiment, she felt like she had jumped off the damn Helicarrier at max velocity, and then for shits and giggles decided to go a few rounds with both Natasha and Melinda for the hell of it.

“You would be a smart ass” grumbles Skye as she buries her face further into Maria’s neck causing Maria to laugh.

“Takes one to know one sweetheart and I was trained and partnered with four of the biggest smart asses in the business, of course I am a smart ass.” Maria said honestly as they continued to lay there. “How much of this morning do you remember?” Maria finally asks breaking the silence.

“First thing I remember is you telling me ‘Whatever you are seeing it is not real, you are safe, I got you’ with you holding me in some crazy ass ninja move” Skye said as she tried to sit up but when she puts pressure on her hand she hissed through her teeth in pain and fell back down on top of Maria.

“Easy there” Maria says ignoring the flair of pain in her ribs as Skye landed against her but at least she was now with her head on Maria’s shoulder. Reaching gently she grabbed one of Skye’s hands checking it as she said, “You went ten rounds with the punching bag without wraps, which is how I found you this morning. I didn’t realize you were in the middle of a flashback when I touched your shoulder saying ‘You are going to break your hands that way’. Can you make a fist?”

“You seriously want me to make a fist right now? Didn’t I pummel you enough earlier?” Skye asked incredulously as she tilted her head up making eye contact with her mates blue eyes as they looked down into her own dark brown she watched as an eyebrow arched at her. “Do all agents know how to do that eyebrow arch? Is it a freaking class or something Eyebrow Arching 101?”

Maria couldn’t fight back the laugh at Skye’s last two questions before she said “Not quite. I was trained by the two best at the eyebrow arch and now use it to devastating effect on junior agents. But please for me try to make a fist, I want to get a gauge on how injured your hands are.”
“Fine” Skye sighed before she tried making a fist. “Ok that hurts like a bitch” she groaned as she loosened her hand.

“Though I’d rather just lay here with you, we will have to get up soon and get you checked out” Maria said with a sigh as she brought the hackers hand to rest over where her soul mark was between her ribs where her chest and stomach meet.

“And you as well, I can see the bruise forming on your jaw” Skye sighed before adding “Sorry about that, by the way.”

“It’s okay Skye, I know how it is to be in the middle of a flashback and not aware of what and who is around you. Remind me to tell you about the one time I knocked out Phil” Maria said as she again started running her fingers through Skye’s hair.

“So oh great soul mate, since you know my name somehow which I am guessing is because of May or Coulson, what is yours?” Skye asks as she starts playing with Maria’s hand that is holding her own.

“Glad that your hacking skills didn’t get into my file then” Maria smirks and outright grins at the now raised eyebrow from her mate. “My name is Maria Hill.”

“My soulmate is the Deputy Director of SHIELD?” Skye asked shocked as her mind tried to process the information. Her soul mate is the person she heard Ward refer to once as the Ice-Maiden of SHIELD but from what she could tell her mate was far from an Ice-Maiden but she realized it also must be lonely at the top.

“Guilty, and as for how I know your name, I might be Deputy Director but I was once Melinda’s rookie and she asked me for a favor, concerning you and certain redacted like all hell get out SHIELD document,” Maria gently said but she still felt Skye stiffen in her arms.

She hates the feeling that she has in that moment, like she broke her mates trust but she didn’t know who she was when she had been given the files. Maria gently rubs her fingers over the bruised knuckles of the hand against her chest. “Please don’t be mad at them or me. I have a higher clearance and they needed boots on the ground to find the actual physical file because the file isn’t on any database. It is part of the reason I was here this morning to talk to them and you about what I had found so far and also to meet you.”
“How much do you know?” Skye whispers fearing the rejection she knows is coming.

“I read everything you gave Melinda and Phil but I won’t push you to talk to me about something if you don’t want to Skye. You are mine and I am yours and I will be here for you in whatever way you need me to be” she says as she feels Skye’s body start to shake with silent tears that soak her shirt.

“Promise?” Skye whispers and a part of her hates herself for sounding so vulnerable but being held in Maria’s arms she feels safe, that she can let herself be vulnerable and not be judged for it.

“Shh, it’s okay. I got you. I promise, I’m here and I’m not going anywhere I’ve been waiting a long time for you Skye, your words have been my constant companion since I was about seven years old. As long as I had your words, I wasn’t alone in this world and they got me through some of my darkest times. That is what your words mean to me that I would not always be alone, and I am not going to let you be alone,” Maria says as she pulls the younger woman closer to her, holding her as she falls apart in her arms.

Her fingers run through Skye’s hair again trying to soothe her upset mate. Maria could only imagine what type of abandonment issues Skye had from years in the system and with the history of abuse she suffered from. She knew it wouldn’t be easy to convince the woman she wasn’t going to bail out on her the minute things got tough but she’d learn soon enough Maria didn’t give up on those she cared about. Skye had been one of those even before they realized they were soulmates because Melinda and Phil had decided to take the younger woman in.

“I thought touch bonds were rare” Skye said as she stopped crying and felt herself relax into her mate’s touch.

“They are and for the next day or two if we aren’t in contact with each other we are going to be a bit uncomfortable but it is worth it because I found you” Maria says as she gently kisses Skye’s forehead.

“Cheesy” Skye laughs as she rolls her eyes at Maria as she snuggles and rests her head on Maria’s chest.

They laid like that for a few minutes before there was a knock on the door and Maria called out “Come in Boss.”
“Good you two are up,” Melinda said as she came into the room with a first aid kit and two bottles of water. “Sit up on the bed so I can get you two at least patched up some before breakfast and no arguing either of you.”

“Yes boss” said Maria as Skye said “Yes May.”

Maria wrapped her arms around Skye tighter as she sat up bringing the younger woman with her so she didn’t have to use her hands. “Can you check Skye’s hands first please I don’t think she broke them but they are pretty beaten up.”

“Fine but then I am checking those ribs” Melinda said starting to work on Skye’s hands as she cleaned up the blood and cleaned the cuts.

“What happened to your ribs?” Skye asked giving her a pointed look before she hissed as May started putting peroxide in the cuts to clean them.

“You got a good hit or two in before I could get you to the ground and on top of you for control. I’m okay though I’ve gotten worse from training with Boss lady here and Natasha” she said trying to downplay the sure to be at least bruised ribs. Maria watched as Melinda tended to Skye’s hands but she started to feel the itch under her skin because of the lack of skin to skin contact with her mate. Before she could think of it she reached out and placed her hand flat on the small of Skye’s back under her t-shirt and was relieved that Skye seemed to relax into the touch.

“Why do you keep calling May ‘Boss’ when you outrank her?” Skye asked trying to understand the dynamic between her mate and the two agents that had taken her in and seemed to be trying to help her.

“Once my rookie, always my rookie” Melinda answered the question before Maria could as she started to bandage Skye’s hands lightly with gauze. “Maria was my last rookie years ago before Bahrain. Before her was Natasha though with Natasha less of her being a rookie and just needing someone to give her a good moral context to events around her. Remember the rules we went over the first morning?” Melinda asks and waits for Skye to nod. “Rule number five: Phil and I will always be here for you, doesn’t matter if you eventually outrank us, you will always be our rookie.”

“Oh” Skye says and Maria watches as her mate ducks her head to look away from both of them. Maria shares a look with Melinda for a moment before she lets her thumb that is pressed to Skye’s lower back start moving up and down.
They sit in silence for a few minutes as Melinda finishes bandaging Skye’s hands before she uses a finger and lifts Skye’s chin gently. “I know you have no reason to believe it but you will never be alone again Skye,” Melinda says softly trying to get the point across to the young woman she waits till she get a nod and small smile from her. “Good now Maria lets checked those ribs then breakfast.”

“Sure thing Boss, but we need to have breakfast in Phil’s office so we can use the cube.” Maria said as she sat up and took off her shirt hissing at protesting muscles. “Bloody hell that hurts but of course doesn’t help I was on a stakeout for 48 hours straight in a cramped ass vent.”

“Oh my god” Skye said as Maria got the shirt off and she finally saw the bruises now blooming across Maria’s skin. Skye made to get up and run away but a pair of long arms wrapped around her waist and pulled her against her mates body.

Maria pulled the younger woman against her body as she made to run away as her hands snaked under Skye’s t-shirt to get the skin to skin contact they both needed. She felt her mates body relax a bit into her touch but she was still stiff and upset as Maria whispered into her ear “Skye listen to me, it’s okay. This morning was not you, you were having a flashback and you are not responsible for what you do during one. I’ve come home with worse from missions. I would gladly take the pain anytime if it meant helping you through a flashback.”

Skye closed her eyes trying to fight away the tears she felt threatening to come out again but could hear the truth and understanding in Maria’s words. Turning in her mate’s arms she hid her face against Maria’s neck as she started to cry again. She hated crying it made her feel vulnerable but with Maria’s arms around her, though she was a virtual stranger she was her mate, and Skye felt safe enough to let her feel everything she kept locked up for so long.

Maria tightened her hold around Skye’s waist with one arm as the other started to run her fingers through Skye’s hair. She felt as Skye’s arms circled her own waist as she pressed kisses to the top of her head. Looking up she saw Melinda packing the first aid kit giving them some semblance of privacy before she turned back and signed ‘Meet in the office’ to Maria as she left them alone once again in the room. Maria started rocking them back and forth in place and it had it’s desired effect as she heard Skye chuckle.

“Are you seriously trying to dance with me while I ball my eyes out and you are topless?” she asks against Maria’s neck still laughing.

“Not quite toplesss but it did get you laughing so I say it worked” Maria says trying not to shiver at the warm breath playing across her skin because she was somewhat topless and her hormones were kicking in, she was only human after all.
“You are such a cheesy goofball” Skye said her tone affectionate as she leaned back in Maria’s arms looking her in the eyes.

“Only for you sweetheart” she said as she smiled gently “Are you okay?” Maria asked not wanting to let go just yet leaning their heads together but this brought their lips only inches apart.

“Yes, are you going to kiss me now?” Skye asks as their eyes meet, breaths mingling together.

“Only if you want me to,” Maria says as her eyes search Skye’s face before looking at her lips.

“I want you to” Skye says simply before closing her eyes and tilting her head up to give Maria better access to her lips.

“That’s all I needed to know,” Maria barely whispered a breath away from lips as she leaned down and kissed Skye. It felt like she had stuck her hand in a light socket as their lips touched for the first time but she didn’t care as she licked Skye’s lips with her tongue asking for admittance. Skye opened her mouth and as their tongues, they both groaned as the kiss deepened.

Skye’s hand came up to run through Maria’s short hair at the nape of her neck as she pulled the other woman closer. She felt as Maria shivered and growled into her mouth as she felt herself pushed up against the door.

A hiss of pain from Skye was like a bucket of cold water to Maria’s hormones as she broke off the kiss resting their foreheads together. “Shit, I’m sorry are you okay?” Maria asked as her hands tightened their hold on her mate’s hips, her thumb moving up and down in a gentle touch. She felt Skye’s hand continue to play with her hair making her purr, her short hair was always a weak spot of hers as she leaned into the touch.

“I’m okay,” Skye said as she smirked at the purring sound coming from Maria and is secretly glad she isn’t the only one that likes her hair played with.

Blue eyes meet brown and they watch as her mate smiles back at her before she leans in and gently kisses soft lips before breaking it off. “Come on, breakfast then more discussions” Maria said as she pulled them away and towards Phil’s office.
Chapter 8

The smell of food came through the doorway along with the soft tones of Melinda and Phil discussing something but they both stop as Maria and Skye came through the door. Maria shuts the door behind them before leading Skye over towards the couch and helping her to sit down because she noticed her moving stiffly favoring her right hip.

She stays standing though as she grabs the cube from the table pressing the two red buttons at the same time as the room and everything in it is bathed in a blue light, letting out a breath she didn’t realize she was holding. Before she can sit down Melinda standing next to her already checking her ribs and Maria doesn’t argue as gentle hands that have checked her for injuries on numerous occasions press up against her side and she does her best not to flinch away in pain.

“I don’t think they are broken but I want you to get an x-ray just in case,” Melinda said handing Maria a clean tank top before sitting down on a chair on the other side of the coffee table picking up her plate. “Eat and then discussions,” she ordered.

“Yes Boss,” Maria said and ignored the amused smile on Phil’s face as he looked between her and Melinda. Carefully she put the tank top on before sitting down next to Skye grabbing her own plate of food realizing she was starving. After only a few minutes of silent eating Maria is already starting to feel the itch beneath her skin that is the touch bond wanting more skin to skin contact. They are sitting next to each other but she knows that if is she is starting to be uncomfortable Skye has got to be as well so balancing her plate with her knees she eats with her off hand while reaching for Skye’s hand and can feel both of their muscles relax with the contact.

“Touch bond, congrats. You will need to stay with us Maria or Skye go with you till it settles, otherwise it will get really uncomfortable for you two,” Phil says glancing over towards Melinda and sharing a small smile with her.

“Oh don’t worry I’m not a masochist like you two or Clint and Natasha,” Maria quipped smirking at the two older agents.

“I knew it!!!” Skye said as she looked between the two older agents and Maria couldn’t help but be amused at her excitement. Maria knew that the pair played their being in sync with the other off as just being partners for a long time but few knew that the two were actually a soul mated pair. “You two had me almost convinced my instincts were wrong about you being mates but I have never been wrong.”
“What do you mean Skye?” Maria asked thinking back to the information that she had come to discuss today.

“I’ve always been able tell if people were a soul mated pair or if they were faking it,” Skye said shrugging.

“You were able to read the visual cues?” she asked turning towards Skye to be able to see her face more clearly but made sure her larger hand was still holding her mate’s smaller hand.

Skye shrugged again, “I don’t know, it is just something I could always tell as far back as I can remember but I don’t think that’s it. If it were visual cues I don’t think I’d pick up on these two being a soul mated pair. How they acted or what I saw went against everything that my ‘instincts’ for lack of better word were telling me. Why?”

Maria sighed because a part of her knew this tied into what she had found out about the woman before her. A woman that was her soulmate and with all probability was a gifted individual. Skye was someone that would probably be placed on the Index at any other time but with what she and Fury were uncovering and suspecting she’d be damned if she ever let that happen.

“Maria?” Melinda’s voice cut through her thoughts and she felt herself take a deep breath. She noticed that Skye was done eating as well so put her own plate down on the table before doing the same with Skye’s plate. Looking at her mate who was watching her with a worried expression she gently squeezed the hand she was holding. ‘Like a band aid just rip it off.’

“I looked into the original file that the redacted SHIELD document came from. The original file is from a SHIELD team that was sent to investigate an 0-8-4 in the Hunan Province back in late 1990. When the SHIELD team got there they found the village massacred with no survivors and no sign of the 0-8-4.”

“So a dead end, no parents” Skye whispered and Maria could see her fighting to keep calm. A dead end for this file, would literally be a dead end for Skye and that thought scared the shit out of Maria in that moment.

Maria gently squeezed Skye’s hand before continuing, “No, not a dead end. It should be the end of the file, but it isn’t. The agents on the team started being found dead with signs of being tortured or went outright missing once they were back stateside. The unredacted document in the file is from one of the members of the team she dropped you off at the orphanage a little under a month after they got back from their mission placing you in the foster system but not for adoption, which was odd.”
“So I called in a favor to one of the best hackers I know..”

“You asked Stark for a favor?” Phil asked incredulously.

“Well more like called in a marker he owed me. The joys of having ‘Avenger Wrangler’ now in my job title no-thanks to you” Maria said giving a pointed look at Phil who didn’t look the bit perturbed. “Anyways I called in a marker and had him hack into the foster system looking for the original documents from the social worker which he couldn’t find.”

“Sorry about that, I removed everything when I..ran away when I was sixteen.” Skye said not sounding all that sorry about it, but Maria didn’t blame her light knew she’d probably had done the same damn thing herself if in that situations Skye had found herself in.

“That is what I figured out when he told me but he was able to find something attached to your file but it wasn’t paperwork. It was a hidden protocol that kept you moving around the system at random intervals and never having the same caseworker for each move. It was a near invisible protocol in their system that was placed to keep you moving, and to keep you safe” Maria said the last gently because she felt her mate tense at the news but that wasn’t everything.

“It was set up that way so no one would look to closely at your case, that if any caseworker started to look to closely they’d be swamped with other cases and you would be moved to another caseworker and home immediately. Same thing if it looked like you were adjusting to the new home and the couple was looking to adopt…” Maria let the last bit be left unsaid as she could see that Skye was clearly upset.

“It wasn’t my fault?” asked Skye in a broken tone that nearly ripped Maria’s heart out to hear it.

Maria could see the tears forming in her mates eyes and her breaths starting to come in fast gasps and she knew a panic attack when she saw one. Leaning forward she put her hands on either side of her mate’s face and touching their foreheads. “Skye sweethearth listen to my voice and copy what I do” she said taking a deep breath and letting it out, before doing it again and again till Skye was finally responding to her touch and her instructions.

They sat like that till Skye’s breathing evened out but the tears were still coming and Maria hated seeing her mate hurting like this. Brushing away the final tears Maria lifted her head and kissed Skye’s forehead before leaning back. Though they had been just touching the itch was almost instantaneous under her skin and she heard Skye let out a small whimper causing her to blush. Ignoring the fact they weren’t alone Maria reached over and easily lifted Skye into her lap, with one
hand snaking under Skye’s shirt both of them relaxing once their skins were touching again.

“Are you two okay?” Melinda asks and Maria can hear the concern in her voice. Not many saw this side of Melinda May but she had been Melinda’s rookie for six years. She knew the woman inside had a heart as big as the Grand Canyon when it came to those who were lost and scared. Maria had been one of those people...hell she still was sometimes and now so was Skye.

“I think so,” Maria said once Skye was still in her arms as she gently started rubbing Skye’s stomach with her thumbs “I just think that because I know Skye is upset the touch part of our bond is demanding more from us. At least the itch, for lack of better term, was almost instantaneous when I let go of her a moment ago.”

“Same” said Skye as Maria watched her start playing with her other hand and was secretly relieved she had a mate that seemed to be just as tactile as she was.

“Do you have a theory Maria on what you found?” Phil asked and Maria finally looked away from her and Skyes joined hands to see a gentle look on Phil’s face as he watched them. Maria once again had the urge to tell the two older agents that she thought of them as her parents but once again put that thought away in a box in her mind for her to look at later.

“I do,” Maria said before taking another breath using the sensation of her and Skye’s hands together to anchor her. “I think that Skye is the sole survivor of the village and that she was exposed to the 0-8-4 or that she is the 0-8-4” Maria said tightening her hold on her mate.

“That is why you were so interested in how I knew these two were a mated pair though they don’t act like it half the time” Skye said.

“Yes, it might be a gift or that you are just that damn good at reading people. Either way we will have to figure out a way of figuring it out but I have a lead on the last member of that team who went missing that I will chase down once we are stable enough for me to travel again” Maria said.

“I’d like to know sooner rather than later if it is a gift and if I should be placed on your guys Index” Skye said her voice small and unsure and not sounding all too happy about the possibility being put on the Index. Not being happy about it Maria could understand because she wouldn’t want to be as well but it was a mute point at this point in time.

“We could have Simmons run more in depth tests on your blood Skye when she gets back” Phil said gently to her mate trying to be reassuring.
“No Index and no blood tests that will end up in a SHIELD database,” Maria said and bitterly laughed at the look of shock on both Melinda and Phil’s faces. It doesn't last long before they share a look before Phil shrugs.

“I’m taking this has to do with your cryptic warning to me and all the cloak and daggers between you and Nick earlier which means a level 9 shit storm or higher” Melinda asked as she indicated the cube on the table giving off the blue glow.

“Level 9 shit storm or higher I’ll have to us that, but yes it is,” Maria answers shortly and tightens her hold on her mate as she makes to get up. “Nope you stay Skye.”

“Level 0 here” Skye said lifting up her right wrist that had what Maria failed to notice as a electronic nanny bracelet. Reaching out for Skye’s wrist she guided the hand up towards her mouth.

“Deactivate bracelet. Commander Maria Hill override code Alpha-Tango-Alpha-Green-Green-Tango-Whiskey” she said catching the bracelet in her hand and tossing it onto the table.

“Maria…” Phil says clearly about to disapprove but she gives him a look that she usually reserves for Nick when he’s pissed her off that makes him close his mouth. She watches as both Melinda and Phil share another worried glance.

“SHIELD’s been compromised” she says before they can say or ask anything and watches as their backs straighten with shock then anger crossing their faces.

“Who?” Melinda asks in that calm, cold and deadly voice that Maria recognizes as the one she had when she came back from Bahrain and she suppressed a shiver that want to crawl up her spine.

“Hell if Nick and I can figure that out. We’ve been looking into it but there aren’t many we can trust and he has been an even more paranoid bastard ever since we first came across the first evidence. We have dirty agents in every department, every level, every specialty, and across all facilities.”

“Your combat assessments at the HUB?”

“A cover for me to go digging in personnel files, not that I really need it being the Deputy Director
but Nick’s a paranoid bastard and it is finally rubbing off on me.”

“Wait you said all levels so that means..”

“Yeah we think the council is compromised as well but we don’t have enough evidence to say who conclusively. I know I can trust you two, Clint, Natasha, Bobbi, Sharon, Pepper and the rest of the Avengers and now Skye but that is a small fucking list’ Maria said rubbing at her forehead as she felt a headache coming on. She felt her other arm pulled tighter against Skye’s body and she hugged the woman back pressing a kiss to her shoulder.

“I’ve wanted to bring at least you two into the investigation from the get go but Nick has overruled me every damn time and ordered me not to let it slip. Technically I shouldn’t have even given you the warning I did Boss but you were there and you had a new rookie to look after” Maria said the last bit poking Skye in the stomach, which earned her a slap on the leg.

“Okay if SHIELD is compromised then that means you shouldn’t even update your soulmate status but you both need to get checked out by a doctor in the next 48 hours for your own safety since it is a touch bond. You said you trusted the Avengers could Bruce check you out?” Phil asked looking towards Maria.

Once again the parental figures that Phil and Melinda had become to her were showing as their immediate concern was for her and Skye, and not for SHIELD. Their whole lives were dedicated to SHIELD, to being the SHIELD in the darkness but that didn’t matter when it came to those they cared about. Maria always told Natasha and Clint she had learned how to show concern and be compassionate from Phil and Melinda because she sure in hell didn’t learn it growing up with her father and his family.

“That was my plan, I’m going to call Pepper and make sure Bruce is available. We will have to go to Avenger tower but it is secure and it will give us time to have the bond stabilize. Now I know Nick wants us to deliver the Berzerker Staff to the Sandbox but I am very hesitant on doing that” Maria said looking towards Phil and Melinda needing ideas because at this point she was trying to do damage control for a problem she had no idea how bad it really was.

Maria watched as Phil and Melinda shared a look before Phil asked “Bait and switch?”

“Could work, we would need a convincing replica and fast though. Light knows that thing shouldn’t be touched by human hands, too much power and if that was held by someone that didn’t have any morals or wasn’t mentally stable...not that I am the picture perfect of mental health…” Melinda sighed Phil reached over putting his arm around Melinda’s shoulder pulling her into his body as she...
leant into Phil resting her head on his shoulder.

Maria wanted to tease them but thought better of it, instead she said “I could probably get Stark to build a replica with a built in tracker incase someone does decide to remove it from the Dark Archives and then leave the original in my apartment in Avenger tower.”

“You have an apartment in the tower?” Phil asked jealous.

Maria pointed at herself “Avenger Wrangler. Since they all still think you are dead, Nick the evil ass made it my job to be their liaison. Which by the way I am still against them still thinking you are dead, I don’t like lying to Natasha and Clint, let alone the rest of the team.”

“Talk to Nick, we’ve been trying to get him to take back the order since Phil got cleared for duty and I came back into the field,” Melinda said rolling her eyes.

“Wait why would the Avengers think you are dead?” Skye asked.

Melinda and Phil shared a look before looking to her and she shrugged “As far as I am concerned Skye has the same level clearance as I do now since she is going to need to know about shit to protect herself.”

“Protect myself?” her mate asked twisting around to look at her and Maria sighed.

“Sorry sweetheart but being my soulmate just painted a big giant target on you not that you didn’t already have one possibly being gifted or being exposed to an 0-8-4 as a baby. Someone wanted you when you were an infant, now lots of someone’s will want you to get to me” Maria answered honestly.

“Then I guess it’s a good thing I am being trained by a SHIELD legend and have a soulmate that is a BAMF” Skye said smirking at her.

“I am almost afraid to ask...BAMF?” Maria asked

“Bad Ass Mother Fucker” and if it’s possible Skye’s smirk got bigger before she turned around and
once again leaned back against Maria as she felt her own mouth open and close a few times in shock.

“Rookie close your mouth you look like a fish out of water” Melinda said snickering.

“Yes Boss,” Maria said closing her mouth with an audible click as she blushed.

“The Avengers think I am dead because after the Battle of New York technically I was dead for a day but when they went to do my autopsy the wound I took from Loki’s staff had healed over and I was alive but in a coma. As far as we can tell the energy from the staff was similar to the Tesseract and that energy somehow healed me.”

“Damn A.C. talk about a Jesus complex” Skye said and Maria buried her face into her mate’s shoulder trying to hide her laughter, she had said something similar to Coulson once he learned the truth.

“Skye” Phil said rolling his eyes “don’t you start and Maria quit laughing. Light help me you two have a similar senses of humor, it was bad enough with Clint and Natasha being so damn similar.”

“Yes A.C.” Skye said sounding amused and not the least bit sorry.

“Ok so I am calling Pepper to have her arrange with Bruce to do a full medical workup on Skye and I while we have Tony build a replica of the Berzerker Staff to put in the Dark Archives at the Sandbox while the real one gets stashed in my apartment till Thor comes earthside?”

“Sounds about right” Phil said.

“Call your team and tell them leave has been extended till Monday at 1500. We need time for the replica to be made, travel time between here and the states, plus Skye and I need our bond to stabilize enough for us not to be needing to touch all the time before we even attempt to go to the Sandbox. I want to keep the soulbond to a very select few people for now till we can get a handle on the SHIELD security issue. Is that okay Skye? I just want to make sure you are safe and until I figure this out..” Maria said tightening her hold on the woman in her arms leaving the rest unsaid.

“I understand but you don’t think anyone on the team is dirty?” asked Skye.
“Honestly I don’t know and I don’t want to take the risk where your safety is concerned” Maria replied honestly. If Maria had her way she’d pack Skye up and keep her at Avenger tower but she knew that wouldn’t fly with her mate and that Skye needed Melinda and Phil to put her back together like they had done with Maria.

“I understand.” Skye sighed but at least to Maria it looked like she did understand even if she didn’t like it.

“Thank you,” Maria said kissing her mates shoulder before burying her face in her hair holding her tightly. She knew she couldn’t always protect the woman in her arms but she was sure in hell going to try to but at the same time make sure she had the tools to do it herself as well.
Chapter 9

Reaching into her pocket Maria pulled out her phone once again saying “Commander Maria Hill, Shadow Condition Delta, call Fury, speaker phone.”

“Maria, how are you two doing?” asked Nick Fury through the speakerphone and by the tone of his voice and the fact he called her Maria instead of Hill this was her partner Nick and not her boss Fury asking her.

“We are okay Nick, it is definitely a touch bond though and that is one of the reasons why we are calling. But first Skye say ‘hi’ to Nick Fury my partner in crime and boss, Nick meet Skye.”

“Hello Mr Nick the pirate” Skye quipped and Maria bit back a groan as she buried her face in Skye’s shoulder.

“Great another smart ass” Nick said and Maria could literally hear the eye roll and smirk.

“Well Nick it sure takes one to know one” snarks Melinda.

“Melinda don’t you start and Maria I’ve already met your mate when Phil almost destroyed the plane only a few weeks after I gave him the damn thing.”

“Not my fault, that was the Columbians,” protested Phil.

“Yeah yeah, if that excuse didn’t work for me with Mom it sure in hell ain't going to work on now for you” snarked Nick.

“Anyways we have a few things to discuss with you before we move forward.” Maria said bringing the conversation back to what they had to get done. She’d rather spend all day BSing with everyone like the old days before everything in their lives seemed to be turned upside down and dropped on it’s head but they had shit to do.

“Alright hit me with it Hill” she heard over the phone and knew they were back to being the professionals they were instead of the weird type sibling bond they had. So Maria told him of the
plan for the Berzerker Staff, of having Bruce Banner do the bonding physicals to keep everything off of SHIELD databases for the now obvious security reasons.

“Do it, and Hill if you need to tell the Avengers anything just tell them we’ve uncovered dirty agents and we are doing this off books to clean house. It is close enough to truth for now. Coulson your team is grounded till Monday at 1500 and please all of you remember rule number six,” Fury said before hanging up.

“What is rule number six? And how many of these rules are there?” Skye asked.

“Rule number six is: we are to protect ourselves and each other no matter the cost, things can be replaced we can not” Maria said as she tightened her hold on Skye and for the first time she is scared that this might really be bad enough that one of them might not walk away from this at all. It was always a possibility and the memory of New York and its aftermath was still fresh in her mind, it was something they'd all prepared for but the thought was enough to give her a cold chill.

“As for the number of rules, no one knows. It’s something that Phil, Melinda and Nick’s S.O. taught them when they were all just baby agents themselves” teased Maria as she tried to lighten the mood “I don’t think they even know how many rules there are or even if their S.O. knows all of them.” Maria laughed and felt Skye laugh as well when Melinda and Phil stuck out their tongues out at them.

“Anyways” Phil said rolling his eyes before getting up and grabbing the dishes “You two call Pepper and make your arrangements while Melinda and I deal with dishes and the team.”

“I’ll deal with the team you get to do dishes dear,” Melinda said as she walked out the door to the office followed by Phil and they could hear the two bickering as the door closed behind them.

“In the months I have been on this plane I have never seen them act like that” said Skye as she looked at the now closed door.

“It is a rare sight, they don’t let many know that they are a soul mated pair, actually I don’t even think it is on their SHIELD files to be honest” Maria said as she scooted over to one of the arms of the couch. Leaning back she let her back rest against it as she lifted Skye and put the woman between her legs.

“Do you know what happened to them?” Skye asked as she yawned placing her head on Maria’s
chest. Maria let her arms hold her mate close to her letting the itch of her skin settle back to a dull sensation.

“No, whatever it was happened before I became their rookie I’m pretty sure Natasha and Clint know because they would take over my training on certain days. They were putting themselves back together, then Bahrain happened and whatever happened during that mission destroyed a part of Melinda. After Bahrain they fell apart again but I know Phil never gave up and they were working on it when New York happened and you now know what happened there. This is the closest I’ve seen them in years and I’m just glad to see it, they are the closest things I have to parents” Maria whispered softly confessing something to her mate she’d never voiced out loud to anyone.

“Have you told them that?” Skye asked turning her head to look into Maria’s blue eyes.

“No I haven’t. Always been too scared to say it, to be honest. A part of me thinks they know it, at least I hope they do. I never knew my mother she died giving birth to me but my father hated me from the start. I don’t even have his last name in his opinion because I couldn’t be bothered to be born with a penis I don’t exist” Maria sighed before changing the topic. “Are you ready to meet some Avengers? I know you will see Tony and Bruce but I don’t know if Clint and Natasha are there at the moment.”

“Wait the Clint and Natasha you all have been talking about are Avengers? Oh holy shit you are talking about Hawkeye and Black Widow aren’t you?” Skye asked voice full of shock.

“One and the same, yes. I was trained actually by all four of them; Phil, Melinda, Clint and Natasha. When I said I’ve gotten worse bruises training with Melinda and Natasha I am totally not joking. When I was first recruited, after I was discharged from the Corps, Natasha took great joy in kicking my angry arrogant ass all over the training mats” Maria chuckled remembering back to surprisingly happy memories.

She now knew that Natasha had been giving her an outlet for the anger that was slowly consuming her from the inside till she finally broke down and cried into the arms of the red headed assassin as she rocked her back forth like a small child. Afterwards Melinda had started teaching her Tai-Chi in the mornings trying to help Maria to control the anger she felt and to get a better grip on her emotions. It was the two women working together that pushed her and challenged her to be better all the while they slowly per her back together.

“Wow, is it weird that I am more nervous about meeting them because they are family to you and not so much because they are Avengers?”
“Nope not weird at all sweetheart” Maria chuckled resting her head on top of Skye’s while holding her. Maria activated her phone again and said “Commander Maria Hill, Shadow Condition Delta, call Pepper Potts, speaker phone.”

“Hello Maria, what can I do for you?” asked Pepper her voice chipper but still straightforward with no bull shit and it was a reason why they had become such good friends and they were so good at wrangling the Avengers.

“Pepper can’t I be calling for a social call?” Maria asked teasing her friend.

“Nope not using Shadow Condition Delta. Come on Maria what’s wrong it has to be something if you aren’t just getting down to business” Pepper said reading her like a book.

“One of these days you are going to have to tell me how you are able to read me so easily,” Maria quipped the old argument they’ve had on many occasions.

“My soulmates are Tony and Bruce I’ve got practice” Pepper deadpanned.

“True,” Maria said before taking a deep breath. “Are the boys with you or are they locked in their labs?”

“They are actually just in the other room packing, we had a charity event last night but we were just about to leave the hotel to head back to New York. Do you want to talk to them over the phone or is this a conversation that needs to be done in person?”

“Both actually” Maria sighed as she looked down and realized her mate had fallen asleep sometime during the phone conversation. She gently ran fingers through Skye’s hair as she watched the sleeping face of her mate.

“I’ll go get them” Pepper said as Maria heard her call out for her two soulmates.

“Agent Hill what do we owe for this pleasure?” Tony said in a slightly annoyed tone and Maria smirked when she heard Pepper smack the back of his head “Ow alright I’ll play nice.”
“Thank you Pepper” Maria said before taking a deep breath. “When are you all due back in New York so we can meet up at the tower?”

“We are in Edinboro but we are suppose to pick up Clint and Natasha in France. Why? Is this something to do with the hack you had me do a few days ago?” Tony asked.

“Yes it does Tony but also because ‘my bruises are going to have bruises’” she said and heard the shocked gasps over the phone of people that were definitely good friends if not already on the way to becoming family to her.

“Where are you Maria? How long and I’m going to assume injuries?” Bruce asked in his doctor voice that said you were going to answer and not argue.

“SHIELD base in England and just before sunrise. As for injuries that is a good assumption on both parts” Maria answered trying to hide the exhaustion in her voice that was slowly taking over her body but knew she failed. It was mainly the bond forming but it was also the stress of everything else going on and she could only imagine what her mate felt like after everything she had been going through recently as well.

“Alright I just texted Natasha and Clint, they said they will drive to the base and pick you up, you are in no condition to drive let alone fly anything. They said they will call you shortly to arrange it all. We will see you all in a few hours” Tony said as he hung up the call.

“We will have to play hide Phil” Melinda said leaning against the door and Maria wasn’t sure when her Boss the ninja had come into the room.

“Damn it Boss warn a girl,” Maria groaned out as her ribs started to spasm after she nearly jumped out of her skin. Closing her eyes she took a few deep breaths trying to stretch out the muscles enough to get them to relax.

“Breathe through the pain Maria, thats it.” Melinda said as she ran her hands through Maria’s hair soothing her as she fought to keep her eyes open. “Maria rest, I’ll arrange everything with Natasha to get you two to safety just rest” Melinda said and Maria felt a gentle kiss to her brow just as exhaustion took her again.
Melinda sat on the coffee table sitting quietly as she watched the two women sleep peacefully. At first she had felt horror when she realized that Maria and Skye were soulmates because her and Phil had practically given Maria an all access pass to the hell Skye had dealt with growing up but maybe it was for the best it happened this way. She knew that the two of them had issues when it came to trust and letting people in but she knew that these two would help each other through them. Skye started to whimper in her sleep and before Melinda could react Maria in her sleep was already reaching out to comfort her mate, slowly the whimpering stopped and they were back to sleeping peacefully.

Since she had touched the Berzerker Staff she was battling against the memories that it had dragged up to the front of her mind, then coupled with the date yesterday she couldn’t help where her mind was going. Yesterday had been Rayne’s birthday, the daughter her and Phil had lost only a few months after she had been born. If she had lived she’d be around Skye’s age and Melinda wondered not for the first time what their life would have been like if Rayne hadn’t been kidnapped and murdered. She knew that she saw Maria as a daughter, though she never said so to the young woman’s face but now she was starting to feel the same for Skye it didn’t help the feeling that Skye was around the same age Rayne would have been had she lived.

Her thoughts were interrupted by the ringing of Maria’s phone next to her, picking it up she used Maria’s finger to press the button to answer it before putting the other woman’s hand on Skye’s neck to increase the skin to skin contact the two needed to stabilize the bond.

“Hey Tasha” Melinda said and smirked when she was greeted by silence, it wasn’t often she got to shock Natasha Romanoff. “You know this is the part where you are suppose to say ‘hi’ back,” she teased.

"Mel what the hell are you doing in England and with Maria's phone?" Clint asked

"Hi to you too Clint. As for why I'm in England that's classified but I have Maria's phone because she finally passed out again."

"Mel we will come back to the whole being in England part later and don't think the classified stick is going to work with me but back to the matter on hand. How are they?" Natasha asked and Melinda knew her friend would soon be digging for information on what the hell was happening since as far as they knew she was still buried in the bowels of Administration in New York.

"As I said passed out exhausted, both of them are injured. Skye wasn't in the best health to begin with and Maria has been running herself ragged since a little bit after New York as far as I can tell from what she has told me.”
"Sky? Is that a codename? What’s her name so I can look at her files" Clint asked being the protective older brother/uncle to Maria.

"Clint don’t go looking, you won’t find anything in any SHIELD databases. Skye's files are gone except for what Maria, Fury and I now have. Now I know you are on your way here how long till you get here?"

"Why do I have a feeling we are missing something?" Clint asked and by his tone Melinda knew he wasn't happy.

"Maria will explain what is going on face to face but for now just know that rule number six applies."

"Oh fuck me sideways, it's never good when anything with a six is said" Clint groaned and Melinda could hear him start to check any weapons he had on his person.

“We are about to enter the Tunnel, we can be there in about an hour, hour and half tops" Natasha said in the voice that meant she was gearing up for a fight. Melinda hated winding the two assassins up but at the moment she didn’t have a fucking choice.

“Good when you arrive drive onto the tarmac you will see my plane, can't miss it” Melinda said before hanging up the phone not wanting to play twenty questions with her two friends. She knew they wouldn’t be happy about her being back in the field so soon after Phil’s ‘death’ thinking she had a death wish and she was getting tired of lying to them.

Taking a moment Melinda smiled as she watched the sleeping forms of Maria and Skye before she took a photo of the two cuddled up on her phone sending the picture to Phil, Maria and Skye. Letting the two women sleep Melinda got up to tell Phil to take Lola for a drive till she called him back and to get a bag packed for Skye.
Chapter 10

Melinda was doing Tai-Chi when a SHIELD issue SUV drove into the cargo bay where Lola usually sat. Phil had left forty-five minutes ago in Lola to make himself scarce to keep up the charade that he was dead, after they had removed any of his personal effects from his office where Maria and Skye were currently still sleeping. Neither of them liked having to lie to their friends but Fury still wouldn’t rescind the order to stay hidden and both of them wondered if it was because of what they had been told earlier.

“’Drive onto the tarmac you will see my plane, can’t miss it.’ What the hell are you doing back in the field Mel?” Clint asked as he got out of the car and Melinda finished her pose before he crushed her into a hug.

“Good to see you too Clint,” Melinda said hugging him back before stepping back and punching him in the arm. “And it is classified. That’s what I am doing.”

“As I said earlier Mel that classified shit is not going to work, not on this” Natasha said as she hugged Melinda as well. Melinda held her best friend for a moment longer before stepping back.

“It will have to do for now, if you want to know more ask Fury. I’m under orders and I’d rather not deal with a pissy Fury. I already deal with him pissy enough as it is running this three ring circus.” Melinda said giving them the impression that she was running things.

“Your own team? Are you at least okay Mel?” Natasha asked studying Melinda closely. Melinda smiled softly because she knew that they were just worried about her and they had cause to worry with how she was after Phil’s ‘death’.

“I won’t say I’m fine because that word has been banned from use in the family but I’m...managing. At first it wasn’t easy being back in the field but I am glad I’m back. Now come on, enough worrying about me,” she said heading up the stairs. “I’ll take you to where the kids are sleeping.”

“Kids?” Natasha asks amused from behind her as she lead them into the lounge area. Turning around Melinda stopped knowing she would need to say something to these two before they stepped in it and caused Skye to have a panic attack or piss off Maria or both.

“Look whatever you do, don’t go all over protective over Maria and start to grill Skye you need to understand some things before we wake those two up so you don’t set either of them off. Skye is a
hacker I picked up on one of my first cases out in the field. She is an unknown, SHIELD had nothing on her at the time other than she was a lead in the case. She helped and I offered her a chance at a fresh start and have started to train her” Melinda said leaning up against the bar watching the two assassins.

“You’ve taken on a rookie?” Clint asked surprised.

“Yes I’ve taken on Skye as a rookie. Few weeks back I caught her doing something she shouldn’t have and she gave me access to what she had on herself, her past. She purposely got caught by SHIELD to try to uncover the reason behind the redacted SHIELD document in the original file from the orphanage she was dropped off as an infant.

“Maria had access to those files before they met and we all realized they were soulmates, so she has read everything there is on Skye since she was helping me look into the redacted document. Skye’s child service files are enough to give me nightmares and she has enough scars mentally and physically that I am surprised she is as adjusted as she is. Doesn’t mean she doesn’t have her demons we both got a look at those on this last mission and this morning” Melinda finished as she watched the shock cross her friends faces at the information.

“What happened on your last mission Mel?” Natasha asked softly and Melinda could feel the assassin gauge her reactions to see how well she really was dealing with being back in the field. She wasn’t about to tell them she had been exposed to the damn Berzerker Staff because they then wouldn’t leave without her and she didn’t feel like arguing with the two. All she wanted to do was get Maria and Skye off towards Avenger tower and have Phil back on the plane with her so she could drop the act.

“Skye was exposed to an Asgardian weapon that when you touch it causes rage by using your worst memories and she has enough memories that fall in that category to be pure cannon fodder for the damn thing” Melinda said last bit bitterly as she stood back up walking towards the other set of stairs ending the conversation.

She felt a hand on her hand on her arm and she turned around before going into the office “Mel?”

Melinda sighed as she took in her two friends worried looks “Tasha she is just a kid. A kid that has faced too much in too little time and when she drops the mask or talks about it you see that look in her eyes that you get after really bad missions. I hate the fact that she had to touch that damn weapon but I’m also proud of her because she used it to protect the part of the team that are non-combat, she was with when I couldn’t be there.”
Turning around she walked into the office and the tightness in her chest eased as she saw Maria and Skye were still sound asleep on the couch when they came into the office and Melinda felt herself smile at the image of the two were making. Their position had changed slightly while they slept as Maria was now fully on her back with Skye on top of her. Maria had one hand under Skye’s shirt in the small of her back and the other was slightly tangled in Skye’s hair. The only hand she could see of Skyes was under Maria’s tank top overtop where Melinda knew Maria’s soulmark was. Taking out her phone she took another photo before smirking at Clint and Natasha as the two assassins took in the sight before them.

Quietly she walked over and sat down on the coffee table before reaching out and running her hand gently through Maria’s hair. She felt Maria lean into the touch before she opened her eyes slowly before taking in all the occupants of the room. “Hello Clint and Natasha” she whispered as she started to run her fingers again through Skye’s hair and Melinda wondered if she was aware she was doing it or if it was a subconscious thing.

“Hey yourself Rookie, looks like you are quite comfortable there” Clint teased.

“Quite” she replied smiling before kissing the top of Skye’s head. Melinda watched as the hacker nuzzled into Maria’s chest and shared a soft smile with Maria. "Skye sweetheart it's time to wake up, our ride is here and I want you to meet them" Maria said gently shaking her mate awake.

"Please tell me you at least got the license plate of that bus?” Skye groaned into Maria's chest.

"Nope sorry, totally missed it." Maria chuckled as she pulled the woman tighter against her.

"You would be a smart ass" Skye quipped and as Melinda watched the exchange she got the impression that they were watching something intimate between the two new soulmates.

"Takes one to know one sweetheart" Maria finished as she poked Skye in the side which earned Maria a light smack to the stomach.

"You two," Melinda said reminding the two that they had an audience.

"Sorry Boss/Sorry May" both said simultaneously as they blushed which earned a chuckle from Clint and Natasha behind her.
Skye went to move to sit up and Melinda watched as Maria stopped her. "Easy there sweetheart. Hey boss I think we are going to need help to get up" Maria said softly as she pulled Skye's bandaged hand out from under her shirt holding it gently.

"Tasha want to help me get these two lovebirds up? I'll help Skye, if you can help Maria but be careful of her ribs” Melinda said as she lifted Skye to a sitting position careful of her hands while Tasha helped Maria to sit up.

"Thank you" Maria said once she was sitting and had pulled Skye's hand back into her lap. "Skye I want you to meet Natasha Romanoff and Clint Barton. Clint, Natasha meet Skye my soulmate."

"Nice to meet you. I'd shake your hands but as you can see they are a bit mummified at the moment" Skye said indicating her hands but with a smile on her face.

"No worries" said Clint "any other injuries we should be aware of?"

"Nothing major but they both need checked over to make sure" Melinda answered.

“No problem, Bruce is ready to do any first aid while we are on the plane and will do complete work ups once we get home to the tower” Natasha said.

"Good. Skye I already packed you a bag for a few days” Melinda said putting the bag onto the coffee table.

"Did you also get my meds from under my bed?” Skye asked ignoring the look that Natasha and Clint were giving her as she stood to look inside the bag followed closely by Maria.

"Yes I did. Now front pocket are your emergency meds, daily meds are on the right side. I packed a seven day supply which is more than you should need” Melinda said opening the pockets so that Maria and Skye could both see the packed medications.

"Thanks May," Skye said softly and Melinda could tell she was fighting back tears. The simplest gestures of kindness were usually the ones that made Skye emotional. Melinda watched as Maria wrapped an arm around Skye’s waist and held her as she whispered softly till she seemed to calm down.
“I also noticed you are running low so I'll put in a supply order for them and have them here for when you get back” Melinda said as she zipped back up the bag.

“Actually Boss, I'll arrange for those meds on my end. I don’t want anything for Skye showing up on any SHIELD databases” Maria said before turning towards Natasha and Clint. “Once we get on the plane and secure I’ll fill all of you in.”

"You better" Natasha said before she picked up Skye's and Maria's bags and tossed them at Clint. "Put those in the truck."

"Yes dear" Clint said sticking out his tongue before he walked out the door with the bags.

"Boss where is the staff?" Maria asked

"In the lab let's go get that so you all can get going and I can get back to all the fun paperwork Fury has given me for the damn thing” Melinda said the last bit dryly to everyone’s chuckles as they walked out of the office back towards the cargo bay.

Melinda went into the lab and grabbed the case that held the Berzerker Staff but also grabbed a second case that had extra weapons in it for them. Coming back through the doors she handed the Berzerker Staff case to Clint. “Make sure no one touches that with their bare skin, especially your Dr. Banner that would be the last thing we need,” she said and watched as Clint looked at the case with trepidation and like he wanted to ask why they were taking it before he shrugged and took it to the back of the SUV to be loaded.

“What’s in the second case May?” asked Skye.

“Extra weapons and ammo and a few Night-Night guns for the Avengers to play with” Melinda said smirking as she handed the second case to Natasha who had a gleeful look in her eyes. ‘Give the woman a weapon as a present and she is happy as a child on Christmas’ Melinda thought.

“Rule six?” Skye asked worriedly as she bit her lower lip.

“Ah you have taught her the rules, the tradition continues” snarked Clint as he took the second case
from Natasha but put it in the second row of seats for ease of access.

“Yes rule six” Melinda said as she took in the two younger women before hugging them both. “Take care of each other, I’ll see you both hopefully on Monday” she whispered and placed a gentle kiss on both of their foreheads.

“Promise Boss/Promise May” they both said at the same time again and shared a smile.

“Good now off you two get” she said shooing them away with her hands towards the car. She watched them as Maria helped Skye into the SUV before she turned towards her best friend that had a soft smile on her face. “What?”

“Nothing, it is just good to see my best friend again” Natasha said as she hugged her and Melinda knew what she meant. See her best friend since the death of Rayne, since Bahrain, since New York. The three events that destroyed her and that she was slowly recovering from.

“Tasha” she said.

“I know Mel, we got them. Just take care of yourself, call me if you need me anytime” Natasha said as she finally released Melinda stepping back.

“I will, promise” Melinda said as she gave Clint a hug as well. “Now you two get going and don’t let them out of medical till Dr. Banner says they can be out. Skye is just as bad if not worse than Maria so good luck” Melinda said to the groan of Clint.

Melinda waited twenty minutes after they left before she texted Phil to tell him it was all clear and to get his ass home. She started doing Tai-Chi as her thoughts a jumble mess of anxiety and fear for those she loved, and fighting the memories of everything in the past. Phil driving Lola into the cargo bay once again interrupted her Tai-Chi but she didn’t care because as soon as Phil was there she let herself fall into his strong arms as she let the mask fall and cried.

As soon as they were out of the gates of the SHIELD base Maria opened up the weapons case and took stock of what Melinda had given them, it was no way a dent in the plane’s armory but it was still a sizeable amount of gear. She pulled out a thigh holster and clipped it on before pulling out a pistol, checking the clip and clicking on the safety. Putting the gun into the holster she pulled out two
extra clips and slipped them into the holster as well.

“Has Mel got you qualified on a gun yet?” Maria asked her mate and seemed to startle Skye out of her thoughts.

“Not yet, we haven’t had the time to do it since the Hub but I have had the Night-Night guns with me in the field” she says taking a look into the box curious to see what May had given them.

“What are these Night-Night guns you two keep talking about?” Clint asked as he drove getting onto a motorway heading away from the city and towards the country.

Skye looked towards Maria with a raised eyebrow and Maria knew what she was asking “You can tell them about the gun just not who is on the team, that is still classified for now.”

“Got it. The Night-Night guns are a prototype designed for a special type of bullet that houses a Dendrotoxin dose that knock someone out for a few hours to few minutes depending on the dosage and the person. They wake up with what feels like a hangover and sometimes no idea time has passed” Skye said as Maria passed one of the pistols over to Natasha who was looking into the case with interest.

“The only problem is getting the dosages right to work on the few super-soldiers we have come across” Natasha paused examining the pistol and gave Maria a heated glance that spoke volumes.

“Oh shit I said something classified didn’t I?” Skye asked.

“Not your fault, I didn’t say missions” Maria said as she rested her hand on Skye’s leg in reassurance. It was her screw up and not Skye’s. Anyways she was starting to get sick and tired of all the secrets Fury was forcing her to keep from people they knew they could trust. She was just about to tell the Avengers everything just to make sure that everyone had backup if everything did go pear shaped.

“This is why I think May is wrong about me being an Agent, I hate secrets. I know secrets are what have kept me “safe” my whole life, but at what cost Maria?” Skye sighed dragging Maria out of her thoughts as she watched her mate lean back against the seat and look up towards the ceiling.

Maria shared a brief look with Natasha before mouthing “Later” to her friend who nodded as she turned around keeping the gun in the front seat with her. She knew that the two would let her know if there was any chance or sign of danger so instead she focused her attention on Skye. Pulling her
mate into her arms she held the smaller woman who was fighting to keep her emotions under control.

“You will make an excellent Agent one day if that is what you truly want to do. I will be there with you no matter what you decide to do with your life. As for secrets they suck and I am sorry but it is the world I have lived in most of my life in but I promise you I wont keep anything from you. Orders be damned because I need you safe and that will always be my first priority along with trying to make sure I always come back to you” Maria said as she kissed the top of Skye’s head.

“I’m sorry, I usually have more control over this but that damn staff has really fucked with my control and I can’t seem to shake it” Skye whispered.

“I know and I am here if you want to talk, remember I know what is in your files but I wont make you talk.” Maria said as Skye shifted against her getting more comfortable. She smiled as she felt Skye’s hand snake under her tank top to rest against her stomach as the itch that she had been feeling since they got into the car start to ease with the contact. They sat like that for a long time just enjoying each others presence as they drove through the english countryside towards whatever private airstrip Stark was using.

“Um rookie, who ordered rule six?” Clint said dragging Maria out of her thoughts coming fully alert at the question and the tension in her two friends.
“Um rookie, who ordered rule six?” Clint said dragging Maria out of her thoughts coming fully alert at the question and the tension in her two friends.

“Fury. Why?” she asked sitting up fully and fighting against her first instinct of pressing Skye down in between the seats since she doubted her mate would appreciate it.

“Because I think we got a tail, black SUV three cars back to our 7 o’clock” he said as he continued to drive. Maria grabbed a pair of high powered binoculars out of the case at her feet before twisting in her seat, ignoring the protest from her ribs as she looked to see who was following them.

“At least two military aged males, with crew cuts” Maria said before she saw a glint of metal on the drivers left arm and cursed. “Skye take a look, drivers left arm” she said as she handed her mate the binoculars wanting confirmation she was seeing what she was seeing.

“Oh fuck me sideways” was the answer enough to confirm what Maria had seen on the drivers arm. Definitely rule twenty six: Being followed or compromised and about to be dropped in it. “We have to warn my team, if Centipede is in England than they need to be warned. Fury gave everyone leave and they all scattered last night while May and I were to recover on the BUS.”

“Mel didn’t say anything about being hurt” Natasha said worried and pissed all at the same time as Maria handed her an M4. Natasha raised an eyebrow in question but she still took the weapon and checked it as Maria went back to pulling out weapons.

“Of course not” Maria said “If she had, you two wouldn’t have left her and she needed you two to leave her there. Don’t give me that look Tasha, we are only following Fury and his fucking orders which just remember when this all blows up that I have been against since day fucking one. How far are we from the air strip?”

“We are another forty minutes give or take. What is Centipede?” Clint asked.

“Super Soldiers with a highly volatile serum cocktail” Maria answered but Skye interrupted her.
“Not anymore looks like they stabilized the damn thing after we shut down their Hong Kong operation. Someone must have gotten away with Scorch’s blood.”

“I thought that was just a theory of the science twins?”

“Well they aren’t changing colors or exploding so I am going to assume they got it stabilized” Skye said turning around trying to unwrap her hands. “Hand me my laptop I’ll try to get an overview of us”

Maria reached over and removed the bandages not arguing with her mate as she handed over the laptop before pulling out her phone. “Shadow Condition Alpha, call Fury, speakerphone” Maria said as she started pulling out more weapons handing them over to Natasha to check.

“Hill what is the..” Fury began

“Rule twenty six and it is fucking Centipede, don’t worry about us just warn SHIELD 616” Maria said not waiting for his response before hanging up the phone.

“All right I’m into an MI6 satellite that is overhead as far as I can tell they are our only tail. Think they are after you, me or the staff?” Skye asked her.

“Wait, you just hacked an MI6 satellite in under two minutes from a laptop?” Natasha asked impressed.

“I hacked into SHIELD with a crappier laptop and stolen wifi from the back of my van before May kidnapped me” Skye says shrugging.

“May didn’t kidnap you. You and I both know you wanted to get caught” Maria said as she watched the satellite feed on Skye’s laptop.

“Not the point. I was black bagged and dropped into the interrogation room with Mr. Robot and AC” Skye deadpanned.
“Fine somewhat kidnapped but back on topic. I’m not sure, could be any of those things or something we don’t even know about yet. Shadow Condition Alpha, call Tony Stark, speaker phone”

“Maria what is wrong?” Pepper answered the phone and Maria could hear Tony in the background already getting into the Iron Man suit.

“Rule six and twenty six. Tony, we might be coming in with company be ready just in case but I am really hoping they have orders not to engage in public” Maria stated calmly.

“How likely is that Hill with two rules of six?” Tony snarked back as she could tell he was now in the air.

“How the hell does Stark know about the rules?” Clint asked

“Because Barton my godmother was Peggy Carter and despite my father being an ass Peggy and Angie were at least always there for me. Bruce stay here with Pepper, Maria I’m on my way to provide overwatch JARVIS has locked on your signal” Tony said and they kept the phone line open just in case.

“Good to see you Tony,” Maria said ten minutes later as she watched Tony buzz their tail through the binoculars that caused her to chuckle. “Tony please don’t make them crash, I really don’t want to deal with the paperwork” she snarked at the millionaire giving him shit.

“Hill you take away all my fun,” Tony whined over the phone as she watched him disappear as he took position above them.

“Looks like you scared them Tony they seem to be backing off,” Maria said as she watched their tail started to slow down and back off from following them. She heaved a sigh of relief as she turned back around and kissed Skye’s temple pulling the woman against her.

“Of course they are scared, I’m Iron Man” Tony said simply before he continued “but lets just get you all to the plane and in the air so you all can tell me what hell is going on.”

“Stark that is the million dollar question of the day” Natasha said as Maria watched her click on the safety of the M4 but still kept it in her lap.
“Legolas go ahead and speed this tin can up, I got your six” Tony said and Maria felt it as Clint started to floor it.

Maria felt Skye stiffen in her arms as she tried to put swollen fingers in her jean pockets but Maria stopped her and quickly grabbed Skye’s phone with her own fingers. Looking at the display she clicked it on and handed it over to Skye. “Hey May...yeah we’re safe...Iron Man is flying overhead...How is the team?...Good...Oh! Tell AC that I hacked an MI6 satellite in under two minutes, bye.” Skye said the last in a total innocent voice as she hung up the phone.

“Skye,” Maria tried to sound stern but couldn’t get it right as she buried her face in her mate’s hair. “You are going to keep me on my toes aren’t you” Maria whispered into Skye’s ear. She felt the smaller woman shiver in her arms and didn’t bother to hide her smirk as Skye leaned back and looked at her.

“Oh you will definitely be busy” Skye said with a wink before she leaned up and kissed Maria.

“I’ll take cheesy lines for 200 Alex” said Tony over the phone causing the two assassins in the front to laugh.

“Fuck off Tony” Maria said breaking off the kiss with Skye and resting their foreheads against each other.

“Nope sorry I’m a happily taken man. Anyways kiddos the airport is just ahead I’ll keep an eye out till everyone is on the plane then we will get the hell out of dodge.”

“Sounds like a plan” Natasha said as they drove through the gate of the private air strip. Clint pulled the vehicle next to the plane as Natasha opened the door and checked the area. “Clear. Maria, Skye grab your bags and the staff. Maria start the pre-flights, Stark we aren’t using your pilots for this trip.”

“Figured that already” Tony said.

Maria handed Natasha her locked phone that was the only com link to Tony at the moment before helping Skye out of the SUV and grabbed their bags tossing them over her shoulder. “Go ahead and get on the plane I’ll be right behind you” Maria said to Skye as she went to the back and grabbed the case holding the Asgardian Staff before walking up the steps behind Skye who seemed to be having
a hard time. Bruce came to the door to meet them and helped Skye to a seat as Maria tossed the bags in a corner.

“Bruce Banner, Pepper Potts meet my soulmate Skye. Skye these two mild mannered people are Tony Stark’s keepers..err soulmates, bless them” Maria said with feeling making the sign of the benediction. Skye laughed as Maria made her way towards the cockpit to start the pre-flight checks.

“Skye please let Bruce re-check your hands for me please” she called back ignoring the pain in her ribs from carrying the bags and walking up the stairs.

“Fine but then he’s checking your ribs” called out Skye.

“Fine,” Maria groaned teasingly back that got Skye to laugh again.

“Oh I like her already” Pepper laughed as she quickly stowed away bags into a back corner of the plane.

“JARVIS let Tony know we are good to go once they get loaded.” Maria said as she finished the pre-flights in record time.

“Of course DD Hill” JARVIS answered as Maria came back and sat next to Skye as Bruce was checking over her hands.

“We will need to xray these when we get to the tower. I don’t think you broke anything but I want to make sure. What is your pain level?” Bruce asked as he reached into the well stocked first aid kit and started bandaging Skye’s hands.

“Five” Skye answered and Maria watched as Bruce lifted up an eyebrow. “I have a high pain tolerance. Which you will get to read in my files once we are airborne since you are to do the bonding physicals for Maria and I. Which reminds me I should transfer over the files before you wrapped my hands and I can’t use them again.”

“Keep wrapping her hands Bruce, I’ll give you access to my set of the files” Maria said simply as she pulled out a flashdrive from a hidden compartment on the bottom of her boot and handed it to Bruce.
“Gotta get me a pair of those” Skye joked. Bruce finished wrapping her hands and she stood up, “I’m going to use the ladies room and take my meds before we take off, in our rush this morning I didn’t take them.”

“Shit I’m sorry Skye” Maria said feeling bad that she completely forgot about Skye needing her meds.

“Maria, it’s okay as long as I don’t make a habit of it I should be fine” Skye said kissing her head before walking back towards their bags.

“Do you need a snack or anything to take with them?” Pepper asked as she walked with Skye to the back of the plane.

“Okay Maria your turn,” Bruce said as Clint walked past them towards the cockpit as Natasha handed Maria her phone back and followed Clint. Maria put her phone back in her pocket before she took off her jacket then had to bite back a moan when she took off her tank top.

“Jesus Maria” Bruce said and she looked down at her side and didn’t realize the bruising was that spectacular. “What the hell did you two do, beat the crap out of each other?” he asked as he started to press on her ribs.

“Close,” she said through a hiss as Bruce pressed a tender spot and he gave her a pointed look. “It’s not her fault I didn’t realize she was having a flashback when we met this morning and I stepped right into it. Look Bruce what you read in her files is going to make you angry, but she is a survivor and I promise you it will all be dealt with.”

“Thanks for the warning” Bruce said as he continued his exam of her ribs. “I don’t think they are broken but same with Skye I want to xray them when we get back to the tower. Tony come over here and help me out.”

“Jesus Hill, did you at least win?” Tony asked when he saw the bruising and started to help Bruce wrap her ribs to try to stabilize them just in case they were broken. Maria watched as Skye came out of the bathroom and crossed over to her bag starting to pull out her meds.

“Yeah I did Tony, I won” Maria said softly and she saw as Tony rolled his eyes at her but she didn’t care. It took a few minutes of Bruce and Tony wrapping her ribs before they finished. Maria went to put her tank top on but Skye stopped her and handed her a button down shirt.
“One of mine we are almost the same size, figured you didn’t want to try lifting up your arms” Skye said slightly blushing which caused Maria to chuckle.

“Thank you” Maria said kissing Skye before she put on the shirt.

“Alright grab a seat so we can get the hell home” Clint said from the doorway of the cockpit before going back to sit with Natasha. Maria led Skye to a set of seats as she felt the plane begin to be moved towards the runway. She sat next to the window smiling as Skye lifted the armrest between the two seats and after buckling up leaned into Maria’s arms.

They sat like that till after take off as Natasha got them to a cruising altitude. “We haven’t discussed how much you want to tell the team” Maria said using the noise of the plane still climbing to mask their conversation. “Bruce has to know everything because he will be your doctor but it is up to you if you want to tell the rest of them everything.”

“You trust them right?” Skye asked turning in her arms as her brown eyes met Maria’s blue ones.

“With my life. At first I was against the Avenger initiative that Fury was so adamant about but after New York I got to know more than just Clint and Natasha and they have become family in a way to me. I hate keeping secrets from them, but I will do it if you don’t want to tell them everything.”

“What do you think I should do?”

“It is your decision Skye, but do you want my opinion?” Maria asked and waited till Skye nodded. “Tell them, they will be your greatest allies and if I am not there and you need help they will be able to help you. They will help you regardless because you are my soulmate but they will understand better what you may need.”

“Then we tell them, since what you told us earlier about me and what is going on...we might need some superhero backup soon” Skye said as she rested her head back onto Maria’s chest her hand sneaking under Maria’s shirt to rest just above her soulmark.

“You know I never asked you where your mark is..” Maria said but didn’t miss the tension that was Skye’s body. “Sweetheart?” she asked as she started to run her fingers through her mate’s hair trying to calm her.
“My lower back near my right hip it’s covered in scars” Skye whispered and Maria tightened her hold on the smaller woman in her arms. She knew what those scars were from and she wanted nothing more than to go beat the living pulp out of those who had caused her mate harm. “Where is yours?”

“Actually, right under your hand” Maria said and felt as Skye fingers flexed over it despite the pain in her hands. “It is covered in scars as well, took a shrapnel wound to my stomach in one of my rookie years when on a mission. Mel and Natasha had to convince me it was still there to get me to calm down enough for them to treat me once they got me out of the danger zone.”

“We are a right pair, aren’t we” Skye laughed and Maria felt as the last bit of tension left her mate as they snuggled up with each other.

“Are we going to talk about the nuclear warhead in the room?” Clint asked as him and Nat sat alone in the cockpit. He had let Nat fly since she seemed to be just holding onto her anger by her fingernails and he wanted to distract her a bit in a hope she’d calm down. It hadn’t worked so instead he was being flippant to get her to talk.

Clint loved Nat with everything he was they were soulmates and once he had found her he never let her go, despite her protest that she didn’t deserve him. They both had pasts that they wished they could take back, to change but all they could do now was make amends together. He joked that they were two fucked up people brought together by the universe to make a whole but sometimes the joke was true depending on the situation.

“Which one?” Nat said without humor in her voice. “The fact Mel is back in the field and probably has a death wish? That Nick has her team going up against super soldiers without any type of superhero backup? Or that she has a rookie that if we hadn’t buried Rayne all those years ago could easily pass for her and Phil’s daughter?”

Clint hid his wince because he now knew he wasn’t the only one to see the possible resemblance between Mel and the young hacker. Rayne had been Mel and Phil’s daughter that was kidnapped and murdered after she was born. It had destroyed their friends, but also destroyed a part of him and Nat because that was their goddaughter. Yesterday was one of those days that Clint always tried to make sure they had off so they could go do something in memory of what they lost all those years ago.

“Or could it be that something is going on that Nick and Maria aren’t telling us? Or that Skye said earlier ‘think they are after you, me or the staff’ to Maria which means that there is more to this story than we’ve been told and that Maria said she is only and I quote ‘following Fury and his fucking orders which just remember when this all blows up that I have been against since day fucking one.’
Nick and his god damn paranoia is going to be the death of us if he doesn’t let loose the fucking apron strings” she said keeping her eyes forward but her knuckles turned white as her hand tightened on the joystick.

He watched her as she took a deep breath and her hand loosened before he said “Yeah all of those.”

“Ass” she said exasperated but with a small smile tugging at her lips.

Clint leaned back in his chair, his job done and smiled cockily at her “And it’s all yours.”

They sat in silence till they got to their cruising altitude “JARVIS engage the autopilot and also monitor the radar.”

“Of course Agent Romanoff” JARVIS said.

“JARVIS what have I said if it’s just the family call me Natasha”

“Of course, but my sensors pick up a person not indicated on the family list you specified” JARVIS answered.

“Babe, I think he’s talking about Skye” Clint said as he stood up and stretched.

“JARVIS please add Skye to the list of family. She is Maria’s mate” Natasha said as she finally stood up as well heading towards the cabin and hopefully to some damn answers.
Chapter 12

Maria felt the autopilot engage on the jet before she saw Natasha walk out of the cockpit towards her and Skye. She knew that look and it was the look that Natasha got when she was pissed and wanted answers yesterday but of course to everyone else it was just a blank look. Here was to hoping that no one decided to shoot the bloody messenger, and if they did, well she was going to make Fury life hell by burying him in paperwork.

“We will be right there, can you pull out my bag for me?” Maria asked wanting to have this conversation once and only once today. Looking out the window she realized the sky was darkening, tonight...fuck she was tired. Natasha nodded to her before she walked towards the back of the plane that had a lounge type set up, Clint followed behind her and just gave Maria a small shrug.

“How pissed is she?” Skye asked.

“How could you tell?” Maria asked trying to see if it was part of her mate’s 0-8-4 status or if she was just that perceptive, if it was the latter than she was proud of her mate.

“How could you tell?” Maria asked trying to see if it was part of her mate’s 0-8-4 status or if she was just that perceptive, if it was the latter than she was proud of her mate.

“Do you remember who I have lived with the last few months? Reading non expressions has become a necessity for me” Skye quipped. “So I repeat how pissed is she?”

“Quite, so best not to keep her waiting. I’ll tell them my news then do you want me to tell them your history or you?” Maria said sitting them up.

“I don’t know, part of me just wants to just give them the files and just let them read it all. There are parts...I can’t quite talk about, but I do know I need to eventually talk about it. At least that is what May keeps telling me but I really don’t want a repeat of this morning at 30,000 feet while I am still feeling the effects of the Staff of Doom” Skye said as she rubbed at her eyes and a look of utter exhaustion crossed her face.

“How bout you decide when it comes time and if you have to stop and take a break no one will fault you, we all have our demons” Maria said as she watched her mate stand up and stretch transfixed by the movements and she felt her hormones kick into overdrive as thoughts played in her head, thoughts she really didn’t need to be having on a plane full of people and no damn privacy.

A hiss of breath escaping from Skye was enough to shake her out of her staring and thoughts as she
reached out and started to rub Skye’s right hip as the muscles contracted. Standing up she used her other arm to support her mate as the smaller woman leaned in burying her face into Maria’s neck groaning. “Fucking hip one of the assholes yesterday got in a lucky shot and it has been acting up since then.”

“We will have to have Bruce check it to make sure there isn’t a fracture when we get to the tower” Maria said as she continued to massage out the kink. Slowly the tension left Skye’s muscles and she let out a soft moan against Maria’s neck that sent shivers down her spine. She felt the smirk against her neck instead of seeing it before she felt lips against her pulse point. It was Maria’s turn to moan as she felt lips slowly work up under her jaw and she tilted her head down to capture Skye’s lips with her own.

“I will hose you two off” Natasha said and Maria flipped her off behind Skye’s back as they broke off the kiss. Maria glared at her friend over Skye’s shoulder only to get a raised eyebrow in response. ‘Damn assassins.’

Sighing she reached out for Skye’s right hand supporting her mate as she led them to the lounge area followed closely by Natasha who took her seat next to Clint. The lounge area on the plane was decorated in true Tony Stark style with a large horseshoe shaped couch that took up most of the area except for the small walk way at its open end that led to the planes bathrooms. Tony, Pepper and Bruce were sandwiched on one side of the horseshoe with Clint and Natasha sitting at the top. Maria carefully helped Skye to sit down before she pulled her bag on top of the table in the middle towards her.

Pulling out another green box from her bag before she took out the cube and pressed the two red buttons. The customary blue light came out bathing the plane in its blue glow and she watched the reactions of her friends as they took it all in. Clint and Natasha shared a worried look while Tony, Pepper and Bruce looked confused.

“This can’t be good” Clint said as he glared at the electronics jamming device as if it would magically disappear and they would be having what she was dubbing in her own head the rule of ‘6’ meeting.

“Thank you for stating the obvious” Natasha deadpanned.

“Are you two done?” Maria snapped as she dropped on the couch next to Skye and had to bite back a groan.
“Maria easy on those ribs,” Bruce ordered.

“Fuck, no need to tell me twice,” Maria hissed closing her eyes taking a deep breath.

“I’m sorry” Skye said from next to her and she could tell by the tone in her mate voice that she was still feeling guilty about this morning. Reaching out blindly she pulled Skye towards her. She felt as her smaller mate first resisted the comfort but soon accepted it as she leant against Maria and a bandaged hand rested lightly skin to skin over her own soul mark.

“Not your fault sweetheart, you were having a flashback and I stepped in it” she said kissing the top of Skye’s head before opening her eyes once again to take in her friend’s expressions that were a mixture of questioning, sympathetic and worried.

“Alright first thing first what I am about to tell you all, until this morning was only known by Fury and myself. Now you all will know along with Melinda May...”

“The Calvary?” Tony interrupted.

“Don’t call her that” Maria, Skye, Clint and Natasha all said at the same time glaring at Tony who raised his hands up in surrender. Natasha and Clint then gave Skye another reassessing gaze and Maria knew that her friend’s opinion of Skye just went up tenfold.

“Don’t try that eyebrow arch with me детеныш” Natasha said trying to be serious but Maria could tell she was amused and curious by the turn of events. Natasha liked puzzles and Skye was a puzzle that Maria knew if she gave Natasha free reign on she would find out everything.

“Hey I got to practice it’s not like I took Eyebrow Arching 101 like you, May and Maria seemed to of have” Skye quipped back at the female assassin totally not afraid by who she was talking to, causing Natasha to smirk.

“Oh Maria your mate has some cojones” Clint laughed but then coughed as Natasha elbowed him in the gut. “Ow damn it babe that hurt” he wheezed.

“Anyways” Maria said drawing out the word to get everyone to focus back on the topic but paused because she didn’t know how to say it all.
“Maria just rip off the band aid already” Clint said wanting Maria to get to the point. Fine if he wanted it fast and dirty than so be it, wasn’t like she was one to pussy foot around anyways. She had the nickname the Ice-Maiden for a reason.

“SHIELDs been compromised” she said to the stunned and angry looks of her friends...no family. They were her family, thicker than blood and hers for better or worse...Shaking her head she continued “Fury and I have uncovered dirty agents in every department, facility and every damn level. We don’t know if they are all tied together or if we just have a serious rot problem but there are only a handful of people at the moment that I trust.”

“Until this morning it has been only the two of us since New York and I’ve been running around like my head is cut off for the last month conducting the investigation under the guise of combat assessments for every facility.”

“You’ve known since New York and didn’t say anything” Natasha said pissed and glaring at her.

“Not by choice Natasha, I wanted to bring you all in since day one of the investigation but I was overruled by Fury.”

“So this is what you meant earlier by following Fury’s orders and for me to remember that when it all blows up?” Natasha asked and Maria felt her face go blank into her Deputy Director face. “God damn it Maria there is more isn’t there?” Natasha asked then cursed in russian at her non answer.

“Look I’m still under orders on the other thing. I don’t like it and I have argued with Fury over it till I am blue in the face and then some but I have my orders and I have to follow them” Maria said softly letting her emotions leak into her voice.

Natasha glared at her till she finally huffed “Fine but I am kicking Fury’s ass next time I see him. Him and his god damned apron strings have already gotten Phil killed and I refuse there to be another because he can’t fucking share. Also while on that subject, whose brilliant idea was it to let Mel back in the field?”

“I thought the Calv...err Agent May was retired?” Tony asked barely correcting himself from using the name they all had yelled at him for using earlier.
“She never retired just transferred to Administration but not anymore, she is now running a mobile command team and is now Skye’s S.O.” Maria said.

“Damn it Maria you and I both know she shouldn’t be out in the field so soon after Phil’s death” Natasha interrupted her with worry evident in her voice.

“Wait a minute, you said after Phil’s death. Agent May was Phil’s cellist?” Pepper asked.

“More than that, they were soulmates and married at one time…” Clint said pained as he tilted his head back and stared at the ceiling.

“Still were married, Phil refused to sign the papers. He never gave up on Melinda no matter how hard she begged him to move on because she thought she couldn’t make him happy” Maria said softly watching as a look of horror crossed Pepper’s face and Tony and Bruce stony expressions at the information.

“Jesus why didn’t you guys tell us, we could have helped her” Tony said and Maria knew he felt just as much guilt over Phil’s death as Clint.

“Because Mel wouldn’t have taken it. Hell she hardly let us be there for her when Clint and I went to tell her...She was almost as bad as she was after they lost…” Natasha trailed off as Maria watched Clint pull her towards him and her friend buried her face into his chest. Maria watched as Clint whispered to Natasha and she wondered what Phil and Melinda had lost, but then she had a sinking feeling and understood what Natasha hadn’t said.

Maria needed to get this conversation away from the topic of Phil Coulson because she was tired and didn’t need to let anything slip. Though she was close to just calling Fury and telling him to go fuck his orders to take away the hurt and sad looks away from the people she cared about.

“I was there after you two were recalled, I know how bad she was…” Maria started but was interrupted.

“Then you fucking know she shouldn’t be in the field Maria” Natasha yelled at her.

“Look she came to us and told us to stick her back in the field or she’d go to work for Lian and I
don’t think there’d be a Washington DC left if she did that” Maria deadpanned but the joke only earned her a glare from Natasha.

“Damn it! It was either I let her back in the field under conditions I could try to control or she’d go get herself killed working somewhere else and quit fucking glaring at me like that Natasha! Melinda is the closest thing I have to a mother...” Maria said before snapping her jaw shut her breathing becoming erratic as she fought back the panic attack, she hadn’t meant to say that. She had only admitted those feelings to Skye this morning but that was the farthest that admission was ever meant to go. Closing her eyes she tried to get control back of her temper and her breathing as she felt Skye straddle her lap.

“Baby, breathe” she heard Skye whisper in her ear and Maria felt as her left hand was placed on her mates right hip while a bandaged hand rested where her mark was on her stomach. Letting the hands be an anchor in the storm of her emotions she slowly took back control of her temper. Taking a deep breath she opened her eyes and looked into the worried brown eyes of her mate. Leaning her head forward she felt as Skye’s head met her own as she continued sitting there.

"Trust me Tasha, she is the closest thing I have to a mother and seeing her hurting killed me” Maria whispered.

“I’m sorry Maria.” Natasha whispered.

“I know Tasha but she is doing better, I promise” Maria said smiling gently to her friend trying to let her know there was no hurt feelings, they were family and they were worried about one of their own.

“Its just the three of us owe her our lives...” Natasha started to say.

“Four of us now,” Skye interrupted Natasha as she kissed Maria’s forehead then moved to sit back in her former position next to her but Maria stopped her. Smirking Skye twisted in Maria’s lap and sat between her legs, leaning back against Maria’s chest. “She’s saved my life, well is trying to save my life I should say. Her and Maria have been trying to get the answers I need.”

“And that brings us to the next thing to discuss. With SHIELD compromised I can’t let it be known that Skye is my mate just as all soulmate status or files on the Avengers have been removed from SHIELD’s databases and hidden by me. Do you want me to tell the story or me?” Maria asked her mate.
“I’ll tell it, but if you have any questions, if I can’t answer it I’ll give you access to my files. There are just somethings I still can’t talk about, or shouldn’t talk about while recovering from my trip down memory lane yesterday, courtesy of the ‘Staff of doom’” Skye said before she sighed and Maria felt her mate lean more into her. Maria held Skye around her waist as one hand rested on her right hip over the soulmark and the other rested lightly on her stomach.

“The Staff of Doom? Do tell. Is that in one of the cases that you brought with you?” Tony asked looking over to where the two cases were stowed out of the way, curiosity in his voice, that made Maria think of the saying ‘curiosity killed the cat’.

“First Skye’s story then we will discuss the staff” Maria said in a tone that told Tony this was not a time for him to argue. She waited till the billionaire nodded before she said “Floors yours sweetheart, take your time.”

“Rip off the bandaid…” Skye said to herself before sighing. “I was raised in the foster system from the time I was an infant till I was sixteen, even though I was an infant I was never adopted. I had plenty of foster homes in my sixteen years in the system though some good, some bad. Foster family for age fourteen was a bad one, something happened and I ended up in the hospital because of it…”

Maria felt the smaller woman start to shake against her as she pressed a kiss to the top of Skye’s head and her thumbs started to move in a soothing motion against Skye’s skin. “They can’t hurt you anymore sweetheart,” Maria whispered till she felt Skye slowly stop shaking.

“That was when the doctors first found the leukemia, I did two years of chemo finally going into remission just after what we have listed as my sixteenth birthday. While I was in the hospital I made a friend who taught me how to hack so I took all my files and deleted myself from every system I could and disappeared. Honestly I didn’t think I’d survive another two years of placements…” Skye said sighing and Maria knew she wasn’t looking at anyone as she spoke she was remembering instead. Putting pressure on the mark on her mate’s hip she used it to bring Skye back from her thoughts, they were trying to avoid another flashback.

“Shit kid” Tony said running his hands through his hair thinking before smirking “Well Skye is a better name then..”

“Say it and I will hack your suit and make you dance disco and listen to polka for a month” Skye threatened.

“You might have skills kid, but I doubt you can hack my suits” Tony said not believing in the threat.
“Please don’t challenge her Stark” Maria groaned as she heard her mate chuckle at her response. “She is that good, believe me. Earlier today she hacked an MI6 satellite in under two minutes from the SUV with her laptop. Which you had to tell May about after I removed the nanny bracelet?”

“Gotta keep her on her toes” Skye quipped and Maria groaned again burying her face in Skye’s hair.

“Just don’t get caught, I don’t need the bloody paperwork” Maria grumbled as Skye laughed.

“I’ve never been caught” Skye said indignantly and Maria twisted so she could arch an eyebrow at Skye. “I let you all catch me, there is a difference.”

“Oh so you admit it now?!” she teased.

“Wait you let SHIELD catch you? Why?!” Tony asked lost trying to understand.

“I never denied it but May still kidnapped me, black bag and all” Skye deadpanned. “But yes I let SHIELD catch me. When I turned twenty the leukemia came back and I have spent the last three years doing chemo treatments. I’m in remission again but the doctors told me that next time I would need a bone marrow transplant on top of the chemo or I won’t survive” Skye said not looking at anyone but at a point above everyone’s heads.

“Only problem is there is no match in the national database. So I started to look into the files I took when I deleted myself from the foster system found out the orphanage I was dropped off at. I went there and removed my original files and found a redacted SHIELD document. After a mission where I tried to help the person who taught me how to hack and got caught by May she confronted me. I could tell her what the hell was going on or I could get off her damn plane so I told her. I gave her everything I had in the hope that she be able to help me.

“May has been helping me since then, I don’t care who my parents are, I just need to know if they are a match if not well...as I told May I want to live the rest of my life on my own damn terms then” she said the last bit softly and Maria felt fear rip through her at the uncertainty of the future with her mate. Maria watched as the pieces finally clicked in place to her friends as they watched the tiny woman in her arms talk about possibly dying in an even toned voice. Taking a deep breath she buried her face in Skye’s hair taking in the scent of her mate, they would figure this out.

“Melinda contacted me because the redacted document that Skye had found was a level 9 clearance
or higher. I found the original file and noticed some discrepancies and red flags. First the file was about a team that went investigating a possible 0-8-4.”

“0-8-4?” Tony asked

“Object of unknown origin.” Maria answered before continuing “What the SHIELD team found was a massacred village with what the mission file stated was no survivors and that should have been the last of the mission but the agents of the team either went missing or were found tortured to death once they were stateside.

“Before one of the agents was tortured and killed she placed Skye in an orphanage and put in place a damn near invisible protocol that Tony found that kept the child moving at random intervals never staying in one place too long. I now believe that Skye was the sole survivor of the massacred village and that the Agents decided to keep her hidden for one reason or another.”

“What about the 0-8-4?” Natasha asked and Maria knew she was trying to put the pieces together. The assassin was giving Skye and her a sympathetic look and Maria knew she could give them the lead on the possible only alive agent of the team and they would track it down.

“I’m it or I was exposed to it and it changed me. I can sense soul bonds and I can tell the type of bond it is. Which is why Dr. Banner you have full access to all my medical files and permission to run all the tests you need to run. I want to know if it’s possible which one it is, the chicken or the egg?” Skye snarked and got everyone laughing breaking the tension in the plane.

“Call me Bruce” he said gently “I’ll read your files and once we are on the ground we will start the tests. Also with your permission I’d like to consult an old colleague of mine that specializes in Leukemia she might be able to help you if you need it again.”

“Thank you...Bruce” Skye said softly yawning.

“You should get some rest sweetheart, you didn’t sleep much” Maria said worried because she had done some research on Skye’s condition before they met and she knew her mate was still recovering from the chemo treatments that only stopped months before.

“Neither did you, anyways as I said earlier I don’t want a repeat of this morning at 30,000 feet while I am still feeling the effects of the Staff of Doom” grumbled Skye “I don’t remember anything except for May taking me to get cleaned up and then having you pinning me to the mats talking me down in
that crazy ass ninja move.”

Maria kept running her thumb up and down over Skye’s mark, “I promise I’ll make sure you don’t have another episode, please for me you are still recovering and light only knows what the staff did to your body.”

“Only if you promise to try to rest soon as well” Skye said yawnning again.

“Once she tells us of this ‘Staff of Doom’ she will be resting as well” Natasha said and Maria glared at her. “Don’t glare at me Rookie that was Mel’s orders to me before we left.”

“Fine,” Maria said rolling her eyes and sticking her tongue out at her friend. “Years later and she is still mother henning me.”

“Thank you Natasha” Skye said yawnning again as she slowly stood up and Maria watched ready to catch her as she tested the weight on her right hip.

“What’s wrong with your hip?” Bruce asked in his doctor voice standing up and coming towards them.

“Old injury, that got aggravated by a hit I took yesterday on a mission not to mention whatever Maria had to do to stop me from attacking her this morning” Skye said shrugging.

“This morning was not your fault” Maria said again as she moved towards a corner of the couch Bruce checked her hip not commenting on the scars that he had to see on the area and he blocked everyone elses view.

“Yeah I have a feeling that is going to be an old argument between the two of us till we are old and gray” Skye quipped trying to distract everyone with humor.

Maria wasn’t falling for it as she rolled her eyes and propped herself up with some pillows before patting the spot between her legs. “Come here so you can stretch out your hip and get some sleep.”

Skye laid down with her head against Maria’s chest her body relaxing almost instantly as their skins
met and Maria slowly started to run her fingers through long dark hair. “We will do an xray of the hip also when we get back home” Bruce said as he gave them a soft smile before he went back to sit next to his mates.

“So ‘Staff of Doom’?” Tony prompted the conversation dragging Maria out of just the sensation of having her mate in her arms.

“Yes that is in one of the cases. First order of business with the damn thing, Bruce please don’t go near it. Actually if that case is open I don’t want you in the same room” Maria ordered.

“That’s ominous” Bruce said looking warily at the cases.

“Yeah well what is in that case is an Asgardian Berzerker Staff. It is a weapon that causes rage in the person that holds it by using their worst memories against them and Skye was exposed to that damn thing. We don’t know the long term effects on humans but we do know some of the short term ones now” Maria sighed.

“Skye was in the grip of a pretty nasty flashback when I came across her this morning with bloody hands beating the shit out of the punching bag...my first words to my soulmate: ‘You are going to break your hands that way’” Shaking her head Maria tried to clear her thoughts, she was tired again and she had a funny feeling the touch bond was going to be a very strong one because she was more tired than she should be.

“Anyways Tony can you make a replica of that staff with a tracking device in it but please don’t touch the bloody thing with your skin. I’d just lock the damn thing up till Thor came back but we need to use the staff for bait to see if we can flush out more dirty agents. So instead we are going to do a bait and switch, the fake staff will go back with us when we head back to Melinda and her team to drop it off at the Sandbox’s Dark Archives. While I keep the real one hidden here in my apartment till Thor can take the thing far far away..” she said yawning.

“Bruce if anyone wants to read Skye’s files go ahead and give them everything on the flashdrive I gave you. Skye said it was okay and if anything happens…” she shrugged not needing to finish that sentence with her family, they all knew what she left unsaid. “I want to make sure you all can help her, just please remember she is a fighter and everything you read about will be dealt with.”

“You need to rest Maria” Natasha said sitting next to her and Maria didn’t remember seeing her friend moving, yawning again she closed her eyes. Maria felt a hand brush her hair out her face and she leaned into the touch, hearing a soft “Rest маленькая племянница, I have the watch.”
“You need to rest Maria,” Natasha said as she sat next to the clearly exhausted Maria who was fighting to stay awake. Touch bonds were exhausting when they formed and it didn't help that the two women in front of her were injured and already not in the best of health when the bond started to form.

Natasha remembered when she had first bonded with Clint, before that moment neither her nor Clint had slept that much in all their lives in such a short period of time. She reached out tentatively and ran her hand through Maria’s hair brushing it out of the woman’s face she needed a haircut soon unless she had decided to try growing it out again. Maria leaned into her touch her eyes closed giving a soft hum of contentment and Natasha secretly wondered if Maria was part cat somehow. Smiling gently she said softly “Rest маленькая племянница, I have the watch.” It was only a few moments later that Maria finally was asleep with Skye in her arms.

Clint handed her a blanket, a soft look in his eyes as he looked between all three of them. Standing she covered both women with the blanket and pressed a light kiss to both of their foreheads before moving back. She motioned for the others to follow her towards the front of the plane where they could reconfigure the regular plane seats to face each other. It was a Stark plane after all and the billionaire had it designed to optimize anything the Avengers might need when using it.

“Ok I think we are missing something” Tony said indicating himself and his mates "Phil was more to you than just your handler, wasn't he?"

She looked towards Clint who shrugged "Might as well tell them" he said before looking towards their three friends. "Phil and Melinda first 'rescued' me when I got on SHIELD's radar in a bad way, they were suppose to arrest me. I don't think anyone realized I was that young, I was only nineteen and very messed up. I was a professional killer, you paid me I took care of it. It's not what I wanted but it was what I was taught all I was good for. When they were sent after me but they made a different call. Instead they worked with me, taught me, and practically raised me."

"I was 'rescued' next when they were sent to cross me off. SHIELD had decided I was too dangerous to try to bring in, but Clint and I realized we were soulmates and they made a different call. Phil and Melinda worked with me, deprogramming what the Red Room did to me as a child. Phil and Melinda hold that ambiguous place to both of us, they aren’t quite mom and dad and not quite older brother and sister."

"And Maria?" Bruce asked curious.
"Maria was quite a few years later. Clint and I were on mission when Phil and Melinda were sent to recruit her. She had been discharged from the Marines when they realized that the female officer that saved a US Senator's life was a lesbian. They did it all quietly gave her an honorable discharge citing injuries she took in the attack which were severe but not that severe. When Phil and Melinda finally found her she was a wreck and she became all of our ’Rookie’. All three of us owe them our lives they took us in, protected us, fixed everything that was broken and made us almost human again. Phil and Melinda became the family none of us had."

"And now May is doing it with Skye, continuing what her and Phil always did. Finding those that needed help, needed someone to believe in them and give them that push in the right direction” Clint said

"Yes which makes me worried about what we will find in those records when we read them. Mel did say the files were enough to give her nightmares and we know she’s read what is documented in our files, and knows what’s not" Natasha said softly eyes distant remembering her own checkered childhood if you could call it that.

"Time to read some files then. Skye is Maria's mate and we are all in this together and we need to be able to help them,” Tony said as he took the flash drive from Bruce and sent the files to everyone's Stark Pads.

Silence on the plane was only interrupted by the occasional sigh or gasp as they all made their way through the files. Natasha could tell she was the first one to reach the incident when Skye turned fourteen that had the young woman shaking earlier. She forced herself to read the whole police report before getting up and walking toward the back of the plane.

Natasha stood there for several minutes alone before a pair of large arms circled her waist pulling her back into the warm embrace of her mate. Clint placed his chin on her shoulder and whispered "She's got us now Tash we won't let her face that again."

"She shouldn't have had to face it to begin with Clint" she whispered back still not taking her eyes off the sleeping women. She had called Maria 'little niece’ earlier and it seemed Skye was going to have that title as well because the protective instincts that she learned from Melinda all those years ago were screaming at her to protect.

They stood there in silence till they could hear Tony get up and go towards the mini bar. Sighing they turned away from the only two peaceful figures now on the plane and went back to their team. Since the Battle of New York they all had become closer than even Fury probably thought possible, they were a team and Natasha thought possibly her family was growing even more. It had been Melinda, Phil and Clint that told her family wasn’t just blood it was those you chose to have beside you on this journey.
Coming back to the group she could see that Pepper had tears in her eyes as she was held by Bruce who had a haunted look in his eyes. Thankfully Bruce wasn’t turning into the Big Guy but the haunted look on his face was almost just as bad in Natasha’s opinion. Tony brought them all glasses as he started to pour the whiskey he preferred when he drank.

Thought it wasn’t vodka, it do for now as she threw back the drink and took the bottle from Tony as she poured herself another to sip while Tony sandwiched Pepper between himself and Bruce. She watched as Tony pressed the glass in Pepper’s hand more firmly before she also threw back the drink and closed her eyes as she shuddered. That reaction seemed to drag Bruce out of whatever personal hell he had gone to as he pulled Pepper closer to him before reaching his arm out and touching the back of Tony’s neck.

Natasha felt as Clint put his arm around her shoulders and she leant into the touch, her bond with the archer craving the physical touch to calm her emotions. Touch bonds were a rare thing, but so far all of the Avengers seemed to be touch bonded to their mates. Even though Steve hadn’t met his two soulmates yet, Natasha would bet money they’d also have a touch bond.

“Is there anything else on the flashdrive other than Skye’s medical records?” Natasha finally asked needing to know if there was more for her to read. Maria was family and this young woman was her mate so therefore Skye was now family and Natasha had the overwhelming urge to protect her. It was probably because she was so young and Natasha had similar experiences while growing up but she now understood why Melinda was so protective of the hacker.

“Just the original SHIELD files and Maria’s notes on the investigation into Skye’s past. She has a lead on a possibly alive member of the original team but she hadn’t been able to chase it down and she certainly can’t do it anytime soon either not without dragging Skye there with her” Clint said as he took a sip of his whiskey closing his eyes.

“We will have to chase it down for her, she’s got enough on her plate as it is and anyways we still are on leave for few weeks” Natasha said as she leaned her head on Clint’s shoulder.

“Let me know if you two need anything when you go,” Tony said and Natasha knew that was his way of showing he cared. If anyone needed anything he made it happen because he just wanted everyone happy and it just was what he did.

“We will let you know, thanks Tony” Clint said and Natasha watched as Tony waved off the thanks. They had been strangers, but now Natasha knew they were slowly becoming a family if not already there.
The sensation of her ears popping as the plane slowly began descending into New York woke up Maria and she tried to work past the foggy feeling she had left over from her nap. Looking down she saw Skye still asleep against her chest and she didn’t hide the soft smile as she ran one hand’s fingers through her mate’s hair.

“Morning маленькая племянница” Natasha said bringing Maria’s attention back to her and saw that the assassin sat on the small coffee table smiling softly at her. Then what Natasha said registered in her head маленькая племянница, little niece, seems like the cat was out of the bag on how she felt about the people that had put her back together all those years ago.

“Morning тетушка,” she said testing out the word and watched as Natasha’s smile seemed to brighten and her eyes soften. Natasha Romanoff was an intensely private person she hid her emotions when around the general public so they couldn’t be used against her, it was a safety measure for those she loved and cared about and she was glad she was one of the privileged few who saw the woman and not the image.

“We will be landing in about an hour. Clint and I will stay with you and Skye for about a day to get you two settled before we go check out the lead you had in your notes” Natasha whispered.

“Thank you, but please be careful. We don’t know if Centipede was following us because of me, Skye or the staff and you could be walking into anything down there” Maria said softly trying not to wake Skye.

“We know that is why Clint and I are going and not you and Skye. We can get ourselves out of pretty much anything and I know you can as well but Skye is still a very green rookie. I’m not about to let you two go down in that snake pit, anyways Clint and I are still on leave we can easily go down there take care of everything and still have plenty of time for..”

"Don't even finish that sentence I'm still traumatized from walking in on you two last time." Maria said closing her eyes as Natasha laughed.

"Teaches you to be aware of your surroundings” Natasha smirked and Maria wished she had something to throw at her.

"It was 0200 in the damn tower gym didn't think I'd have to knock before entering a common
"Sparing and sex sometimes go hand in hand. I have a funny feeling you will learn that soon enough" Natasha said with a shrug and smirk as Maria groaned. "Anyway better Clint and I then Phil and Melinda that is still an image I can't bleach out of my head."

"Ewwwww so didn't need to think of that. Damn it Tash! They were like parents to me, that is an image I so totally did not need. Well there goes any sex drive I had out the window at that thought" Maria whined.

"I hope not' Skye mumbled against Maria's chest as she stretched.

"Sorry sweetheart did we wake you?" Maria asked ignoring the smirking assassin watching them.

"No ears popping did but the conversation was interesting," she quipped and groaned as her hip started to spasm.

Maria reached down and massaged the muscles of her mates hip as Skye buried her face in Maria's chest. "How hard of a hit did you take during the mission?"

"Honestly don't know, I didn't feel it while holding the staff I just remember the hit landing. Even then I didn't feel it till hours later when May was helping me up the stairs towards the showers to finally get cleaned up” Skye said as she took a few deep breaths in what Maria recognized as a breathing exercise from Tai-Chi.

"Do want me to get Bruce? He might have something to take the edge off." Natasha asked making to stand up.

"No if we are landing soon I can wait and it's better if he examines me without the pain meds in my system" Skye said as she started to relax a bit into Maria's touch again. “I'll be fine, it is just a little bit of pain, nothing new” Skye said turning to look at Natasha. “I take it you all read the files by the look you are giving me.”

“We did and I am going to tell you the same thing I told Maria a very long time ago” Natasha said
“Wasn’t that long ago,” Maria groaned.

“Maria it’s been six years since Mel and Phil introduced you as their rookie. Six years and already Deputy Director so proud, they grow up so fast” Natasha teased wiping a fake tear from her eye.

“Only have the job because Nick needed someone that would argue with him to ground his ass in the probable reality and not his bloody paranoia” Maria said rolling her eyes.

“Still it’s an accomplishment and you were trained by the four best agents SHIELD has, if I don’t say so myself” Natasha said brushing off imaginary lint from her shoulder.

“You are impossible тетушка” said a chuckling Maria.

“Аnyways, детеныш I will tell you the same thing I told Maria all those years ago. You might be Mel’s rookie but you are also mine and Clint’s rookie now. We will be there with you every step of the way. If you need us, we will be there. No matter what, we are family now and we protect our own” Natasha said gently but firmly.

Maria knew what Natasha was trying to get Skye to understand that she wasn’t alone anymore, it was the same thing she had told Maria all those years ago when Mel had introduced them. She had felt her mate tense half way through Natasha’s speech but she knew it wasn’t because she was upset it was because she was shocked. For someone that had her childhood to go from no one giving a damn to having people suddenly care for you was an odd sensation but she was with kindred spirits when it came to that.

Silently she watched as the two women looked at each other and knew Skye was seeing the woman Natasha was and not the image of the Black Widow she let everyone else see. She felt as Skye relaxed back into her and she finally let herself bury her face into Skye’s hair kissing the top of her head.

“What is it that you keep calling me? It’s russian I can tell that much” Skye asked.

“детеныш?” Natasha asked another smirk on her face as she stood up and placed a gentle kiss on Maria and then Skye’s head. “It means ‘young one’. Now time for you two to get to an actual seat while I go save us from having Clint trying to land the plane” she said as she left them heading for the cockpit.
“Did I just get called kid in russian by a femme-fatale?” Skye asked bewildered amusement in her voice.

“Yes you did but I’ve seem to picked up the title ‘маленькая племянница or little niece’” Maria said amused as they got up and headed for some actual seats for the landing.
Skye paused as she followed Maria off the elevator into a large open planned living room kitchen combination. The living room was done in cream with large black leather couches that sat around a tv and coffee table. With the only thing separating the living room from the kitchen was a long black topped bar. The kitchen walls was done up with an exposed brick walls look while the cabinets were done with a worn unfinished wood look.

Maria’s apartment at the tower seemed to be a whole floor as she looked around spotting little knick-knacks here and there amongst shelves that held books and movies. Photos of places and people were on the walls of the living room, it all had a lived in quality to it with a half folded blanket on one couch and a paperback left on the coffee table. Skye watched as Maria’s shoulders seemed to lose that little bit of tension and she could tell this was home to her mate.

She watched as Maria tossed their bags onto one of the couches, her mate had insisted on carrying their bags since her hip was giving her more problems as the effect of the Berzerker staff slowly went away. Skye had a feeling she knew what was wrong with it but was choosing to ignore it for now, she’d rather be here in this moment as Maria turned around and slowly walked back towards her.

“So this is home?” she asked when Maria was an arm length away and watched as her mate paused briefly before smiling back at her. Maria wrapped her arms around Skye’s waist, one hand going to rest lightly on her mark as she snuck a hand under Maria’s shirt resting a bandaged hand over the mark there.

“It is where I’ve stored my things, but now it is a home because you are here” Maria told her resting their heads together.

“Cheesy,” she teased and watched as Maria smirked.

“Only for you sweetheart” Maria said before they kissed. At first it was just a brush of lips but soon became more heated as they were once again interrupted by a snickering laugh.

“Don’t make me have to hose you two off!” yelled Natasha from the elevator behind her and she groaned as Maria broke off their kiss. Slowly she turned around in Maria’s arms and leaned back into her mate’s embrace.

“Damn it Tasha! Really?! Do you have freaking radar or something?” Maria said to the pair of
snoozing assassins in the elevator as she tightened her hold around Skye trying to get control of her hormones. She was angry at being interrupted but it was also a good thing because she wasn’t sure if she could have stopped them if Skye kept kissing her like that.

“Well I did tell JARVIS to warn you we were on our way but he said you didn’t respond to him telling you. Now come on Bruce is waiting for us all in medical. Faster we get there the sooner it’s done and we can all relax and get to know each other” Natasha said beckoning them into the elevator with her and Clint.

Maria rolled her eyes as she took Skye’s hand leading them into the elevator. Leaning against one of the walls she pulled her mate’s body back against hers as they rode the elevator in silence down to the medical floor. She was trying not to glare at her two oldest friends, the people she thought of as the cool aunt and uncle in her life but the two were smirking knowing she was trying not to glare. Giving a huff as the door opened up she let them leave first as she and Skye followed.

Natasha continued through the door to the main exam area while Clint peeled off at the door to sit at one of the waiting room chairs. “We don’t need a guard Clint,” Maria grumbled as she knew what the two were doing.

“Yes you do, Mel already warned us your mate is just as bad as you are when it comes to medical” Clint said laughing.

“Pot” Maria shot back as they walked through the doors rolling her eyes.

“Alright you two I’ll need you to get into the gowns so we can do the exams and x-rays. Skye is there anything else that hurts?” Bruce asked as he handed them each a pair of hospital gowns as they walked into one of the many exam rooms.

“Honestly I hurt all over, but I think that is from coming down from the Berzerker staff, I might still be learning but I didn’t take that many hits during the mission so I think it’s just sore muscles. My hands and hip are the worst” Skye said eyeing the gown she was given with fear. This would be the first time Maria saw her completely exposed and a small part of her was afraid that her mate would do a runner when she saw her back.

Maria took the gown Bruce handed her with resignation, she hated being so exposed. She knew she had scars, her childhood and her occupation made sure of that but she still had issues with them at times. This moment was one of those times because this would be the first time Skye saw all of them.
Looking towards her mate she saw her fear reflected back to her in brown eyes and without thinking she took the smaller woman in her arms. Skye tucked her face against her neck and Maria slowly let her hand rub up and down her mate’s back as she felt tears against her neck. She heard the door to the exam room close but knew they weren’t alone in the room, as she could hear the almost silent breathing of Natasha.

“This is the hardest part of the soul bond, letting your mate see you so exposed, to see everything. I know both of you have scars both emotional and physical, every life altering experience written across your skin like a story but it is your story don’t be ashamed of it because you survived and that is all that matters in the end” Natasha said softly as she approached the two women and placed a hand each on their shoulders trying to be the steady guiding presence the two needed for this.

She remembered when Mel and Phil had been this for her and Clint all those years ago. Clint had wanted to help them like she was now but they had decided against it because of Skye’s history she might not react so well to his presence in the room. Heck if they had a female doctor on the team she would probably be the one doing this exam but Bruce was the next best thing even though he was male he was soft spoken and caring.

“Sorry I’m just not use to letting anyone see everything, May only recently saw everything when she made me get examined by one of the science twins” Skye said using the code name she had for FitzSimmons. She rested her head against Maria’s chest letting the sound of her heart beating sooth her as the hand on her shoulder grounded her.

“I know sweetheart, but I am not going anywhere. You are not going to get rid of me so easily now that I have found you. As тетушка said we all have scars, I’ll show you mine first and if you aren’t ready to show me yours I’ll close my eyes and hold your hand till it’s all over” Maria softly said as she rested her cheek against her mates head.

“No, you need to see now instead later if we…” she paused blushing and felt as Maria chuckled against her ear. “Not funny.”

“It’s a little funny, but I understand. Just remember I am here no matter what” Maria said kissing the top of Skye’s head.

Natasha smiled gently at the two women as she squeezed their shoulders, “Ok get changed into the gowns so we can get this all done and then you two can get back to whatever you two were doing when Clint and I interrupted.”
Maria rolled her eyes as she took a step back and grabbed the gown to only have a pair of boxers fall to the ground. Bending down she grabbed the boxers off the floor and arched an eyebrow in question to Natasha.

“My idea, got tired of walking around bare ass around medical after missions with your Uncle and the team” Natasha said shrugging, as she leant against one of the walls. It also helped her not to feel so damn exposed and vulnerable when she was already hurt and on edge from it. The idea seemed to help the team as well.

“I’ll have to have Fury implement these in the SHIELD ones, once we get everything squared away” Maria said as she sat down in a chair to unlace her combat boots before taking them off and sitting them to the side. She stood as she took off her jeans and underwear, years of training had her folding them neatly before she pulled on the boxers but she felt Skye’s eyes on her. There were some scars on her legs but they didn’t bother her as much as her other ones did. These scars were older, from her childhood and she learned long ago that despite the stories behind them they didn’t matter, she survived.

Next she unbuttoned the shirt Skye had given her earlier and slowly taking it off watched as her mate took in the scars that littered her stomach and chest area from the various wounds she had taken over her years. Skye slowly moved closer to Maria as one bandaged hand traced over the soul mark that sat on her stomach between her ribs. Maria realized it was the only thing that Skye seemed to see, she didn’t see the scars from shrapnel, knives or bullets. No, the woman before her only saw the soulmark that meant they were meant to be.

“Mine?” it’s said just above a whisper and if they weren’t standing so close Maria doubted she’d hear it.

“Yours always,” Maria said slowly taking the hand that is tracing over her words and holding the hand over them. The only clothing she wore was her sports bra that she knew she could keep on and the boxers she had been given. With one finger she lifted Skye’s head so she could look into brown eyes that were soft and watery. “Yours always,” she said as she kissed her mate’s forehead.

Skye closed her eyes as she felt soft lips on her forehead and leaned into the touch. “My turn” she sighed as she took a step back and reluctantly removed her hand from over her words on Maria’s chest. “I might need some help,” she said looking at her hands.

“That’s okay,” Maria told her as she took one hand and slowly unbandaged the hand and then the other. Skye flexed her stiff fingers before sitting down with a hiss as her hip protested the movement. Before she could do anything though Maria is there kneeling before her as she undid the laces on the combat boots May had given her.
She took in the sight of the woman before her, with her dark hair starting to grow past her ears some strands were in her face as she helped Skye with her boots. Muscles moved beneath skin that had scars but she hardly saw them as she took in the beauty of the woman before her. From the chair Skye had the perfect angle to look down the front of the sport’s bra that held back Maria’s breast and had a feeling the bra was hiding a lot. But it was one thing she learned fast while training with May, breasts sometimes got in the way so she even had taken to wearing tight as hell sports bras under her clothes.

Once Maria was done with removing Skye’s boots she fought to hide her blush because she could feel her mate’s gaze like a caress against her skin checking her out. Taking a deep breath she stood up and reached out a hand to help Skye up and winced as she heard the hiss of breath again as Skye stood. “Are you okay?” she asked concerned.

Skye went to try to put some weight on her hip and her leg almost buckled as she felt a pair of arms grab her holding her up. She bit back a scream at the sudden pain in her leg as she leaned her head into her mate’s chest hiding the tears. She took a few deep breaths as she shook her head no.

“Alright I got you, we need to get you out of these clothes first so we can get an x-ray of your hip. I’m going to hold you up and Tasha will help me finish getting you undressed. Okay?” Maria said as she held her crying mate, she felt the hot tears against her skin and she wished she could do more to help. She felt Skye nod against her skin and looked towards Natasha who had been standing there ready to catch Skye if Maria hadn’t caught her.

“Скай, я собираюсь снять твои брюки,” Наташа сказала Скай как она приблизилась, она приподняла их между Марией и Скай, быстро отстегнула ее джинсы. Она натянула их, пытаясь быть осторожной в области таза, она посмотрела вниз и увидела Марию, она кивнула. Мария подняла Скай и Наташа быстро сняла джинсы и одела боксеры, подняв их вверх.

“Okay детеныш lets get you on the table and Maria can help you the rest of the way while I go get a wheelchair so we can get you to x-ray” Наташа сказала как она обошла Марию, она взяла ее на себе и положила ее на стол, меньший в размере. Она держала ее на руках и подняла ее на стол, когда Мария пыталась успокоить свою матку, она вздохнула, открыла дверь и пошла в обнимку со своей матерью.

Maria heard the door close behind them as she held onto Skye as she cried into her chest. “It’s okay I’m right here, let it all out.” she whispers over and over again as one hand runs fingers through long dark hair. Slowly the tears stop and she feels as the tension in Skye’s muscles relax in Maria’s arms.
“I hate this,” she mumbles against Maria’s chest and she knows she means being injured.

“I know, I’m the same way. Hence why Clint is sitting outside making sure I don’t go hide from Bruce” she says trying to make Skye laugh.

“We are a right pair aren’t we?” she quips back and Maria smiles.

“Yes we are. Now lets get you out of this shirt,” Maria says but pauses in her movement when Skye starts laughing. “And what is so funny?”

It takes a moment for Skye to stop laughing long enough for her to smirk and look at Maria “I pictured you undressing me and saying something like that but this isn’t exactly the context I had in mind.”

Maria smirked at the woman in front of her she leaned in and whispered “Not quite how I pictured it either but it will do for now. Later when we are alone, you are mine.” She felt Skye shiver and moan in her arms as she nipped the skin just below her ear.

“Tease,” Skye said breathlessly.

“Not a tease when it’s a promise” Maria said before kissing the mark she left gently. Standing back up fully she started unbuttoning Skye’s shirt and slowly removed it as her eyes took in every inch of exposed skin. She saw the scars but didn’t as she took in the beautiful form of her mate. Once Skye’s shirt was off she tossed it over the chair in the room and went back to looking at her mate.

"Like what you see?" Skye teasingly asked.

"You know I do" Maria says before taking her eyes off of Skye body and looks into her mates eyes. There is uncertainty in those brown orbs and she wished she could kill whoever told her mate she wasn't enough. Bracketing her mate in between her arms she leaned on the table and gently kissed her lips. "If we weren't liable to get interrupted again I'd show you how much but for now believe me when I say you are beautiful."

Skye felt her eyes water again as she gently kissed Maria "So are you baby."
"Do you want the gown on? I've worked out with everyone here in practically the same thing as I am wearing now so I don't mind them seeing me like this" Maria asked holding up the gown to her.

"Umm" she said biting on her bottom lip. "Yes, but can we put it to where it's covering my back instead of my front."

"Of course sweetheart anything that will make you comfortable. Do you want me to help you?"

Skye closed her eyes and took a deep breath "You should see my back now instead of later."

"Skye look at me," Maria whispers as her hand gently cups Skye's face. She waits till Skye opens her before asking "Are you sure?"

"Yes" she hears her mate whisper before she slowly walks around the exam table keeping a supporting hand on her mate. The first sight of her mates uncovered back makes her want to take a hold of the smaller woman and never let go, to protect her from the world and everything in it. The second emotion that comes up is rage at those that hurt her mate in such a way and a part of her wants to sic the Avengers on their asses but her mate doesn’t need her rage right now so she swallows it down and buries it to be dealt with later.

Scars crisscrossed across her whole back she knows that they are from the whips that foster family for age fourteen used to punish her and she looks towards her mates lower right hip. There covered in scars is her writing she tentatively reaches out but ignores the scars instead tracing her words to her soulmate. “You are beautiful Skye” she whispers as she places a gentle kiss to the back of her mate’s neck.

“I think you are a little biased.” Skye whispers back trying to hide the shiver she had when Maria’s lips touched the back of her neck but before either of them can say anything else they are interrupted again by Natasha coming back into the room.

“Fucking radar I swear” Skye hears Maria grumble against her skin, she can’t stop the laughter that escapes from her chest and only laughs harder at Maria’s petulant “It’s not funny” that causes Natasha to smirk even more. It takes a few minutes for her to stop laughing but by that time she has tears in her eyes that she wipes away.
“Bruce is on his way he decided to break out the portable xray machine Tony built him when I told him we needed a wheelchair” Natasha said as she watches Maria reach for the gown next to Skye.

“I don’t need it” Skye said.

“Are you sure?” Maria asked her mate as she came around the table giving her a gentle look like the woman before her was the most precious thing in the world. Natasha watched the exchange with a soft smile as she leaned against the wall happy to just sit back and observe the new soulmates. Her thoughts that even though shit seemed to be about to hit the fan that at least Maria and Skye had finally found some happiness.

"Natasha" Skye said pulling her out of her thoughts and she watched as the younger woman picked at the him of the boxers she wore.

"Yes детеныш?" she asked gently.

“You said you are now my S.O. as well as May?” she whispered still not looking at Natasha.

Natasha pushed off from the wall and crossed to the exam table placing a finger under Skye’s chin to lift her face so their eyes can meet. “Yes детеныш I am, but the same thing I told Maria when she was a rookie, I will also be more than that if you let me” she said and watched as tears filled Skye’s eyes but they did not fall.

“Then you will need to see my back,” Skye said and Natasha saw as the younger woman took a deep breath and squared her shoulders. She traded spots with Maria and then stood behind Skye as she took in the younger woman’s back. Intellectually she knew what Skye had been whipped and beaten within an inch of her life when she was fourteen but it was one thing to know something and whole other thing to see the evidence of it.

She felt a pair of eyes on her and didn’t even realize that Skye had her face pressed into Maria’s neck as the woman she now saw as a niece watched her over her mates shoulder. Taking a deep breath she found her center like Mel had taught her all those years ago and threw the rage and sorrow she was feeling into it. Those emotions had no part in this for now, they would come out later in the privacy of her and Clint’s rooms but not now. Now the two younger women needed her to be their anchor and and guide.

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with
scars.’” Natasha said as she came back around the table and waited till Skye moved her face out of Maria’s neck and looked towards her. “Never be ashamed for what you have been through, it is not your shame to bear. Embrace the experiences and become stronger in heart, body and soul. That way they can never win.”

Maria laid on her side as she watched the even breathing of her mate as she slept off the painkillers Bruce had forced her to take before they had done a closed reduction on her right hip. Her mate had been walking for over 24 hours on a partially dislocated hip and she wondered if her insane pain tolerance was from her upbringing or was another part of her 0-8-4 status. As Skye had put it on the plane it was a chicken or egg question that she doubted she’d ever have the answer for.

Bruce had taken blood from her mate after she had passed out since he had read about her phobia of needles in her medical charts and didn’t want to stress her out more than he had with the shot. He had promised to discuss any results he had whenever they finally awoke, stating that Skye would be knocked out for a few hours at least from the meds and their bond stabilizing would make them feel the need to touch let alone sleep. After that she had been quickly examined and ruled that despite some spectacular bruises she didn’t have anything that was broken so despite their protests Maria had picked Skye up and carried her back to their apartment.

Their apartment, that was a strange thought, but it was true. Whatever she had was now Skye’s, she knew that whatever happened with the shitstorm that was brewing that the Avengers would take care of Skye if she couldn’t. Here they finally found each other and Skye was dying slowly from leukemia because even though she was in remission with her type it didn’t matter unless she found a bone marrow donor. And Maria had a bad feeling and all her instincts were telling her this was a rule thirty six situation; If it seems to be a bigger shitstorm than you are seeing, murphy’s law: it probably is.

She knew that just outside the bedroom doors Clint and Natasha were in her living room keeping watch over them as they had the bond stabilize and they got past the first night of their recoveries from the last few days and months. Yawning she knew she should sleep but she was afraid she’d wake up and this be all a dream.

The door to the room opened up and she watched as Natasha came into the room sitting on her side of the bed. Her side, fuck she had it bad, she knew Skye was her mate but they hadn’t been able to have any type of discussions what that meant. They flirted and had kissed but talks about the future, not so much. It was something they’d have to rectify once they were both awake and coherent enough to have the discussions.

“You should be sleeping маленькая племянница, you do neither of you favors by fighting your body,” Natasha reprimanded her softly.

“I know I’m just afraid that if I go to sleep…” Maria shrugged as she went back to watching Skye.
“That it was all just a dream. I know both Clint and I had the same issues when we first bonded, it’s why I came in here to check on you. Skye won’t be awake for some hours yet from the meds that Bruce gave her, but you would be letting your mind running away from you. Thinking in a hundred different directions and not quite thinking all thoughts through and driving yourself insane. Trust me Maria you will want to rest it will make it go easier for the both of you.

“Now come on, lay down fully and cuddle with your mate. Don’t worry about hurting her you are on her left side so I doubt you can hurt her, that and your mate is freaking beast when it comes to pain tolerance” Natasha ordered and Maria finally relented because she was fighting to keep her eyes open. Laying on her side she put her right arm under the pillows, then her left rested lightly on Skye’s stomach holding onto her mate. Their skin to skin contact optimized that they were both still just in the medical wing boxers and sports bras.

“Close your eyes маленькая племянница and rest,” Natasha whispered as she started to run her hands through Maria’s hair. It wasn’t long before Maria’s breathing evened out and she was asleep next to her mate, which is how it should be. She stayed there for a few more minutes making sure Maria was fully asleep before she stood up and pulled out her phone and took a picture and sent it to Mel. Her friend couldn’t be here right now but Natasha would try to make sure she didn’t miss any moments of it, she’d make sure JARVIS had instructions to take snapshots from the video feed and send her the pictures to forward to Mel.

Closing the door softly behind her she had left on the bathroom light hoping it was enough light for Skye incase she woke up before Maria, she didn’t want to the hacker frightened on her first night here. Walking into one of Maria’s guest rooms she saw that Clint was already asleep sprawled out on his stomach. Stepping back into the hallway she said “JARVIS”

“Yes Natasha?”

“If Maria or Skye wake up, could you wake up Clint or myself please?” she asked the AI. It was a computer program but he was also a strange friend to them all.

“Of course Natasha” JARVIS said.

“Thank you JARVIS” she said as she went back into the room and got out of her clothes into a pair of PJ’s they had brought from their own apartment. Climbing into bed she kissed Clint’s shoulder and he stirred himself awake enough to lay on his side pulling her to his chest. Moments later she too was asleep.
Chapter 14

She felt like she was floating as awareness slowly crept back into her overly foggy mind. Her consciousness fought through the fog and the first thing she realized was a slight pressure on her left with a warm breath tickling at her neck. Opening her eyes it takes a moment for her eyes to focus, the room was dark but there was a small light coming from her right from what she assumed was a bathroom as the door was partially closed. Turning her head to the left she was met with the sight of Maria curled up next her with her face buried in Skye’s neck. Their bodies were touching skin to skin with only the sports bras and boxers between them and she took the time to admire her mates sleeping half naked form.

Laying there feeling safe and warm with someone next to her was an odd sensation, she had lovers before but she had never felt this relaxed in their presence. The even breathing against her neck letting her know that Maria was at least sleeping next to her and she fought not to just let the sensation lull her back to sleep.

Slowly memories flooded back into her consciousness as she remembered the xray and confirming what she had feared, she had partially dislocated her hip once again. Bruce had looked grim while giving her the news but she had shrugged and told him that he’d need to get Clint to help them hold her down. She knew from experience that the shock of joint popping back into place was enough to make her lash out and she’d like to avoid hurting anyone that was trying to help her.

The fogginess in her head must have been from the painkillers Bruce had insisted he give her she had only stayed quiet and let Bruce give them to her because her telling everyone that she was okay without them seemed to make everyone worry for her worse. She vaguely remembered Bruce lording Clint into the room to help, he’d been told to hold her arms and torso down while Natasha was to keep her from kicking Bruce with her left leg. Maria had been the one to hold down her shoulders leaning down to whisper in her ear trying to distract her, her mate's voice had been deceptively calm but she had heard the undercurrent of worry in it.

It had been slightly painful when Bruce lifted her leg but it had been blessedly short as he had gotten her leg and hip back into place with only two tries. She had screamed when it finally snapped back into place and had been coherent through it all till Bruce pushed more meds into her system, that was the last thing she had remembered before waking here with Maria pressed against her.

She had passed out more from the meds than the actual pain she was in, chemo was definitely more painful than popping the hip back into place. The dull ache from her right hip now was better than the near constant stabbing feeling it had been before the reduction and this pain was a familiar pain, she could deal with this pain. She took a moment taking stock of the rest of her body, she was sore but no where near what she had been earlier and she honestly had survived worse pain before.
Turning her head she buried her face into Maria’s hair and breathed in the scent of her mate. Her left arm was slightly pinned by Maria’s body but she slowly got it unpinned and started to run her fingers through her mate’s hair. Maria’s hair was short but it was still enough for her to run her fingers through it or pull… ‘No Skye mind out of the gutter’ she thought to herself.

She didn’t know how long she just laid like that, running her fingers through Maria’s hair, listening to her breathing and letting her mind wander but soon the light started to increase in the room from one of the windows as a new day dawned. Smiling softly she kissed the top of Maria’s head as her mate started to stir against her as she woke up. Skye felt a gentle kiss placed against her neck and she moaned as the touch sent tingles down her body.

“Morning,” Skye said as her fingers continued to run through Maria’s hair which seemed to meet to the approval of her mate as she seemed to lean into the touch and purred. “Good to know playing with your hair gets that response from you,” she chuckled.

“Hmm, I could get very use to this” Maria hummed into her mate’s neck placing another gentle kiss this time to her pulse point.

“Good….So could I,” Skye admitted softly as she continued to run her fingers through the short hair at the nape of Maria’s neck. The admission was out of her mouth before she even thought about it and that scared her a bit but she knew that fear was from her own abandonment issues.

Maria felt her heartbeat quicken at Skye’s words as she kissed the underside of her mate’s jaw before pulling back and propping herself up on an elbow to look down at her. “How are you feeling?”

“It’s back to being the dull ache I’m use to. Today is one of the more achy days but nothing more than I can’t handle” she answered honestly as she traced her words on Maria’s skin.

“I hated seeing you in that much pain,” Maria said closing her eyes losing herself in the sensation of the words being traced.

“That pain wasn’t that bad I’ve had much worse. I know what you mean though and if this is the life I choose, to become an agent it is going to happen again but thank you for distracting me,” Skye said as Maria opened her eyes. Blue eyes met her brown and she wondered what Maria saw when she looked into her eyes like that but didn’t ask.
“I’ll always be there to distract you, if you want” Maria said with a smirk as she leaned down and brushed her lips with Skye’s. She felt the hand on the back of her neck pulling her closer as the gentle brush turned into more as their lips met over and over again. Maria nipped at Skye’s lower lip asking for entrance as she deepened the kiss letting her tongue explore her mate’s mouth.

Shifting slightly she let one arm prop herself up more for a better angle, making sure her weight didn’t fall onto Skye. While her other hand started to ghost over the exposed skin of her mates stomach and ribs, not exactly where she wanted to be touching but she didn’t want to push Skye to go too fast.

Skye moaned at the feel of Maria’s hand on her skin and arched into the touch trying to ask for more without having to break off the kiss. Her head was dizzy from the sensations and the lack of oxygen but she didn’t care as long as Maria didn’t stop kissing her like that. She let the hand that was holding Maria’s neck start running her fingers through the short hair and could hear and feel her mate’s reactions to it. Slightly she let her hand tighten and pull gently at Maria’s hair with the resulting moan and groan combination sending a shock of electricity right between her legs.

Maria broke of the kiss and groaned as she dropped her head onto Skye’s chest at the sound of a knock on the bedroom door. “I swear that woman has fucking radar” Maria moaned into her mate’s skin as they both laughed trying to catch their breaths. “We will be right out” she called out hoping that Natasha wouldn’t still come into the room. They didn’t need the female assassin walking in to them all flushed and breathless.

“Breakfast is in fifteen minutes then Bruce wants to talk to you two” Natasha called out through the door before Maria heard her retreat away from the door. She had felt Skye stiffen underneath her at the news of Bruce wanting to talk to them but kissed her mate softly.

"Whatever he says I'll be right there with you," Maria promises as she cups Skye's face brushing away the tears that have already escaped. She doesn't flinch or look away when Skye gives her a searching look. With her mates past she doesn't feel hurt at the look she is being given, she understands it. When you had been hurt or abandoned as much as Skye did as a child it was a given she was slow to trust that you weren't going to run out on her when it got hard. Skye would eventually learn that with herself and the makeshift family they were now a part of, they might not be blood but they took care of their own.

“You really do mean that don’t you?” Skye asked as she finally looked away from Maria’s eyes. The blue orbs had been filled with tenderness and understanding as she had stared into them trying to come to terms that the woman next to her meant every word. Her eyes went to her words written across Maria’s stomach they were slightly lopsided and covered by scars as her finger gently traced them again but they were hers.
The question to her is uncertain like her mate couldn’t quite believe it and she has to fight the urge to just either wrap the woman in bubble wrap or run away with her and say fuck the world. That urge is her protective side but she knows it is the last thing either of them need to move forward. “Yes I mean every word of it and if you let me I will show you everyday for the rest of our lives” she says softly to her mate.

Bruce watched as Maria wheeled in the newest member of their little group who looked just thrilled to be in the wheelchair. The new soulmates were followed by a smirking Natasha and for a moment he wondered what had made the woman smirk like that...then he thought better of it. He really didn’t need or want to know.

“Morning ladies,” he said smiling trying not to seem so threatening, “ready to finish up these exams?”

“No results?” Skye asked with fear in her voice and he watched as Maria sat in one of the chairs before taking Skye’s hand in her own. He didn’t blame Skye’s fear or Maria’s reaction to her mate’s distress, they had a reason to fear his results but they didn’t quite know that yet.

“Some, but I first want to get the exams done and ask some questions before we go over what I have so far. Let me put you at ease though, there is no sign the leukemia has come back” he said gently and watched as Skye let go of the breath she had been holding while Maria leaned over and whispered something into her mate’s ear. He gave them a few moments as he shared a small look with Natasha who seemed just as relieved by that bit of news, to be honest so was he but he still was about to turn the young woman in front of him world upside down.

“Okay Skye you are first since we need to check on that hip. Now how’s your pain level?” he asked listening closely to the answer because it would determine his later discussion on her blood results.

“It’s back to the dull ache I’m more than use to. It is a little more achy now than a usual day but nothing I can’t handle. I would have walked down here but these two insisted on my using the wheelchair” Skye said as she shrugged.

“Have you walked with a cane before?” he asked, because in her charts it had only said she had used a walker when she had been originally recovering from her first hip dislocation when she was fourteen.

“Yes briefly.”
“Okay” he said standing up, grabbing the cane he had in the exam room for this purpose and handing it to her. “Let’s go to the hallway I want to see you take a few steps with the cane,” he said opening the door for Maria to wheel her mate out. Natasha followed and gave Bruce an eyebrow arch in question. “Testing a theory,” he whispered and watched as his friend nodded.

Maria locked the wheelchair before she moved the leg stirrups to the side. Skye stood and that was his first real look at the scars on her back, he had to stomp down on the urge of the Other Guy to go look and Hulk Smash the assholes that had done that to the woman before him. She had been a kid, an orphan and innocent but she still faced more at a young age than he wanted to even think about.

Taking a deep breath he thought of his two mates and let their love wash away the anger as he forced himself back into his doctor mode. Skye stood first putting her weight on her left leg and then her right. He watched as she walked halfway down the hallway before she turned heading back and then stood there supporting her weight with the cane.

Bruce watched her face and either she had a really good poker face or she really didn't feel the pain she should feel. "Again please," he said watching as Skye arched an eyebrow at him before shrugging and doing the walk again.

"How is the pain now?" he asked watching her face as she stood there. Both Maria and Natasha were poised to catch the woman if she fell but he doubted they'd need to. They probably thought the woman before them was just stubborn and not showing the pain or had a crazy high pain tolerance, which wasn’t far from the theory he had that was being partially confirmed with this test.

"A little more achy but it's manageable."

"Same as the first time you dislocated your hip?"

"For the hip yes. Honestly the other injuries at the time hurt a little more than this" she said shrugging again.

"Okay that is enough for now, please sit and we will finish our exams,” he said indicating the wheelchair before turning and opening the door again.

The rest of the exams passed easily with little to no gripeing from either of them, which was a
surprise. He’d been warned by Natasha that Skye’s S.O., Melinda had warned them that she was just as bad as Maria about getting examined or telling someone she was hurt. Maria didn’t have an excuse beyond being stubborn but Skye did have an excuse and one he would have to share with Melinda so she knew what to keep an eye out for in the future.

They had all retreated to his ‘office’ after they had finished the exams so he could go over some results with them. He looked at the two women sitting before his desk as they sat hand in hand and he could tell they were trying to reassure the other as they whispered to each other while he went through the charts and results one last time.

He shared a look with Natasha as she leaned against the wall just behind the pair and watched as worry crossed her face before he slightly nodded, giving her the indication that the news might upset the two women. Turning his attention back to the task at hand he took a breath before saying, “Alright test result time. Maria other than the bruises you are perfectly healthy but I would appreciate it if you didn’t do any sparing for a few days and rest, just to play it safe with those ribs.”

“Got it, no sparing and rest” Maria said not arguing and Bruce didn’t hide his surprise. “Hey Bruce I am not going to argue when you are basically ordering me to take it easy and rest with my mate” she said smirking at him.

“I swear you are just as bad as Tony” he said not bothering to hide the roll of his eyes before he pinched the bridge of his nose. Shaking his head he took a deep breath.

“Now Skye as you are aware you partially dislocated your hip and we had to do a closed reduction of it. I know this is your second time having this injury so I am going to suggest physical therapy and rest till it is back to somewhat normal.”

“How long is that going to take? I can’t be long from my team, officially I am not here at the moment” Skye asked him then turning to Maria who turned to look at him.

“I don’t know. Your chart doesn’t have many notes indicating that they did physical therapy with you the first time so I have a theory that it didn’t heal properly or fully the first time. We will be rectifying that this time around to try to prevent a third time but honestly it is a likely thing to happen in the future. Right now I want to take it day by day but I’ll have a more definitive answer for you by Saturday, if you will need more time or could go back on limited duty.”

“Okay I can go with that for now,” Skye said sharing a look at Maria. “We might have to start coming up with a cover story if I can’t go back right away though. We can tell May but Mr. Robot and the Science Twins are on your no one is to know about us list.”
“We will figure it out together when it comes to that” Maria said softly and he watched as she squeezed Skye’s hand before turning back to him.

“Now that is solved, next thing to do is to go over your blood work. As I said earlier that there is no indication that the leukemia has come back which is good, since it means we have time to try to find a bone marrow donor for you when the time comes. But I already started to look at your blood work for as you put it ‘the chicken or egg’ question. I did find some anomalies in your blood” he said but stopped to give them a moment to process what he said.

“First thing was a mutation and an anomaly I recognized because it is something I researched when I was trying to recreate the super soldier serum. There is two parts to this; the mutation is in your SCN9A gene, it is a rare mutation, the anomaly though is that it is only a partial mutation which has never been documented before. I have two theories on all of this.”

“What is the SCN9A gene? What does it do? And what are your theories?” Maria asked him and he sat back in his chair but decided as Clint always put it, ‘rip the fucking band-aid off’.

“A normal SCN9A gene is a gene that basically creates the links between your nerves and brain that tells you when you are in pain. Almost everyone have the dominant form of this gene and they feel pain normally. There are only a handful of documented cases of people having the recessive form of the gene that causes them to have what is being termed as ‘Congenital Insensitivity to Pain’. Which in basic terms means that you don’t feel pain at all, but you do feel some level of pain so this is where my theories begin.”

“And your theories?” Maria asked and Bruce watched as his friend looked towards her mate with worry.

“First theory is that Skye inherited both recessive genes from her parents and she was born with this condition, though Skye was exposed to something that caused the anomaly I detected causing her to feel some pain but not all of it. Or second theory, which I am leaning more towards is that Skye inherited both dominant genes from her parents and whatever she was exposed to her caused the anomaly that I detected. This anomaly is what is causing her to feel some pain but not all of it or even that she might have some subconscious control over it.”

“But that wasn’t the only thing I found in your blood Skye so I am almost certain you aren’t the 0-8-4 but that you were exposed to something or an 0-8-4 that caused these changes. I have to consult a geneticist friend of mine to confirm the other mutations in your blood and what they may cause but that is the one I know for sure what it does. The thing is and I am almost certain of this part, that you were exposed to whatever it was for a period of time. Either deliberately or by accident I don’t know
but mutations like this don’t happen instantly unless with human interference, myself and Steve are case points on that fact” he said the last dryly but it seemed to fall on deaf ears.

“So either I was left somewhere with a dangerous object as a small infant on accident? Or someone was purposely exposing me to a dangerous object and experimenting on me?” Skye asked him clearly upset and he nodded slowly. “I need some air,” she said standing up and running out the door and he winced because he knew she was running the risk of doing permanent damage to her hip. If she didn't feel the pain she couldn't tell she was hurting herself.

“Skye?!” Maria said chasing after her mate and he dropped his head into his hands.

“It’s not your fault Bruce,” Natasha said and he had completely forgotten the other woman was in the room.

“I know but it doesn’t make it any easier. When you do leave to go chase after the lead Maria had in her files?” he asked rubbing at his temples before standing up as well. The Other Guy was angry and though Bruce had control it was better to let him out in the Hulk Room to burn it off.

“Tonight now that I heard the results, because if she was experimented on, it means that the bastards can still be doing it and we need to shut them down hard. I’ll go check on them but you need to go Bruce, I’ll let Tony know to meet you in your room,” Natasha said pulling out her phone and he didn’t hesitate as he made his way to the elevator. He had control yes, but the Other Guy was no saint and he didn’t want to push it.

Maria ran out of the room with just enough time to see the elevator doors close. “JARVIS where is Skye heading?” she called out running for the emergency stairs.

“Miss Skye is on her way to your floor. Do you want me to stop her?” the AI asks as she starts running up the stairs.

“No let her go it will be her floor as well from now on” she said answering the AI as she finally reached their floors emergency stairway entrance. Opening the door she walked into a silent apartment but had a feeling where she would find Skye as she continued to their room and found the open balcony door. Pulling on a jacket she grabbed another for Skye from her closet before walking out onto the balcony.

For a moment she stops in the doorway and takes in the form of her clearly upset mate, even though she was upset she was still gorgeous. Skye was standing there with her arms extended and braced on
the balcony rail as her hair gently blew around her face. What they had heard was not easy for either of them to hear but she wasn’t about to let Skye try to deal with it herself.

Maria placed the jacket around Skye’s shoulders she gently kissed the back of her mates neck and wrapped her arms around the woman's smaller waist. They stood like that for a long time in silence watching the skyline as it slowly became afternoon turning to evening. Their exams and the results had taken most of the morning and the early afternoon and evening was fast approaching as they stood there, but she didn’t move.

"The more I learn about my past...I don't regret starting to look because I found you but a small part of me was hoping that it wouldn't read like some Greek tragedy. That maybe I had been loved at some point and something happened but it looks like from a very early age I was being used." Skye said her voice just above a whisper as she let go of the balcony and placed her arms above Maria’s, like she was trying to pull them even closer together and Maria tightened her hold.

"I don't know what I expected to find when I started to look for my birth parents but Baby, I'm scared what else you all will find out. What else am I going to have to face?" she paused and Maria could tell her mate was crying but also knew she wasn't done. "I don't know if I can deal with this..."

Maria kissed the side of Skye's head before whispering "You don't have to face this alone, not now and never again. I am here with you every step of the way. You are mine, I am yours and I am not going anywhere."

Skye turned around in her arms and buried her face into Maria’s chest. One arm held the woman close while the other started to run fingers through long hair trying to give comfort. They would get through this no matter what else was found but right now all she wanted to do is what she was doing in that moment holding Skye in her arms.

Natasha leaned with one shoulder against the doorframe watching Maria and Skye as they stood out on the balcony, a pair of arms circled her waist as Clint placed his chin on her other shoulder. “I take it, it didn’t go well.”

“You could say that,” she said with a snort as she leaned back into his warm body. “Bruce found a lot of anomalies in her blood, one is the reason for her crazy high pain tolerance. She shouldn’t be able to walk right now but she damn near ran out of Bruce’s office after the discussion.”
“Damn the 0-8-4?” he asked.

“Most likely exposed to something on accident or on purpose as an infant over a period of time. With everything going on with Skye’s blood work, I think Bruce is thinking on purpose and I think I have to agree with him there are too many anomalies. He was able to explain her pain tolerance, but he wasn’t sure about the other ones, he is waiting to talk to a geneticist friend of his to get an idea what we are dealing with.”

“I take it you want to leave tonight and see what we can find out instead of tomorrow night?” he asked.

“Yes, tonight because if she was experimented on, it means that the bastards can still be doing it and we need to shut them down hard and see if there are anymore like her to find and protect” Natasha answered softly thinking back to all those years ago, to Rayne and her being kidnapped. The bastard experimenting on her goddaughter as they tore apart the world trying to find her only to not get there in time.

The timeline was right but it had to be a coincidence or it could have been another group all together experimenting on children. There had been plenty of those groups over the years, hell she was the result of one of those groups.

“Am I the only one seeing coincidences?” Clint asked his voice rough and she knew that she wasn’t the only one remembering.

“No you aren’t” she said her voice broken as the thoughts of the past and their failure came to the top of her mind.

“Alright I’ll go and get a plane ready and go talk to Tony. After dinner okay?” he asked holding her tighter for a moment and she knew he was trying to reassure both of them that she was there and safe.

“Yeah after dinner is good, I’d like to have one group dinner before we need to leave again” she said before turning in Clint’s arms and softly kissing his lips.

“I’ll be back before dinner,” he whispered against her lips before pulling away and walking back out of the room. She knew he would get everything ready for them to leave she would just need to keep an eye on the Maria and Skye. Turning back around she assumed her position against the door as she
watched Skye turn around in Maria’s arms and buried her face into her mate’s chest.
Chapter 15

Dinner was filled with laughter and smiles as the eclectic bunch of superheroes all sat down to eat as playful banter was exchanged and stories were told. Tony's stories usually were from his drunken days before he met Pepper and she started settling him down. There were stories about the beginning of him becoming Ironman and about some of his experiments gone wrong with some hilarious results. There were also stories of him meeting Bruce and then Bruce and Pepper meeting for the first time.

Clint's stories have Natasha in them but they usually also included Melinda and Phil and they are more often than not about the trouble the two couples use to get into in between or during missions and how Fury use to threaten to let them rot the next time before bailing them out. Occasionally Natasha will correct Clint or they will argue about how something actually happened, and sometimes Maria chimed in because the story was from her rookie days. Mainly though Maria seemed content to sit back, listen and laugh as she held Skye’s hand.

Skye listened to the stories since it was a side of two people she secretly wished were here with them because they deserved to be there. She wouldn’t have this if May and Phil hadn't given her a second chance, if they hadn’t decided that she was worth helping. Skye leaned her head against Maria’s shoulder, taking in the family like atmosphere that this group had and letting herself believe that everything would work out. Soon though dinner was done and Clint, Natasha, Maria and herself retreated back to Maria's apartment. Maria and her had cuddled up on the couch while the other couple sat on the coffee table looking at them.

“You two are leaving, aren’t you?” Skye asked as she felt long fingers start to run through her hair and she let herself lean into the touch to reassure herself that Maria was at least still there. She was shocked to realize that she had become attached to Natasha and Clint in the short time she knew them and didn’t like they were going somewhere dangerous to help her. Intellectually she knew that they could handle themselves and that it was a part of their jobs but it still didn’t mean she liked it. This part of her forming attachments of any kind was not something she was use to, she wanted to blame it on the bonding with Maria but knew that wasn't fully true. No, the attachments started with Phil and May if she was honest but her mate trusting these people did make it easier for her to trust them. That and maybe she was so tired of fighting and doing everything alone that she was willing to give them all a chance, maybe this time she wouldn't be abandoned the minute things got rough.

“Yes we are детеныш, but we will only be a call away if you two need anything” Natasha said reaching forward to grip her hands. “After today I think it is even more important that Clint and I chase down this lead.”

“You think Skye wasn’t the only one?” Maria asked letting her fingers run through Skye’s hair as
she watched her two older friends exchange a look. She knew that look, they were deciding what they could say and couldn’t and watched as Clint shrugged.

“You always leave it up to me,” Natasha huffed out.

“You know if it was left up to me I’d just say it, you are the spymaster not me” Clint shrugged.

“To answer your question we know Skye wasn’t the only one” Natasha paused and Maria could tell she was fighting not to show the haunted look she had when stuff reminded her of her own childhood. Maria watched as Clint reached over and gripped her free hand. “We broke up an operation around the time Skye was born that was experimenting on infants. If it is the same people or a whole different operation I don’t know but we need to get on this to make sure it isn’t still happening.”

“What happened to the others?” Skye forced herself to ask and watched as a haunted look passed over Natasha and Clint’s faces. Her hand was being squeezed and she realized that Natasha was still holding her hand and she squeezed back. “I’m the only survivor, aren’t I?”

“If it is the same operation we had shut down at that time then….that we know of, yes you are the only survivor. But I promise you if there are others we will find them and help them” Natasha said softly and Skye watched as the haunted look was replaced by one of determination and she almost felt sorry for the poor bastards at the other end of this woman’s wrath...almost.

“Please, be careful тетушка and дядя. This is unsanctioned so you know what that means, call me if you need anything and I’ll do what I can” Maria said with worry evident in her voice.

“We will маленькая племянница,” Clint said in a teasing voice trying to lighten the mood only to get elbowed by Natasha “Ow! Damn it babe that hurt” he whined causing everyone to laugh.

“Keep us informed if anything changes but we will be in touch” Natasha said standing before kissing the top of their heads. Clint mirrored her actions before they walked to the elevator and disappeared.

They sat like that for a while, Maria running her fingers through Skye's hair as they both just relaxed into each other's presence. "We should try to get some rest, Bruce is going to want to start your PT tomorrow."
"What are we going to do if I can't go back right away?" Skye asked not liking the idea of being away from her team for so long but also not liking the thought she would soon have to leave Maria.

"Honestly I don't know if we pull you away for special assignment that paints a target on you. If we let it be known you were injured someone can use those injuries against you and hurt you worse in the future" Maria said fighting off the urge to go protective of her mate which she knew wouldn’t be appreciated.

"Neither is an ideal story but we are going to have to figure it out. I want to be an agent and I will need this hip healed to do that" Skye said turning in Maria's arms looking at her mate.

"Are you sure Skye? This is a very dangerous life. If you want this I'll support you. I just want you to be sure because once you start down this road you will make enemies and they will never give up" Maria said as her blue eyes searched Skye’s brown eyes, “I want you to make sure this is what you want and not what you think is expected of you.”

"I'm sure Maria, you all are the good guys and I think it's time for me to make a stand especially with what we have learned in the last few days."

"Then we will put it out there you are undergoing agent candidate evaluations. Even if the PT doesn't need more time I'd like having you home for a little bit longer" Maria said the last bit softly afraid she might spook Skye with the ‘H’ word.

“Home?” Skye asks. Brown eyes meet the blue of her mate but this time she is the one searching for something. She isn't sure what she is looking for but a part of believes she found it as that one word gives her a strange feeling in her chest because she never had a home, at least not in the traditional sense. The orphanages or the foster homes had never been home, they honestly made the word leave a bitter taste in her mouth for years as she was growing up. The hospital, rising tide or her van had never been home, they had been places to lay down her head, nothing more.

The BUS was starting to feel like it could be home but it was missing something, Phil and May were making it a somewhat home for her as they had taken her on. They were honestly the closest things she had to role models and if Maria thought of them as her parents then maybe they were her in-laws in a way. That was a strange thought but it led her back to the realization that all those places didn’t have Maria and that was all the difference.

“I think I like the sound of that” Skye said as she slowly she let her hand touch Maria's face letting her thumb brush over lips before she leant up and kissed them. The angle they were at wasn't the best and she suddenly needed more contact so without breaking off the kiss she straddled Maria’s lap on
the couch. At first the kiss was gentle as she licked Maria's lower lip asking for entrance it soon deepened and turned into something more.

A hand snaked under her shirt resting just above her right hip over her soulmark as her own hands pulled Maria's shirt from her waistband but didn't stop there as she broke off the kiss removing the shirt only start the kiss again as soon as she tossed the shirt somewhere behind the couch. Her hands seeked out skin to skin contact as one rested above Maria's soulmark while the other ghosted across abs and the ribs.

Maria felt the absence of her shirt as a small hand ghosted across her abs and up her ribs. Moaning into the kiss she broke it off reaching for the hem of Skye’s shirt, lifting it over the other woman’s head and tossing it to the side before going back to kissing Skye. She felt her mates smaller hands return to the side of her ribs as they slowly trailed upwards before cupping her breast through her bra. Small delicate fingers started testing the edge of her bra and groaned before breaking off the kiss and holding her mates smaller hands in her own.

They struggled to catch their breaths as Maria held their hands against her frantically beating heart. Leaning forward she rested her head against Skye’s forehead. “No further tonight, sweetheart. Your hip needs a few more days to heal and I don’t want to hurt you and you not feel it.”

“She then I am going to need a very cold shower,” Skye grumbled as she moved her head and dropped it onto Maria’s shoulder.

“You and I both sweetheart, you and I both.” Maria said as she held her mate for a few more minutes against her before picking up Skye as she stood up from the couch. “Come on you first in the bathroom, then me and then bed.”

Skye let the cold water cascade over her tired and sore muscles as she let the towers awesome water pressure wash away all the sweat from that mornings physical therapy/training session or what she called the ‘PTT of Doom’ in her mind, that had finished moments before. Her muscles would probably appreciate warm or hot water at the moment but her ever increasing hormones were demanding the almost near frigid water. The morning after Natasha and Clint had gone in search of information from her past Maria had woken her up at the butt crack of dawn to start doing Tai-Chi out on the balcony. After Tai-Chi and a gorgeous sunrise she’d rather have spent curled up with her mate on one of the chaise lounges, she had been dragged to the towers gym where Maria had continued her hand to hand training.

Two days later of wrestling on mats with Maria with little to no clothing between them and she was ready to blow as frustratingly her mate had not let them get past first base in any of their make out sessions or the few stolen kisses they were able to steal throughout the last few day. She knew she
wasn’t the only one feeling the frustration because Tony last night had teased the two of them at dinner about using all the cold water and to just do it already. The comment earned Tony a double head slap from his two mates as they glared at him and told them to ignore him.

How Maria was so in control she had no fucking idea, she wanted to scream in frustration because if she was feeling the itch beneath her skin all the time then so was Maria. The touch bond they shared was pushing for them to complete it and this insane need to keep touching Maria was driving her slowly insane. Though the torture hadn’t stopped there, oh no after morning training Bruce would join her to go through strength training on her legs and hip area while Maria went to go take her cold shower and just the thought of Maria in the shower was enough to drive her to distraction.

When she came back out Skye would be sent in to shower which is where she was now totally and utterly frustrated. Next she knew would be weapons training on the firing range as her mate tried to push as much knowledge and skill on guns and other assorted weaponry into her head. If Maria’s need to make sure was safe wasn’t totally endearing the way the woman’s body pressed up against hers as she corrected her stance on the various weapons left her a puddle of warm goo.

Another two or more hours later and Skye was heading for another cold shower as Maria usually had to take a call from Fury around that time to update him on any information they had been able to decipher on all the data she had been collecting trying to find all the dirty agents. The rest of the afternoon was usually spent with Skye and Maria huddled around files their bodies touching as they tried to make sense of what they were seeing.

One room in the huge apartment turned out to be an office of sorts for Maria to use when she was at the tower. The overly large room had a desk with a very comfortable desk chair that sat back to another entrance to their balcony. Another wall was home to another large black leather couch while the wall opposite had a large whiteboard and corkboard combo that had all their notes on them. Their thinking behind this method was to get an overall visual of the madness of the notes that Maria had compiled and to see if there was a pattern or a common link.

This list of confirmed dirty agents kept growing as well as the possibly dirty agents was growing steadily now that she was helping Maria run even more in depth background checks with JARVIS awesome computer speed back up. Though this time was suppose to be spent by them getting to know each other neither of them would let their needs get between the urge they had to protect each other and their ever growing family and to do all that though they needed to figure this out.

Family that was a strange concept for her but Maria was her mate, her perfect match that looked at her like she was the most beautiful thing in the whole world. The person who held her at night when she woke up silently, shaking and scared from the nightly night terrors that have plagued her for years. Maria never pushed or asked what it was she saw, she wasn’t ready to talk about it but she knew if she did she wouldn’t be judged.
Last night she had woken up to Maria thrashing next to her clearly in the throes of her own nightmares but as soon as she called out her name she had woken sitting up with a gun from light only knew where in her hand. Skye had slowly reached out and pushed the gun down and away from their bedroom door as hard blue eyes searching for threats slowly came back to the present. With her hand still on the gun she waited till Maria looked at her with haunted eyes before she took away the gun checking the safety and put it on her nightstand.

She didn’t ask, she didn’t push she just opened up her arms and let Maria fall into them. Her fingers had run through Maria’s hair as the slightly older woman silently cried into her chest and understood that they both had grown up silently crying to themselves but never seeking comfort. Not for the first time she wondered what drove her mate to do what she does, she knows there is a story there but after the haunted look in Maria’s eyes she decides to wait till Maria tells her.

Eventually Maria had passed out in her arms but Skye stayed awake running her hand through her mate's short hair and watched her sleep. Just before sunrise Maria woke up confused at first but then clearly remembering the night before as she then leaned into Skye’s touch. They had laid like that for a few minutes as the sky continued to lighten outside before her mate had sighed and sat up in bed. Shaking her head to clear it she finishes rinsing off before stepping out the shower to finally get dressed and start her day.

Maria watched as Skye disappeared into the gym showers to take what she knew would be a cold shower. Light help her she felt the itch beneath her skin like a fire and was fighting the urge to just go into the shower with her mate. Taking a deep breath she closed her eyes as she used a technique that she had read years ago in a book and it seemed to help better than any of the other control techniques she tried over the years. She pictured a flame in her mind and threw all her emotions into it, slowly becoming calmer, more in control of her body and her urges.

Opening her eyes she turned to Bruce who was packing up his gym bag she knew that the mild mannered doctor was soon to head to the Hulk-Out room to train before he would return to his work in the labs trying to make heads and tails of Skye’s latest blood work. She caught the smirk and eye roll that he was hiding from her as he packed his bag and she stamped on the urge to kick him in the shins. He knew what she was waiting for him to say, what she needed him to say so she could stop torturing herself and her tiny mate.

“You really want me to say it?” he asked in his dry humor.

“Bruce please,” she said and if it had a begging quality to it she was totally choosing to ignore it.
“For heavens sake Maria, go be with your mate. As far as I can tell that hip is as good as it is going to get. She needs to keep up with the exercises that I gave her but you two can get to whatever activities you need to get to…” Bruce finished exasperated with her as he threw up his hands in the air as he walked for the gym exit.

“I will keep Tony distracted for today and tonight just please no public spaces. I don’t want to walk in on you two like I occasionally do with Clint and Natasha” he called out as he walked out of the room.

“Don’t worry getting caught is not one of my foibles” she called out as she pulled out her phone and texted pepper. <We are a go for the plan. Thank you!> She knew that Pepper would be down here soon to take Skye out shopping and for some proper pampering till it was time for her to surprise her mate with a somewhat traditional first date. Maria was the secretly hopeless romantic type and had wanted to make tonight special for Skye, especially since she had the impression that her mate never been well and truly romanced.

Maria watched as Skye came out of the locker room still somewhat wet from her shower as her white t-shirt clung to her body in certain places and her hands were running in through her hair trying to get it in its usual ponytail or braid for weapons training. She felt her eyes linger on the places where the white t-shirt clung to her mates curves as she stepped forward surprising Skye by kissing her. For a second her mate didn’t respond to the kiss but soon she was opening her mouth to Maria as they slowly backed up to the wall just behind Skye.

She pressed Skye’s body into the wall her hand automatically pulling out the t-shirt from pants as her hands sought skin to skin contact with her mate and she wasn’t the only one as her own shirt was untucked and she felt Skye’s hand over her soulmark. Her left hand made contact with her mates soulmark and for a moment the itch under her skin eased as her other hand gripped Skye’s hips before lifting her up enough to pin her to the wall with her own body as Skye’s legs wrapped around her waist.

Maria growled into the kiss before breaking it off to nip at her mate’s neck which caused a whimper and a tightening of the legs around her waist. She felt hands pulling at her shirt to get it off and her head cleared enough for her grab smaller hands in her own lacing their fingers together as she dropped her head to Skye’s shoulder breathing heavily.

“Damn it! Please Maria I can’t take much more and I know are feeling the itch worse than I am because of my stupid high pain tolerance” Skye whispered in her ear before sucking on her earlobe. She felt her knees almost buckle and forced herself to straighten out her legs before she dropped them both on their asses. Maria chuckled and groaned as the sudden jerky movement caused Skye to squeak and grip her tighter.
Lifting up her head she kissed the underside of Skye’s jaw and quickly her lips before looking into her brown eyes. “Go out with me tonight, on a real date. Just us, no distractions.”

“You know you don’t have to wine and dine me, baby” Skye said as brought both of their joined hands to a soulmark each.

“I know you don’t expect it, but I want to do this sweetheart. You deserve to be romanced and shown how special you are. Please let me do this and I promise” she paused as she leaned in to whisper in Skye’s ear “whatever you want to happen will happen tonight.” Maria felt her mate shiver in her arms and couldn’t help the smirk as she nipped just below Skye’s ear causing another shiver.

“Tease” Skye moaned.

“Not if it is a promise” Maria said before she kissed at the small bite as her hands went back to Skye’s hips to support her as stood on her feet again.

“I’m holding you to that promise” Skye said wagging her finger at Maria and she had the urge to bite the finger that she stomped down on because if they started up again she wouldn’t be able to stop.

“Good, now Pepper should be here any moment to take you out and do the whole pampering and shopping thing” Maria said and raised her finger to Skye’s lips to stop her protest. “Let me do this, please. You deserve this and so much more” she said softly and smiled as Skye nodded her consent just as Pepper walked into the gym.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Sex scene in this chapter.

Maria hadn’t been this nervous in years but tonight was her first date with Skye and possibly so much more she thought as she watched her image in the mirror reach up and touch her lips. She traveled back in her mind to just that morning, to the kiss she had shared with Skye in the gym. Her pulse quickening before she took a deep breath trying to take back control of her overly charged libido, it wouldn’t be good if she jumped Skye the moment she saw her mate but she knew the burn just under her skin was just this side of painful after being separated for most of the day.

Hands twitched at her sides as she fought the urge to smooth away the imaginary wrinkles on the tailored black slacks and blue dress shirt that hugged all her curves. Her body was tall, lean and muscular but she was still a woman with some curves and the clothes she wore tonight emphasised that despite their masculinity. A well tailored suit or uniform was comfortable, familiar to her and she wore it like battle armor against her nerves. It seemed at the moment her nerves were winning but the war wasn’t over just yet, no that would be determined when she saw her mate in a few minutes.

Skye had left hours ago with Pepper for what her red headed friend had called a day of pampering and shopping and she wondered what the results were. Her tiny mate would be beautiful no matter what but her imagination was running wild all day as she had gotten everything ready for their evening. Maria had cooked tonight’s dinner and had transformed the balcony into an oasis of candlelight and soft music.

Taking another deep breath she turned away from the mirror and grabbed the red rose that sat on the dining room table before leaving the apartment to go pick up Skye from Pepper’s floor. Maria loved Pepper but her friend has insisted that if she were to help Skye get ready for the date then Maria would have to come up to her shared floor with Tony and Bruce and pick her up. Her reasoning was one it would make it seem like a legitimate date and also because she wanted to see the reaction of the two women when they first saw each other.

“JARVIS can you let Pepper and Skye know that I am on my way, please?” Maria asked as walked into the elevator staring at the red rose in her hand as it spun between two of her fingers. She was giving Skye a single red rose tonight while there were rose petals scattered everywhere throughout the apartment and on the balcony.

“Maria don’t you look nice, hot date tonight?” Tony teased her smirking from the couch cuddled up
next to Bruce as she walked through the elevator doors up into the living room area of Pepper, Tony and Bruce’s floor. She should have known that the man would tease her but she didn’t really give a damn as she watched Pepper first walk out of the hallway and gave her a small smile before Maria swore her brain short circuited at the moment Skye walked into her field of vision.

Her mate wore a red and black corset gothic style dress that left very little to Maria’s imagination as her eyes traced every curve from head to toe. One side of the black skirt was pinned up to show a tanned leg that was wearing a red pump that was decorated with black lace. Maria fought down the urge she had at the moment to cross the distance to run her fingers in the dark hair that was partially up in a bun while the rest framed her mates red lips that were begging to be kissed as they curved into a smile.

“Like what you see?” Skye teased as she slowly walked towards Maria throwing a little bit of sway to her hips.

“You know I do” Maria answered honestly her voice just a bit husky as she held out the rose for Skye to take and watched as her mate took the rose and brought it to her nose to smell. Maria brought Skye’s other hand to her lips kissing her knuckles and smirked at the blush the small action caused.

“I want her home by eleven Hill” Tony said from the couch before he was smacked by his two mates.

“Ignore him, go and have fun you two” Pepper said smiling that soft smile Maria knew her friend had for those small special moments and she couldn’t help but agree that this was one of those moments. Nodding to her friends she offered Skye her arm in a true gentlemanly fashion and led them into the elevator.

The doors closed before Maria pressed Skye against the wall and kissed her gently, slowly. She wanted to do so much more but she was determined to give Skye the romance she deserved, so she pulled back from the kiss and smiled as her blue eyes met pupil blown brown eyes. “You are so beautiful Skye,” Maria whispered into her mates ear as the elevator doors opened back into their apartment.

Dinner had gone amazingly well as they sat there talking about everything and nothing in the candlelight as the stars shined above them. They had slowly drifted closer and closer as Maria had gotten up to retrieve the different courses. She stood up again, kissing Skye with a brush of their lips before taking the dessert plates back to the kitchen.
Coming back to the door of the balcony she loses her breath for a moment as the candlelight flickers casting Skye’s face in shadow and the beauty of the moment isn’t lost on her. Skye’s eyes are turned upwards staring at the stars and she knows that when Skye was a child when she felt lost or alone she would stare at the stars for hours. It was the reason her tiny mate had chosen to take the name Skye when she had reinvented herself. Maria’s nerves are back but the moment reminds her of a song and she gets an idea. “JARVIS?” she whispered quietly in the doorway.

“Yes Maria?” the AI asked.

“Can you play Sixx:A.M.-Stars please?” Maria asked and stepped onto the balcony as the opening chords of the song start to play. The change in music causes Skye to look towards her as she holds out her hand “May I have this dance?”

Skye gave her a small smile before she placed her hand in Maria’s hand and Maria pulls the tiny woman up out of the chair. It wasn’t a perfect song to slow dance to but it fit them as Maria wrapped one arm around Skye’s waist resting one hand just above where her mark sits on Skye’s hip. She laced her fingers with Skye’s hand as she brings their joined hands to rest just above her mates mark on her own skin.

*Do you wanna go to heaven tonight?*

*Leave the evidence far behind*

*Say alright, alright*

*Do you wanna be my lover tonight?*

*We can leave everybody else behind*

*Say alright, alright*


*Do you wanna see heaven tonight?*

*Underneath those lights you will look so beautiful*

*Do you wanna see the stars before they fall,*

*See the stars before they fall?*


*Do you wanna be my love tonight?*

*And for all my life it could be so wonderful*
Do you wanna see the stars before they fall,
See the stars before they fall?

Maybe we should just run away
Never look back as the world decays
Say alright, alright
Nothing matters ever since the day
You pulled the pin in my heart like a hand grenade
Say alright, alright

Skye’s other hand slowly caressed up her neck then gently cupped her cheek as they danced. Brown eyes searched her blue eyes and she wondered what Skye was looking for but didn’t hide as she let the love she felt for this woman shine in her eyes. The words written on their bodies was a promise that neither of them would ever be alone again and she loved and admired the woman in her arms.

Do you wanna see heaven tonight?
Underneath those lights you will look so beautiful
Do you wanna see the stars before they fall,
See the stars before they fall?

Do you wanna be my love tonight?
And for all my life it could be so wonderful
Do you wanna see the stars before they fall,
See the stars before they fall?

(Oh)
Fall out of the atmosphere
Lets run
Run until we disappear and
Never let them come and get you

Never let them take away our stars

Maria sings along to the last chorus of the song as she leans their foreheads together. Her arms pulling Skye even closer to her as she tries to convey all the feelings she has for the woman in her arms.

“Do you wanna see heaven tonight?

Underneath those lights you will look so beautiful

Do you wanna see the stars before they fall,

See the stars before they fall?

Do you wanna be my love tonight?

And for all my life it could be so wonderful

Do you wanna see the stars before they fall,

See the stars before they fall?”

After singing the last chorus she leans in and captures Skye’s lips with her own in a gentle kiss. Maria groans as she feels her mate’s hand as it wraps around her neck and starts playing with the hair at the nape of her neck.

Before they fall (oh)

Before they fall (oh)

Before they fall (oh)

Do you wanna see the stars before they fall? (oh)

Before they fall (oh)

Before they fall (oh)

Before they fall (oh)
Do you wanna see the stars before they fall?

As the song finishes the kiss becomes more as she nips at her mates lower lip asking for entrance and is rewarded by a moan from Skye as their tongues meet. With difficulty Maria breaks off the kiss and starts to playfully nip a trail to her mates ear. “I love you Skye,” she whispers and holds the woman tighter as the smaller woman shudders in her arms.

“I love you too Maria,” Skye whispers before she starts to press kisses to Maria’s neck the sensation making her knees feel weak but she starts to move them backwards towards the balcony door that leads to their bedroom.

“I want to make love to you, make you mine forever” Maria whispers huskily and is forced to catch Skye as her knees buckle but she easily lifts her up bridal style. “Do my words affect you?” she teased.

“You know they do, now take me to our bed and make me yours so I can make you mine” Skye said before she pulled Maria’s head down to kiss her.

Maria didn’t have to be told twice before she carried Skye the rest of the way and placed her mate back on her feet in their room. She gently turned Skye around the face away from her as she slowly took in the back side of the corset. Leaning forward she kissed the junction of shoulder and neck from one side to the other as she first wrapped her arms slowly around Skye’s middle pulling her up against her own body. Her hands slowly trailing up to cup Skye’s breast through the corset, gently squeezing as she heard Skye moan.

“You are so beautiful sweetheart. I’ve been wanting to do this all night,” she whispered as one of her hands slowly trailed back around and pulled on the string tied like a bow as she slowly unwrapped her present. Painfully slow the dress seemed to loosen it’s hold on her mates body as Maria put her long fingers to use as she undid the ties and hooks holding her mate in the dress. It probably would have gone faster but she couldn’t stop pressing kisses to the exposed skin of Skye’s shoulder and neck.

“Please, Maria quit teasing” Skye whined as she pressed her body back towards Maria’s body and grinded her ass against Maria’s front.

“Oh I’m not teasing, you haven’t even seen teasing yet” she growled in Skye’s ear as she finally got the last clip undone and watched as the dress slowly dropped to the floor. The dress dropping
revealed that Skye hadn’t been wearing anything but a black thong underneath the dress.

Pulling Skye backwards she left the dress and the shoes in a pile on the floor as she pulled their bodies flushed against one another. Her hands ghosted over the exposed skin of ribs before she gently caressed for the first time her mate’s breast and nipples skin to skin. She rolled nipples been fingers and thumbs, feeling them harden almost instantly and is rewarded with a breathy “Maria please” being moaned.

“Turn around” she ordered as she let her hands trail downwards cupping Skye’s ass as they kissed again. Guiding her mate backwards she got them next to the bed and gently lowered her mate down onto it without even breaking the kiss. Pressing their bodies together she grinded her hips down into Skye’s and smirked at the moan that escaped the other woman’s lips as she thrust her hips back towards Maria.

Breaking off the kiss she trailed kisses slowly down Skye’s neck that were a combination of lips, tongue and teeth as she tried to touch every exposed inch of flesh. A part of her wanted to rush to the prize but she forced herself to take her time with the woman beneath her. Skye deserved to be worshipped and shown how beautiful she really was and if she drove her mate insane with the pleasure of it all, all the better.

Taking one hard nipple in her mouth she let her teeth graze across it before kissing it better with her tongue and switching to the other nipple. She went back and forth for several minutes as she heard Skye become more aroused as her fingers ran through Maria’s hair just putting enough pressure on it to make Maria moan into Skye’s breasts. Every sigh or moan she heard from Skye was sending shocks of electricity to her own pussy and she felt like she was going to orgasm just from the sounds alone.

After several minutes and some light pushing on her head Maria finally started kissing her way down Skye’s body. As she knelt at the foot of the bed she got the first whiff of the smell that was purely Skye and it made her mouth water. Hooking her fingers into the sides of Skye’s thong she kissed the inside of Skye’s thighs as she waited till Skye lifted up her hips and started to slowly pull the underwear down and off. She kissed her way back up both of Skye’s legs before coming back to where she wanted to be.

Maria paused for a moment as she looked up and along Skye’s body, the image alone was enough to cause a flood of wetness between her legs and she wanted nothing more than to finally lean in and taste her mate. Looking past the gorgeous creature before her she looked into the pupil blown brown eyes of her mate seeking permission. Skye sat up slightly on one arm and reached down with the other to gently caress Maria’s face and Maria leaned into the touch.

“Please my love,” Skye whispered “I want you and only you. Neither of us will ever be alone
Maria felt a lone tear escape from her eye as soft fingers wiped it away as she kissed the palm of the hand holding her face. “Lean back sweetheart” Maria said barely recognizing her own voice as she watched Skye lay back on the bed. Gently she placed her left hand underneath her mate’s soulmark on her right hip before leaning forward and taking the first taste of her mate.

The taste exploded on her tongue and she moaned into her mate’s pussy causing the other woman to gasp and curse above her. Skye’s hand was back in her hair as she continued to lick and suck dragging out sounds from her tiny mate that made her even more turned on. Maria moved her lips to suck and lap at Skye’s clit while her right hand pressed into the entrance of her mate’s pussy. The intrusion causing her mate to grip Maria’s hair almost painfully so she kept her fingers still but continued to lick and suck at her clit.

She waited till she felt Skye relax around her fingers before starting to move them slowly in and out as she curled them upwards looking for that certain spot. The “Oh fuck me” from a gasping Skye told her she had found the spot and she doubled her efforts. It didn’t take long as her efforts soon had a cursing, shaking, gasping mate screaming her name “Maria, fuck oh fuck me, there don’t stop, don’t stop, please, please oh fuck, fuck me.”

Every gasp, every pull of her hair, every curse, every tremor, and every scream of her name drove Maria wild as she kept up the movements driving the woman that she was bonding herself to for life through one orgasm after another. The burning underneath her skin was almost painful because she needed the release of her own orgasm to complete the bond but she wanted Skye to get as much pleasure as she could from this before they completed the bond on her end because once they did it would snap in place and they would be exhausted.

Maria finally started to slow down as she felt every muscle in Skye’s body seize up one final time before she went limp. Even passed Skye’s body was still clenched around her fingers so she waited trying to catch her breath as she lent her head against her mate’s thighs. Once her mate’s pussy muscles relaxed enough she gently pulled out her fingers. Carefully she crawled up onto the bed and pulled her mate into her arms and waited as her mate slowly came back to the land of the living.

“Welcome back, beautiful” Maria whispered into her ear as she opened her brown eyes trying to get them to focus as she felt her mate’s thumb caresses her soulmark. She looked up into the pupil blown blue eyes of Maria as she slowly reached out and pulled the woman down for her to kiss. Skye groaned into her mate’s mouth when she tasted herself on Maria’s tongue and gently sucked on it to get more of the taste.

“You are way too dressed” Skye said as pulled back from the kiss taking in the clothes her mate was still wearing. She had wanted to strip Maria out of the shirt and pants since the moment she saw them
earlier that evening and now she got to do just that. Pulling Maria down for a kiss she used one of her new found sparring skills and flipped them and placing Maria beneath her.

“Nice move,” Maria teased from beneath her as she felt hands exploring her naked body. Skye grabbed the roaming hands and pinned them onto the bed while kissing Maria’s lips. The need for air finally made her break off the kiss as she slowly kissed down her mate’s long next before biting and sucking at the junction of neck and shoulder. “Skye please” she heard Maria beg as she squirmed beneath Skye’s body.

Letting go of the hickey from between her teeth she gently kissed it before kissing her way back up just below Maria’s ear. “Relax my love, let me take care of you” she whispered and felt Maria shiver beneath her. Smirking she sat up straddling the still clothed body of her mate and she slowly started to unbutton Maria’s dress shirt. Her left hand resting instantly on the soulmark on her mate’s chest as she felt Maria’s hand once again on her hip.

With one finger she gently traced the edges of her mates silk laced bra watching as both nipples went hard underneath the material. Slowly she reached for the front clasp of the bra but stopped before looking into her mate’s blue eyes and only moving to unclasp it once she got a whispered “Please.” The bra fell away and Skye felt her mouth watering at the sight below her as full round breasts were revealed.

Sliding down lower she brought her mouth to a nipple while one of her hands played with the other nipple. Every graze of her teeth on a tight hard nipple had Maria gasping while every suck had her sighing and every lick had her mate’s hips bucking against her own. “Skye, please. I’m not going to last much longer if you keep teasing,” Maria warning was gasped as her hands were now fisting in the sheets beneath them.

Skye continued to lick and suck at Maria’s nipples as she let her right hand trail down soft skin that was pulled tight over a pair of six pack abs and her fingers quickly unbuttoned and unzipped her mates pants. Kissing her way back up Maria she nipped at her mates earlobe as her hand slowly found its way down and under Maria’s underwear where it was met with a warm wetness. “Oh my love you are so wet. Is that all because of me?” she whispered as she let her finger circle Maria’s clit. “God yes, Skye please. Please don’t stop, right there” Maria whimpered and the sound made Skye wet between her legs all over again. Lightly she slid her hand down lower and slipped two fingers deep into Maria and captured her mate’s lips with her own. Curling her fingers she slowly pulled out of her mate and found the spot she was looking for by the audible moan that was released from her mate into their kiss.

Straddling one of Maria’s legs while pressing one of hers against Maria’s center giving her just that extra pressure behind her fingers as they kept moving in and out of the warm wetness of her mates
pussy. Pulling away from the kiss she had been sharing with Maria she let her left hand start to caress and pinch at her mate’s nipples as her breast bounced with every movement.

Skye added another finger into Maria and her thumb start to tap a rhythm against Maria’s clit. “Oh fuck me. Right there, don’t stop, please baby no more teasing” Maria whimpered and gripped and tore at the bed sheets below them. She felt it in the way Maria’s muscles tightened on her fingers with every push that her mate was close so she dragged her fingernails down to her mates soul mark and pressed her left hand to it.

Moments later Maria was coming on her fingers as her mate screamed her name but Skye didn’t stop if anything she increased her rhythm. The skin below her hand that was on top of Maria’s soulmark felt like it was burning but she knew that was their physical bond finally snapping into place. She kept up the rhythm of her fingers inside Maria until the woman literally sat up with the strength of her last orgasm. Skye captured her mates lips with her own swallowing the scream that came from Maria in one last kiss before her mate collapsed passed out on the bed.

Catching her breath Skye pushed passed the weight of the bond as it laid across both of their skins finally completed. Slowly she removed her fingers from Maria and brought them up to her mouth to get a taste of her mate and if they weren’t so spent from both of them having multiple orgasms Skye would want to go to the source of the taste. Instead she licked and sucked her fingers clean as she watched Maria’s passed out form.

Getting a taste from the source would have to wait though for now, right now she needed to strip down Maria and try to get her mate fully into their bed. Their bed, that was a new concept for her but staring down at her mate as she slowly came to she knew she would have it no other way. Leaning down she gently kissed Maria as she woke back up and was surprised as Maria sat them up and lifted her up off the bed. Skye wrapped her legs around Maria’s waist and felt her mate growl into her mouth.

Maria broke off the kiss as Skye felt herself being gently laid back onto the bed and surprised again that the covers had been moved. Sliding over she laid on her side as she watched Maria finally remove her clothing “Like what you see?” Maria asked as she stood there finally naked before Skye and she let her eyes wander every visible inch of her mate.

“You know I do,” Skye said as she held out a hand that Maria took as she crawled into bed with her. They kissed again a slow languid thing before Maria laid on her back and pulled Skye on top of her. Skye rested her head on one shoulder as her hand found her mates soulmark and rested on it. She felt it as Maria’s long fingers started to run through her hair.

“I love you.”
“I love you too.”
Chapter 17

A constant ringing sound disturbed his sleep as Coulson reached over and grabbed his cell phone from the bedside table trying not to disturb Melinda as she slept against his naked chest. Muscle memory had him sliding his thumb across his phones screen as he put it to his ear “Coulson.”

“Phil I need to reactivate your team I know I gave you all till Monday but we got a lead on Centipede and I need you to track it down” Fury said as Phil fully became awake.

“We’re down a team member. Is Skye going to meet us and if not what’s the cover story?” Phil asked as Melinda rolled out of bed and started to get dressed. He admired the naked form of his soulmate and wished they had the extra few days that both of them had been looking forward to.

“As of my last update from Maria, Banner hasn’t cleared her just yet for field work. So we are going to put it out that she is undergoing agent candidate evaluations which is partially true.”

“Understood we will assemble the team,” Coulson said sitting up as well and pulling on clothes.

“Good details have been uploaded on your server” Fury said before hanging up the phone.

“Would it kill him to say goodbye, just once in his life” he said tossing the phone on the bed before tucking in his dress shirt and buckling his pants.

“Yes it would and you know it. Now I’ll go get the plane ready and you get to call the kids” Melinda said before pulling him by his tie that he just got on and kissing him. He reached out trying to pull her against him but she let go of his tie and took a few steps back before smirking.

“Damn it Melinda don’t tease me” he groaned as he watched her turn around and walk back out the door of their room.

Melinda closed the door to the cockpit and leaned against it using it as a shield between her and the rest of the plane that was full of well meaning agents. Phil was missing, Mike Peterson was dead and Hand was on her plane. She fought to take back control of her emotions that were coursing through her body threatening to cause her to act instead of thinking things through. Closing her eyes she took a deep breath and locked away all her fear and desperation into her center focusing them on the issue at hand, she needed to find Phil. She could not lose him again.
Hand was in charge of the investigation and she was a good agent but she was too straightforward, too by the book to be able to understand someone that seemed to think outside the box like Centipede did. Melinda couldn’t go and investigate on her own despite how much she wanted to in this moment because she needed to keep an eye on Hand to make sure in her unimaginative brain she didn’t fuck it all up. She needed someone on the outside but she couldn’t call Natasha and Clint, she’d been already ordered not to contact them since they were still not to know Phil was alive...Skye and Maria.

That was it, Skye and Maria could run down things and think outside of the box if she couldn’t have Natasha and Clint, they were the next best thing. Melinda hated calling them and disturbing the two new soulmates from their time together and she knew that Banner still hadn’t cleared Skye for active duty but she was desperate. Pulling out her phone she called Maria and hoped she wasn’t interrupting anything.

Maria groaned as her phone rang and swore under her breath as she tried to reach for the damn thing without waking Skye. Her fingertips kept just missing it and she was just about to try to scoot out from under Skye but her tiny mate had other ideas as she rolled over on top of Maria, straddling her lap as she grabbed the damn thing and put it in her hand.

"Not how I was hoping to be woken up this morning" Skye groaned as she leaned down pressing their very naked bodies together and nuzzled into Maria's neck.

"Hill" she said trying to bite back a moan as Skye started to nip at her neck.

“Maria..” a voice said and the tone of voice caused her to fully come awake. Skye must have sensed something was wrong because she sat up and looked at her with worried eyes.

“What's wrong?” Maria asked fearing the answer because she knew by that tone it wasn’t going to be good.

“Phil went missing on a mission last night, where we also lost another agent” Melinda told her and she could tell her mentor was barely holding on to herself at the moment.

“What happened?” Maria asked fighting to keep calm, to keep her head to the task at hand. She felt Skye press her hand against her mark in a sign of support and with her free hand she held the hand closer to her. Looking up into brown eyes she could see the worry and fear playing in her mates eyes and wished she could tell her that everything would be okay.
“We were recalled yesterday morning when Fury got a lead on Centipede, we were ambushed the first time around and barely got out of it because of Mike Peterson’s help. But they somehow got a hold of his son Ace and in a bid to protect his son we were going to do an exchange, Mike for Ace. Instead something went wrong and now Mike is dead, Phil is missing and we have no idea where Ace is.”

“Fuck Boss, what do you need? Do you need us there?” Maria asked as she started to plan things out in her head and she watched as Skye rolled off of her starting to pull out clothes for both of them.

“Hand is running the investigation but you know how she is, I need you and Skye to go over everything we have and look at it from a fresh angle. Maria I can’t lose him, not when we just got back together” Melinda admitted and Maria heard as her mentor, the woman she thought of as a mother, voice break a bit at the last sentence.

“Boss we will get him back, I promise. I’ll log in and we will start tracking things down on our end. Once we have any ideas we will let you know” Maria promised as she also started getting out of bed pulling on clothes as she talked.

“Thank you,” Melinda said and Maria could tell she was shutting off again after letting herself feel for just that little bit she just hoped her mentor didn’t lose herself again because of this.

“Mel you’re family to us and we protect our own. I’ll call back once we have something,” Maria said and quickly hung up the phone tossing it on the bed. She didn’t know what caused her to admit that to the woman but she knew deep down it was the right thing to say, even if it scared her to hell and back at the moment.

Closing her eyes she tried to control the shakes that she felt in her muscles as her fear of everything going on threatened to consume her. Could Centipede know the truth behind Phil’s recovery? Or did they just want to try to silence the lead investigator into their organization? Or was something else in play? She had too many fucking questions and it seemed lately she had no goddamn answers to any of them. It seemed like everything was at a tipping point and she had a bad feeling it was all connected.

She felt as Skye put her arms around her waist and pulled their bodies flush together. Instinctively she put her own arms around Skye’s back and buried her face into her mate’s hair breathing in her scent. The simple act of touching and holding her mate calmed her long enough for her to gain back control of her emotions. “It’s not good is it?” Skye asked.
“No. AC is missing and Mike Peterson is dead. SHIELD is looking for him but Mel wants someone outside of the system to look into it. She wants us to look at the evidence and the information on the mission and think outside the box to see what we can find” Maria said holding her mate and trying to comfort her as she took in the news. She felt the first body shudder before she even heard a sound from Skye as she cried almost silently in her arms.

They were no closer to finding Phil as they had combed through all the files, they were missing something, she knew it but she couldn’t put her finger on it. Skye watched as Maria paced in front of her as she sat on the couch, they were both feeling the pressure to think of something, anything. Her mate was worried, it was in the set of Maria’s shoulders and the way her hand kept going to the holster she had strapped to her thigh. Despite being in the tower they had already changed into their tactical suits and their weapons were packed and ready to go at a moments notice, well that was if they were able to find a damn lead.

Skye knew it was there they just weren't seeing it yet, but that was not surprising when all she wanted to do at the moment was worry about Phil and cry for Ace who was now an orphan. Ace that was it! He was suppose to be under protective custody while Mike underwent treatment and training from his time as a lab rat for Centipede. They had been so focused on finding Phil and dealing with Mike’s death that they hadn’t thought about what it meant for Centipede to have Ace in the first place. Grabbing her laptop on the table she furiously started to type as she hacked her way into SHIELD’s database looking for the order of protection and file on Ace’s protection detail.

“What is it?” Maria asked as she stopped pacing and watched as her mate started typing away with a look of concentration on her face. Hope filled her chest that Skye might have thought of something, anything to give them the lead they needed to find Phil.

“We have been looking at this the wrong way, we were so centered on finding AC and Mike being dead that we forgot that they somehow got a hold of Ace. So what happened to the agents that were assigned to protect him?”

“Fuck you’re right. So are the agents dead, or are they on our ever growing list of dirty agents?” Maria asked as she went up to the board of their main investigation. “Give me the names.”

“Hendrickson, Arnold.”

“Damn it, he is on the suspected and the other?” Maria asked.
“Smithson, Clarice”

“She is not on my dirty list or suspected list,” Maria said as she checked their third smaller list of agents that they had confirmed as much as they could to be clean. “She isn’t on any of the lists. Have we even started to check her out yet?” Maria asked as she stood in front of Skye.

“No she just graduated, she was a rookie this was her first real assignment” Skye said as she hacked into the woman’s personnel file and started to run her own personal program she designed the first day she started to help Maria on this investigation. The program she designed did three things; first it started kicking out documents and records into the printer so they had a paper trail to look at, second it started running facial recognition software looking for any video footage or images ever archived on the agent and third it started to start looking for any correlation between the known dirty agents and suspected dirty agents and the person they were investigating as well as any terrorist organization that SHIELD had on its radar.

While she was running her programs on Clarice Smithson she also started running a facial recognition on Arnold Hendrickson and Ace. It wasn’t long before she got a ping on Clarice’s facial recognition and pulling it up she cursed when she realized what it was for. “We can stop looking into Clarice, Chicago PD has a Jane Doe that facial recognition recognized as her. Damn she was found in a park with two to the chest, close range.”

“Can you pull the financials for Hendrickson again see if we missed anything or if there is anything new? Right now he is our only link at the moment on how Centipede got a hold of Ace. I need to call Fury and let him know we have another possible murdered agent on our hands.”

“I’ll pull it all out” Skye said as she pulled out the case file they already had going on Hendrickson out of the filing cabinet.

“Shadow Condition Alpha, call Fury, speakerphone” Maria said into her phone

“Hill what do you got?” Fury asked.

“We are looking into SHIELD 616 and Mike’s case from a different angle and we found something. Ace, Mike’s son was suppose to be in SHIELD protective custody. Of the two agents assigned to him we have one that was on the suspected dirty list that was sent to you on Friday and the other is most likely a Jane Doe that local leos found in a park dead of two gunshot wounds to the chest, close range.”
“God damn it,” Fury cursed and she heard him throw something at a wall through the phone. “Where?”

“Chicago. We can be there in less than an hour by Quinjet to confirm but I need someone else there other than Skye that I can trust.”

“Mockingbird is in Chicago at the moment between assignments, I’ll have her meet you at the Chicago airfield to pick you two up and Maria I want you to read her in.”

“On everything?” Maria asked silently hoping Fury was finally caving on trusting the people she knew she could trust. It also meant though that she would be the one to tell her friend that another of their friends was really alive.

“Everything” Fury said though it sounded like he was pained to say it.

“Fine but if I get tased because of this I’m kicking your ass next time I see you” Maria said and hung up on her boss.

Barbara ‘Bobbi’ Morse, call sign: Mockingbird sat parked at the edge of the airfield SHIELD used as an air base of operations and refuel point for the midwest region. Only an hour ago she had received a text from Fury telling her to grab her gear, pick up a package from personnel in the Chicago office and then to meet someone at the air base. No information on who she was to meet only to be there by noon and a subsequent text of don’t shoot the messenger what ever the hell that was suppose to mean. ‘Ambiguous text messages from your spy master boss for $200 please’ she thought as she watched a Quinjet park.

The back hatch of the Quinjet dropped down and she felt a smile cross her face, because she’d know that tall stalking brunette anywhere. Maria Hill had been one of her earlier field operations partners after graduating from the SHIELD academy and since Natasha Romanoff and Clint Barton had been made her S.O.’s. It had been awhile since they had worked together and Bobbi found herself looking forward to some possible girl time, heaven knows she needed a bitch fest after her latest disaster of an encounter with Hunter. He had been sweet but good god was he annoying and if they weren’t fucking each other into oblivion they were fighting and vice versa. She wished they would find their third soon because without them they fought like cats and dogs.

Bobbi found herself surprised when she saw a slightly shorter brunette, wearing aviators exit the plane behind her friend and that was when she noticed both women were in full on tactical gear.
‘What the hell is going on?’ she thought as she exited the SUV and flagged Maria down. Maria gave her a small smile but held up a hand for her to wait a moment and she found herself intrigued while she watched Maria bend down to say something in the other woman’s ear.

Something in their stances was screaming at her but she couldn’t put her finger on it as she watched them from afar. Both women were tense and hypervigilant as their dominant hands stayed close to their weapons strapped to their thighs. It was in the way though it seemed that they leaned into each other but not quite touched, she would almost say they were lovers if she didn’t know that Maria had a no at work policy since reaching the Deputy Director position.

“Thank you for the ride Agent Morse,” her oldest friend said as she approached Bobbi breaking her out of her thoughts. At first she was hurt by the formality of the greeting but then she noticed that Maria’s eyes kept looking down while the other woman seemed to stand to the side but between them at the same time and that was when she realized she was blocking the view of Maria’s hands. Looking down she saw Maria signing with one hand while she held her tactical bag in the other. <Is the car clean?> was signed again at her.

‘What the hell is going on?’ she thought not for the first time today and she had a funny feeling it was just going to be that type of day. “You’re welcome Commander Hill. The Director put me at your disposal for your stay” she said while signing <Didn’t think I had to check the car, Fury only told me to come here, with gear and no other info.>

“Excellent let’s get on our way,” Maria said while making to sit in the backseat while the other woman sat in the front. Bobbi felt her hackles rise a bit when the other woman with slightly shaking hands un-holstered her weapon once she was seated and buckled. Looking into the rear view mirror she raised an eyebrow at Maria who only slightly shook her head.

They sat in silence till they got through the gate and onto the highway Bobbi had no idea where they were going and she didn’t ask as she just randomly picked the closest highway entrance to the airbase. A zipping sound was all she heard before she saw the tell tell blue light of an electronics jammer but still kept her mouth shut waiting for her to be told what the hell was going on.

“Skye check our backtrail,” Maria said as she handed the younger woman a laptop who seemed almost relieved to be having to holster her weapon and take the equipment. Bobbi watched amazed as the young woman, Skye in no time hacked her way into a satellite’s feed overhead and got eyes on them.

“We’re clear but with the direction we are heading I’d suggest option B we discussed. I know you...” she said as a ping on her laptop interrupted her and she started to type furiously again on the machine.
“Please tell me it found a connection,” Maria said with almost a fervent prayer quality to her voice that startled Bobbi. She hadn’t heard Maria sound like that in years, not since that botched mission in Los Angeles where they were both surrounded and had to hold their position till backup arrived.

“Your wish is my command” Skye said with a smirk and a playful teasing tone as she continued to type insanely fast and Bobbi could tell she wasn’t just hacking other people’s systems she was also hacking into SHIELD’s and surprisingly enough Maria didn’t say a thing to the other woman.

“You might want to call Boss lady up and tell them they need to look into an arms dealer named Vanchat. Seems like he wired a large sum of money into our douche bags account earlier this week and after we are done here we need to go pay a visit to someone else because I need his computer terminal to crack open the finances on everything wide open” she finished with a devilish smirk.

“Where is our next stop?”

“Los Angeles, and I’d prefer it if we went with some back up since I have a funny feeling this is a rule 6 and 36 situation.”

“Wait how the hell does she know the rules? Maria did you take on a rookie without telling me?” she asked tired of not knowing what the hell was going on.

“Skye is a rookie, but she’s not my rookie. Skye meet Bobbi Morse call sign Mockingbird. Bobbi meet my soulmate Skye” Maria said and started laughing as Bobbi swerved the SUV in shock and started cursing.

“Damn it Maria” she said getting the car back into the lane.

“Sorry couldn’t resist,” she said laughing but suddenly stopped and sighed. “Alright Bobbi get us to the Chicago morgue we need to go ID someone and then you’re coming with us to Los Angeles and I’ll read you in on the plane.”

She heard Maria’s phone ding with a text message “Fury says you have a package for Skye?” Maria asked almost surprised and Bobbi wondered what was in the envelope.
“Yeah it’s in the glovebox” she said as she got them heading in the right direction and watched as Skye pulled out the envelope and opened it up. The younger woman’s posture seemed to stiffen at the contents before she reached in like she was grabbing something precious and pulled out a SHIELD badge.

“Congratulations sweetheart,” Maria said placing her hand on Skye’s shoulder squeezing it as the younger woman traced a finger over the badge.

“We discussed it, I just didn’t think it would ever happen” Skye said softly before pulling out her credentials before turning them over. “That fucking pirate, I’m going to shoot him in the damn foot and give him a for real fucking peg leg next time I see him” she said as she handed over the credentials to Maria.

“Oh god he didn’t,” Maria said trying to hold back her laughter.

“Oh yes he bloody well did, it’s even on the server and the bastard put level 10 encryption on it.” Skye said typing and with every passing moment it seemed she got angrier and angrier.

“Okay curiosity is killing the cat here” Bobbi said as they pulled into the local coroner's office parking garage.

“Meet SHIELD’s newest agent, Agent Skye Fall” Maria said as she burst out laughing and was soon joined by Bobbi.
The laughter at Skye’s current predicament with Fury was short lived as they got out of the SUV and the cold reality of where they were washed over them. A working understanding of human nature was something that SHIELD trained into all their agents, it tied neatly into the situational awareness that was drilled into them at the academy. When at the academy Bobbi had found another subject matter to intensely study and excel at it had left her one of SHIELD’s best interrogators and undercover operatives, it was why when she graduated she had been put under Natasha Romanoff aka The Black Widow to get field experience.

In the field it was a great tool to have but she wished she could turn it off when it came to her friends as she watched Maria square her shoulders and the cold mask of the Deputy Director fall into place. She knew how much of a toll it took on her friend to be the Deputy Director, how much crap and loneliness she had to put up with over the last few years since her promotion to get the job done. Though Maria hardly ever complained about it, no it was a job needing to be done and she did it. That was just the nature of her friend.

A silver lining was on the horizon though as Bobbi watched the young rookie come around and fall in beside Maria as they made their way into the building. The two women weren’t touching but the silent support the younger was giving the older was evident in the way they moved almost in sync and she wondered how long Maria and Skye had been bonded. Bobbi had last seen Maria six months ago just before she had gone on her latest undercover assignment and her friend had been miserable but hiding at the time behind the mask of the Deputy Director.

Skye was a rookie but she seemed to be doing good as Bobbi assessed the young agent as she assessed the building and everyone they came across. She didn’t leave the assessment totally to Skye as another part of her awareness was also searching for threats to them, as her instincts were picking up from the other two women that more was at play here than what she had been told at the moment. Not being told the whole story was the name of the game for a spy and investigator, it was your job to figure it the fuck out.

Bobbi wasn’t the young woman’s S.O. but if she was going to be watching Maria’s six then she’d be damned if she left her friend in the hands of some very green rookie, soulmate or not. But that brought up the question if Maria wasn’t her S.O. then who was? She was wondering who it was because the way she moved with Maria while almost totally in sync wasn’t quite identical. If she didn’t know that Melinda May wasn’t semi retired she would have pegged her as Skye’s S.O. in the way the younger woman moved.

There was some raw talent here but she doubted all of it was raw talent, it was almost like it was something she was doing for years but she was too young to have it already. It started with the fact that she hadn’t heard from Maria to tell her the news, let alone the fact that Fury had her deliver the badge and credentials that marked the younger woman as an agent of SHIELD. If she wasn’t already
an agent that meant she didn’t go through the academy so how the hell did SHIELD pick her up? No there was a story she wasn’t being told just yet about this woman in front of her that was her friends soulmate and she was going to make sure she was told it on their way to Los Angeles.

The mind is a funny thing, the whole time she had been assessing her friend and her soulmate they had already met up with the lead detective and coroner and been brought into the autopsy room. A small petite body laid underneath a white sheet and intellectually she knew why they were there, to ID a body but it was one thing to know it and another to see it. Maria and Skye took one side of the table as she joined the detective and the coroner on the other as they pulled back the white sheet.

Shock flooded her system as she took in the face of a young recruit that she had known while doing a teaching stint at the academy. She felt herself shut down her emotions almost instantly but guessed she wasn’t fast enough because her friend gave her a searching look across the body. Bobbi ignored her friends searching look as the coroner started to explain what they had found in the autopsy. The young agent had taken two to the chest close range just a few days ago and been left sitting on a park bench as she bled out no one noticing a thing. By that information alone Bobbi knew that it had been done by someone the young agent had known maybe even trusted and she felt anger replace the shock.

Skye pulled out a tablet from her backpack and handed it over to Maria without a word and Bobbi knew what was to happen next. They came here to get an ID and for that they would need a full retina scan. Willing her hands not to shake from her anger she moved to the head of the table replacing the coroner and gently reached to open the young dead agents eyes as Maria activated the retinal scanner.

She knew the young woman’s name but it was better to keep control of the anger she felt bubbling just under the surface of her skin if she kept thinking of the young woman before her as the young agent instead of putting a name to the face or even acknowledging any of the memories that threatened to spill out of hastily crafted mental walls. Later, much later she would deal with the memories and the emotions but for now they had to be pushed aside.

Seconds later a ding was heard and she could see the tightening of Maria’s jaw muscles confirming what she already knew. Gently she closed the young agents eyes before she reached down and pulled up the sheet the cover the body, blocking the visual reminder of the risk they all took everyday. She heard her friend tell the men that they were taking over the case that the young woman had been one of theirs and that someone would be in contact to make arrangements for the body and that they would tell the family.

Family, they would get a cover story of how, why and when their daughter died but they would never fully know the truth of how or why their daughter died. It was part of working for a secret intelligence agency they all knew that their families or friends would never know fully whatever happened to them. That one day they could be there with their families and the next on some mission
that was meant to protect the ones that they loved back home and that they might have to make the ultimate sacrifice for that protection. All agents carried life insurance policies for their families and SHIELD would make sure that the family came across the information but still no amount of money made the hurt of losing someone go away.

Bobbi had no doubt the young agent dead inside the building had died while in the line of duty and there should be more to acknowledge that sacrifice than the Deputy Director, a senior field agent and one rookie. Silently she followed Maria and the even now a more young looking to her Skye out to the SUV as she felt the weight of her job press in on her. Once they were in the SUV she reached over and turned on the electronics jammer before she turned on the SUV. Bobbi didn’t even question it when Skye pulled up satellite feed of their position or when Maria pulled out one of her sidearms and placed it on her lap behind her.

One of their own was dead and she wanted in on the hunt now more than ever.

They had only been in the air a few minutes on their way to Los Angeles when Maria had handed her a tablet with a thumb drive sticking out of it telling her to go in the back to read and to send Skye up to the cockpit for another flying lesson. Now as she sat on the patio of a beach house owned by Stark she understood the text message that Fury had sent her almost twelve hours ago and she really wished she could shoot the man in the damn foot and give him the peg leg that Skye was threatening to give the man earlier.

<Don’t shoot the messenger> It was currently taking all of her willpower not to tell Fury where he could shove his damn text message. Fury was playing a dangerous game of cat and mouse and had not told any of them that they were the fucking mice. She knew that he must have ordered Maria to stay silent because she knew her friend trusted more with information than Fury. Their boss was a paranoid bastard and sometimes that was a good thing but she had a sickening feeling that this was not going to be the case.

A small part of her still wanted to just taser Maria for not ignoring the order but her friend was first and always a soldier before a spy and it had been drilled into her at the bone deep level to follow orders. At the moment she was barely keeping her temper in check and if Hunter was believed that was a bloody miracle all on its own. Sighing she pushed away thoughts of Hunter, though they were soulmates they were a triad and because they were missing their third, they were more and more volatile as time went on without either of them finding her.

“Maria said you liked coffee” Skye said knocking Bobbi out of her thoughts and handing her a mug. Bobbi nodded her head in thanks and took a sip of the coffee. She watched as Skye sat down on the edge of another lounge chair as they both turned towards the sunset. The view from the patio was amazing and on a normal day it would have her full attention but today wasn’t normal and she felt as
her mind once again start to wander over the last few hours of her life.

On top of everything else she had read about one of the few people she considered a friend, that she thought they had lost in action was alive and still kicking. Kicking, that reminded her she owed Phil a kick in his damn shins for making her go to his damn funeral without him actually being dead. Bobbi was glad that the older agent was alive, his dry humor and wit was one of the few things that could get her temper under control with just a few well placed words but she still felt partially betrayed. It once again boiled down to Fury and his secrets even having secrets.

She needed a distraction she thought as she sipped the coffee again watching the sunset, her mind was still processing everything she had been told but if she kept consciously thinking on it she was going to explode. By the sound of it Maria was arguing again with Fury on the phone as she sat just inside the house near the electronics jammer.

“Thanks, I needed this” Bobbi said indicating her coffee. “So I am guessing your real name isn’t Skye Fall” she teased after taking another drink. Bobbi knew by the sound of the argument that they probably had some time to kill so she might as well try to get to know her friend’s soulmate.

“Nope. I’m an orphan don’t even know my real name, I choose Skye as my hacker handle while with Rising Tide and just kept it” Skye said shrugging as she yawned.

“Rising Tide? How’d you get caught?” Bobbi asked surprised and amused all at the same time. Leave it to Maria ‘IceQueen’ Hill to be soulmates with a hacker with known ties to, well she didn’t want to call them a terrorist organization because they weren’t violent, they were mainly just pains in the ass when it came to information security.

“I didn’t. I let them catch me” Skye said with a smirk on her face and Bobbi in shock quickly swallowed her coffee causing her to choke on it as it burned down the wrong pipe.

“Ha you admitted it again!” Maria said from behind her as Bobbi felt the smack on her back that was so totally not helping her on the burning or the choking on coffee. Coughing still she watched as Maria easily sat against the back of the chair and pulled her smaller mate against her. The sight before her was cute but also a painful reminder that she still had a piece of her missing but she stamped on it hard because she was happy for her friend.

“I’ve never denied that I let you all catch me, but May still kidnapped my ass black bag and all!” Skye finished and for a moment she had a glance into haunted brown eyes before the playful mask slipped back over them and Bobbi had the odd feeling she was witnessing an old argument between the soulmates.
At least her instincts earlier weren’t off on who she thought was training the younger woman before her, that had been another smaller shock that Melinda May had come out of semi retirement becoming an active field agent. Being Maria’s friend Bobbi had known all about Maria’s first S.O. and the unofficial reputation that Melinda May and Phil Coulson had in training agents, it was also was now the reputation that her own S.O.’s Natasha and Clint had.

Watching as Skye finally relaxed against Maria she realized that she hadn’t picked up on how wound tight the younger woman seemed to be. She was usually more observant than this but the shocks of the day was clouding her judgements and that wasn’t good in their line of work. Though now she knew she hadn’t been looking she now could see all the subtle tells and wondered what the smaller woman’s story was. She was certainly too young to have that haunted look in her eyes, but appearances could be deceiving or the world could really be that big of a bitch.

“How long have you two been together?” Bobbi asked as she watched as the younger woman closed her eyes.

“Almost a week” Maria said and Bobbi was once again shocked by the news. Maria and Skye were so in sync earlier while they were in the field that Bobbi honestly believed they had been together at least a few months. But then it all started to make sense as she watched as Maria started to slowly run fingers through her mate’s hair with such a look of tenderness on her face, a touch bond. Touch bond’s were rare but not unheard of and it somewhat explained the closeness of the bond but not fully. “Sweetheart did you-?”

“Yes love, I took my meds and yes you can tell Bobbi the rest of it” Skye interrupted Maria with a soft smile on her face, her eyes still closed. It seemed like these two were just full of fun surprises today and that even more were on her way. They all sat with the sounds of the ocean waves and the dwindling light lulling them into a sense of peace, moments passed like this before Bobbi finally went to ask the two what they meant about telling her the rest of it but she realized they had stayed quiet as Skye had fallen asleep in Maria’s arms.

“I have more for you to read but I had to get her permission before I shared it with you. It’s her story, not mine,” Maria told her as she gently maneuvered her mate into her arms and stood up heading inside. Shaking her head to clear it Bobbi quickly followed after and passed Maria in the hallway so she could open the door for her friend into the bedroom door of the guest room that she knew Maria had stowed her and Skye’s gear in earlier. Maria gently laid Skye on the bed, making quick work of the other woman’s boots and weapons before she covered her mate and kissed her cheek.

“Busy night?” Bobbi whispered teasing and laughing at her friends blush as Maria made a hand movement to shoo Bobbi out of the room. Bobbi watched with a sense of foreboding as Maria grabbed her tablet from her bag on the floor before turning on the light in the attached bathroom. She
went to shut the door but Maria stopped her before she could fully shut it and she raised an eyebrow in question to her friend. Her only answer though was for Maria to turn around and walk back towards a living room that was decorated out of a furniture magazine's centerfold.

“Yes, to be honest we just completed the bond last night but she is also still recovering from other things” Maria said as she finally sat down on one of the couches.

“Just last night? Why the hell did you two wait that long? Maria even I can tell you two share a touch bond, what the hell possessed you to wait that long? It must have been painful as hell for the both of you” Bobbi said trying to keep her voice low so not to wake up the other woman as she flopped down onto a chair that was sinfully comfortable.

“As I said she was recovering. We had to make sure our bonding didn’t aggravate her healing” Maria said as she dropped her head back and looked at the ceiling. Bobbi took in her friends posture and though she looked relaxed she really wasn’t because she still had one gun holstered in her shoulder rig and she’d bet a week’s pay that she had at least two knives still on her person.

“You are about to give me more news I’m not going to like and it has to do with your mate? What else have you got other than your human garbage problem and the fact that..”

“SHIELD 616 or AC has been reactivated?” Maria interrupted giving her a look that said not to use names.

“Yes that!” Bobbi said rolling her eyes she hadn’t forgotten about Stark’s AI that she had been introduced to earlier. Being introduced to a computer had been a new one on her but Maria seemed to have a genuine working relationship with the computer so she was trying to understand.

“Sorry” Maria said as she pulled out a thumb drive from the hidden compartment in her boot heel and plugged it into the tablet before handing it over to Bobbi.

Bobbi took the tablet and looked down surprised to see multiple files labeled for a Mary Sue Poots, a couple for a Daisy Johnson and then the surprise of them all a level 9 SHIELD document. “Maria I’m obligated to tell you I am level 7 and there is a level 9 document in here” she said looking over towards her friend who had a grim look on her face.

“I know. This is totally off the books otherwise I’d be saying welcome to the level 9 shitstorm that is now my reality. But alas no princely pay increase for you” Maria said trying to crack an old joke but
it fell flat between them and she sighed. “Look this is a side investigation that was started by Melinda and AC when she got caught warning a Rising Tide member we were about to arrest his ass she finally came clean on the fact she let us catch her. Right now I have Natasha and Clint chasing down a lead for me but unlike Fury I know who I can trust and I need to know that if this all goes to shit and I don’t make it that Skye will be protected.”

“Come on Maria you can’t think or talk like that. We will make it out of this we always do,” she said but even she wasn’t so reassured by her own words.

“‘Rule 36: If it seems to be a bigger shit storm than you are seeing, murphy’s law: it probably is.’ Just humor me on this, please Bobbi” Maria said and by her tone of voice and years of working with her friend she knew the fear was real. The fear from Maria was almost palpable enough that Bobbi almost wanted to call Hunter to apologize to him and tell him that she loved him because if Maria was scared, they had reason to believe they might not make it through all of this.

“Alright Maria you know I always have your back. Now what is it that I’m looking at?” she asked and then was told and read the life story her friend’s soulmate. Later on that night when she laid in her own bed she silently cursed fate because sometimes her own curiosity was her own worst enemy as images played in her head.

“How do you want to do this?” Bobbi asked from the front seat watching the house that they were about to break into. The two lovebirds were in the backseat hunched over Skye’s laptop as the woman typed away doing light only knew what. She fidgeted with her earpiece, she hated the damn things, years later and she still wasn’t use to the twice be damned things but she knew she would need it in a few minutes.

“Well I was able to hack into the security system and it is now shut off. We can now just walk in and no one would be the wiser, though I do need a while to hack his computer to get access to all the financial records that will hopefully blow the Centipede operation wide open” Skye said closing her laptop.

“Bobbi can you watch the perimeter? I’ll check the house while Skye can hack to her heart’s content” Maria said as they drove up to the house and parked in the driveway. She watched as Bobbi disappeared around back while her and Skye walked in through the front door.

“Told ya” Skye lightly teased as they slowly made their way through the house room by room clearing it as they looked for a computer. Finding the office Maria watched as Skye holstered her gun starting to hack into the system.
“I am going to go clear the rest of the house, stay here please” Maria said kissing her forehead and Skye fought to not roll her eyes at the back of her mate. She loved Maria and the protectiveness that she held for her was endearing most of the time but for someone so used to being independent it was a bit much at other times.

Pulling out her laptop from the backpack she was carrying she initialize the file transfer of every backdoor financial transaction that one Lloyd Rathman had ever had his finger in. Having access to the man’s computer was exactly what she needed in being able to get all the documentation, the access of his secure network for his work office and her finally being able to hack into those highly secured off-shore accounts she knew that one Mr. Lloyd Rathman was dead to rights in trouble. Money laundering for criminal syndicates or drug lords was one thing but doing it also for known terrorist organizations, well lets say Maria was going to gleefully lock this guy up and lose the key for several decades at the least.

The sound of a car pulling up pulled her out of her silent musings on the fate of the man whose house they had broken into. Pulling up what was the internal video security feed she saw as said man got out of a car with six armed guards and she cursed as she realized she must have missed something. “We have company I count six armed guards two are going for the back and four coming in the front” she said over the comlink to Maria and Bobbi.

“Mockingbird handle your two then come inside. Oh and try for the non-lethal approach I’d like for something to question later on if we need it. Skye fall stay where you are but be ready to move,” Maria said over the comlink and Skye did roll her eyes this time, first at the name and second at the order she had all intentions of ignoring as she stood up rolling her shoulders and cracking her neck. ‘Just like sparring practice’ she kept telling herself as she was full of nervous energy, it was her first real fight but she’d be damned if she let Maria take on four armed men without backup.

She took out the night-night gun from her shoulder harness remembering that Maria had wanted to keep everyone alive if possible. Slowly she crept down the hallway towards the front area where she could now hear shouts from the men as Maria was probably spotted. Gunfire rang out between Maria and the men and she had to fight down the urge to go running to protect Maria. Taking a deep breath she looked around the corner and quickly glanced at the group.

Without thinking she exhaled and took aim shooting two of the guys quickly in the back with night-night rounds dropping them. In the distraction of taking fire from the rear the two bodyguards left standing turned towards her but soon one was brought down by Maria from behind with a night-night round while the other made to grab at her. Ducking she quickly kicked the man in the balls bringing him to his knees to be fully dropped by a roundhouse kick to the head.

Finally turning to the man of the hour she brought her gun up instantly to find him already with his
hands in the air as Maria was pointing a gun already at the man. Melinda and Maria had told her that once she was in a fight and surrendered to her instincts that everything that they were training into her would kick in and she’d react without thinking. They were right on that as she fought the urge to hug herself to keep the shakes she was feeling inside.

Lowering her gun from Lloyd Rathman financial cleaner of the big, the bad and the ugly she fired off a round from the night-night gun into the man she had knocked out from the kick to the head just for good measure. Better safe than sorry and she’d like to have them all knocked out till they at least got them tied up. At least they weren’t Centipede soldiers, the newest formula of the night-night’s still didn’t work fully on the enhanced super soldiers and for that she was grateful.

“Well doesn’t look like you all needed my help” Bobbi said smirking as she came in from the back hallway and started to zip tie the sleeping bodyguards. Skye didn’t wait around to see the cleanup, quickly she turned around went back to the office and her hacking. Walking into the office she walked over to the bar area and opened a decanter and sniffed, whiskey, it wasn’t rum but it would do. Pouring herself a shot she quickly threw it back feeling the burn in her throat and letting the sensation ground her in the here and now.

“You ok?” Skye heard Maria ask from behind her but still didn’t turn around as she quickly poured a second shot of the whiskey and throwing it back as well.

“Peachy, you?” she asked finally turning around they were feet apart and they both were checking with their eyes for any signs of injury on the other. She didn’t find any on Maria and Skye let out a breath she didn’t realize she was holding when her brown eyes finally met her mate’s blue and didn’t see anger in them but concern. The exhale was like a signal because one minute Maria was a few feet before her and in the next she was in the taller woman’s arms.

“Damn it Skye, please don’t scare me like that again” Maria whispered against the top of her head.

“Wasn’t going to let you face them alone, we are a team” she mumbled into Maria’s neck breathing in the scent of her mate and using it to further calm her down, but that backfired as the whiskey mixed with her libido. Moaning she nipped and licked up Maria’s neck before the taller woman leaned down and captured her lips.

The kiss grew heated quickly as she felt Maria back her up against the wall with her hands easily lifting Skye up and pinning her against the wall with her hips. Moaning Skye wrapped her legs around Maria and squeezed her legs while rolling her hips enough to cause Maria to groan into her mouth.
“Oi! You two, really?!” Bobbi said from the doorway causing them both to break off the kiss and growl at her causing the woman to hold up her hands in surrender. “Hey don’t get mad at me, Fury tried reaching you Maria and you didn’t answer so he called my ass. He wants know our status” Bobbi said waving the hand that had her phone in it.

“Give us a moment and tell him I’ll call him back and if he gives you shit tell him Amsterdam ‘05” Maria said before turning back to Skye and leaning their foreheads against each other as they caught their breaths.

“After this mess is dealt with can we go on vacation? No phones, no distractions, no one walking in on us all the damn time” Skye grumbled getting Maria to laugh. Slowly she unwrapped her legs from around Maria and let her mate lower her back to the ground.

“Love, after this is all over I am all yours” Maria whispered before they shared a slow kiss to once again be interrupted but this time by the beeping of Skye’s laptop. Groaning she broke off the kiss and walked over to the laptop and looked at what it found. She knew her eyes widened as she quickly sat down and started hacking bringing up satellite feed of the area confirming her find.

“Jackpot! Call Fury let him know that we got this guy on cleaning money on more than just the Centipede group. Homeland Security will definitely want to talk to this dude, Gitmo is in his future. While you do that I’ll call boss lady to have her meet us at a location that my program just found with a connection between Hendrickson and a real estate deed that is held by a dummy corporation that this douche bag set up for Centipede.”
Silence settled between them it was a bit uncomfortable but it wasn’t oppressive. No, the silence was what little precious time they had left between them to be alone before the reality of their jobs and the unknown enemy or enemies they were about to face came back to roost. Maria wanted to protect Skye, to keep her away from everything in her world that was about to explode but she couldn’t. Skye had chosen this as her life and Maria was going to respect that but it didn’t mean she wouldn’t be fighting her protective instincts most of the time.

Fury had called in a favor and had a recon drone launched from the local Marine base, it was a closed mission with just the ‘pilot’ and the commanding officer knowing that they were about to watch a live raid go down. He had given them access to the feed as soon as he told them that the drone was on station. Ever since then Skye had been studying the feed with such a look of concentration that it made Maria wonder what she was thinking.

Reaching over she gently took Skye’s hand in her own and gave it a squeeze, she knew that right now they were working but she couldn’t bring herself to care when Skye turned to her give her a soft smile before turning back to the feed. “Quarter for your thoughts?”

The question startles Skye and she starts laughing before asking “What?”

“I said quarter for your thoughts. You have such a look of concentration on your face I’m wondering what you are thinking” Maria said as she gave Skye a grin before turning her attention back to the road.

“I think the saying is penny for your thoughts, love” Skye teased.

“Nah totally underpaying with a penny. Anyways it’s a saying I picked up from Phil and Mel. He use to always say it to her when she would get lost in thought from a case or something was bothering her. You actually kind of reminded me of her just then with you staring so intently at the screen” Maria says brushing her thumb over Skye’s knuckles.

“Really?” Skye asks her voice has a slight unsure quality to it and Maria can guess where her thoughts are going. They had talked a few times about how Maria thought of Mel and Phil as her parents and Skye had joked that then she guessed that made them her in-laws, but Maria knows that her young mate was seeing them in that light as well. It wasn’t quite that type of relationship just yet, but the two older agents have already been a good impact on her mate’s psyche.
“Yes, really. Now what’s got you thinking so hard?” Maria asked as she slowed the SUV to turn into the abandoned diner that they were meeting Mel and the rest of the team at. Driving to the back and parking she waited because she knew Skye was gathering her thoughts. “Skye?” she gently asked giving her mate’s hand another squeeze after she had started to worry at her lower lip.

Skye shook her head as if she’s trying to clear it but she sighs before turning in her seat to look more towards her. “I was looking at the feed and knowing what we have to work with for this raid and instantly was thinking of plans. The thing is though, I don’t know how to plan for something like this but I can…” Skye looks away before she sighs again. “I can close my eyes and see similar situations playing out behind my eyes…”

Maria squeezed her mate’s hand again and reaches forward turning Skye’s face back towards her. “Hey we are in this together sweetheart, don’t hide from me. If you hide I can’t help and be there for you” Maria says and doesn’t look away as her mates brown eyes search her blue. She knows Skye finds what she needs in them because soon her face is leaning into Maria’s hand and Maria runs a thumb across a smooth cheek. “Now when you close your eyes what exactly are you seeing?” Maria asks but she already has a theory what is causing this.

“Battles, fights but with swords and other medieval weaponry” Skye says as she closes her eyes again but a small shudder flows through her mates body.

“Skye open your eyes,” she says and she doesn’t mean for it to come out sounding like such a command because they are mates and equals. But she is still thankful all the same when Skye responds to it instantly opening her eyes. “There you are sweetheart, it’s probably an aftereffect of the Berserker staff. I know it might be scary but use it. You are still very new to this and we might be about to be dropped in it and though I wish you weren’t exposed to that damn thing, use it to your advantage.”

“Scary, that’s an understatement” Skye chuckles humorlessly but still nods.

“Good now let’s get inside then you can tell me your plan. We have about an hour before Mel and them get here” Maria said reluctantly pulling away from Skye as they got out of the SUV. She went around the back to grab their tactical bags, though this was their second raid of the day this would be the first time they would be in full tactical assault gear today, earlier they had been armed but in civilian clothes to blend in.

The weapons she had for them was from her own store and also from the chest of weapons Mel had given them a week ago but the brand new tactical suits and custom bullet proof vests had been from Tony before they had left. She didn’t want to think how Tony had all their exact measurements but she knew that they were custom made because they had fit like a glove the first time they wore them when they left. Maria would have to thank him when she saw him next because even though he was
a pain in her ass at times, he treated her and Skye like one of the team instantly.

“Do I even want to know?” Maria sighed as she came across Skye picking the lock to the back door.

“Probably not” Skye said as the door opened as she turned back with a twinkle in her eye and a smirk that was totally holding back a laugh.

‘Going to keep me on my damn toes, but I wouldn’t have it any other way’ she thought as she followed Skye through the kitchen into the diner area. Skye stopped at the front counter area as she started to set up her laptop while Maria continued inside and dropped their bags on one of the booth tables.

Maria turned around and was amused to see that Skye had already started to twist and turn from side to side on one of the stool seats as she typed away. Shaking her head she walked over and putting a hand on one of Skye’s legs she turned her mate around before stepping between her legs. She felt Skye’s hands come up on her hips giving them a slight squeeze before she leaned down and captured Skye’s lips with her own.

The kiss was slow and gentle and Maria didn’t want it to end but they were running out of time. With every tick of the second hand from her analog watch in the silence of the diner, they were running out of time and Maria wished it wasn’t their reality. So with regret she pulled back from the kiss and rested their foreheads together as they both struggled to catch their breaths.

“Um what did I do to deserve that, so I can make sure I do it again?”

“Being so damn cute for one and two because I love you” Maria asked as her hand pushed a loose strand of hair out of Skye’s face and behind her ear.

“I love you too. I’m guessing that after this we are both going to have to go back to work?” Skye asks and Maria can only nod as an answer as her chest tightens at the thought of being separated from Skye. Precious moments pass with them like this as they stare into each others eyes. They no longer needed the skin to skin contact since the bond was now set but the looming separation promised to be rough on both of them.

“Promise me you will be careful. I can’t lose you” Maria whispered finally into the silence of the abandoned diner.
“I promise my love,” Skye said before smirking that smirk that let Maria know trouble was on the way, “anyways you owe me a vacation with no distractions and no one walking in on us.”

Maria couldn’t help but laugh as she buried her face into her mate’s hair taking a deep breath of Skye’s scent for one last time to hold her over till whenever they were able to be together again. “You got it sweetheart. Now you go and get into your tactical suit while I keep watch” she said taking a step back and pulling Skye to her feet. The move is almost like a dance move and Maria can’t help but lift Skye’s arm and twirl her around.

“You are such a goofball,” Skye laughs and the sound of her laughter and the smile on her face is something she files away for later because this moment like any moment with her mate will be precious to her.

With one last twirl she has Skye facing away from her and lets go of Skye’s hand. “Go on and get changed” she says before slapping her mate on the ass as she walks away. After the slap Skye totally adds more sway to her hips and Maria couldn’t help but think ‘Definitely going to keep me on my toes...’

They are discussing Skye’s plan when they hear the sound of a car pulling around and into the back of the diner. Maria knows it should be Mel and her team but Fury’s paranoia is rubbing off on her as she instantly goes for her 9mm in one of her thigh holsters. She is grateful and thankful she isn’t the only one to react that way as she notices Skye do the same thing. A part of her is saddened that her mate is just as paranoid as she is but maybe a little bit of paranoia will keep them alive in the coming days.

She moved to a booth that was missing its table while she signaled for Skye to take cover in the hallway that led to the bathrooms, the two positions would provide cover for them while also giving them the best angles on the entrance from the kitchen as well as the front door. Multiple car doors open and close before they hear the back door open and quiet footsteps in the kitchen. The door from the kitchen swings open and Mel is standing there with an eyebrow raised as she sees Maria and Skye.

Maria instantly feels the tension drain from her muscles and she can see the same reaction pass through Skye from the bathroom doorway. The sound of both of their safeties engaging before they holster their weapons echoes in the abandoned diner but it is soon drowned out by the sound of arguing. She watches as Mel rolls her eyes before she moves away from the doorway and lets the younger agents into the diner. It takes a moment for them to realise that she is there and all three of the younger agents almost come to attention.
The shock doesn’t last long as the two scientists see Skye in the doorway as they shout “SKYE!!! Where have you been?” running towards their friend and hug her. Maria has to fight back the smile that wants to creep onto her face and she hates hiding behind the mask of the Deputy Director but for now she has to. Silently she prayed that when she got back home to the tower and ran the checks on the rest of Skye’s team that they come out clear. She had been putting them off only because Maria didn’t want to put Skye in that position of investigating her friends. Maria was currently in that position and it sucked, so it was the last thing she wanted for her mate.

Looking towards Mel she realizes she isn’t the only one amused by the scene before her but behind her is Ward and he seemed almost upset by it and a dark look crossed over his features before they went back the usual blankness that he sported. Maria was a pro at reading non expressions though and what she was reading on the young male agents face was setting off warning bells to her instincts. She couldn’t put it off any longer, once she was home she would investigate the SHIELD 616 team with Skye’s programs. If nothing was found great but she was still going to talk to Fury about moving Ward somewhere else...preferably somewhere far away from her mate.

“Agent candidate evaluations. Now I don’t want to break up this little reunion but we have a raid to conduct” Maria says in her best Commander voice and has to fight back her amusement seeing FitzSimmons jump and then look sheepish. “Good, now were you able to get the night-night guns to work on these Centipede soldiers?”

“No ma’am. From the simulations we have been running they’d have to ingest it for it to affect them” Fitz begins to answer.

“But even then it would only last a few minutes. The only way we can keep them knocked out for longer is most like intravenously” Simmons finishes.

“All right live rounds then to bring them down and if they live drug them. Did you bring any supplies to try the intravenous method with you?” Maria asked as she watched Skye out of the corner of her eye move back towards her laptop and the drone feed. She had seen movement on the image but trusted Skye to handle it while she had to finish ironing out the kinks in their plan. The plan Skye had thought out would work but there were only a few variables they had to nail down first before the put it into action.

“We have some of our supplies with us but didn’t know how much we would need or if even we should bring it. We left the rest on the Bus in the lab” Simmons answered looking nervous.

“Skye how many guards so far?” Maria asked.
“So far I’ve seen three pairs always patrolling the location. So anywhere been six and I’d say twelve, ma’am” Skye answered almost absentmindedly as she kept rewinding and playing forward a part of recorded feed. Maria watched as the rest of the younger agents gave Skye’s back a shocked look at her sign of respect towards her.

Turning back to FitzSimmons she asked “Do you have enough for let’s say eighteen of them for at least six hours?”

Maria watched as the two scientist started talking in the same all too fast way that Tony and Bruce sometimes did when thinking out a problem in their lab. She waited patiently because she now knew from experience if she wanted a correct answer it was best not to interrupt. “We don’t have enough supplies with us but we have enough on the Bus and we can easily synthesize more of it quickly if it is needed” Fitz finally answers in a voice like he is waiting to be yelled at.

“Ma’am?” Skye interrupts and by the tone of her voice Maria can tell she has found something. She wants to walk over there and lean over Skye’s shoulder to watch what she has found, but it would be too much of a temptation to touch her mate and she can’t do that. Instead she arches an eyebrow in question and stays where she is. “I’ve got footage that confirms they are holding someone there and I’d bet that it’s AC.”

“May check the footage” she orders while pulling out her phone from one of her many pockets. Maria dials Bobbi’s number and waits for her friend to answer the phone “Where are you?”

“Well hello to you too” Bobbi quips at her before answering “Just getting back to base. Had to have one of the Homeland Security dudes give me a ride back since someone took my ride.”

“Good. On the field you are going to see a Boeing C-17 Globemaster III, go to it and inside the lab you will find intravenous bags labeled Dendrotoxin. I want you to get all of it and enough supplies for at least twenty IV’s” Maria said before being interrupted again.

“Hill, we have visual confirmation that it’s Coulson on site” May tells her her voice flat and she can see the strain in her mentor as she stood there instead of running out the door to go to her mate.

“Understood. Skye we are going to go with plan Alpha, fill them in” Maria ordered and turned away as the rest of the team gathered around Skye as she explained the plan. “Ok we got confirmation that SHIELD 616 is at the location. I’m calling Hand now and telling her you are on your way. Time to suit up Mockingbird and don’t forget my jet” Maria orders and hangs up before dialing Hand’s number next.
“Hand.”

“We have visual confirmation that SHIELD 616 is on site at location” Maria says but before she can say anything else she hears Hand start to issue orders to scramble two jets and the tactical teams assigned to her. “I want at least two medics per jet incase we actually are able to take any prisoners. Mockingbird is on her way to the Bus to get some needed supplies and is then going to fly wingman with you to the location.”

“Understood we will be there eta twenty five minutes” Hand says and Maria can tell she is checking her weapons. “Are you waiting or going in hot?”

“Going in hot. So be ready to drop for support. I’ll have the hacker on the team give you access to the drone feed as soon as you are in the air.”

“Good hunting Commander.”
Chapter 20

Skye felt the heat of the sun baking her in her tactical gear as she followed Maria to the brushline at the edge of the compound. Pausing they looked through it towards the brick buildings looking for any movement but the only movement she saw was the waves of heat in the air. They had a good idea where they were keeping AC but they didn’t have any idea where Ace might be so they were going to have to clear the whole compound as fast as they could.

The plan they had come up with had the compound split in three sections and with teams of two they were to clear it. Each team had a specialist and a scientist or techy, even though FitzSimmons really weren’t cleared for this type of work they had no choice. They couldn’t take the risk of a leak telling Centipede that they were on the way to raid the compound. Both Fitz and Simmons carried Medkits and 9mm handguns while May and Ward each had an M4 with extra ammo and whatever assorted weapons they chose.

While May and Simmons took the north side, Ward and Fitz were taking the south side with Maria and herself coming right up the middle. They were the most likely to hit the heaviest resistance because where they believed AC was being held was right in the middle of the compound. Skye felt her nerves but ignored them because she would have the teams no other way because she wouldn’t trust the two scientist to cover Maria’s six the way she could now with her training over the last week.

She watched as Maria clicked the safety off of her M4 and she did the same as she rolled her shoulders easing the pressure from the Medkit she also carried. Both of them carried an M4 with extra clips as their main weapon but they both had 9mm strapped to their right and left thighs with extra ammo in that holster ready to go. Skye also had one Marine issued Kbar knife on her hip while she knew Maria had one on her hip and another strapped to her left calf above her boot.

Maria raised an eyebrow and smiled softly towards her as they shared one last look. Skye felt a warm feeling in her chest and mouthed the words “love you” and watched as Maria did the same back. Maria took a deep breath before she reached up and tapped her com twice and Skye heard as she was answered with two more sets of double taps on her own radio.

Slowly they went building by building clearing them with Maria taking point and Skye watching their six. Gunfire rang out from the north and the south at almost the same time as two centipede soldiers came out of the building that was next for them to clear. They instantly saw Maria and opened fire on her mate as she hastily took cover behind an old beat up pick-up truck. She watched as Maria tried to return fire but she was pinned down and she knew one of them was about to swing around and box her mate in.
Skye knew they didn’t see her as she was still inside the previous building without thinking she let out a breath and swung around the door frame and opened fire taking out the soldier that was swinging around on Maria. The first soldier returned fire on her position and she cursed as she got hit in her left arm by flying glass as he shot out a window to reach her. Taking cover she heard another burst of gunfire before she saw Maria come back in through the door searching for her. “Shit,” Maria cursed as she dropped to her knees to check the wound.

“I’m fine,” Skye said earning herself a glare from Maria as she checked out the wound. There was a creak on one of the boards of the walkway outside and she brought up her sidearm from her thigh holster up in time as the Centipede soldier she had shot earlier came in through the door. She hit him with a full clip, one of the shots hitting him in the throat. He went down with his hands to his throat and his feet scrambling against the floor but it only lasted a few seconds before the man went still.

“Thanks” Maria said as she continued to check the wound before pulling out a field dressing putting pressure on the wound to slow the bleeding and then tied it off. Her mate didn’t even flinch or move to defend herself, trusting Skye to handle the danger and that knowledge brought a warm feeling to her chest.

“Anytime” Skye smirked at her mate trying to get her mate to smile, she could tell that behind the cold exterior of what she deemed her mate’s Deputy Director face that she was pissed that Skye was hurt, again.

“That’s going to need stitches.”

“I know.” Touching Maria’s face she made Maria face her before tapping her nose with a finger. “Now help me up.” Her mission was accomplished as Maria rolled her eyes but she could see a smirk on her lips as she reached down and pulled Skye to her feet.

They had cleared another building without issue before she heard “Mockingbird to Athena” as it came over their com’s and they quickly crouched down in the shade of the building so Maria could concentrate on the radio traffic while Skye guarded them.

“Athena, go ahead.”

“Thought you might like a hand, got a Quinjet to back you up. More help is ten minutes behind me. How do you want to call it?” Bobbi quipped over the radio and Skye swore she heard the smirk on the woman’s face.
“Mockingbird, maintain the perimeter. Don’t let anyone or anything escape and call out if you see anything. Pass the same to Hecate once she arrives” Maria ordered.

“Copy that.”

A high pitched scream was heard from ahead of them and they shared a look and nodded. Skipping the building they were about to search they continued as they made their way to the sound of the screaming. It had sounded like Coulson and it seemed both her and Maria would be damned if they cleared the buildings while he was being tortured more.

They passed the building they were about to clear when two more soldiers came around the corner from behind them. “Down” she yelled as she crouched low opening fire trusting that Maria took the command and dropped with her. Fire came from over her shoulder and soon both soldiers were down. Maria went to clear the weapons as she covered her six before they were again heading towards the screaming.

“North is clear,” May said over the com’s “Multiple hostiles are down.”

“Copy. Swing in towards the center” Maria ordered. Skye heard more gunfire from the north as May and Simmons made their way towards them. Two more soldiers with rifles ready, were standing out front of the building that had the screaming coming from it but they never had a chance as Maria and her dropped both of them with bursts of gunfire. Quickly they cleared the guns away and made their way on to the porch. She watched as Maria kicked in the door and Skye pushed past her taking point, almost instantly coming across a woman in a flowered dress that had Coulson in some machine.

“It’s for his own good” the woman said as Coulson screamed in the background. Skye felt a deep rage but shoved it down because to get angry was to let something slip past her so seeing that the room was clear other than the woman. Clicking on the safety she dropped her M4 letting the clip on her tactical gear catch it before she decked the woman knocking her to the ground out cold. Running to the panel on the machine she tried to get it to shut off as Coulson kept screaming the word ‘rain’ over and over again.

Maria came into the room and looked around making sure it was clear as well before she ran towards the wall that had power cords and quickly yanked them out of the wall. “We have AC. South go get the truck,” Skye heard Maria order the rest of the teams.
“AC we got you, come on open your eyes” Skye pleaded trying to get Coulson to calm down, holding onto one of his hands as she watched Maria take the other.

“Come on Boss man, follow our voices” Maria said as she squeezed her friend’s hand. It seemed like forever but soon Coulson stopped screaming as the tears slowly stopped.

“Skye? Maria?” Coulson softly said as they watched his eyes slowly open up and take in their faces and they smiled down at him just as May and Simmons arrived. Simmons rushed over with May to assess his injuries but not before Maria and Skye both kissed his forehead and stepped out of the way.

Without saying anything they both stepped outside to keep watch over the perimeter till seconds later Ward and Fitz drove up with the truck. Fitz hopped out running inside to help Simmons. “Maintain the perimeter. Ward take the back Skye the front. I have to update the Director” Maria ordered as she stepped inside to make the call. Skye took up a position as she heard Ward grumble some very not nice words about her mate as he went around the back of the building. He was lucky he was moving away from her because Skye wanted to deck him for what he said about Maria.

A noise caused her to turn towards the south as she saw a man in what she would call normal SHIELD suit attire run past. “Boogie one o’clock from my position heading towards the south perimeter” Skye called out as she gave chase because the figure looked like the confirmed dirty Agent Hendrickson.

"Agent Ward maintain watch. As soon as they are ready get Coulson in the truck and back to base” she heard Maria instantly snap the order over the radio and she could tell her mate was chasing after her.

“Mockingbird to Skyefall coming up on your position.” Skye heard over the radio and had to fight back the urge to roll her eyes.

Turning a corner she took ducked as the man opened fire at her and with the glance she got before taking cover she confirmed her suspicions and knew they would have to try to take the man alive. “I got eyes on Dirty Harry switching to non-lethal” she radioed in as she leaned around the wall again and began taking fire again till the Quinjet opened fire on his position pinning him down.

Skye used the coverfire of the Quinjet as she quickly circled around from behind but she must have made a noise as Hendrickson turned around to shoot her but this time his gun clicked empty. Skye took that moment to take aim and shot him with a night-night round and watched as the round did
nothing to the man, so she emptied the entire clip into him and it did nothing but piss him off.

“Fuck he’s enhanced” she radioed quickly as he rushed at her and she had to duck under a punch before punching the man in the ribs. She stepped back avoiding him wrapping his arms around her as she landed a jab to his face. Hendrickson backed up and spat blood onto the ground before growling and rushing at her again, she side stepped landing another blow to his ribs.

Without reading his file Skye would have been able to read the older agents fighting style. He was a brawler, use to his size and strength being the only thing he needed to win a fight especially when the opponent was smaller and weaker than he was. The man was a bully and Skye hated bullies. She had been bullied all her life throughout the whole foster system and even again in the Rising Tide because she was a female hacker playing in a boys sandbox.

Hendrickson landed a cross to her jaw that sent her head ringing and her body spinning towards the ground. Somehow she kept a hold of consciousness as she tucked and rolled trying to get some space between herself and the man. But she knew Hendrickson smelt the blood in the water so to speak because he quickly advanced on her, giving her a kick in the ribs that sent her flying sideways. She landed face first in the dirt and pushed up with her arms as she spat out blood, trying to get back up on her feet to defend herself.

She watched detached as Hendrickson gave her a cold smile and she couldn’t help but wonder if he had given that look to Smithson before he murdered her. Something inside Skye snapped and she felt a bone deep rage as it flooded her system, giving her the strength she needed to stand up. Instinctively she knew that this feeling of rage and the strength to keep fighting was once again the Berserker staff imprint on her system making itself known. She watched the shock cross Hendrickson's face as she stood and rolled her neck before dropping back into a fighting position.

Hendrickson rushed at her and she lost herself to the instincts rushing through her and a part of her knew that this was the staff’s doing because even though she had been trained she was using moves she’d never been shown. Somehow she is going blow for blow with the enhanced Hendrickson and a small part of her consciousness was yelling at her that this wasn’t normal that she shouldn’t be able to do this. But a part of her didn’t care as the image of Agent Smithson dead on the slab in the morgue came to the front of her mind but the image was soon replaced by Maria and she felt her blood run cold.

Skye felt it as Hendrickson’s fist connected with her jaw again and it sent her flying backwards into the dirt knocking the air out of her lungs. His foot next connected with her ribs knocking the air out of her lungs again. Hendrickson picked up a gun from the ground as she got up and went to shoot her but she rolled out of the way but the gun clicked empty. He cursed as he threw the gun at her and she ducked it before closing the distance with him again.
Maria was running and praying that she wouldn’t be too late, Bobbi couldn’t take a shot without risking hitting Skye in the process. By the sounds of it her mate had taken a couple hits to her ribs at one point had a gun pointing to her head. Hearing the play by play over the radio as she raced there was seriously making her want to have a panic attack and as she fought to control her breathing she no longer could hear Bobbi telling her what was going on which might be a blessing and curse all at the same time. Skidding around the corner she came across a shocking site as her tiny mate stood above a downed Hendrickson with her foot poised to deliver a killing blow to the man’s throat.

“Skye!!” she yelled her mate turned towards her then looked down and seemed to be shocked by what she saw. Maria watched as her mate took a step back only to fall on her ass before scrambling backwards into the wall of one of the brick buildings. She watched as her mate curled up into the fetal position and Maria silently swore. Quickly she advanced on Hendrickson and kicked him over onto his stomach and quickly ziptied his hands and then his feet.

After that she dropped to her knees next to Skye and began visually assessing the injuries of her mate. Maria could hear the wheezing breaths that indicated what was at best just bruised ribs or at worst a punctured lung. Her mate was missing her whole com unit and quickly looking around she found it a few feet away smashed to pieces. Maria deactivated the microphone on her radio as she took a deep breath.

“Skye, sweetheart look at me” she ordered softly and she hated it because they were partners but Skye was clearly going into shock. Her tiny mate slowly raised her face and Maria’s blue eyes met one brown eye that was filled with fear. On top of an already swollen left eye, Skye also had a split lip and an open cut across one side of her jaw.

Her tiny mate wheezed out and she knew Skye was beginning to have a panic attack. She grabbed one Skye’s hands and with the other hand she touched the side of Skye’s face careful not to touch any of the bruises or open wounds. With that simple touch it seemed to ease Skye's breathing as Maria gently then ran a hand through her mates hair.

“Shh it’s okay don’t try to talk just yet, just take it easy. I need you to breathe with me love” Maria said as she wiped away tears from her mates face. “I got you Skye, stay with me okay?” she asked as she got a nod in confirmation before reactivating her com.

“Athena to Mockingbird I am going to need you down here with your medkit and possibly a backboard” Maria ordered over the radio.

“Copy that Athena. Be advised Hecate and Xena just arrived” she heard Bobbi respond as the Quinjet pulled away from hovering above them to find a landing spot.
“Athena to Hecate”

“Go ahead Athena” she heard over the radio and even though Victoria Hand was a pain in her ass most times, she was also a damn good agent even if they didn’t quite agree on somethings. There were only a handful of agents that were just below Maria in the chain of command at SHIELD and Victoria Hand was one of those agents. Maria had Skye run her programs on Victoria Hand earlier that week and though there were some questionable things...all it added up to Hand hiding a lover and not that she was dirty agent.

“Hecate, I want you to drop all your teams then have your jets on overwatch, nothing escapes. Have one of your STRIKE teams re-clear the buildings when you land. We have multiple hostiles down and I doubt any of them are alive but if they are put them on an Dendrotoxin drip and secure them for transport.

"There is also one female that is zipped tied in the building they were holding 616 at. I want her escorted to my jet and she is to be secured for transport as well. Next I want you to bring a medic and a STRIKE team here to my location ASAP to escort another prisoner to my jet.” Maria ordered hardly paying attention as Hand responded back to her and started issuing her orders to her own teams.

The sound of running feet coming towards her had Maria bring up her M4 in an instant and she kept it trained on the area the sound was coming from. Seconds later she relaxed as she saw Bobbi skid around a corner in her own tactical gear while she was also carrying a large medkit bag and backboard. Maria clicked the safety back on her M4 before she put the gun down and watched as Bobbi dropped her gear on the other side of Skye.

“Hey Rook can you tell me what hurts the most?” Bobbi asked gently as she started pulling out supplies.

“Ribs right side” Skye wheezed out.

“Alright” Bobbi said grabbing her stethoscope from her bag and began listing to Skye’s breathing. “Deep breath in, and out. Again. Again. Okay good, lungs sound good so nothing is punctured. You probably just have some slightly cracked or definitely bruised ribs so it should get easier for you to breathe, but I want you to tell me if it gets worse.”
“Ya got it doc” Skye said imitating Bugs Bunny and Maria knew it was serious when Bobbi placed an oxygen mask on her mate’s face and the woman didn’t object to it despite the numerous notes in her medical file from the nurses that said she would outright refuse to wear them when she needed them.

Bobbi next then pulled out gauze and handed them to Maria to start putting pressure and tape up for transport some of Skye’s worse cuts. Maria was just grateful for something to do as she watched Bobbi start to check Skye over for a concussion. “Alright Rook you have a concussion and possible broken ribs, so we are going to need to put you on the backboard to transport you to be safe.”

Maria’s worry increased when Skye didn’t even argue or put up a fight but just nodded as they worked to get her onto the backboard but before they could strap her in they heard running heading towards their location. Both Bobbi and Maria swung around watching the approaches with their M4s at the ready as Hand and a couple members of a STRIKE team came around the corner. Maria lowered her weapon shaking her head and clicking on the safety but was surprised to hear a third safety click behind her and Bobbi.

Turning around she saw Skye with one of her own 9mms in her hand, her grip strong and aim steady and Maria couldn’t stop the feeling of pride she had in the younger woman. The drive to protect each other was bone deep in both of them and she couldn’t be mad at Skye for reacting to it, but she still wished her mate hadn’t moved so fast because she could see the obvious pain the movement had caused Skye. Her mate’s face was white as a sheet and she could hear the hitch of pain in her mate’s breathing as she holstered the weapon back into it’s thigh holster.

An audible groan escaped from Skye was proof enough that her tiny mate was seriously hurting if it was enough to get her to groan with her crazy ass pain tolerance. Maria watched as Skye tried to lay back down on her own but the movement almost made her fall backwards. Instantly she reached out and steadied her tiny mate and slowly lowered Skye back onto the board with Bobbi’s help and between the two of them they got her strapped down for transport. They needed to get Skye out of the heat and confirm if she had broken ribs or not.

“You two, once the medic has the Dendrotoxin drip going on that piece of shit I want you to bring him to my jet and throw him in the cage” she ordered pointing towards two of the agents and waited till they moved to follow her orders.

"You two," Maria said pointing to the last two agents "grab an end. Agent Morse you have point. Hand you and I have the flanks." Maria ordered as she stood up changing the clip on her M4 to a full one and watched as Bobbi lifted the medkit onto her back. As she did that, that is when she noticed Skye’s other 9mm on the ground in the dirt next to the now doped up Hendrickson.
Maria walked over to it and bent down to pick it up. Skye’s gun was almost the one that ended her life...Shaking her head she checked the safety before checking the clip to find it empty, then she remembered that Skye had used the gun earlier to save her life and her mate had never rearmed it. That thought made multiple emotions flood through her and she had to fight back the urge to either cry or laugh hysterically. Instead she reached down into her own holster and brought out a fresh clip and slid it in place before checking the safety again.

By the time she turned around the agents had Skye lifted up between them. Walking over she took Skye’s hand, placing the gun in it gently and watched as her mate checked the safety on instinct. “Dropped something Rookie” she said softly sharing a brief look with Skye. Looking up she caught the questioning look Hand was giving her and Skye but Maria shook her head slightly.

Taking a step back she moved to the front and brought her M4 to the ready and began escorting them all back to the jet. Skye needed medical treatment and Hand was going to be brought fully into the still small group of people that she trusted.

Maria looked out the window of the Quinjet trying to gather her thoughts together. She had left Skye’s side only to get them in the air and to get the course set for The Fridge instead of the base where Coulson and his team were at. Maria would have to have them meet her at The Fridge or they would have to go back to meet them at the LA base. But for now Fury wanted the two main prisoners at The Fridge for questioning, and he wanted it done yesterday.

A hand on her shoulder pulled her out of her thoughts and she looked away from the window and into the worried eyes of Bobbi. “What’s wrong?” Maria asked fearing the answer.

“Your mate is being combative and argumentative. Reminds me of someone but I can’t think of who” Bobbi says innocently.

“Her ribs?” Maria asked choosing to ignore the jab at her less than wonderful attitude when injured.

“Cracked but not broken. I got her on oxygen right now, well if she would keep the damn mask on. She keeps taking it off. I haven’t checked for bruising on her ribs or checked her arm yet because Hand’s back there and I didn’t know how Skye would react to having to let me see...” Bobbi sighed and shrugged leaving the rest unsaid.

Maria sighed before unbuckling herself from the pilot seat and turning on the auto-pilot. She watched as Bobbi backed up as she stood up and walked past her into the back of the Quinjet. Years of practice made her check the cage and the prisoners inside were bound with zip ties, with noise canceling headphones on with a black bag over their heads.
From the posture of the woman she could tell she was now awake so Maria pulled out her night-night gun from her left thigh holster and put a round into the woman and watched her slump over asleep. She also checked the Dendrotoxin drip that was going into Hendrickson making sure it was open and flowing.

“Time the rounds, I want to see if she is even a little bit enhanced” Maria ordered as she walked on towards the back. “Jammer?”

"Activated it as soon as we were in the air" Bobbi answered.

“Finally! Took you long enough! Did you get lost looking at the sky?” Skye quipped using a bad pun she had heard from Tony a few days ago at dinner as Maria came into her field of view. Maria heard the sharp intake of breath from where Hand was sitting and she raised her hand to forestall her friend from giving Skye a tongue lashing on respecting a superior officer. She knew that Skye using that pun was her way of saying it was up to Maria to decide how to proceed with the unknown person on the plane. The pun was also a bit reassuring since Maria knew if Skye was at least joking she was at least feeling a bit better.

“Not quite the Skye I want to be losing myself in” she answered back dropping her mask and throwing caution to the wind. She walked over and sat carefully next to Skye before gently kissing her on the lips. Pulling away from the kiss she pulled the oxygen mask back over Skye’s face. “Mask stays on.”

“It feels funny. Always hated them, even when I was a kid” Skye complains pulling the mask away from her face to talk but puts it back on when Maria gives her a look.

“Would a nasal cannula be better?” Maria asks trying to find a middle ground with her mate and lifts up the mask so she can answer.

“Better? Not really but at least I’d be able to talk” Skye answers but doesn’t argue when Maria puts back down the mask before she looks towards Bobbi.

“She can have the cannula but if her oxygen level drops again the mask goes back on. I’m pretty sure she didn’t break any ribs but she took a hell of a beating” Bobbi answered as she pulled out a cannula tube from the Medkit bag and handed it to Maria.
It took a few moments before Maria had the cannula replacing the oxygen mask, “Better?”

“Getting there” Skye said winking at her before pulling Maria down for another kiss. “Now I’m better.”

“You are impossible” Maria said chuckling.

“Only for you, love” Skye answered before looking over towards Hand “Um love I think we broke your agent…”

Maria turned towards Hand as well to see a shocked look on her face before she seemed to snap out of it. “Soulmates?”

“Yes, we found each other a week ago” Maria said as she ran her fingers through Skye’s hair. “Victoria Hand, meet Skye. Resident hacker on Coulson’s team and my soulmate. Skye meet Victoria Hand, call sign Hecate.”

“Nice to meet you,” Hand said as she shook Skye’s hand before her mate smirked back at the woman but when she went to take back her hand Skye didn’t let go and Maria knew something was going on.

“Likewise. Welcome to being in the know,” Skye said and Maria went to interrupt her but Skye lifted up her other hand. “Yes, I know it is for both of our safeties but I think that Victoria here knows what it means to protect her soulmate. Am I correct?”

Maria watched as shock reached Hand’s eyes but the agent’s face quickly dropped into the face she wore when dealing with particularly difficult agents. That face usually had junior agents either scrambling for cover or remembering they had something to do somewhere else and that they were late. For Skye though her mate just kept eye contact with her friend not even flinching and Maria couldn’t help but be slightly impressed.

Out of the corner of her eye she saw as Bobbi pulled out one of her Battle Staves but Maria shook her head slightly while watching Hand. Remembering the only questionable blip she found on Victoria Hands background check and what Skye was able to sense she realised what was happening. “Skye release Victoria’s hand please” Maria said keeping her voice calm and watched as
her mate complied but shook her head as if she was trying to clear it.

“Sorry that’s a first for me. Never felt a bond before without both bondmates being there for me to pick up on it” Skye said as she laid her head back and closed her eyes. Maria went to ask her if she was okay but Skye answered the question before she even asked it, “Yes love, I’ll be fine just give me a moment.”

Maria gave her mate a look before shaking her own head and turning back towards Victoria who now totally had a shocked look on her face. “Well I am guessing congratulations are in order. And as for your not reporting your change in soulmate status to SHIELD when you met, don’t.”

“What do you mean don’t Hill? Regulations clearly state we were suppose to within the first month, especially since she is in my command” Victoria said as she sat back down on her seat her movements contained, controlled as if she was just holding onto herself. Maria’s respect for the woman increased in that moment because she didn’t flinch away from the look Maria was giving her. Sighing she forced her own body to relax, it seemed like Maria was about to bring Victoria Hand into all the secrets and she needed to get the other woman to loosen up.

“First I think you can call me Maria since we now know each others most important secret. That and what I am about to tell you is going to bring you into a very small group of people that I know I can trust. But the answer to your questions is one simple answer. SHIELD has been compromised” Maria said without hesitation and she wondered if the topic of conversation was just getting easier for her to say with all the practice or if she was finally accepting it as truth. She knew when the news was done filtering through Victoria’s mind and knew the agents very analytical mind came to the right conclusions.

“You investigated me and somehow found Isabelle in my past or my records?” Victoria said her voice trying to hurt anger and betrayal she felt. Isabelle Hartly call sign Xena, that was the only Isabelle that Hand had under her command. Now that was an interesting pair Isabelle Hartley was brash, confident and a true specialist of the Barton variety. While Victoria Hand was cold, confident and efficient. Together they had been one of her more competent investigative teams and she had wondered how the hell the two women got along but the answer was there the whole time, they were soulmates.

“I had to be sure. This goes up all the way to the council, we don’t know who but we know that something is rotten and it’s not just because they are all politicians. Fury has been having me run this investigation silent since New York and he is only letting me bring people in once I’ve been able to confirm they are clean. And that only because in the last week I met Skye, otherwise I’d probably be running around with my head cut off trying to make heads or tails of all the information.”
“As for how I found out about Isabelle that was with Skye’s help, my soulmate the wonder hacker here designed a program that has been helping me determine who is clean, who is dirty and who I have to question.”

“Is…” Victoria starts up and then stops and Maria could tell that she was arguing with her personal self and her professional self.

“She is your soulmate, what do you think Victoria?” Skye asked gently before Maria could give her the answer that she didn’t know. Maria started to run her fingers through Skye’s hair again letting her mate take the lead on this part of the conversation, this was her gift. She watched as Victoria struggled with her answer because she knew the woman was struggling with the two sides of the coin, her head and her heart.

“I don’t know” she answered and Maria could hear the pain and the doubt in the other woman’s voice.

“What does your bond tell you? Feel down that line that connects you two and tell me what you feel.”

“That I can trust her with my life, I have trusted her with my life. But my head keeps telling me that, that doesn’t mean a thing...not when it comes to my track record” Victoria answers her with confidence on the first part, but her voice is once again unsure on the second. Maria knew they were seeing a part of Victoria Hand that she kept hidden from the world behind the protocols and rules, and wondered who was the real Victoria Hand.

“I wish we could tell you but we don’t know. She was next to be checked out on your team but then all of this dropped and we’ve been busy running a side investigation with your main one. I couldn’t risk open lines to tell you what I just told you” Maria answers honestly and hopes for her friends sake that they didn’t find anything.

“I can run the scan once you all get me unstrapped from this damn board and hand me a laptop” Skye offers.

“Your laptop is in the SUV with your team.” Maria said looking down at her mate. She knew Skye had issues with being confined from the multiple incidences in her files but she was hesitant on having her move so soon after the beating she had taken.
“I know but I just need a laptop, so I can hack into the secured server I set up hidden inside Stark’s systems. Preferably Bobbi’s laptop then that way I can get the programs downloaded on her laptop so she can help you once I am back with my team” Skye answers and by the way her mate keeps closing her eyes she knows that she is struggling to stay calm. Maria reaches out and gently runs her fingers in Skye’s hair and instantly the tension in her mate’s body lessens again.

“As long as she stays sitting and promises to keep the oxygen on it should be okay. But with Skye I just don’t know, Dr. Banner might be able to answer better since he has been treating her since her last injuries.” Bobbi answers with a shrug of her shoulders when Maria turns towards her to ask.

Maria sighs before fishing out her phone and dials a number after engaging the shadow protocols. “Hello Maria what can I do for you?” Bruce asks always pleasant and she can hear him snapping his fingers to get Tony to turn down the music.

“Skye got hurt again. I am going to put Bobbi Morse the medic I have treating Skye on the phone. She has read Skye’s files but she needs a consult on the injuries.” Maria says before handing over the phone to Bobbi and tries to listen in but is soon lost in the one sided conversation. She moves out of the way as Bobbi moves to the portable x-ray towards Skye again and takes another set of x-rays.

“What are you doing? Protocol states she isn’t suppose to be removed from the backboard until a medical crash team clears her.” Victoria says as she looks between Maria and Bobbi.

“Skye is different.” Maria answers vaguely because she isn’t sure if Skye wants another person to know her story in its fully detail or not.

“What Maria isn’t saying, though I think the cat is out of the bag on that one is that I’m an 0-8-4 or was exposed to one as a baby. Not sure yet it’s kinda like the chicken or egg question, ya know? But it’s how I could sense your soulbond and whatever other weird shit I might be able to do. Maria doesn’t want me on any SHIELD databases other than I’m a hacker on the 616 team” Skye says to Victoria before Bobbi finishes with the phone and comes back towards them.

“Alright Dr. Banner says you can get up but you are to stay sitting and oxygen stays on. You can have your laptop but first I need to get pictures of any injuries and send them to him. He wants to be able to chart your progress with these injuries as well and compare” Bobbi says looking down at Skye.

“I figured as much” Skye sighed as Maria started unbuckling her mate from the backboard. Gently between Bobbi and herself they got Skye sitting up on top of the backboard.
“Victoria do you have your tablet with you?” Maria asks as she moves behind her mate and lets Skye lean back into her body as Bobbi moved to start getting things ready to treat the rest of Skye’s injuries.

“I do” she answers and Maria can tell that Victoria is somewhat lost in her thought as she looks at Maria and Skye. She knew that Victoria was probably trying to process all the information she had been told and thinking about her own soulmate. Maria holds out her hand and waits till Victoria hands it over before giving it to Skye.

“Full package?” Skye asks as she starts accessing the tablets systems.

“Yes” Maria says as she bends her leg and reaches into the hidden compartment in the heel of her boot and pulls out the two flash drives. Holding both in front of Skye she waits till her mate nods before she takes back the tablet and inserts the first flash drive into it after Skye installed her custom encryption program onto it.

“Read and if you have any questions I’ll do my best to answer them. You should have enough time between here and The Fridge to read it all” Maria says as Bobbi comes back and they start to undress Skye to check her bruising on her ribs and to stitch up the cut on her arm.
Chapter 21

Maria watched out of her office window at the Fridge as the Quinjet that held Phil, Mel and Isabella Hartley landed. She had provided a distraction for the other members of the SHIELD 616 team by making FitzSimmons fill a surprise guest lecture spot at the Sci-Tech academy and she had ordered Ward to go with them as their guard. With how things were going she wasn’t going to let the scientist be left unguarded even at a highly secured SHIELD facility. It didn’t mean she trusted Ward but she trusted him to at least act like he was guarding the two scientist when surrounded by hundreds of other agents, not all of them could be dirty.

A pair of arms circled around her waist and she felt her tiny mate kiss her back between her shoulder blades. Turning around she buried her face in the top of Skye’s head and breathed in her scent. Thirty-six hours later and her mate was finally off the oxygen and was already on the mend from her latest round of injuries. The bruising was still quite spectacular but at least the concussion and the swelling of her left eye were gone.

“I could hear you worrying from across the room” Skye said as she leaned back in Maria’s arms looking up at her. Blue eyes looked down into brown and she couldn’t help but smile softly before leaning down and kissing Skye on the lips. “Better. Now come sit with me till Bobbi and Victoria escort them up here” Skye said as the kiss broke off and she pulled Maria out of her office and towards the living room area part of her quarters. It was one of the good things about The Fridge both her and Fury shared this floor between their offices that rarely got used and their living quarters which were huge.

She had asked Fury one time years ago why they had such a large space in the secure detention center that they rarely had time to use anyways. His answer at the time had rang to her as paranoia but now she appreciated it because here she was using it as a secure place to gather those she trusted. Well some of those she trusted, with not many knowing Phil was alive she had to keep the groups separate for now but this was still a good sized group. “Sorry Sweetheart” Maria said as she sat on the couch and pulled Skye into her lap.

“Don’t be sorry love, I know you got a lot on your mind’ Skye said as she rested her head on Maria’s shoulder, pressing a kiss lightly to her neck. A lot on her mind was an understatement. Hendrickson didn’t have a kill switch like all the other Centipede soldiers that they had encountered when rescuing Phil but that didn’t mean that the man was now deader than a doornail. When they had him restrained and lowered the dosage of the Dendrotoxin to start questioning him he had committed suicide by biting down on a hollow tooth and taking cyanide. He had said something at the end but she couldn’t make out what it was between the effects of the Dendrotoxin still in his system and the cyanide.

Raina the woman they had captured, on the other hand didn’t seem to have such failsafes but she was tight lipped on information other than to spout the wonders of the Clairvoyant. Hearing the same
rhetoric over and over again rang of brainwashing techniques that made Maria’s skin crawl just thinking on them but all the scans disproved that theory so the woman was a true believer in this Clairvoyant. It was almost enough for Maria to want to personally shoot something just to make it stop and she had at one point shot the woman with a night-night gun just to shut her up. At the time Bobbi had looked over at her shocked but didn’t say anything but raise her eyebrow in question.

She was frustrated to all hell because it seemed like everything was connected but she didn’t want to make the assumption it was and miss anything. It also didn’t help matters that it had been a week since Natasha and Clint left to go check out the lead on Skye’s past and they hadn’t heard from them. Maria knew that the two assassins could take care of themselves but they were walking in blind, without backup and she was starting to get a bad feeling.

A knock pulled her out of her thoughts with a sigh as Skye gently kissed her lips before she stood up and walked over to the door. Skye activated the security panel next to the door making sure it was the group they were expecting before opening the door and letting everyone in. As soon as the door closed Skye reactivated the now upgraded Shadow Protocols and Maria felt herself relax slightly once everything was activated and secured.

Maria watched as Isabelle Hartley’s shoulders tightened as she took in the extra security measures and for a brief moment Maria felt guilty because she ordered Victoria Hand not to say anything to her mate till they were both in a secured area to talk. She wasn’t the only one to notice the stance of Isabelle as Victoria came up behind her and placed a hand lightly on her mates shoulder. By the look of shock on her face Maria was pretty sure Isabelle wasn’t sure to be more shocked at the security measures or the fact that her mate was touching her in a comforting manner in front of one of their bosses.

Glancing around the room she saw that Mel and Phil were quietly talking to Skye still near the front door the two older agents clearly making sure the younger woman was okay as they took in her newest set of injuries. She also knew they were trying to reassure Skye that Phil was okay after his ordeal of being captured and tortured. The noise coming from the kitchen area had to be Bobbi as her friend took the opportunity to gather drinks for everyone before their little meeting started.

As far a SHIELD was aware this meeting was a secure debrief and update to her on the investigation into Centipede by the two teams that were assigned to the issue. In truth that was partially true but this meeting was also a gathering of all those she could trust and what very well might turn into her war council. Fury was leaving this fully to her now while he dealt with other projects and issues.

Turning back towards Victoria and Isabelle she saw the couple having a whispered heated argument and she felt guilty for it because she knew she partially caused it. Sighing she picked up the tablet already with the two flash drives attached to it from the coffee table and headed over to the pair. “You two with me” Maria said her voice dropping into her Commander Hill voice that said do it and don’t argue as she walked past them and towards her office area. “Shut the door.”
The door clicked behind her with an audible sound before she turned around leaning her hip on her desk and handing the tablet to Isabelle. “First, yes I know about you two but I just found out about thirty six hours ago and that totally on accident. Don’t be mad at Victoria she was under orders from me to not tell you anything till you got here.”

“So this isn’t a meeting about our investigation into Coulson’s capture by this Centipede group?” Isabelle asked anger at being lied to in her voice and her body posture.

“Yes it is, but that isn’t everything. I wish it was everything but it’s not. Centipede, I’m afraid to say is only the tip of the iceberg. Read what is on the tablet, if you have a question ask Victoria though she has only been read in for about thirty six hours now, if she can’t answer it I will” Maria finished before walking out of her office leaving the two soulmates to hash it out. Victoria was better equipped to deal with her mates reaction to the news she was about to read.

Skye patted the spot on the couch next to her as Maria came out of her office. She knew that Maria had put Victoria and Isabelle Hartley in the room so the two soulmates could hash out any fight they were having and for Isabelle to have a private area to take in all the information she was going to be reading. Apparently a Hartley/Hand fight were things of legends wherever the two women were stationed at but they were one of the best investigative teams SHIELD had. Maria admitted to her last night that at one point she had almost split up the two women because the fighting had gotten to ridiculous proportions but hadn’t at the last minute because it seemed they had worked through whatever had caused the issue.

After Maria settled on the couch Skye leaned into her mates arms and rested against Maria’s side. A low chuckle brought her attention back to AC as he rested back against one of the smaller couches with one arm tucked behind May. “I’m glad you two are getting along so well” he said with a small smile on his face as he watched them.

“So well that it’s almost sickenly cute at times” Bobbi deadpanned as she carried in a tray of drinks and snacks placing them on the coffee table. “I’m surprised I haven’t heard any yelling or anything crashing in there” she said now glancing at Maria’s closed office door.

“Soundproofing” Maria answered with a shrug “I activated it before I left them in there. I didn’t want to hear the fight let alone the possible make up.”

“So is this soundproofing only in your office or did you two forget to turn it on last night for your room?” Bobbi asked innocently as AC choked on his coffee and May smirked. Skye felt it as Maria hid her face in her hair knowing that her mate was beat red in embarrassment as they had been quite
vocal the night before in their lovemaking. They knew their time together was coming to a close and last night had almost a desperate quality to it as they committed every inch and everything to their memories for when they were apart.

“Mockingbird I am not above shooting you with a night-night gun” Skye threatened with a smile on her face.

“Bring it Skyefall,” Bobbi smugly said as she dropped into one of the chairs.

“Skyefall?” AC questioned as he looked between herself and Bobbi.

“Fucking pirate” Skye muttered as she now hid her face in Maria’s chest as her mate now chuckled at her embarrassment. She poked Maria in the ribs earning her an ‘oof’ for her efforts before she felt Maria reach over to the side end table and grab her credentials tossing them to the two older agents. Sighing she turned to watch as AC and May opened up the credentials and looked between them and her.

“Congrats Rookie” May said with a soft smile “but remember rule five.”

Skye relaxed at what May said not realizing she was worried how they would react to her becoming an agent so soon after she had betrayed them in a way. A part of her always knew they would be proud and happy for her but that still large part of her that was use to people getting angry at her and leaving still had feared their reaction. She felt Maria press a kiss to her hair before she surprised herself by standing up quickly and moving to hug the two older agents. “Thank you” she whispered softly to them and she knew they understood all that she was trying to say.

Standing back up she took back her credentials tucking them into the back pocket of her jeans as she turned back towards Maria. A small smile crept on her face as she took in the change in position of her mate on the couch as she sat down between Maria’s stretched out legs. Leaning her back against Maria’s front she felt a pair of strong arms hold her and she relaxed as she let the conversation roll over her taking in the happy moment and committing it to memory.

It was about an hour later when Maria heard her office door open and she turned to watch as Victoria and Isabelle came out hand in hand. Not a stitch of clothing was out of place but Victoria was sporting a hicky on her neck just below her ear that usually would be hidden by her hair if it wasn’t up in a pony tail. Maria looked towards Isabelle and saw the smug look of satisfaction on the specialist face as they came into the room.
“Grab a seat and get comfortable” Maria said indicating the other couch as Skye continued to lean against her playing with her other hand. She waited till the two women sat down but wasn’t surprised when Isabelle sat against an end of couch pulling Victoria down onto her lap. Amusement filled her as she realized that Isabelle was the possessive dominating type in private while it was Victoria that was that persona in public since she was the ranking agent of the team.

“I take it that you actually read the files?” she asked amusement coloring her voice. Victoria blushed while Isabelle nodded to her in an answer as her eyes for a moment flashed cold before turning back to normal. Maria had to remind herself that she was looking at one of the top ten female specialist that they had working at SHIELD currently. Isabelle Hartley was a force to be reckoned with when pissed and she had an impressive service record that was almost as thick as Natasha or Mel’s.

“Alright Isabelle I think you know everyone in the room except for this cuddle bug” Maria said poking Skye in the stomach with an affectionate smile on her face. “Isabelle Hartley meet Skye my soulmate and one of the files you read about.”

“Nice to meet you Isabelle. Sorry about outing you two, but when Victoria shaked my hand I knew she was bonded and that she had kept it hidden. With everything going on..” Skye said shrugging leaving the rest unsaid.

“Don’t worry about it, I’ve been wanting us to come out of the shadows for a while” Isabelle said as she shifted on the couch lifting Victoria easily in her arms. She mirrored the same position that Maria and Skye were in on their own couch with Victoria before bending down to whisper something to her mate and instantly Victoria relaxed into her body.

“Okay this a gathering of those I’ve told about my current investigation and that know that Phil here is alive. This group hopefully will get bigger once I can convince Fury to let Phil reveal he is alive to the Avengers.”

“They still don’t know? Fury is playing with fire” Isabelle said.

“Don’t have to tell us twice. We’ve been telling Fury that since day one but he has ordered us not to reveal that information and now that order extends to you as well. Now Fury has ordered me to create a secret team or even division that will be totally off SHIELD books and will be funded by one of the secret slush funds Fury has stashed everywhere. For once the man’s paranoia isn’t giving me a headache but easing the one I’ve had.
“Welcome to level 10 everyone. It’s unofficial in SHIELD but our access in the computer system will now have ghost protocols installed by Skye here that will let us have access to everything. Please be careful with your access and remember what you should know compared to what you do know. Skye has also built a secure communication network that she will need to install on your tablets and phones before everyone leaves. If anything goes missing even briefly let us know so we can brick the device.

“Skye has also built a secure server hidden inside the Avengers personal server in New York and on there will any information that we find out, the updated lists of who we have confirmed dirty, who we need to dig into more and who we have confirmed is loyal. Fury doesn’t want us moving yet because he wants to make sure we thoroughly vet the top brass before we make our move so not to tip our hand.

“But waiting could be dangerous as well so we are going to be working in teams and we are not to separate unless we can’t help it. I don’t need to tell you all to watch your six’s because this is very liable to blow up fully in our faces” Maria said her arms tightening around Skye as she leaned down and took in a breath of her mate’s scent.

“How do you want to do this Maria” Mel asked dragging her out of her thoughts that kept thinking of worse case scenarios that had her heart racing. She forced herself to calm down before she answered.

“Skye will return with you and Phil to your team on the bus. I can’t justify keeping her close to me since she is your rookie. Skye is still only registered as a consultant for your team that is undergoing evaluation to become an agent. With her past it’s not suspicious I haven’t filed my report yet if she qualifies or not to become an agent. Her being an official agent of SHIELD is now removed from the main database and is hidden on the secure server along with everyone’s levels.

“Phil, Mel and Skye I want you to keep the pressure on Centipede and if you suspect anything is amiss don’t hesitate to abort a mission or notify me if you suspect a team member.”

“Am I to assume you are investigating them and found something?” Phil asked his voice cold.

“Yes and before you ask, no nothing concrete yet but don’t take the risk” Maria ordered and waited till the other two nodded to her.

“Bobbi is going to be my partner and officially being assigned as another liaison between the Avengers and SHIELD. I’ll tell the Avengers the truth of her assignment but at this point in time Bobbi is now part of the Avenger team” Maria said as she observed the shocked look on Bobbi’s
“Going to catch a fly that way Mockingbird” she teased and laughed when Bobbi flipped her off.

“Victoria and Isabelle you two are to investigate Centipede as well and provide back up to Phil and his team on the investigation. Pass information over normal channels for this but if its something that touches on this investigation use the server. Also you two will be returning to the Hub. Congrats Victoria you will be running the facility as Martinez is retiring at the end of this month. I want you two to go through all personnel there and clean it out.”

“Understood” Victoria said from Isabelle’s lap.

"Good now Fury is to take care of the Triskelion while Bobbi and I clean out headquarters….” Maria said as she detailed their assignments and her thoughts on where the investigation is going through.

Slowly she awoke to a warm breathe on the side of her neck and a warm weight across her ribs. Opening her eyes she looked down at the peaceful sleeping form of Clint as he slept with his head on her chest. She brought a hand and gently ran it through his hair reminding herself they needed to find a barbershop for him today to get it cut. The sounds of the city below them filtered through the open veranda window of the hotel they were staying at as she thought on everything.

It had been a week since they left New York, taking them two days to get down here to the little port town along the coast of Chile. The other five days had been spent trying to track down the lead Maria had found on the only possible agent still alive on the team that had Skye all those years ago in China. Former SHIELD Agent Lumley was turning out to be quite the ghost but they weren’t giving up yet, even if they had to call Maria and extend their leave. Natasha felt like she had to get to the bottom of this mystery, especially since it was hitting very close to home.

She knew when Clint woke up because his fingers started tracing the soul words that were just under the swell of her right breast. Those words weren’t the words Clint said to her, his were under left breast, no these words had started to come in a few days ago. At first they had been faint but they had started to come in darker and darker and now they were as black as her and Clint’s words to each other. It was rare for a soulmated pair to find a third so late in life but despite their sins, here they were being blessed with a third.

Something told Natasha that their triad was going to be something of a rarity because she just knew their third wasn’t just born. No it seemed like events were now in play that were bringing them together, when they might not have met otherwise and that they would need each other. At least that is what it seemed like from their mate’s first words on their bodies. ‘He’s dead isn’t he?’ were written across Clint’s back while her words ‘I’m sorry, we knew this was coming but we hadn’t told
Kids, that thought unleashed so many emotions in her that she felt her breath hitch in her chest and Clint’s arms pulled her to him as he rolled onto his back. She laid there for a long time against his chest listening to his heart, his fingers gently ran through her hair as she silently digested all those feelings that one word triggered. The Red Room had removed any chance of her getting pregnant all those years ago when she became the Black Widow.

At first it hadn’t been a loss to her because of all the conditioning and brainwashing she had undergone since she was a small child. Though after meeting Clint and having SHIELD deprogram her, she had silently mourned the loss as she knew he did in his own way. Clint was excellent with children, she teased him it was because he was just like them and he would just smile that impish smile at her and go back to playing.

“I promise we will protect them” he whispered as he kissed the top of her head, pulling her tighter against him. Once again her mate hit the bullseye as her thoughts turned to the other reason they never thought to try to have kids, even through adoption. Their lives were just too dangerous to raise a child in and neither were the type to sit at home while they other put their lives on the line.

“I know,” she said sighing as she pulled away to look into his eyes before gently kissing his lips. “We need to get up and get you a haircut” she said rolling out of bed and walking towards the bathroom naked.

“It’s not that long yet” Clint grumbled behind her as he got up out of the bed to follow her.

Clint should have known that his getting a haircut was just so Natasha could talk to one of her old contacts in the area but he had to admit that Ricardo did good work. The man had given him an old school shave so close that his face was baby smooth, which he knew pleased Natasha because she hated stubble and now kept touching his face. He hadn’t been able to follow the rapid conversation between the two old friends but whatever he had told Natasha had them now at an outdoor market a town away from where they were staying.

At the moment they were playing the part of newlyweds on their honeymoon as they held hands and perused the individual stalls. It wasn’t a hard part to play because he did love Natasha with everything he had and knew that he would love their soon to be met third just the same. Natasha was looking at some native art work as he kept watch on their surroundings playing the part of tourist and that was when he spotted Lumley. Squeezing Natasha’s hand three short times he let her know that he had spotted their target.
“What do you think honey?” Natasha asked as she held up the piece of art and turned towards him.

“If you want to get it, go for it baby. It should look good in our living room,” he said glancing with his eyes over her left shoulder. He watched as Natasha pretended to contemplating purchasing the painting but he knew by her eyes that she was really checking the market for any threats.

Putting the painting back down on the table she placed it crooked in its spot letting him know that there might be trouble. Clint kept eyes on Lumley as he heard Natasha say something in the native tongue to the stall owner. Music was playing next to the stall that Lumley was standing at buying what looked to be groceries and he pulled Natasha over and started dancing in the street with her to the music.

Natasha’s laugh was melodious as she threw her head back before leaning in close to him whispering, “We have two Centipede soldiers behind you watching Lumley.”

Clint lifted her up and spun her around as she squealed stopping as he faced the trouble getting a look at it himself. His eyes searched the crowd but it wasn’t hard to find the two men in it, they stood out like a sore thumbs. “Got them, we need to get him out of here because they are watching him not us. Which means we aren’t the only ones interested in finding out what he knows about China” he whispered into her ear hearing Natasha giggle playing her part.

“I think Lumley has spotted them because he is moving away towards the exit of the market. They are definitely after him” she said as they Centipede soldiers passed them by without even giving them a glance. “Drunk newlyweds pincer movement?”

“Looks like it’s our best option” he said kissing her hard for a moment before breaking off the kiss and pulling her behind him. Clint watched as Lumley turned down an alley that he knew from earlier didn’t have an exit and the Centipede soldiers followed after him. Stumbling into the alley he heard Natasha giggle as he pushed her up against the wall attacking her neck with kisses and bites. Natasha moaned loudly and he had to try thinking of anything disturbing to keep down the swelling in his pants. Once they were done with this, the little minx was his and she knew it.

“Roberts get rid of them” he heard one of the soldiers say to the other. Footsteps approached them but he pretended not to hear anything as he felt Natasha’s hand under his shirt reaching for the 9mm at the small of his back. The super soldier got up to two feet away from them before Natasha pulled out the gun and put two to his chest in quick succession but he didn’t go down as he quickly started to return fire. Clint stepped away pulling another 9mm from a shoulder holster that had been hidden by his suit jacket.
Ducking behind in a doorway he took fire from behind them and he cursed as two more soldiers opened fire down the alleyway towards them from their rear. Quickly he returned fire covering their six as he trusted Natasha to deal with their front. “One down. Aim for their heads,” Natasha yelled out as she ducked back into the doorway as she reloaded. Clint fought not to roll his eyes before he put two to the chest to one soldier and while he was staggering back put one in his head.

The other soldier to their rear started shooting wildly and he cursed at the look in the other man’s eyes. They must have been a mated pair that had a strong bond because Clint recognized a Kamikaze charge when he saw one as the man charged his position firing. Cursing again he quickly reloaded and with a deep breath he dropped and rolled firing as he came up hitting the man in the head as he then dove into Natasha’s doorway.

“Fancy meeting you here” he quipped as he stood up and realized he didn’t quite get out of the Kamikaze charge without damage. He felt the burn and wetness of a gunshot wound to his right upper thigh but ignored it for now as he watched their rear. One more set of gunshots and then silence.

“Clear” Natasha said as he felt her slide out of the doorway behind him heading quickly towards the back of the alleyway. “Fuck! Hawkeye get over here, Lumley is down” she said and he slowly limped backwards keeping an eye on the mouth of the alleyway. Turning around he saw the damage Lumley had taken and knew that despite their best attempts the man wasn’t going to make it. Not in a tiny village like this that didn’t even have an actual doctor.

Kneeling next to the slightly older man he kept one eye on the alleyway but put pressure on the wounds trying to buy them time to ask him what they needed. “Agent Lumley I’m Hawkeye and this is my partner Widow we are from SHIELD.”

“I know who you are, I looked into you two a few days ago and that is probably how I got tracked but I had to know” he said coughing up a bit of blood.

“What do you mean?” Natasha asked him but he just smiled softly at her and gripped her hand.

“You will see, but since you reacted to my looking you up with surprise I take it that isn’t why you are here or how you know who I am.”

“No I’m sorry we’ve been looking for about a week now for you. Our boss has questions in regards to China and a certain baby girl you and your team snuck into the US” Natasha asked.
“Ahh I knew that event would come back one day and find me. I don’t have much time, what do you need to know?” he asked in between coughing fits as more blood came up out of his mouth.

“Honestly we need the full story and not the edited version in the file. We aren’t exactly sure what we are looking for. Only that, that little girl’s life now a young woman might depend on what you tell us.”

“We responded to a possible 0-8-4 in the Hunan Province of China called in by an undercover SHIELD agent. But when we arrived to the coordinates provided we found a village massacred and the agent dying with the baby girl in her arms. Before the agent died she handed the baby over to my partner Avery and said one word ‘hide’. We took it meant the baby was the 0-8-4 but she was a quiet little thing even if she was covered in blood and grime.

Back then with everyone so still hyped up from the Cold War and too many governments trying to make super soldiers my team and I decided the best thing to do was to hide and protect the child. Avery was actually going to leave SHIELD and raise her as her own child but when we got back to the states, we started either disappearing or being found murdered. So instead we hid her in the foster system, making sure she moved around randomly not staying anywhere for too long. A few days later Avery was dead and I was the last man standing and I ran because I was the only one left knowing where she was.”

“Thank you Agent Lumley you helped us a lot. Is there anything we can do for you?” Natasha said as she held the man’s hand and ran her fingers through his hair in a comforting gesture.

“Yes, go to the Bodega four blocks east. Around the back will be a set of stairs. Introduce yourselves using your call signs and tell her I love her and the kids” Lumley said before coughing one last time and dying.

“Do you think?” she asked barely above a whisper green eyes filled with sorrow that he knew was reflected back in his own eyes. He watched as Natasha turned away closing the Agent’s eyes and Clint looked at the foot of the alleyway. They only had minutes left to get away before someone finally got brave enough to come looking into the gunfire and they couldn’t do anything more for the man.

“We need to go. If they tracked him then they might have tracked her,” he said standing up and reaching down to pull her to her feet. Limping to the alleyway he looked around and didn’t spot any trouble so they quickly made a hasty getaway trying to blend into the crowds just a block away.

Natasha put his arm around her shoulders as she gripped his waist, “Your hit.”
“Just a graze, once we are somewhere safe you can sew me up but until then we need to keep
moving and get her out of here” Clint said his mind going a mile a minute as his eyes wandered the
crowds looking for threats. Lumley had looked them up like he knew they were coming, the only
thing he could think of was that their codenames were part of what they said to their third and he had
known their third. Their marks had shown up on her but not on him. He knew that his time was
going to end soon and he still greeted them not with anger but with relief because he knew they
would protect her and the children.

They made their way to the Bodega and quickly made their way around the back seeing no signs of
anyone getting there before them. Natasha helped him up the stairs and they shared a look as they
heard children playing coming from inside. Knocking on the door they heard the children stop
playing and someone come to the door. The door slowly opened and they saw a woman with long
dark hair and dark eyes that had a smile that just reminded you of home.

“I’m Hawkeye and this is Widow” Clint said watching the woman for her reaction. He saw surprise
on her face, then sorrow as she took a step back opening the door for them to come inside.

“He’s dead isn’t he?” the woman whispered and Clint wanted to reach out and comfort the woman
but Natasha moved him past her and sat him down on a kitchen chair.

“Yes I’m sorry. He wanted us to tell you he loved both you and the kids” Natasha said as she slowly
approached the woman and opened her arms. There was a moment of hesitation before the woman
stepped into Natasha’s embrace as she started to cry. Natasha’s arms tightened as she whispered
words into their thirds ear.

Clint wanted to stand up and hold both of his mates but he was starting to feel the blood loss as he
felt a bit woozy. Taking off his belt he used it as a tourniquet on his leg and looked through the
whole in his black jeans and tried not to wince. Natasha was going to kill him, it wasn’t a graze it
was almost a through and through in his thigh but he wasn’t going to tell her that now, they needed
to get their mate and the children out here. Clearing his throat he got their attention as he started
taking in the tiny apartment, it was well lived in and full of pictures of two kids an older boy around
eight and a girl that was about five.

“I’m sorry, we knew this was coming but we hadn’t told the kids yet” their mate said as she backed
up looking at Natasha as she dried her eyes.

“Don’t be sorry for showing emotion красивый. Come on we will get the kids and then we have to
leave” Natasha said as she held out her hand for her to take. It was a moment of hesitation again
before she took Natasha’s hand as they walked down the hallway where the kids were hidden.
Standing up he limped over to the fridge taking a look inside for anything to boost his blood sugar. Reaching inside he grabbed a picture that looked like orange juice and a cup from the counter. Stumbling back to the kitchen table he sat down before pouring himself a drink and started to feel instantly better.

Moments later he watched as the kids were led into the kitchen. Both kids had a small backpack on their backs and had a sad look in their eyes as they tried not to cry. They must have been told what happened to their father and he shared a small sad smile with Natasha as she came into view but her eyes narrowed at him drinking the juice. Clint stopped the argument before it started by giving Natasha a pointed look towards the kids his head slightly shaking.

“I’m going to assume your names aren’t actually Hawkeye and Widow. I’m Laura and this is Cooper and Lila” their mate Laura said indicating her children.

“I’m Clint Barton, call sign Hawkeye and behind you is Natasha Romanoff, call sign Black Widow” Clint said smiling gently at her. “Do you have a car Laura?” Clint asked taking charge as he stood up and limped to the window. He observed the back area not seeing anything of particular concern but he kept his eyes on the area watching.

“Yes the SUV in the back, inside the seats are ‘things’ that Richard started to put in there” Laura said her voice catching at her mate’s name but Clint knew what she meant by ‘things’. If he had known he was most likely going to die and leave his wife and children to be cared for by total strangers he would have prepared as much as he could in his short time.

The whole situation they found themselves in was a bit fucked up because the small family in front of him tragedy, was his and Natasha’s gain. He knew Natasha was hurting inside and that she was cursing the fates but they had something both of them had always wanted a chance of having but never dared to hope for, a family. He felt he was going be thanking Richard Lumley profusely for the rest of his life because instead of running away he had stayed to make sure Laura met them even if it meant his life.

“Okay Nat you are driving, Laura I want you in the back with the kids.” Clint said before he used the wall to kneel down in front of the kids. “I know you are sad and scared at the moment but I promise you Natasha, your mother and I will protect you. If we tell you to get down, I want you to drop in between the seats with your hands over your heads like this” Clint said as he demonstrated it to the kids. “Okay?”

Cooper nodded at him as Lila said a soft “Okay” around her thumb and Clint couldn’t help the gentle smile he gave them as a warm feeling filled his chest. Using the wall again he struggled to stand up
till Natasha rolled her eyes at him muttering something in russian that sounded suspiciously like ‘stubborn ass’ but he was choosing to ignore it. He had a feeling that his red headed mate will be cursing at him in russian more often now that there were little ears around.

Once he was standing he opened the door and let Natasha pass him as she started to assess the area as she moved towards the SUV. He watched as Laura picked up Lila in her arms and took Cooper’s hand as they followed Natasha down the stairs. Clint stayed at the top of the stairs keeping an eye out till both of the kids were in the vehicle before he started down the stairs himself.
Chapter 22

It was hours later and the hotel room was quiet as both Cooper and Lila were asleep in the main room. Cooper was curled up around his sister as if he could protect her from the world they found themselves in. He stood in the doorway leaning against the frame as he watched them sleep with looks of innocence on their faces and wished he could keep that look on their faces for sometime yet. It was only a few hours and he was already attached to the two children.

He could hear the low murmur of Natasha and Laura talking out on the veranda as he closed his eyes and just absorbed everything around him. They would be leaving back to the states tomorrow morning as he had called in favors to make sure that Laura and the kids had passports waiting for them at the airport. Laura had met Richard ten years ago while working as a school teacher in a tiny village in the south of Argentina. Neither of them had a soulmark and despite everything had fallen in love but to stay together she had to disappear with him and she had without thinking twice.

Ten years and two kids later they had been surprised when Laura woke up having not one but two soulmarks. Richard didn’t have any but had hugged his wife telling her that he loved her then researched the two names on her body. It was almost like that thing Tony and Bruce argued about when watching that one British show, a circular paradox. Laura got the marks when they had decided to come down here to try tracking down Richard Lumley but he hadn’t researched their names blowing his cover till a few days ago trying to find out who they were. Still though the agent knew he wouldn’t live past any of them meeting and had gone with a dignity Clint hoped he could match in the end.

Grabbing his cane he hobbled over to the sliding door that led to the veranda and cursed again the stupid super soldiers. When he got back he was going to make Mel read him into that damn investigation so he could help put an end to that nonsense. Of course when they got back to New York they might have a whole other thing that they needed to deal with if what Lumley had told them was true. Natasha and he had already decided that they would wait to get to New York before trying to confirm or disprove their suspicions.

The two women stopped talking as his cane made enough noise to announce his presence to them. Two pairs of eyes one green and familiar, the other dark brown and mysterious but yet warm followed him as he slowly walked over to them before dropping onto the chaise lounge chair across from them. “Everything is arranged for the morning flight and the Harpers are going over in the morning to air out the Farmhouse” he said leaning back into the chair after stretching out his leg in front of him with a hiss.

“упрямый боль в заднице” Natasha said shaking her head as she poured him a shot of whiskey and pushed it towards him along with the bottle.
“Yes but I am your stubborn pain in the ass” he said affectionately before picking up the shot of whiskey and quickly throwing it back letting the burn wake him as the alcohol started to numb the pain. Laura was watching them both interact with a small smile on her face. “And now I am also your stubborn pain in the ass. I apologize ahead of time,” he said giving both women his best impish smirk.

He watched as Laura covered her mouth as she laughed while Natasha just rolled her eyes at him. Natasha reached over and took Laura’s hand and he watched as their fingers interlace together. All three of them shared a touch bond, he could already feel the itch just below his skin but he ignored it as he didn’t want to push Laura to fast. Richard Lumley hadn’t been a soulmate but she still had loved the man for ten years and he wanted to give her the time to grieve.

“красивый” Natasha said getting Laura’s attention “Clint isn’t too bad he is just stubborn when hurt like he is now.”

Laura tilted her head to the side as she looked back and forth between Natasha and himself. He could see that she wanted to ask something so he just sat there waiting patiently for her to ask the question. “What is it that you keep calling me?” Laura asked Natasha and he watched his red headed mate blush slightly as he poured himself another shot of whiskey.

“красивый, is russian for beautiful” Natasha whispered and it was Laura’s turn to now blush as her and Natasha shared a look between them. Leaning forward Laura took the shot glass that was filled with vodka and threw it back. Putting the glass down Natasha filled it again with vodka as all three of them sat there listening to the night air.

“I know you two said you are bringing us back to the states but how are you getting us into the country. I’m officially listed as dead and the kids don’t even exist except in very few records scattered across South America” Laura asked them.

“How much did Richard tell you about his past other than that he was on the run?” Clint asked and he decided he was going to give their mate his way of answering things instead of Natasha’s way. Even though he knew Natasha would want to tell Laura everything, some habits were hard to break for her.

“Only that he was on the run and that if he ever told me to run I was to take the kids and not look back. That he’d find us once it was safe to” Laura answered and he watched as Natasha’s hand tightened on hers in a sign of support.

“Okay” he said rubbing at his face before bringing his hands down and looking Laura straight in the
eyes. “Richard was at one time an agent of a secret intelligence organization called SHIELD. The same organization that Natasha and I work for. We were looking for him because the last mission he was on before he went on the run has resurfaced and he was our last link to find out answers.”

“And this is what got him killed?” she asked.

“It is,” he said technically not lying because the Centipede soldiers were tracking him only because of his ties to that mission. There was more to that mission that met the eye and Clint knew the whole damn backstory. “The mission was called in by an undercover agent about what we call an 0-8-4, or an object of unknown origin. Richard and his team went to go investigate the call but when they arrived all they found was a massacred village and the agent dying with a baby in her arms. The agent was only able to say one word ‘hide’ before she died.”

“So Richard and the others hid the child and someone wants to know where she is? And why did you emphasise the word hide?” Laura asked and Clint cursed internally, well he had promised himself he would try not to lie to her. Clint shared a glance with Natasha and knew that she was thinking along the same lines, their mate was one observant and smart cookie. They so were going to get anything over her.

“Yes Richard and his partner Avery were the two that hid the young girl and they want her because they experimented on her. The world at that time was very dark and every country were running human experiments trying to make a better, faster, smarter human. As for the word ‘hide’ Natasha and I have a sick feeling that the agent wasn’t telling Richard to hide the child but naming the man that experimented on her” Clint said taking another shot before pouring himself another taking the distraction to order his thoughts.

“A little bit before Richard’s mission Natasha and I were part of a team that was after a scientist that used the moniker Dr. Hyde. The scientist had kidnapped the daughter of two of our friends, we were to be her godparents, to use her for his experiments. When we finally tracked him down he had blown the facility and escaped. As far as we could tell all the children he was experimenting on died in the explosion and fire including Rayne.”

“You think that the baby Richard and his partner hid was your friend’s daughter?” Laura asked and he could see the tears in her eyes as she thought of all the horrors they must see. Natasha started to run her thumb back and forth over Laura’s knuckles. “How did the investigation come back up if you believed all the children were dead?”

“Because the baby girl that Richard hid started looking for her family because she is sick and if she doesn’t find them will most likely die. The only clue she had was a redacted SHIELD document in her original intake file at the orphanage they dropped her off at. So the girl, a damn good hacker already got on SHIELD’s radar in a bad way to purposely get caught. The girl, Skye is a good kid,
just very lost and broken from years of being in the system. The team that picked her up is run by the woman that most likely is her mother” Clint finished before grabbing his shot glass and taking another hit of the whiskey.

“And her father?” Laura asked the question he knew she would ask and he dreaded answering. Clint poured himself another shot and took it as Natasha answered for him because she knew him to well and he still felt guilt over the whole affair.

“Died a hero last year during the alien invasion of New York” Natasha said softly picking up the story “Mel, his wife and soulmate was semi-retired at the time after the loss of their daughter she couldn’t do field work anymore. After Phil’s death she went back into the field without telling us. One of her first missions as a team leader is when she picked up Skye, the girl Richard hid and the very likely daughter of Mel and Phil.”

“So your friend Mel called in a favor to have you look into Skye, does she suspect that the girl could be her daughter?”

“No we got called in by another of their friends Maria who is one of our bosses. Mel had originally called Maria in to investigate but it turns out that Maria and Skye are soulmates. We were brought in later that day to check out the lead Maria had that led us to Richard and you. I don’t think Mel suspects that Skye is her daughter Rayne because even though the timelines are close there is enough of a gap that it might not be her or that Skye is another woman’s child stolen.

“Once we get you and the kids to the Farmhouse and safe we have to go back to New York and find out for sure if what we suspect is true or not. If it is true then it will be bittersweet because we have all read Skye’s files, the kid is fighter but no child should have to go through what she did. Mel will find her daughter and Maria her soulmate only for them to possibly lose her to the leukemia she has already had to beaten back twice on her own. If she isn’t Mel’s daughter than she might die no matter what we do because she has to have a bone marrow transplant and her type is very rare, the type of rare that it could only be a family member” Natasha finished the story as she took another shot of vodka and he watched as Laura copied her.

They sat on the veranda drinking until the early hours of the morning answering any questions that Laura had about them. Some of the stories brought laughter to the newly forming triad while others brought tears to their eyes. While Clint was telling a story from around the time he and Natasha met, Laura had fallen asleep curled up next to Natasha. When he had looked over Natasha had cracked open and green eye to look at him as he took in the sight before him and he swore he was one very lucky bastard.

“Rest Natasha I’ll keep an eye on things and wake you in an hour or so for us to get to the airport” he whispered softly. Using the cane he grunted as he stood up on a leg that was stiff but he hobbled
over and bent down to kiss the foreheads of both women. Natasha closed her eye with a smile on her face and he watched them for several minutes sleeping. Shaking his head to clear it he walked over to the wall of the veranda and watched as the sun rose.

Clint drove up the dirt road in the middle of the night as Laura sat next to him in the large Suburban that Natasha and he had purchased to use while out here at this house. The large family type vehicle was mainly used to haul construction equipment and materials back and forth to the house as they had renovated it years ago but now he was thankful for it since they needed the space. If they weren’t home the vehicle usually stayed at the air strip they used for their plane stored in their private hangar, read for them use when they came for a bit of relaxation when they needed time away from SHIELD and the other Avengers.

The Farmhouse was on a stretch of land about fifty-acres in the middle of no where Idaho. The land had a forest, fields and even it’s own creek that ran by the main house. The main house from the outside looked like a sprawling old fashioned wooden farmhouse if looking a bit old it looked to be at least well maintained. Looks could be deceiving though as Clint and Natasha had remodeled the inside making sure that everything was built to last.

Behind Laura and him their redheaded mate was curled up with the kids on the folded down seats. They had all gotten a late start than what had been originally planned by himself. Of course Natasha and he never had kids to take into account before and the time needed to get two kids up, showered, fed and dressed was something they now had a healthy appreciation for. Laura had handled it all in her stride smiling, laughing and wiping away the occasional tear from the children as they faced their second day knowing their father wasn’t coming back.

Pulling up in front of the house he turned off the vehicle and watched as Laura took in her new home. “I know it doesn’t look like much but inside is much better,” he promised as he got out and using the cane stretching his muscles with a groan.

“Are you okay?” Laura asked concern in her eyes as she came around and placed a hand on his arm. Instantly the itch just under his skin subsided a bit and he felt it as not only he relaxed but her as well.

“I am now. Let me give you the tour and then we can get them into the house” he said softly taking her hand and putting it in the crook of his elbow and led her onto the porch. Taking out his keys he opened the front door and let her go first into the house. Reaching to the right of the front door he pressed his hand onto the security panel activating all the lights in the house and turning off the alarm system.
As he took in the first look of home in a long time he silently thanked the Harpers because it looked like they had tidied up for them while they were away. The older retired triad lived a few miles down the road in a house that during the summer was usually bursting at the seams with grandchildren. They kept an eye out on this place for Nat and him usually going to town to stock it up with groceries if they knew they were coming for a stay. This time he had told them that Nat and he had found their third and were bringing her home with her two kids. Both Mrs. Harpers had squealed into the phone while Mr. Harper had jokingly said that Clint was in for it now.

Looking towards Laura who had a shocked expression on her face he saw as a lone tear escaped her eyes before he reached out brushing it away. Not saying anything he held his breath as Laura leaned her face into his hand he gave her moment before took a step closer to her. She was closer to his height than Natasha as he looked into her dark eyes, leaning in he gently kissed her forehead as he closed his eyes.

He sensed it as Natasha came into the house behind them and opened his eyes to share a soft look with her before Natasha came up behind Laura wrapping her arms around the woman. Laura jumped slightly at the touch startled but she instantly relaxed back into Natasha’s body as she whispered into Laura’s ear. Clint took his other hand and reached for Natasha’s hand interweaving their fingers together.

They stayed like that for a while just standing there with Laura held between them as she silently cried. Their mate had been so strong all day for kids but the kids weren’t there at the moment to see her moment of weakness and they just stood there trying to comfort her.

“I’m sorry I’m such a mess” Laura said as Clint wiped away her tears.

“Don’t be sorry красивый for showing emotions, not now or ever” Natasha answered softly as she kissed Laura just below her ear and he bit back a groan as Natasha’s green eyes danced in amusement. His red headed mate knew exactly what that sight would do to him and she was enjoying teasing him.

“Now let us give you the tour and then we can get the kids to their rooms” Natasha said letting go of Clint’s hand as she started to lead Laura around the house. He followed at a slightly slower pace than the two women but he wasn’t going to complain about the view.

The first floor of the house had a large living room area that had a large ‘L’ shaped couch and a huge entertainment center that seemed to be overflowing with electronic gadgets of all types. Further in was a dining room with an old fashioned large wooden table and then there was a huge kitchen that had all stainless steel appliances but still had the rustic country charm to it from the cabinets and counter tops.
Smiling he could totally picture the kids at the dinner table doing homework while Laura and Natasha moved around the kitchen dancing to music as they cooked. A dish towel hitting him the face knocked him out of his imagination as he looked towards his laughing and smiling mates. There was no way for him to stop the smile that filled his face as he took in the sight of them and he chuckled softly. Natasha smiled as she hugged Laura again from behind and even though Laura was a bit taller it seemed that the taller woman fit nearly back into Natasha as she leaned her chin on their mate’s shoulder. “Day dreaming Clint?”

“Very much so” he said softly letting his emotions and desire into this voice. Laura gave him a soft smile as she blushed and Natasha just winked at him. “Upstairs are only bedrooms and bathrooms so why don’t you two go get the kids and I’ll go turn down their beds so we can get them inside into bed” Clint said as he turned walking towards the stairs taking care with his leg. He reached to top of the stairs and opened the first door on the right and the first door on the left. Both rooms were plain rooms with twin beds and a small dresser and desk each. They would have to go into town or even the city a few miles away tomorrow to get supplies for the kids to decorate the rooms and make them their own.

Clint heard Natasha and Laura come into the house carrying a child each and he quickly got out of the way as they reached the top of the stairs. He watched from the hallway as both women gently laid down the kids before taking off their shoes and tucking them in for the night. By some unspoken communication his two mates switched places and then went to kiss the other child as well on the forehead. They joined him in the hallway, Natasha already wrapping her arms around Laura as he then also went into each room kissing the kids goodnight before turning off the main lights leaving on a small night light each. He left the doors open a crack so if they cried out they could hear them and be there for them.

As he entered the hallway he saw that Natasha was kissing Laura at the end of the hallway as she had their mate pushed up against the door that was to their room. He watched transfixed at the sight before him and felt as his pants became quite uncomfortable but he didn’t move closer. The itch just under his skin was yelling for him to touch them and for them to touch him.

“Clint” Laura moaned as she held out her hand to him as Natasha was kissing and nipping at her neck. He must have hesitated because her voice next had the sound of an order to it as she said “Come here now Clint.”

Slowly he moved towards his two mates taking Laura’s hand in his own. She pulled him closer as he finally leaned down and kissed her lips. Groaning he wrapped an arm around her waist as he kissed her and he felt Natasha’s hands unsnap his jeans easing the pressure a bit, just enough for him to gain some control to pull away from this kiss. “Are you sure карие глаза?” he asked as he kissed the other side of her neck.
“Yes. Both of you will be going out into danger soon and I will not have our uncompleted bond distracting you two. I want both of you to come home to me and the kids” Laura said with emotion thick in her voice and he watched as first Natasha kissed her then he kissed her as well. Breaking off the kiss he watched as Natasha moved them back from the door as he opened it. He followed them inside gently shutting the door before going over to the security panel and making the room soundproof so they didn’t wake the kids while turning on the monitors that would alert them when they woke up.

Turning around he leaned against the door as he watched Natasha start to undress and worship every inch of their mate. He definitely was one lucky bastard.

Natasha woke the next morning as she felt slim arms tightening around her middle holding her close. Warm breath ghosted across her skin before she felt Laura kiss the back of her shoulder. Slowly Natasha turned around in Laura’s arms before kissing her gentle mate’s lips. “Hmm, Morning красивый” she said as her green eyes took in how the morning sun played across Laura’s face.

“Morning Tasha” Laura said with a soft smile on her face before she slowly stretched. They both heard Clint groan in his sleep from her movement but he soon went back to sleep lightly snoring and they both had to stifle giggles. “Cooper and Lila should be awake soon,” Laura said as she lightly touched Natasha’s face. Natasha wanted nothing more than to just lay here in bed with her mates as she slowly worshipped their bodies but the kids were priority. She would have to talk to Clint and Laura about possibly a vacation after everything settled.

“Then come on красивый we will go see what the Harper’s stocked the fridge with this time and make some breakfast” Natasha said as she kissed Laura one last time before rolling out of bed, naked as the day she was born. Normally she wouldn’t put clothing on since it had always just been Clint and her here but she doubted it would be appropriate to walk around naked with the kid. They had to move fast when they found Laura and the kids so they didn’t have much but her and Clint would make sure that changed today as she pulled out two pairs of SHIELD sweats and handing one pair to Laura.

Natasha got dressed but mainly watched Laura as she pulled on the sweats and started to run her fingers through her long dark hair. Turning Laura around Natasha kissed the other woman’s neck before quickly braiding her mates hair out of her way. “Thank you” Laura said once Natasha finished and started to pull her mate out of the room.

Both kids were still asleep in their beds when they checked in on them so they continued downstairs to the kitchen to see what they could make for breakfast. Natasha stopped at the kitchen counter where there was a stack of mail to the alias that owned this particular bolt hole that she started to go through, while Laura continued onto the refrigerator and started to look inside. Finishing looking through the mail and not finding anything of importance she came up behind Laura and wrapped her
arms around her. Sneaking her hands under Laura’s top as she placed her hands flat on the woman’s stomach.

Laura leaned back into her touch as they looked into the refrigerator looking at their options. “You are very tactile aren’t you?” Laura asked after a moment.

“Yes and so is Clint, but only around those we trust. With you and the kids we will always be Clint and Natasha but out there when we work, we are Hawkeye and Black Widow and they are someone else entirely. I hope you never have to see the full extent of that side of us” she said resting her chin on Laura’s shoulder.

“That sounds exhausting always hiding who you are, being someone you aren’t” Laura said as she turned around in Natasha’s arms. Brown eyes were searching her green eyes and Natasha wasn’t sure what her mate was looking for in them but she didn’t hide. Just like she had promised herself she wouldn’t hide from Clint, she refused to do the same with Laura and the kids.

“It is but it’s all both Clint and I have ever known. We will tell you our stories once the kids are in bed again tonight but please be patient with us, being part of a family is a very strange concept to us. It is something we always wanted but we never thought we’d ever get the chance to have” Natasha said before being interrupted as she heard small feet on the floor above her. Leaning forward she quickly kissed Laura before smiling “Lila is awake.”

“How do you know?” Laura asked tilting her head to the side.

Natasha smirked before taking a step back and turning towards the stairs before saying “Trade secret.”

Laura chuckled as Clint collapsed face down on the living room couch and had to bite her lip when she took in Natasha sprawled out on the floor her body surrounded by bags of clothes, shoes, toys and bedding. They had gotten an early start on shopping after a simple breakfast and had just come home after stopping for lunch at the local diner. It was a toss up in Laura’s mind on who had been more tired the kids or her two mates once they got home. The kids were both asleep in their beds for an afternoon nap while her two mates looked like they weren’t too far behind them.

“I will never complain about going shopping with Tony again” Clint muffled into the couch and she wondered who Tony was.
“Don’t let him hear you say that,” Natasha said turning a slight glare towards Clint.

“Wouldn’t even dream of it sweetheart” Clint retorted back.

“Good because I will not be dragged along to one of his shopping trips ever again after that last fiasco. I didn’t know who was going to kill us first Maria or Pepper!” Natasha groaned and Laura wanted to ask who these people were. Maria she assumed was their boss that they mentioned earlier that was mated to Skye who might just be Rayne.

Standing up from the chair she had sat in to just rest for a moment, she shook her head to clear her thoughts before sitting down next to Natasha on the floor. Pulling bags towards her as she began to separate them into different piles to make it easier to put away once the kids were awake again. “You are superwoman! How the hell do you even have energy still?” Clint asked as he looked at her from his position on the couch.

“You forget at one time I was a teacher. I had thirty of them to look after at once for eight hours a day. Anyways I’ve always homeschooled those two so I am use to how hyper they can be. Though they wouldn’t have been so bad if someone hadn’t given them candy as a snack before lunch” she said giving Clint a pointed look and he blanched.

“Point taken and duly noted” Clint said with feeling as he pushed himself into a sitting position. He pushed himself off the couch, sitting down on the floor next to Natasha and pulled off her shoes before tossing them in a corner. “Okay kids are asleep, so more Q and A time”

“Good idea” Natasha said as she scooted closer to Clint and propped her feet in his lap. She watched as Clint rolled his eyes but he had an affectionate smile on his face as he started to rub Natasha’s feet. “красивый, you go first.”

“Okay since you just mentioned it. Who is Tony and what’s the story behind him and shopping?” she asked.

“Tony is Tony Stark aka Iron Man and general pain in the ass. How Pepper and Bruce are mated to him let alone deal with him I have no idea” Natasha said as she groaned as Clint must have hit a particular sore spot.

“You two know Iron Man?” she asked as she finished separating the shopping. Clint patted the spot
on the floor next to Natasha and she quickly crawled over before laying back down on the floor. She felt as Clint took off her shoes as well and tossed them where we tossed Natasha’s shoes earlier. Reaching over she laced her fingers with Natasha’s fingers as Clint started in on the foot rubs.

“Know him? We practically live with the man-child when we are in New York and not on mission” Natasha said from beside her.

“Nat, I don’t think we told her what exactly we do or who we are” Clint said.

“We are SHIELD agents” Natasha said.

“And we are also..” Clint interrupted and Laura looked between her two mates as realization hit Natasha.

“дерьмо” Natasha said and Laura just knew that she had cursed. “I guess I should be glad that our covers are somewhat intact. No one really talks about us to compared to the rest of the team, which is fine by me. красивый, we aren’t just SHIELD agents we are also two members of the team called the Avengers.”
Natasha leaned into the turn on her motorcycle as Clint followed behind her as they turned into the employee parking entrance of Avengers tower. Though the tower was now used primarily by the Avengers there were still some offices and many laboratories on the lower floors of the tower being used by Stark Industries. They continued towards the executive area parking where there was another door that led into the garage where the Avengers parked their miscellaneous vehicles.

Parking the bike she pulled off her helmet shaking out her hair as she watched Clint pull out his cell phone and smile. Walking over to him she dropped her chin on his shoulder as he was still sitting on his bike and watched as the video from Laura played out of her and the kids making cookies in the family kitchen. It had been six days since they met their third and her children. Five days since they had brought them home to the Farmhouse and they had bonded. Clint and her had stolen away four precious days with their mate and the children making sure that they had everything they needed as well as just basking in the feeling of love and family.

It had only been six days and Natasha knew that both her and Clint were absolutely in love with Laura and the children. They didn’t want to leave that morning but knew they had to report back to Maria but not before they had Bruce run the test. If their suspicions are right then this was going to be a shock, if not they had agreed not to bring up the possibility unless asked. Despite what Mel told them they knew their friend had to be hurting after the death of Phil and they didn’t want to open the old wound of Rayne’s death as well on top of it.

“Welcome back home Natasha and Clint” JARVIS said startling her and Clint from their thoughts. She kissed the back of Clint’s neck chuckling before taking a step back and letting him get up off of his bike. Avenger tower was a home but it wasn’t the home she wanted to be at in that moment but she shook her head. They had a job to do and knew that doing this job would keep Laura and the kids safer in a world that was going topsy turvy just a little bit more every day.

“Thank you JARVIS. Is Bruce up in his labs?” she asked as they made their way into one of the Avengers private elevators. The doors closed and it instantly started moving upwards towards the Avenger floors.

“Yes he is currently working on another blood analysis of Ms. Skye’s blood. Shall I tell him you wish to see him?”

“Yes please” she said and rested her head back onto Clint’s chest as he wrapped his arms around her waist.
“I’m thinking after all of this blows over we should take a little family vacation” he whispered in her ear as he began kissing her neck.

“Read my mind” she murmured but before she could kiss Clint the elevator was stopping and the doors opened into one of Bruce’s many labs. Sighing she left the comfort of her mate’s arms as she walked over to Bruce who was sitting on a stool looking at them with a tablet in his hand and a hologram behind him.

“Welcome back you two” he smiled but he looked past her before sighing “What did you do to your leg Clint?” he asked before putting the tablet down.

“Don’t worry about me Bruce. Nat has already patched me up and it’s only a scratch” he said waving off Bruce as he sat down on one of the many stools and propping the cane against one of the lab tables.

“You are using a cane and say it’s just a scratch” Bruce deadpans before shaking his head and muttered something under his breath. “What can I do for you two?”

“First JARVIS please shut down the recorders and lock down the lab” Natasha ordered and watched as JARVIS acknowledged the order. “We need you to run a test for us on Skye’s blood, we have a lead, if it pans out then we will say something if not then I’d rather not tell the parties involved so not to open up old wounds” Natasha said.

“What type of test? I got the latest batch of blood when Maria delivered it to me when she came back a few days ago” Bruce asked as he took off his glasses and cleaned them.

“Paternity test” she said and watched as Bruce stopped cleaning his glasses a shock look crossed his face.

“You think you know who her parents are?” he asked carefully after putting on his glasses and looking back and forth between them.

“We do. I need you to compare it to the DNA sequence markers on this flash drive” she said pulling the chain of the necklace that was hidden in her shirt. The chain came over her head and she dangled the flash drive between them before handing it to him. It had taken some doing but she had hacked into SHIELD’s medical files on the flight back and pulled both the DNA sequence markers for Mel and Phil.
“Who?” he asked taking the flash drive but not making a move to access it as he looked between them. “I’ve never seen you two this skittish. Something has you two spooked.”

Natasha cursed in her head, here they thought they were playing it cool and he saw right through it. Of course they were also still stabilizing after bonding with Laura but no one was to know about her not even the Avengers till they dealt with the rat problem in SHIELD, these damn Centipede soldiers and find whoever experimented on Skye as a child and made them pay. Even the chance of someone tracking down Laura and the kids through them was enough to make her blood run cold with fear.

They wanted to tell their family but the best kept secret is one that is only known by you, if you had to tell anyone tell only one other. Clint and her had already made the necessary arrangements for their family to find out about Laura and the kids if anything were to happen to them. It was a morbid thought but they were both realist and practical, wanting to make sure their little family was taken care of in the event anything happened to both of them in the field. She looked towards Clint who nodded but ultimately leaving the decision to her.

“Melinda May and Phil Coulson. We think Skye is Rayne May Coulson who was kidnapped right from the hospital nursery hours after she was born” Natasha said her voice thick with emotion as she reached for Clint’s hand.

“Sweet Jesus!” Bruce said as he picked up his tablet and plugged in the flash drive. “JARVIS run the test and throw up the three profiles for me.”

“Of course Bruce” JARVIS said as he began the testing and the sequences were displayed before Bruce as he studied them.

Maria threw the mini nerf football back towards Bobbi as they waited for the latest batch of papers to print out. They were almost done with all the level 8 agents in the New York office and the lists were not impressive. At the moment they were having a skull session debating the merits of moving onto the level 7’s or starting on one of the international field offices. Despite adding to the people in the know of the investigation more than just her they were still insanely spread too thin to check everything. She was loathed to add more people to the investigation but she was even more against splitting up their teams.

The nerf football was also a distraction and way for her to channel her worry because the 616 team was on an undercover mission at the moment in Italy so they had gone radio silent a day ago. It had
only been a few hours before Maria and Bobbi had finally put together their analysis of the other three members of the 616 team. What they had found had her on edge because there was a possibility that all three agents were dirty, though Ward was definitely a sociopath that somehow passed all the SHIELD psych exams. Once the team was done she had given orders for Victoria to recall them all to the HUB.

One more day, she had to wait just one more day to start making the changes necessary to somewhat protect Skye and Fury be damned. She wasn’t having a sociopath with a badge and gun anywhere near her mate, let alone in her organization. There were probably more but he was known and she wasn’t going to turn a blind eye like it seemed others did already in SHIELD. Pausing mid throw she looked at her last thought turning it over in her head.

“Maria?” Bobbi asked.

“Pull up all those that have worked, trained, treated or supervised Ward. You can’t tell me we are the only ones that looked at his files, hell we both knew something wasn’t right just looking at his basic information. Someone has been covering for Ward keeping him in SHIELD” Maria ordered as her phone started to ring.

“On it” Bobbi said from behind her as she stood up and walked over towards her desk and fished her phone off its charger buried under a mound of paperwork. Looking down she saw that it was Mel calling her using the shadow protocols and she had a sinking feeling in her gut as panic started to grip her heart.

“Hill” she answered willing her voice not to crack with just that simple word. Silently she started praying to all the gods she could think of, even Thor that everything was okay, that Skye was not hurt or worse...

“Maria, I’m so sorry. Skye’s missing in action” Mel said her voice breaking and Maria felt her knees give out as she fell to the floor. Bobbi was there in an instant, gently taking the phone away from her as she quickly talked to Mel but Maria couldn’t make herself listen. Her chest felt like it was being squeezed in a vice grip as she tried to fight off the icy panic she felt.

Skye was missing. Skye was most likely hurt badly because her mate was a fighter and wouldn’t have gone quietly. Skye needed her, needed her to be strong so she could find her and bring her home. She needed to find her mate then put a bullet in the head of anyone who dared hurt her mate. The anger was a welcomed feeling because it pushed away the panic and left her somewhat able to function. Bobbi was still talking to Mel, good. “Tell her if they haven’t called it into SHIELD then don’t.”
“Maria?” Bobbi asked while she quickly did the math in her head. Milan, Italy was almost a nine hour flight by commercial but with one of the upgraded Stark Quinjets that SHIELD was about to purchase it would be just under two hours and she was going to use the prototype they had taken for a test flight earlier that day.

“Tell her we are on our way. I want them to secure the location and then wait there till we get there. Then they are to return to the bus if the junior agents question the response they are to say because we think there is a leak in the local field office and we don’t want to tip anyone off that we might be about to catch them.” Maria said and she knows she is falling into her Commander persona as coping mechanism but she would take it.

She heard Bobbi relay the orders as she stood up and opened the door heading to one of the spare rooms. This room had been turned into an armory for all of her and Skye’s gear when Skye came to stay with her. Slowly and methodically she started packing a bag pulling gear from the walls and drawers. Her thoughts were going in a thousand directions at once, cataloging all the favors she could call in for backup and help. She’d rather assemble the Avengers but already knew Fury’s answer to her request the same he had given her when Phil went missing.

Maria already knew what her orders were going to be but sometimes she wished she wasn’t so much a soldier and could tell Fury where he could shove his orders...especially now.

“JARVIS alert Maria that we need to speak with her and take us up to her floor” Natasha said her voice cracking as she fought back the tears she wanted to let out. She needed to keep her head on the task at hand but as a pair of strong arms gripped her hips she let herself be pulled into Clint’s embrace.

“Maria has her floor on lockdown at the moment. One moment while I alert her and ask for her permission” JARVIS said as Clint placed a soft kiss to her head as he held her. The elevator started moving as JARVIS said “Maria did not respond to my request but Agent Morse is with her and told me to let you up.”

“Bobbi is with her?” Clint asked surprised they hadn’t seen their rookie in a very long time since she had been on constant undercover assignments in the last few years. They knew that in between the assignments she tried to see Hunter one of her soulmates but that even those times were far and few between as they were a volatile pair without their third.

“Yes Agent Morse arrived with Maria a few days ago and has been with her since. Agent Morse is the new liaison between the Avengers and SHIELD” JARVIS answered before the elevator doors opened and they were greeted by the sight of the tall blonde haired woman that had been one of their first rookies. Both Natasha and Clint stiffened as they took in the concern in Bobbi’s eyes and knew
something was terribly wrong.

“What’s wrong?” Natasha said pushing out of Clint’s arms and automatically started looking around for Maria.

“Maria just got the call, Skye is missing in action and I can’t get her to respond to me” Bobbi said her voice breaking. Natasha glanced at Clint and nodded towards Bobbi as she she went looking for Maria to try to snap her out of it. They needed to know where the team was and they needed to get to Mel and then they needed to find…

Natasha found Maria in her armory and it seemed that she was packing enough to start a small war. She took in the cold dead look in Maria’s eyes, the stance and the way she was moving around the room as she pulled weapons from the walls checking each one with care. Maria’s rank in SHIELD was Commander but her call sign was Athena for a reason and Maria it seemed was in full on Commander Athena mode. That could be a mixed bag depending on the situation and how she was reacting to the events around her. She could be either calm, cool and collected fully in control of herself or she could be like the Valkyrie of legends.

“маленькая племянница” she said softly from the doorway softening her stance and holding her hands out to her sides to show she wasn’t a threat. Even though Maria was family to her the woman before her was dangerous till she could be brought back down from her shock. It had only happened once but she had seen Maria have a flashback from her Marine days while this way. Natasha knew that even if she could subdue an outburst she couldn’t do it without seriously hurting the woman before her and she wanted to avoid that if she could.

Maria looked towards her head tilting to the side as her hand tightened momentarily on an M4 before she engaged the safety and placed it in the bag without looking away from her. Anger flashed in Maria’s eyes replacing the cold dead look in them and Natasha wasn’t sure if that was a good or bad thing. “Where the hell have you two been? Two weeks without a fucking word Romanoff! And how did you get past my lockdown?”

“Agent Morse told me to bring them up when you didn’t respond back to me Agent Hill” JARVIS answered her last question giving her time to think on a way to calm down Maria. It was definitely not good if she was calling her Romanoff and that JARVIS was even calling her Agent Hill instead of Maria. Natasha watched as Maria’s nostrils flared as she took a deep breath and she knew the woman before her was barely holding it together.

“What did you find?”
“I’ll tell you but I need you to promise me to take Clint and I with you to meet up with Mel to find your mate” Natasha said as she slowly moved into the room and closer to Maria. She wasn’t sure how Maria was going to fall or react and she wanted to be close to be able to respond.

“What. Did. You. Find?” Maria bit out as she started shaking in barely suppressed rage as her eyes tracked Natasha moving closer. Natasha stopped just within arms reach keeping her muscles loose despite the urge she had to tighten them in anticipation for either the fight that was about to happen or needing to catch Maria.

“The truth and we just had Bruce confirm it. Skye was born Rayne May Coulson on April 24th 1990 and was kidnapped from the hospital nursery hours after she was born. We believed she died November 24th 1990 when the lab she was being held at and experimented on was blown up before we could rescue her” she said slowly and clearly, watching as shock and horror crossed Maria’s face before she collapsed onto her knees on the floor.

Natasha was there instantly next to her friend, the woman she called маленькая племянница and realized now in reality she was. Maria was now even more family as the reality of everything hit her. Maria was soulmates with Skye/Rayne and she wondered if it was always fated for their lives to play out this way. It was enough to make her head hurt thinking on it all as she held Maria in her arms as they both cried.

Looking up she watched as both Clint and Bobbi came in through the doorway towards them. From the shocked look on Bobbi’s face either she had overheard what she had told Maria or Clint had filled her in on the truth. It didn’t matter either way the truth was out and they still had to tell Mel that the daughter her and Phil buried all those years ago was actually alive and with her all this time.

Clint knelt on the other side of Maria and put his arms around both of them, as they held Maria between them as the woman broke down. It was all too much for anyone to handle and Maria was juggling everything and no one in the room faulted her for finally breaking under the pressure.

Bobbi moved around the room finishing up the packing that Maria had started. Their rookie had tears in her eyes and down her cheeks but she was the practical type and wouldn’t take comfort from them till she had done what needed to be done. Bobbi was another child that had grown up way too soon in the foster system after her parents had died in a car crash. She had been on the cusp of her teen years when they died and instead of becoming rebellious the highly advanced student Barbara Morse had thrown herself even more into her studies.

Bobbi had been it all the athlete and the dream student for any teacher worth their salt. She had graduated high school by age sixteen earning herself scholarships for both academics and sports that carried her quickly through University and by the time she was twenty four she had a Doctorate in Biology. That had been when she was approached by SHIELD and the rest was history.
She thought of all this as she held Maria trying to distract herself from the pain and sorrow she felt in her chest. They had all read the files Skye/Rayne had given them and she had felt horror when reading them the first time only knowing Skye as Skye. Now though knowing that Skye was really Rayne the goddaughter that she had sworn to protect and use to sing to while she was in Mel’s belly...A part of her felt like she had failed and though she knew they had done everything they could at the time they still failed.

They stayed like that for a while but soon she felt the change in Maria as the tears slowly stopped. Pressing a kiss to Maria’s head she slowly pulled back and sat down fully on the ground as she watched her little niece process fully everything she had been told. “Does Fury know about Skye/Rayne?” she finally asked turning to look at Natasha.

“He knows of Rayne, but he doesn’t know that Skye is Rayne. You are the first to know after we had Bruce run the test.”

“Do you have the results?” Maria asked as she grabbed onto the edge of the table that she was using to pack and pulled herself up to her feet. She moved over to one of the walls and started to pace. It was a nervous habit Maria had from her rookie days but it also helped her to think, to keep moving when the anger or fear were almost too much for her to handle so she could think clearly.

“I have them on a flash drive but I don’t trust them even to SHIELD’s secure communications that you and Fury have been using” Natasha said as Clint moved to help her stand as she gave his hand a squeeze. They shared a look before she leaned against the table watching Maria while Clint went to hug Bobbi who had finished packing and was looking lost.

“Give it to Bobbi. We have a secured hidden network now thanks to Skye...Rayne..oh fucking hell” Maria cursed as she gripped her hair in her hands before taking a deep breath and letting go of her hair. Maria looked to her and then at Clint a strange look crossing her face almost like she was internally arguing with herself before she snorted and shook her head.

“Bobbi send the information to Fury and Fury only on the network. Then activate Hand and Hartley tell them that Skye has been taken and that I want them at that location they are to keep an eye on the junior agents but I don’t want them to know Skye’s identity, not before we can tell...Oh fuck me, Mel...JARVIS! Activate the Avengers and tell Bruce and Tony they have twenty minutes to meet me at the prototype still on the roof. If Tony gives you shit tell him rule forty six and that I am activating Kaleidoscope!” Maria ordered.

“Maria, Fury’s orders to Melinda, 616, and us were no Avengers” Bobbi said not agreeing with Fury’s order but having to remind her friend she was about to disobey a direct order.
“Fuck Fury and his damn orders” Maria growled as she grabbed one of the bags heading towards the elevator. Natasha caught up with Maria and her long strides as she also had grabbed a bag followed by Clint and Bobbi. “JARVIS Bobbi’s floor then Clint and Natasha’s floor.”

“Get your gear and meet us on the roof. Also call Sharon and tell her Kaleidoscope she will know what to do” Maria said to Bobbi as the elevator quickly stopped on her floor. Bobbi didn’t answer just nodded as she disappeared behind the quickly shutting elevator doors. They stayed in silence till the elevator doors opened up onto their floor and they moved to go grab another set of gear from their armory.

“тетушка and дядя remember when I told you that we were only following Fury and his fucking orders and to remember that when it all blew up that we had been against them since day fucking one? Well it’s all about to blow the fuck up so please remember that” Maria said to them softly almost like she was afraid of their reactions to her, before she also disappeared behind the rapidly closing elevator doors. Natasha shared a concerned look with Clint before they both made their way to their armory.

“That was ominous. Call красивый and the маленькие птенцы while I start pulling our gear” Natasha said as she started to pull weapons and their tactical gear from various walls and drawers placing it on the table in the middle of the room.

“Little chicks?” Clint asked amused as he activated the phone and placed his wireless in his ear. Stopping Natasha briefly he placed her own wireless in her ear before activating it.

“It fits” Natasha said with shrug of a shoulder and a soft smile that she knew grew when she heard the voice of Laura in her ear. Turning towards Clint she saw the same look on his face as they began stuffing their gear into the bags while talking to their mate.

Maria got onto the roof and was striding into the back of the prototype Quinjet that she had left on the roof the other day before her phone started ringing with a priority call. “Hill” she growled into her com unit as she tossed her gear on some of the seats as she continued into the cockpit and started the pre-flights.

“Hill I gave you a direct fucking order no Avengers!” Fury snarled at her over the phone. He really was quite a bear when his orders were being ignored, totally use to people too afraid of him to even think of disobeying.
“Check your mail sir and fuck your orders. If you still want to relieve me after that go right ahead!” she snarled ending the call. Her phone rang again but this time it was Steve calling her, “Hill.”

“Maria what the hell is going on? I got the activation then Fury automatically tells me to stand down” Steve asked concern in his voice.

“Ignore Fury the activation stands. Are you still in Washington?”

“Yes, Fury has me training kids straight out of your academy.” Steve asked and she could hear him moving around probably getting gear together.

“I know Peggy taught you the rules, this is a many rule of six type of situation. I can’t say more but Pepper is in Washington find her and keep her safe. I’m sending you someone to you for backup. She will use the word the Avengers agreed on when it comes to soulmates when she approaches you. She is family and you can trust her” Maria says as she hears everyone running into the back of the jet. Glancing around she sees that everyone is there and presses for the doors to close.

“Understood” Steve said his voice that deadly calm he gets when someone he cares about is threatened. “Good hunting Commander” he said before she hung up the call.

“Alright boys and girls drop your asses in seats!” she yelled back not waiting and activating the thrusters getting the jet airborne. Out of the corner of her eye she saw as Bobbi quickly dropped into the co-pilot seat next to her with a glare. Maria gave her friend a small smirk before pulling up on the stick and started climbing steeply into the air. As soon as they were high enough to not have to be wary of commercial flights Maria activated the boosters setting their course to Italy.

“Go explain this shit sandwich to the Avengers. I’ll make sure we stay in the air, just make sure big guy doesn’t turn green back there. I’m good but let’s not put my skills to that test, yeah?” Bobbi deadpanned.

Her eyes were blurry when they opened as she woke up groaning. Every part of her body hurt which was saying something and she tried to move but found that she was strapped down naked to a cold metal table. Skye started to panic but heard May’s voice in her head ‘Stay calm. Remember your training.’ Then she heard Maria’s voice as it whispered in her ear before they had parted ‘No matter what happens I will always find you, I love you.’ Pushing away the panic she closed her eyes and used their voices in her mind to anchor herself.
Opening her eyes again she forced them to focus as she looked around the room as much as she could since she couldn’t move her head. It looked like she was in a brick room and it was cold. She didn’t see any doors or windows or hear any noise other than the hum of the lights above her.

Next she took stock of her injuries despite her whole body hurting she knew other areas were more hurt than others. She remembered Quinn shooting her in the right leg and then Mike Peterson who had been horribly disfigured, grabbed her as she had struggled to escape. In the fight she had taken a kick to her right hip that had dislocated her hip fully by the feel of it because it hurt more than any other time. Her right leg had fully collapsed under her but she had various bruises and cuts that meant she had fought or they had manhandled her roughly when they took her.

The question was why did they take her? Did they somehow find out she was Maria's mate or was it because of their investigation? Just had to be patient and try to find out what was the end game. She willed her muscles to relax, she had to try to keep up her strength and be ready for whenever Maria and her team came to get her. Because if she knew one thing she knew they were already looking for her and nothing would stop her mate from finding her.

She heard the sound of a door opening in front of her and tried not flush in embarrassment and shame of being naked strapped to the table. “Well, well, well look who is finally up” said a voice from the foot of the table. Despite trying to flick her eyes downward she couldn’t get a good look at the man. She heard a laugh, almost a chuckle but it sounded cold and not quite right and the sound made her skin want to crawl.

Footsteps shuffled towards her as the man came to stand at her side looking down at her. He looked almost normal, like one of the guys you expected to have 2.5 kids and a white picket fence but the smile on his face was a predators smile, while his eyes danced with a manic energy.

“Little Miss Rayne, after all these years you are no longer so little,” he said as he looked at her naked body slowly. Skye’s skin was crawling and not just because the look he was giving her, she had seen that look before at plenty foster placements and she had survived. No what was making her skin crawl was the fact this man was a few good fries short of a good happy meal.

“You don’t recognize me, do you?” he asked as his eyes met hers and for the first time she realized she couldn’t talk. She felt panic threatening to overwhelm her but she shoved it aside as she listened to the crazy that had her captive. Information was gold and she needed to know everything he told her in order to try to escape.

“No probably not, you see the last time I saw you, you were just a baby. You, Rayne were special you had survived the longest and shown the greatest potential of all my special children. We were so
close, but then those idiots at SHIELD had to raid the base and my assistant ran off with you as we made our escape” he said caressing her cheek with a finger.

‘Oh god it’s worse. This is the nut job that experimented on me as a child. Fuck how did he find me? It had to be Centipede. Super soldier experimentations, I was only a child but now they are working on adults, but what if there are more like me?’ her thoughts ran wild as she started to fit the pieces together.

“Oh yes, it looks like you are starting to figure it out Miss Rayne. Even as an infant you were smart like your parents, lets see if you have their strength? Maybe your mother’s will? I know they didn’t raise you, I stole you and they thought you dead all these years while you suffered” he laughed and Skye wanted to scream, to tear up the man before her.

“Getting mad are we Miss Rayne? Good, I like angry. It makes it so much funner to run the experiments when the subject has a little fight in them. You my sweet special child are going to be my greatest revenge and my greatest accomplishment after I am done with you..if you survive of course. Maybe as a reward I will let you kill your dear sweet parents and your twice be damned aunt and uncle. That would rid me of the thorn they have been in my side all these years” Crazy said as he stepped away and she heard him fiddling on a table to her right. She tried to see what was happening but she couldn’t move, she might as well have been blind for all that she could see.

Crazy kept calling her Miss Rayne, was that her first or last name? Her parents were still alive and she had an aunt and uncle as well? Were they all SHIELD it seemed like it if they were this guys archenemy along with SHIELD. Who the hell were her family? Why did SHIELD put her in the foster system if her family were agents? Her soulmate was her parents boss, that could get awkward and fast. She didn’t care her parents were still alive and they had thought her dead...she might still be dead but if she got out of here she still had a chance.

So lost in her thoughts she didn’t hear Crazy shuffle back to her but she realized he was back when he injected her with something that made her instantly feel like her skin was on fire. She glared at Crazy and he chuckled as she fought not to scream, she wouldn’t even give him the satisfaction even if she couldn’t scream or talk at the moment.

“Oh you will scream soon Miss Rayne, as soon as the paralysis wears off, your screams will fill these walls and bounce back into you. Embrace the pain child because it will be all you know till I’ve made you perfect. This is only just the beginning” Crazy said before smiling down at her, he leaned down kissing her forehead and then as he was leaving he turned off the lights and shut the door. Her world became blackness as she started to be able to move again even if it was to scream.

Skye didn’t know how long she held out laying there in the dark on the cold table, naked as the day she was born but it felt like her body was on fire from the inside out. It started with a whimper but
soon she was screaming and the echoes of her own cries were her only companion in the dark room.
Maria walked back from the cockpit and looked onto the group assembled in the back of the Quinjet. It wasn’t one of the jets Tony had pimped out just yet with all the usual the comforts he put in for the Avengers but it was fast and still had all the functionality of their usual jet and then some. Tony had already activated the jets meeting mode setting their jump seats to come towards the large table that popped up from the floor.

She watched as Natasha pulled out an electronics jammer, switching it on before she pulled out a gun and started checking it. Clint also was checking weapons though they were from one of the many bags she had packed but she also noticed the cane that was propped up against the table and wondered what the hell happened in South America. Tony and Bruce were sitting together talking in low tones most likely discussing Pepper, because her safety always had them worried and that was why she had activated Kaleidoscope.

Nervous energy sang across Maria’s muscles as she knew she would finally have to tell her friends, her team, her family that she had been lying to them for a while. It didn’t matter that it had been an order and knew they would understand that part of it but they would still be mad at her. This was one of the rare times she wished she had closed the door on Mel and Phil all those years ago when they had come to recruit her when she was plastered on really cheap scotch. That thought though only lasted a moment when she thought of Skye, they probably would never had met, would never have the family that they had now.

Sighing she dropped into the chair at the head of the table and Maria felt the pressure of everything rest on her shoulders. The investigation, the secrets, the lies, the guilt she felt over a lot of things, but now was the pressure she felt to find Skye/Rayne and to protect her. She knew her mate had chosen this life but it didn’t mean that Maria’s instincts were screaming at her for letting her mate go out in harm's way.

She felt a hand on her shoulder and she glanced to her right where Natasha was sitting, a look of concern in her eyes but there was something more in the look but Maria didn’t know what. Shaking her head she closed her eyes for a moment and took a deep breath. The times for lies and secrets was over and she didn’t care if Fury fired or arrested her for telling the Avengers, one of their own was missing. Skye/Rayne wasn’t just her mate, no she was the daughter of Phil Coulson and Phil was an honorary Avenger. Opening her eyes she leaned back into the seat and looked around the table looking each Avenger in the eyes.

“First thing first, Tony and Bruce I have activated Kaleidoscope. Agent 13 and Steve should be enroute to Pepper and they will be staying with her till either of you or I lift the order. I left it open to Agent 13 and Steve how they wanted to proceed but hopefully they can convince Pepper to come back to New York without much debate” Maria said as she watched the tension ease out the two men.
“Now I activated the Avengers against orders from Fury after I received the call from Melinda that while on an undercover op with her team that Skye has gone missing. Only a small group of agents even knew about the op, so someone talked and from what I understand it was an ambush but it seems like Skye was specifically targeted this time. If it’s because of who she is or who she is to me we don’t know.”

“Where was the mission? And how could anyone find out about Skye and her abilities? Bruce is only just uncovering what her blood work is telling us.” Tony asked and she realized no one had told him that Skye was Rayne. Maria looked towards Natasha raising an eyebrow in question and she shrugged, it seemed no one had the time to explain.

“We are flying to a SHIELD base near Milan, Italy. Let’s hope your prototype goes as fast you said it should because I want to look at everything as fresh as possible. Though when we land I might be arrested for disobeying Fury’s orders by activating the Avengers but frankly I don’t give a damn.”

“Then don’t land at the SHIELD base, I have a villa not far away that has a helicopter pad. It might be a tight squeeze but the jet should be able to land there. And the villa has facilities we can use.” Tony said smirking “And if Fury fires you remember my offer.”

“Hold onto your offer Tony until I reveal everything, you might not want to talk to me after I tell you what I have been keeping from you all under orders” Maria said humorlessly “Now what do you mean facilities?”

“What can I say after Afghanistan, the last few years of ‘rules of 6’ situations and working with the Assassin Twins, you and Fury I’m a little bit paranoid now and started retrofitting some of my properties into…bases for the Avengers. The Italian property has rooms for us and a small support staff, labs, medical facilities, interview rooms and cells if needed. It was going to be a base of operations in the Mediterranean if it was ever needed” Tony finished sheepishly as he rubbed the back of his neck.

“Well damn Tony” Maria said leaning back into her chair slightly in shock and her mind racing. Using an Avenger ran facility would be better than using a SHIELD one, the security concerns she would have to constantly be aware of in a SHIELD location would be non existent there. They would be able to talk freely and it might be better for her to be able to tell Mel and Phil about their daughter.

“Give Bobbi the coordinates and tell her that she needs to pass it on the secure network to Hand and Hartley. They are who I have enroute to the location and two of the few SHIELD agents I know I can trust” Maria said as Tony got up to go talk to Bobbi quickly. A few minutes later she felt the jet
slightly shift course before Tony came back.

“As for how they found out about Skye they might have found out a number of things but I am suspecting a mole on the team she is on. Now Clint and Natasha just came back from tracking down my lead and have confirmed Skye’s true identity.”

“Who is she?” Tony interrupted looking around the table realizing he was the only one that didn’t know.

“Skye was born Rayne May Coulson on April 24th 1990 and was kidnapped from the hospital nursery hours after she was born. She is the daughter of Melinda May and Phil Coulson. Skye/Rayne is mine and Nat’s goddaughter. We all believed she died November 24th 1990 when the lab she was being held at and experimented on was blown up before we could rescue her” Clint said before she could say anything and she watched as he gripped Natasha’s hand in his own.

“Sweet Jesus! Agent had kids?” Tony asked rubbing at his face as he fell back into his own chair a clearly horrified look on his face.

“Just Skye/Rayne, after her death Phil and Mel were almost destroyed. They were only just somewhat back to functioning when Maria became their rookie and then Bahrain happened and Mel shut off more. Phil never gave up on his mate though, then New York happened…” Clint said his voice breaking at the last and went silent leaving it unsaid.

“Did those two ever catch a break?” Tony asked angrily. “So I guess no ones told Agent’s Mate that her daughter is alive and has been right under her nose this whole damn time?”

“No, we need to be there to tell her. Honestly I don’t know how she is going to react and we are going to have to show her proof” Natasha said quietly. Silence filled the jet as everyone was lost in thought and Maria knew it was time for the big reveal...big reveal it sounded like she was doing a fucking magic trick but it gave her an idea. She used the hack that Skye/Rayne had given her into the Bus’s video files and pulled up footage of Phil while he watched Skye and Mel spar a few nights ago but didn’t put it up on the screen just yet. Maria cleared her throat getting their attentions again.

“There is more. What I am about to tell you, please remember that I was under direct orders from Fury to keep it from all of you. At first it was because we didn’t know how the hell it happened or if he would survive and for his safety we had to hide him and create a cover story and you all were unknowingly a part of that cover story.” Maria said pausing before she typed the few keys to bring up the video of Phil Coulson watching over Mel and Skye as they spared. “Phil Coulson is alive.”
Silence filled the room as the Avengers were all shocked before anger started to cross their features. “What the fuck Maria, that’s not funny. I saw his body, he is dead” Clint said angrily as he pushed away from the table. Standing up he leaned on the table his breathing erratic as he glared at her with barely suppressed rage as his knuckles turned white.

“When you saw him, he was dead. When I saw him that day needing to see it for myself that the man I thought of as a father and never had the courage to tell, he was dead. Phil was legally dead for at least a day. When the SHIELD coroner went to do the autopsy the day after that, he found the wound almost completely healed over and that Phil somehow had a pulse again” Maria said her voice not hiding any of the emotions she was feeling having to tell them this, having to relive that horrible day in her head all over again.

“Scared the shit out of the coroner and then scared the shit out of Fury when we were called down to autopsy and shown. I was with him and I had to deal with the paranoid bastard’s mumbling about zombie apocalypses for days till he realized Phil wasn’t a damn zombie. That is when I had Fury order you and Natasha back to the carrier so I can get Mel and bring her to him. When I was finally able to get there Mel was piss drunk and it took the whole car ride to where we had Phil stashed to get her even half way sober…” Maria said softly.

She watched Clint drop back into his chair and rest his head in his arms on the table, knowing that the man before her that she thought of as an uncle was crying. Natasha leaned over softly talking to her mate in russian, Maria only caught a word here and there but what she was catching didn’t make any sense to her so she turned away looking towards Bruce and Tony. The two men had each others hand in a death grip as tears silently fell as they looked at the image on the screen.

“How?” Bruce finally asked breaking the silence.

“To be honest” she started but was interrupted.

“That would be a good place to start” came Clint’s gruff reply from her right and she didn’t have the energy to hide the hurt feeling she felt at that comment, but she knew she deserved it.

“We don’t know. Our theory was and still is that the Tesseract like energy in Loki’s scepter that he used to stab Phil somehow healed him” Maria said shrugging looking towards the two scientist. She was afraid to look towards Natasha and Clint, afraid to see the look in their eyes but she forced herself to look at everyone.
“Once everything settled after New York and Phil seemed to be healing fully we knew we had to do something. I wanted to tell you but was overruled by Fury once we realized we had a rot problem in SHIELD. So I gave Phil and Mel a team and the bus. Even though I couldn’t tell them what Fury and I were suspecting we had them investigating things for us that we were coming across while digging. We had information on Centipede in our system but someone kept putting it at a lower priority than it should have been so that was the first thing we had them investigate” Maria said leaning back in her chair.

Closing her eyes she let all the masks drop because she was tired and couldn’t bring herself to care anymore. She might be the Deputy Director of a secret multinational intelligence agency but she was also human. She was a woman whose mate was missing and she knew that most likely would soon be questioned and tortured for information and that thought was enough to kill her right there on the spot from the guilt she felt.

“I understand that you are mad at me but don’t be mad at Phil and Mel. Ever since Phil woke up he wanted to see you all but Fury forbade it and we are all so use to following the overly paranoid pirates orders. I’m going against his orders now telling you all this and probably will be arrested and fired for this but I’m so tired of all the lies and secrets.

“I need your help finding Skye/Rayne and finally reuniting her with her parents. The same parents that have unknowingly found their daughter and have been healing the emotional wounds that cover their daughter’s body just as the physical scars do” Maria said as she felt tears just behind her closed eyes because she couldn’t help but think that fate was a real bitch.

“Maria?” Bobbi asked from behind her.

“Yes?” Maria asked finally opening her eyes as she turned towards Bobbi.

“Hand and Hartley have arrived on the scene and are asking if there are any updates to your orders before they move in” Bobbi said and the moment came finally that Maria had to look at her team and face the music. Turning around she met the eyes of the assembled Avengers and was surprised they weren’t angry at her.

“It’s your mate Maria, we are still upset you lied to us but we know we need to have a long talk with Fury about that. What are your orders Commander?” Natasha asked and Maria felt the tension she didn’t know she was holding onto release before turning back to Bobbi.

“Tell Hand it’s time for her to be the bitch she can be and ride rough shod over Phil and Melinda for show. I want Hand and Hartley to escort the 616 team and any evidence they have to the villa where
“Thirty minutes till drop time for us. If Hartley drives they will be there in forty five minutes.” Bobbi responded already anticipating Maria’s questions, it was one of the things that made them such good partners when they were rookies.

“Good make it happen” Maria ordered turning towards the Avengers “Now this is what we are going to do…”

Pepper Potts was not having a good day, she had been stuck in a meeting with some Senators and their lackeys since the early morning hours. She had been trying to get the Senate Energy Committee to quit heeing and hawing on permits for the new Stark Industries building they wanted to build in DC that would have Stark Arc Reactor technology built into it from day one. It was taking all of her considerable amount of patience, she was soulmated to Tony Stark after all, to keep from telling the Senators where they could shove it. Let alone from telling one of the Senator’s lackeys off for staring at her chest most of the meeting.

Now though as her and Happy walked to the car they were trying to make up for lost time as the meeting had lasted an hour more than what they had planned for. Her hopes for lunch before her next set of meetings with the company attorneys on some licensing issues they’d been having were slowly dwindling. ‘Looks like it’s going to be fast food for lunch’ again she thought grimly as she quickly checked her text messages from both Tony and Bruce. One text in particular set her blood running cold though when she read it <Kaleidoscope>, it was only to be used when an Avenger’s mate was in danger and it meant that she was to get to the nearest Stark house and go into lockdown mode till someone could get her.

After the Mandarin incident she had an increased stamina and strength thanks to the now stabilized Extremis in her system but it still didn’t mean she knew what the hell to do with it. Maria and Natasha had been trying to teach her between everything else going on and now she wished they had tried harder to find the time. But she was Pepper Potts, soulmate to not one but two Avengers and a female CEO of an international corporation she had learned how to act cool under pressure. Without breaking stride she tipped the phone towards Happy’s direction and watched as he took in the text as her eyes started looking around their surroundings.

She didn’t know if it was the paranoia of knowing that possibly someone was after her but Pepper now felt as if eyes were following them as they walked up an incline to where they had parked the car earlier that morning. As they neared the car they heard the squeal of tires behind them as a blonde haired woman came out from behind a car in front of them. “Down!” she ordered and she felt it as Happy instantly pushed her down in between two cars that they had been passing by.
Pepper heard the gunshots before she even saw the woman stride forward with two handguns firing into the SUV that was rushing at her. One of the gunshots must have taken out the driver because it quickly crashed into some parked cars as the occupants got out and started to fight the woman. She had seen Natasha and Maria fight on numerous occasions in the Avengers gym and the blonde haired woman moved with the same grace and fluid movement of those two as she moved from attacker to attacker.

The sound of a motorcycle coming towards them had Pepper peeking around the edge of the car and she relaxed because she would know that broad shouldered male anywhere as Steve came driving up the ramp. He quickly braked his motorcycle sliding its back side into two of her would be kidnappers and out of nowhere pulled out a gun pointing it towards the woman. Realizing that Steve had taken out the last two guys the woman smirked as she held out her hands saying “Easy there boy scout, I’m your backup.”

Pepper watched as shock briefly flashed on Steve’s face before he said “Prove it.”

The smirk on the woman’s face only increased as she blatantly oogled Steve as he sat astride the motorcycle pointing a gun at her. “I always wondered what I’d have to prove but this wasn’t quite what I had in mind. Hill sent me and told me to say ‘Scooby Snacks’” the woman finally said and Pepper stood up once the woman said the codeword that meant that either Hill or one of the Avengers had sent her during a Kaleidoscope situation.

Steve blushed lowering the gun slowly and made it disappear back into a shoulder holster he had under his leather jacket. Pepper watched as Steve nervously ran one of his hands in his hair smiling and blushing at the young woman. At first she thought it was because he was embarrassed about pointing the gun at the woman that was here to help but then the woman’s first words to Steve registered and she realized that the two were soulmates.

“Thank you for coming…” Pepper said trying to learn the young woman’s name.

“Sharon Carter, Agent 13” Sharon said smiling at a blushing Steve but she seemed to snap out of it as she started to scan the area. “Well your car is totalled, Ms. Potts” she said and Pepper followed her gaze to where the black SUV had crashed into the lane her car had been parked in pushing the cars up the incline and smashing her car. “No worries I have a SHIELD SUV the next row over, come on we need to get out of here and get you somewhere safe. Captain can you clear the lane?” Sharon asked Steve.

“Yes Ma’am” Steve said instinctively and then blushed at his answer. Sharon chuckled, gliding over towards him and leaned in as she whispered something in his ear that made him turn even more red
before she quickly kissed his cheek leaving a red lipstick mark of her lips on his cheek.

“Come on Ms. Potts and Mr. Hogan with me” Sharon said as she led the way to her car. Pepper followed smirking because Steve would have a sassy soulmate and she wondered who their third was. She couldn’t help the laugh that slipped past her lips ‘Oh the family is going to love this story’ she thought.

“In position, vehicle approaching” Maria heard over the com unit and a moment later she saw the SHIELD issued SUV as it drove into the circular driveway.

“As soon as all three of you have the shots, take them.” Maria said as she watched the SUV approach and park. Maria stood there watching as the occupants got out of the SUV she stood there with her hands clasped behind her back and a blank look on her face.

Three shots rang out and she didn’t even flinch as the three junior agents of the SHIELD 616 team dropped to the ground. Hand and Hartley having known ahead of time what was about to happen instantly covered the downed agents with their own hidden night-night guns while Mel and Phil turned to her with rage in their eyes “What the hell Maria?!” Phil yelled at her and she knew if he was cursing he was well and truly pissed off.

“You have a leak and I am plugging it for good this time” she said her voice cold as she approached the down agents and motioning Mel and Phil off to the side. A few moments later Clint and Natasha approached rifles ready as they approached the scene and she finally turned to Mel and Phil to see shock playing across their faces.

“Prisoners secure” Clint said after zip tying the knocked out agents and putting another round in Ward for good measure. There was no love lost between those two since Clint never had liked the young specialist and after reading what Maria had found on the man she knew Clint pegged him as the biggest threat of the three agents.

“I hope you know what you are doing Maria. We had our orders from Fury and as far as I know they haven’t changed” Phil said still angry but he had a concerned look in his eyes as he watched her.

“Oh she knows exactly what she is doing brother. Anyways this is now an Avenger matter with SHIELD only playing support,” Clint said as he approached Phil hugging the man tightly. It took a moment but soon Phil was hugging Clint back and whispered something to Clint that got the
younger man to laugh. As they broke apart Natasha nearly tackled Phil to the ground but he quickly
recovered and kept them on their feet as he laughed at her antics. Soon Tony and Bruce came out of
the house both awkwardly hugging Phil as well before being introduced to Melinda.

Footsteps from behind her had Maria turning to Bobbi as she approached with her night-night rifle
slung over one shoulder as she had a small smile taking in the Avengers greeting Phil and meeting
Melinda. “I’m glad they know now, they need each other with the days that are coming” Bobbi said
to her before grimacing as she looked over towards where Victoria and Isabelle were still keeping
guard over the knocked out agents “I’ll get the baby agents in their rooms.”

“Thanks Bobbi and can you make introductions for me for Tony and Bruce. Then fill in Victoria and
Isabelle on everything we know, please.”

“Got it. Come on Bruce and Tony come meet two of the top female agents SHIELD has” Bobbi said
throwing an arm around each man’s shoulder and dragging them with her over to Victoria and
Isabelle.

“With me” Maria said as she approached the small group that was her core family and she knew
there wasn’t a dry eye between them. Maria didn’t cry though because if she started she didn’t know
if she would stop so instead she began to lead the way inside trusting that Clint and Natasha would
make sure Mel and Phil followed. Once inside she turned right into a comfortable living room that
was near the front entrance and waited till everyone was inside the room.

“JARVIS secure the room and turn off the recorders, please” she asked the AI as she watched doors
shut and lock while the windows went dark. Lights sprang on in the room so they weren’t left in the
dark and she saw the tension return to the shoulders of both Mel and Phil.

“Sit down” Maria ordered indicating one of the couches while she dropped into a chair herself. The
last thing she needed was for the two to hurt themselves if they fainted or went into shock. She
watched as the two older agents shared a look before sitting down and Maria could see behind the
front they were giving off, both of them were scared but were hiding it as best as they could as they
gripped each others hand.

Natasha and Clint sat down on the coffee table in front of Mel and Phil and she watched as they
prepared themselves to tell their oldest friends the truth. Maria had told Natasha and Clint it was up to
them to tell Mel and Phil that their daughter was alive but now currently missing. That the young
hacktivist that they had taken under their wing was the daughter they thought dead all these years.

Maria closed her eyes as she sat there and felt an itch just below her skin that felt like burning and
knew that Skye was now being tortured. They knew this was a possibility when they had parted, that they shared a bond so strong that they might feel the others extreme cases of pain, especially if they were close. It had started the day after the raid when she had woken up with her ribs sore. At first they thought it was because she slept on them wrong but as the day progressed they both knew that wasn’t the case.

“You found out something about Skye. What?” Mel asked.

“We found out who Skye’s parents are” Natasha said and watched as Melinda gave her a questioning look. Fuck this wasn’t easy. How does one tell their best friends this type of news?

“Tasha rip the band aid off” Mel said clearly getting impatient with their silence and Natasha ran her hands through her hair before sighing. Glancing towards Clint she saw him shrug then nod it seemed he had no idea how to break it to them gently either.

“Skye was born Rayne May Coulson on April 24th 1990” Natasha whispered softly as she pulled out the paper print out she had Bruce give her of the paternity test results. She looked up into the eyes of her two oldest friends as their faces drained of all color as they took in the information. Gently she reached out and touched Mel’s hand and opened it as she handed her friend the test results.

“The agents who found her didn’t know who she was, only that an undercover agent had called in the 0-8-4 and that the agent and the entire village had died to protect her. The only thing the agent was able to say before she died was the word ‘hide’ which they took that they needed to hide her. They were all young lower level agents they didn’t have access to Rayne’s case so they didn’t know we were after a man that called himself Dr. Hyde.

“We all know what the world was like back then, what was done to innocent children that had no one to fight for them. The agents took it upon themselves to bring her back to the states and protect her. Agent Avery was going to leave SHIELD and disappear with her to make sure she wasn’t used as a weapon but as soon as they got back to the states the team started being crossed off. All showed signs of being tortured and murdered for information and soon it was just the two most junior agents left.

“Agents Avery and Lumley made the decision to hide the child in the foster system and make a run for it, hoping to lead the hunters off the trail of the child. Agent Avery was found murdered a few
days after that while Agent Lumley stayed hidden and constantly on the run till we found him and even then he paid the ultimate price to protect her. We got ambushed by Centipede while down there but they weren’t looking for us, they were looking for Lumley” Natasha said finishing the story as she watched Phil and Mel with concern. Their eyes were blank and unseeing and she could only imagine what they were thinking about. How close their daughter had been the whole time. About how much their daughter had suffered over her life that they weren’t there to protect her from.

Natasha felt Clint’s hand take hers in as they watched their friends. Neither of them had any blood children but they now had Laura and the kids and the thought of either of the children going through what Skye/Rayne did made her blood run cold. Her grip tightened on Clint’s hand and his answering squeeze let her know that she wasn’t alone in her thoughts.

“That answers why Clint was using the cane earlier” Maria said her voice low and raspy was startling in the silence of the room. Natasha looked towards her and saw that Maria had her eyes closed and her hands clenched so tight her knuckles were white. Nostrils flared as she took a deep breath and for a moment Natasha thought Maria was angry and trying to control it but she was shocked to realize she was in pain.

Giving Clint’s hand one more squeeze she went over and sat on the arm of the chair pulling Maria close to her as she started to run her hands through Maria’s hair trying to comfort her. A low whimper escaped from Maria and Natasha’s concern for her increased because she finally understood what was going on. It was rare to have a touch bond, even more rare to have one so strong that you felt the others pain and it seemed Skye and Maria were one of the rare cases.

"Oh маленькая племянница why didn’t you tell us?” Natasha asked while she continued to comfort the woman that she now called little niece. If Skye/Rayne had an insanely high pain tolerance and if Maria was use to not showing pain because of her own troubled upbringing what the hell were the bastards that had Skye/Rayne doing to her goddaughter? Sometimes she wished she wasn’t who she was because she could easily imagine what was happening and she felt sick to her stomach.

"We suspected what was happening and I just had it confirmed in spades but at least we know she is near by” Maria rasped out an answer between breaths as she held herself tightly together. Natasha felt the unshed tears in her eyes as she shared a look with Clint and his own eyes showed that he understood the situation they found themselves in all too well.

Melinda felt paralysed as she heard the story that her best friend, her sister was telling her and she couldn’t stop herself from believing the words coming from Natasha. Skye was Rayne the daughter she thought she had lost all those years ago, a part of her that had died that day when she had watched the lab explode and catch fire before they could rescue their daughter.
She couldn’t blame the team that had found her daughter, they didn’t know who they had found. The fact that she had been pregnant was carefully hidden away only seven people had known the truth of her year long leave. With the same seven people investigating Rayne’s kidnapping after her birth and they had never figured out how Dr. Hyde knew she was pregnant let alone where she was when she had given birth to Rayne. Could there been a traitor in her small group of friends back then? With what they knew now it was very likely.

Hyde had killed a nurse and kidnapped Rayne right from the nursery before almost completely disappearing with her daughter. They had torn apart the world trying to find Rayne and those seven months were filled with a lot of things she wished she could say she regretted doing but knew she would be lying. She would do it all over again a hundred times over if it meant that her daughter had been returned to her safe.

But Rayne had never been safe, she thought as her mind raced with a new sick clarity as she remembered everything from Skye no Rayne’s files from the foster system. A cold feeling filled her gut as she remembered every entry that corresponded with both the physical and emotional scars the young woman she knew was dealing with. Their daughter looking for her family trying to save her life had somehow found her parents and didn’t even know it. None of them had put it together because the chance of it was so damn absurd….but fate was a right bitch sometimes.

Oh god, she thought as she remembered back to the first honest conversation they had with Skye when they had confronted her on her lying to them. Her daughter’s words now haunting her “I don’t care who they are, I don’t care why they left me, I just need to know if they are a match, because if not...If I am to die, I want to live the rest of my life on my own damn terms.”

She felt the tears run down her face as she silently cried for all those lost moments because Skye/Rayne had been wanted. When her and Phil had found out she was pregnant they had sat there talking for hours to her stomach as if their child was able to hear them. It was something they did throughout her pregnancy whenever Phil was home from a mission, it was something even Clint and Natasha had started doing.

Her little girl had grown up way too fast, forced to protect herself when it had been both her and Phil’s job to keep the monsters away and they had failed. Their little girl was dying and her only hope was either her and Phil being a match, if not they would lose her for real this time.

Her hands tightened trying to snap herself out of her thoughts, they needed to find Skye/Rayne and protect her, to tell her the truth but she had no idea how she was going to do that. Paper crinkled and she looked down at a folded piece of paper and she wondered where it had come from. Giving Phil’s hand a squeeze she let go of his hand and opened up the paper and read what was on it. It was the results of a paternity test that proved that Skye was Rayne.
Melinda felt the change in Phil next to her and she gently handed him the paper that was worth more than gold in her eyes. She let him look at the results as a whimper pulled her attention away from it and towards Maria. Tilting her head she took in the sight before her as Natasha sat on the arm of the chair holding Maria close as she ran her hands through her daughter’s soulmate’s hair trying to comfort her.

At first it didn’t make sense then the sickening clarity came back as she put it all together. Maria was Skye/Rayne’s soulmate, they shared a touch bond. A touch bond that must be very strong as Maria sat there in silent torment only occasionally whimpering in pain while she shared in her daughter’s physical pain. Turning towards Phil she saw sad understanding in his eyes and with a silent conversation they both stood up from the couch.

Phil gently folded the paper and put it in his breast pocket as they slowly moved over to where Maria was leaning against Natasha as their friend and sister looked on lost but hopeful at them. Melinda knew Maria was suffering but was stubborn enough that she would let herself be in pain to be near Phil or herself to be there for them if they needed her as they learned the truth. Maria had been like a daughter to them all these years, someone that they looked after and cared about deeply and now in truth she was their daughter. Maria was Skye/Rayne’s soulmate and that connection was everything because Melinda loved them both so very much.

Gently Phil bent down and put his arms around Maria’s back and under her legs as he lifted her up into his arms. “Come on kiddo, let’s have Bruce take a look at you” he said softly as he carried her towards the door. One of Maria’s arms went around Phil’s neck while her other hand reached for Melinda’s hand and she gripped the young woman’s hand back trying to give her daughter’s soulmate the strength and comfort she needed.

“JARVIS lift the security lockdown and alert Bruce we need him in Medical and then guide us to Medical please” Natasha said as her and Clint passed them as they ran ahead to open the door for them.
“How do you think they are taking it?” Tony asked as he and Bruce watched the monitors on the still knocked out baby agents. They had JARVIS monitoring their vitals so they can study them and get a baseline reading for once they started questioning them. Tony felt it as Bruce slipped his hand in his own giving it a squeeze and Tony knew that Bruce wasn’t doing well. His quiet mate rarely participated in any public displays of affection, it just wasn’t his way unless he was upset.

“I think just as well as us learning about Phil” Bruce deadpanned as he sighed turning away from the monitors pulling Tony into his arms. Tony easily folded into Bruce’s embrace letting his head rest on the other man’s chest. He wouldn’t question this unusual display, he would just keep his mouth shut and give Bruce anything he needed. Bruce had been Skye/Rayne’s physician since she had met Maria and reading the kid’s files and seeing the actual proof of the abuse she went through were two different things.

When dealing directly with Skye/Rayne and Maria he had been totally professional but Tony knew that Natasha had sent Bruce to the Hulk out room at one point because his anger was almost too much. Even after Hulking out in the room his mate has returned to their apartment with a very haunted look on his face that both Pepper and him had tried to ease by the small touches that seemed to calm Bruce.

It hadn’t just been the abuse that haunted Bruce though, it was the fact the girl was dying and his friend had told them there was nothing any of them could do without a bone marrow match. That one thing is what set this whole thing in motion because it was why Skye/Rayne was trying to find her parents or any family member who could help her. “Did you run the test after the paternity test?” Tony asked knowing what his mate now had running through his head.

“Yes, Melinda is a match for when Skye/Rayne gets sick again. Which with everything going on, it might be sooner than later. Her body is already exhausted from fighting off the cancer, the constant injuries aren’t doing anything to help her body but she wouldn’t hear of it” Bruce answered before burying his face in Tony’s hair.

“Like Mother like daughter” Agent Hartley said as she walked in with her hand surprisingly on the small of the back of Agent Hand. Tony knew of them from hacking into SHIELD and reading their service files, which were quite impressive separately but together they were a force to be reckoned with. Looking between the two of them he realized why that was and wondered if SHIELD had a tendency to keep mated pairs together as kick-ass teams. “Melinda is the same way, always was even in her academy days.”

“You were at the academy with them?” Bobbi, the newest Avenger asked Hartley as she leaned against the table but kept her eyes on the screens behind him and Bruce.
“Yes I was in the same form as Phil and Melinda. We weren’t besties but they were friends and the three of us were constantly competing for the top spots in our classes” Hartley answered as she stood next to Bobbi and pulled Hand who rolled her eyes into her arms.

“Dr. Banner, Agent Romanoff wanted me to inform you that they are on their way to medical with Deputy Director Hill” JARVIS said causing Bruce to get a puzzled look on his way before he looked down at Tony and a dawning horror filled his eyes and cursed before running out the door. Tony knew it wasn’t a good sign if his very passive mate was cursing and quickly ran after him.

Bruce cursed and quickly bolted for the door to the medical labs “JARVIS tell them to keep her calm till I get there!” Footsteps behind him told him that he was being followed as he ran to medical but he only gave them a passing thought. This was something he should have known would happen, the bond that Maria and Skye/Rayne shared was extremely strong. Honestly it was the strongest he’d ever seen and was wishing they had told him of this latest development in their bonding.

Skidding to slow down in front of the medical bay doors he used his momentum to turn into the room as JARVIS opened the doors for him. He’d have to remember to thank the AI later as he took in the scene before him. Maria was laying on the bed curled up resting against Melinda’s chest as she actually whimpered. Clint had Natasha in his arms as he whispered to her and Phil stood next to his mate silently giving both his mate and his daughter’s mate silent support.

Bruce turned to one of the crash carts and grabbed a needle and some Ativan. He wanted to give Maria something stronger but he knew her aversion to any heavy duty pain killers so started with something to at least keep her calm. Turning around he saw that Melinda and Phil already were getting Maria out of her tactical suit and without a word he quickly gave Maria the shot. A long few moments later the whimpering at least stopped and she seemed to collapse further into Melinda’s hold absolutely exhausted.

He watched as blue eyes opened up slightly clouded over with pain but still very much aware of everything. “Why didn’t you tell me?” Bruce asked as he got the things he needed to start an IV line for Maria.

“We suspected after the raid but this just proved it” Maria rasped out as she closed her eyes and her body went limp. Bruce sighed as he rubbed at his face.

“Well I need to get her comfortable and stabilized so everyone out” Bruce ordered after seeing that
they had an audience. He watched as Tony left giving him a nod before escorting Bobbi and the two agents out of the door. He looked around to the remaining four people in the room and sighed.

“Phil take Clint and go find our daughter. Nat and I will help Bruce with Maria” Melinda ordered and watched as Phil kissed his mate before walking out with Clint as they started discussing everything that was going on.

“Help me get her out of the tactical suit, strip her down to the bra and underwear. I need to see if she is getting only the physical sensations or if she is also getting the injuries themselves” Bruce ordered as he started turning on the equipment in the room.

She had screamed till she had no voice left and now she just thrashed on the table as her body felt like it was on fire from the inside out. Whatever Crazy had injected her with was like doing all her past chemo regimens all at the same time. But soon a calming sensation washed over her and she realized that her fears had been confirmed, Maria and her were linked and if she died she would most likely drag her mate with her. She relaxed into the cold table and for now just let the sensation of not being alone fill her as she passed out absolutely exhausted.

Phil walked into the room that JARVIS had instructed them to followed closely by Clint. Looking around he saw the monitors that were recording all the data on the three most junior members of his team and knew that at least one of them was a traitor. They had been ambushed on the train and even though they made it seem like SHIELD knew what they were doing in all honesty only his team, Hand and Hartley knew the full details of the mission.

Looking around at everyone in the room he saw that they were waiting for him to give the order with Maria out for the count at the moment it looked like this was his rodeo.

“Clint I want you to go the location and make sure we didn’t miss anything. You are my best tracker so see what you can find and then come back here with anything you find” Phil ordered and his friend clapped him on the back before leaving.

“Victoria, Isabelle and Tony I need you to go back to the Bus and toss it. Tony somehow one of my team has been communicating with the enemy I want you to find out how, take it apart and see if we can trace it. We dropped this mission last minute on my team knowing there was probably a leak in it so its gotta be there.”

“Got it Agent” Tony said smirking but there was a cold look in his eyes before he turned towards the
ladies. “Ladies follow me to the garage where we can find something to get us back to your base” he said leading them out of the room.

“Boss?” he heard Bobbi trying to get his attention. Bobbi had been Clint and Natasha’s first rookie along with Maria. But he had been all four of their handler at the time and then off and on for other missions over the last few years before New York happened.

“I’m going to need you on interrogation Bobbi you and Natasha are the best we have and I need that skill set right now” he said sighing not liking one bit what they were about to do.

“I know Boss. The science twins are starting to wake up and I’ve read their files. Who do you want me to start off with first?”

“Fitz, he was the last to see my...daughter. JARVIS can you place Fitz’s file up on the screen please?” he said and began reading the file Maria and Bobbi had put together and was surprised by what he read. Well that explained some things.

Fitz groaned as he slowly woke up and took stock of his head feeling like a thousand monkeys were doing a tango inside it. The last thing he remembered was getting out of the SUV and seeing the Deputy Director waiting for them on the steps to what looked like a large mansion, then nothing. He sat up and went to go rub his face but realized he couldn’t move his arms as they were handcuffed to a spot in the middle of the table he had been sleeping on.

“This isn’t good’ he thought as he tried to fight past the blinding headache and start thinking of what the hell was going on. As he was doing that though the door to the room he found himself in opened and in walked a tall blonde woman who was dressed in a SHIELD tactical suit. He watched her as she put down a styrofoam cup next to him and a thick file on her side of the table.

The woman was armed with one of his night-night guns that rode in a holster on her hip that he noticed when she dug into a pocket and pulled out a key. She kept her eyes on him assessing him as if he was dangerous as she leaned forward and uncuffed one of his hands.

“It’s not tea but it’s water to help you wash out the Dendrotoxin out of your system” she said indicating the cup as she sat down across from him. It confirmed his realization that he had been shot with one of his own guns and was now most likely in a SHIELD interrogation room. He tried to think of anything he might have done to land himself into this mess but the only thing he could think of was their recent botched mission and the fact that Skye was missing.
“Now I need you to run me through the events of today Fitz and don’t leave out any details” the female agent said as she sat back not even opening the file in front of her.

“Skye and I were running the back end of the op from the baggage car of the train. Jemma and….” he paused wondering if she knew about Agent Coulson being alive.

“I know about Agent Coulson go ahead” she prompted letting him know that she at least knew he was alive.

“Jemma and Agent Coulson were in one of the train cars acting as spotters as Agents Ward and May were to intercept the package once it was spotted. That’s when it all went topsy turvy our com units when down and Skye and I were ambushed in the baggage car.

“Skye saved my life when we got ambushed. We thought we were in the clear but Jemma then came running in being chased. Skye took out the guys chasing after her but Jemma had already been hit with a night night round. I don’t know how the bad guys got a hold of them but every damn last one of them had a night night gun and regular gun as well.

“Skye spotted the package being removed from the train while it was still moving and decided to go after it. She had told me to stay with Jemma but I couldn’t let her go chasing after them alone and we couldn’t get in contact with the rest of our team. So we hid Simmons as best as we could and went after the package together.

“We tracked the package all the way to a villa a few miles away. That is when we saw Ian Quinn arrive and Skye told me to keep trying to team and to disable the cars in the front of the house while she went inside to see if she could get eyes on the package and see why Quinn was there. I just had finished disabling the cars when the rest of the team arrived on site somehow but we were spotted and we had a bit of gun battle before a vehicle escaped from the rear.

“After taking down the guards that remained we ran into the house to try to find Skye and that is when we realized she was missing and that there was some blood and signs of a struggle in the basement” Fitz finished taking another slow drink of the water.

“Thank you, now can you tell me why you lied to SHIELD on your academy forms?” the woman asked shocking him. What the hell did she mean?
“Care to tell me what I lied about?” he asked confused.

“You family section in particular” the woman said handing him the form that list his next of kin. It was a very short list because it was only him and his mother now.

“I didn’t the only family I have is my mother after my father passed when I was a toddler. Don’t particularly remember the man and mom doesn’t talk about him much but I guess there might be more family that I don’t know about” he finishes rambling with an audible click of his teeth because the woman is giving him a look that he recognizes from one his own mother gave him when she was pissed. “Seriously I have no idea what you are talking about” he finally says as he squirms.

“You are telling me you didn’t know you were adopted or that you were a twin?”

“I had no idea” he answered as he stared at her shocked. Adopted? He just assumed he looked more like his dad. He had only seen a picture or two of the man because it was too much for his mother to deal with since they have been a mated pair. His mother told him that if she hadn’t had him she didn’t know if she had survived the loss of his dad. Then the twin part hit him and he wondered what it would be like to have a sibling a bond like that.

“Please can you tell me about my twin? Do you know who they are?” he asked begging the woman. The woman looked at him for another moment before she turned around and left the room without saying a word to him. Fitz stared after the door for a few moments lost in thought before he placed his head onto the cool metal of the table. ‘What the hell is going on?’

“He was telling the truth” Bobbi said as she walked back into the room and poured herself a cup of coffee. She had been running on coffee and pure adrenaline since she met Maria and Skye in Chicago and she was starting to feel the exhaustion.

“Any change with Maria?” Phil asked Natasha as Bobbi heard her walk in the room behind her and she poured her mentor a cup of coffee as well and handed it to her.

“Thanks. No Bruce says that her body is exhausted and she is now just passed out. We can’t keep her knocked out for fear of them doing something extreme to Skye..Rayne..fuck this is complicated but we can at least ease both of their pain. Where is Clint?” Natasha asked.

“Sent him to look at the scene and see if we missed anything” Phil said.
“Well since Ward seems to be still knocked out from the double love tap Clint gave him earlier I’ll finish with the last science twin before we move on to the main event” she said grabbing the file they had on Jemma Simmons and walked out of the room.

Simmons had the longest time between waking up and Bobbi interviewing her so she was going to go with a different tactic. Opening the door she strode in kicking the door shut behind her as she felt the female scientist eyes follow her into the room. She tossed the file effortlessly on the table before leaning against the wall directly in front of the female scientist crossing her arms just under her breasts. The scientist was cute and Bobbi felt like playing the part of sexy bad-ass interrogator for this one.

"Jemma Simmons quite the impressive resume you have. Dual PhD's in both Biology and Chemistry all earned by the time you turned twenty one. Why did you join SHIELD Dr. Simmons?” Bobbi asked as she looked on watching the young woman's face for any tells she could use. Simmons’ eyes widened for a moment before they narrowed and looked at her with an intensity that started ringing warning bells in her head.

Bobbi kept her arms crossed but she slowly unclenched her fists and loosened her muscles ready to reach for the night-night gun on her hip. She watched as the young woman looked down at her hands still handcuffed to the table and as she finally looked back up she saw a pained look on the woman’s face but she had hope in her eyes as she looked directly at Bobbi.

"You know, of all the scenarios I thought of, this one definitely never crossed my mind” Jemma Simmons said softly to her and Bobbi felt her thoughts come to a grinding halt. She stood there frozen in shock as her mind processed what she had just heard. Bobbi wanted to step closer to make the physical connection to her mate that sat before her handcuffed to a table. Her mate was before her and she was suspected of being a traitor to the organization that was written on her skin. None of it made any sense to Bobbi but she couldn’t make herself move or speak.

A gentle knock on the door dragged her away from her internal turmoil over the situation. Taking a deep breath she walked to the door, the physical act of turning away from the tiny scientist that was her mate was painful as she opened the door. Natasha came into the room giving her a soft smile as she placed a hand on Bobbi’s lower back and steered her towards Phil who stood outside of the room. Phil opened up his arms and she willingly fell into them as she let the tears finally fall.

Natasha closed the door but not before she heard the beginning of Bobbi’s tears that pulled at her heart strings. SHIELD was everything to Bobbi and finding her mate when she is sent in to interrogate her for possibly being a traitor....It was too much for her rookie, it was why she came in
here she wasn’t going to ask Bobbi to interrogate her own mate.

Natasha had known Bobbi’s words only because during a mission a year before New York she had to patch Bobbi up in the field. Bobbi had taken a slicing knife wound just above the mark on her stomach while they had to fight their way out of a bar in Panama after their contact had double crossed them. It could have been a whole lot worse but they all had a bad feeling on the intel for that mission so Clint had been close by and was able to provide covering fire for them as they disappeared into the night.

Turning around she leaned against the door watching as the young scientist sat there with tears in her eyes. Jemma Simmons stared at her but Natasha knew that the young woman wasn’t even seeing her standing there, no she was looking past her at the door that her newly found mate had disappeared through. A myriad of emotions played across her face and in her eyes, she was so open, so young and so hurt by the turn events.

“I’m Agent Romanoff. I’m going to ask you a few questions and you will answer them” she said startling Simmons enough to jump slightly in her seat as she walked across the room and sat down across from the scientist.

“Yes ma’am” she says trying to pull herself back together and she makes a good show of it as she straightens her back but her eyes are lost as they keep going back towards the door.

“I’m here part of the team to find your friend Skye, I need you to tell me everything you remember about the mission today” Natasha orders as she sits back to watch the scientist. She listens to the story and catalogues all the visual cues that Simmons is giving her and comes to the conclusion by the end of the recount that she is telling her the truth. Natasha is relieved for that part because she didn’t know how her rookie would take it if her mate was a traitor to SHIELD.

She doesn’t say anything though as she opens the file that Bobbi and Maria had compiled on the young scientist and reads the points and notes quickly. Natasha realizes that the issue that Maria and Bobbi had come across with Fitz past is the same they have with Simmons. “We think there is a mole on the 616 team, we have suspected this for a while but two missions almost back to back where team members have been kidnapped forced our hand to act. We looked into your background and we found an inconsistency on your SHIELD academy forms. Did you know that you were adopted?” Natasha asks and watches as shock crosses Simmons face with the question and then resignation as her shoulders sag.

“I suspected but I never cared to find out. I love my parents and I know they love me and I never had the heart to ask them for fear of hurting them” she said softly as she stared down at her hands handcuffed to the table.
“I’m going to uncuff your hands now since I don’t think you are the mole but please don’t do anything stupid. I so don’t want to explain to your mate why I had to hurt you, understand?”

“Yes Agent Romanoff, I won’t do anything stupid promise. I like keeping my body parts where they are” Jemma says as Natasha uncuffs her hands and she watches the young woman rub at her wrists.

Natasha goes to say something else but a knock at the door stops her and she good naturedly glares at it for a moment because she knows who is on the other side before she even answers it. Walking over she opens the door and affectionately rolls her eyes at her rookie standing there with a very confused Fitz next to her. Bobbi has the grace to blush before shrugging her shoulders as she looks towards Natasha.

Taking a step back she opens the door and doesn’t say a word as she lets Fitz and Bobbi into the room. Bobbi and her both smile a soft smile as they stand back as Fitz rushes over towards Simmons and the two scientist hug before checking each other over quickly and start talking rapidly to each other.

Leaning against the wall for a few minutes they just take in the sight before them but Natasha barely could follow the conversation between the two so she looks over towards Bobbi raising an eyebrow in question. Bobbi though just smiles affectionately at the two and shrugs her shoulders in answer. Well guess it’s up to her to shock the scientist’s world then.

“Jemma Simmons, meet Leopold Fitz your twin brother. Leopold Fitz, meet Jemma Simmons your twin sister” she finishes smirking as she leans against the wall with Bobbi and watch the gobsmacked expressions on the two scientist.

“Wait what?!” Jemma asks shocked and almost faints but Bobbi is there instantly catching her before she fell to the ground and Natasha was forced to move fast as well as she steadies Fitz with a hand to his shoulder.

“Easy there cutie” Bobbi says as she gently picks Simmons up and sits her on the edge of the table. Natasha sees the two new soul mates smile shyly at each other and she rolls her eyes and grabs the still shocked Fitz’s elbow and steers him out of the room.

“Come on Fitz you can catch up with your sister a little bit later after her and Bobbi, your now future sister-in-law by the way, have a conversation” she says closing the door behind them and laughs at the face Fitz makes.
“Easy there cutie” Bobbi says as she gently picks Simmons up and sits her on the edge of the table. She gives her soulmate a shy smile and gets one in return as she hears Natasha take Fitz out of the room. The door shuts behind them and Bobbi makes a mental note to thank Natasha later for giving them these few moments together.

Slowly she reaches up her hand and waits till Simmons nods her head and she gently runs her fingers against her mate’s cheek. “I am so happy I found you finally,” Bobbi said before slowly leaning forward giving her mate time to back away, but she doesn’t and their lips meet in their first kiss.

At first it starts off as just a slight pressure against their lips but soon it becomes more and she can’t help but nip at her mate’s lower lip. Simmons moans against her and she does it again as her mate’s mouth opens up and their tongues meet. Bobbi’s other arm circles around Simmons waist pulling her tight against her body as they kiss. The need for air makes her break off the kiss as she rests their foreheads together.

“Wow” Simmons says then blushes when she realizes she said that out loud. Bobbi throws her head back laughing and feels a finger poking her in the ribs.

“Oof, easy there cutie, I need those ribs” Bobbi teases as she steals a kiss.

“Even though you know my name, I am Jemma Simmons, SHIELD scientist” Jemma says holding out her hand and Bobbi takes the hand and brings it up to her lips, placing a gentle kiss across the knuckles.

“Barbara ‘Bobbi’ Morse, call sign Mockingbird” she says watching as recognition crosses her mate’s face.

“You are a legend at Sci-Tech” her mate says and Bobbi can’t help the smug smirk.

“Well I do try,” Bobbi says as she bends down and captures Jemma’s lips with her own again for another kiss.

“JARVIS turn off the recorders to the second interview room please!” Phil orders after he sees Bobbi and Jemma kiss for the first time and turns in enough time to see Natasha lead a still somewhat in
shock Fitz to the command room. She gently pushes him down on the couch and then walks over to the coffee maker pouring two cups. “I’m going to go check on Mel and Maria” Phil tells Natasha as he stands next to her and she hands him the two cups of coffee she poured.

“Take Mel some coffee” she says before starting to pour two more cups of coffee for her and Fitz. Phil gently kisses her temple before walking out of the room and down the hallways heading back to medical. He wanted to check on Mel and Maria, his mate had refused to leave Maria’s side since they realized that Maria shared such a deep connection with their daughter. He understood Mel’s reasoning if they couldn’t be there for Skye/Rayne, the least they could do was make sure someone was always with Maria.

Daughter...that was a strange but wonderful thought because they had thought they had lost Rayne all those years ago but they had a second chance they just had to find those that took her again. It was like history was repeating itself again but Phil pushed down his fears that it would fully repeat itself because he’d be damned if he let it happen again. No they had to find Skye/Rayne not just for her own sake but for his now growing families sake.

Turning into medical he was warmed by the sight of Mel laying in the bed, eyes closed with Maria curled up to her side as she slept. His mates fingers were gently running through Maria’s short but lengthening hair and he absently wondered if she had decided to try growing it out again or if she had been just so focused on everything else going on that she forgot to get it cut again. Quietly he walked in but wasn’t surprised when Mel’s eyes opened up and tracked him as he came into the room. Smiling softly he handed her a cup of coffee before gently leaning down placing a soft kiss to the top of Maria’s head.

“Wake her and I will kick your ass” Mel whispers before taking a drink of the coffee. She hands him the cup and goes back to running her fingers in Maria’s hair.

“Any change?” he asks as he drinks his coffee.

“No Bruce says she is just exhausted and with her connection to..” Mel pauses and he places his hand on her shoulder in a sign of support. “With her connection to Rayne and both of them running themselves ragged he thinks it’s all catching up with them. Anything new on your end?”

“Fitz and Simmons were questioned they aren’t our mole problem but Maria did find out some interesting information on them that explains a few things. Turns out our science twins are really twins, separated at birth and adopted by different families. They are a little bit shocked at the moment Bobbi and Nat are with them” he said pulling a chair closer to the bed.
“Do we know who their parents are?” Mel asked him but before he answered Maria did it for him.

“I have my suspicions but wanted fresh blood samples from them for the test. Son of a...after this we taking a damn vacation” Maria said groaning as she woke up and Phil knew it was testament on how bad she was feeling that Maria didn’t try to sit up. Instead she stayed curled up against Mel’s side taking comfort as Mel played with her hair.

“I think you two have earned it Kiddo” Phil gently said after a moment as he took one of her hands in his own, the nickname earning him a soft smile from Maria. “I guess I should tell you that Bobbi found her third, Simmons” Phil said smirking at the shocked look on Maria’s face.

“Poor Simmons” Maria says chuckling then groaning from the movement “I hope she has the patience needed to deal with Bobbi and Hunter. Did Bobbi call Hunter to tell him yet?”

“No, Natasha had to step in to finish the interrogation and then Bobbi dragged Fitz into the room just as Natasha broke it to Simmons that she was adopted. Fitz and Simmons were told they were twins then Bobbi and Simmons started making eyes at each other so Natasha left them in the interrogation room while she dealt with an in shock Fitz.”

“Okay read the twins in on everything. We will need their help. Then have Bobbi and the twins report here I want to have Bruce run the test. Where is everyone else?” Maria asked and he easily fell into their usual roles while at work. All at the same time Maria his daughter’s mate laid curled up in Mel’s arms.

Bruce walked back into medical after stepping out briefly to try to reach Pepper and make sure she was okay. He had been relieved to hear his fiery mate’s voice on the phone as she told him of the events of her morning. It was a shock to find out that Steve had finally met one of his soulmates and apparently she was a sassy little thing according to Pepper. Their little ragtag family of misfits was growing by leaps and bounds as everyone started meeting their soul mates. The thought of all the chaotic holidays in their future, surprisingly enough gave him a sense of peace and belonging he never thought he’d have.

As he walked in he saw that Phil was sitting next to Maria’s bedside as he talked to Maria and Melinda. Bruce was a little surprised that Maria was awake but he was just glad she hadn’t tried to get up out of bed yet. He knew eventually she would insist on getting up and contributing and he so did not look forward to trying to enforce some conditions on her when she did.

“Bruce, how’s Pepper?” Maria asked as he walked over to the foot of the bed.
“Good your Agent 13 and Steve got to her in just enough time, someone did try to make a grab for her but they apparently put a stop to that real fast” Bruce said as he glanced over to the machine monitoring Maria’s vitals and making note of them in her chart. “They are are currently at the Stark house just outside Washington with the property on full lock down till they can arrange secure transport back to New York for them.

“I guess I should tell you that your Agent 13 has made quite the impression on Steve, she even called him boy scout.” Bruce said smirking and watched as Maria took in the information before busting up laughing.

“Ow damn it that hurts” she groaned trying to stop laughing as Melinda looked towards Maria with concern in her eyes but Phil looked towards him with a confused look on his face.

“Steve met one of his soulmates” Bruce clarified for Phil and watched at the man started to laugh as he dropped his head on the edge of the bed.

“I’m missing something” Melinda said confused looking at her mate. Phil sat back in his seat tears in his eyes and Bruce wondered the same thing as he arched an eyebrow at a smirking Maria.

“Agent 13 is Sharon Carter and the granddaughter of Peggy and Angie Carter. She is also very much like her grandmother’s. Sassy, a total badass with a straight forward attitude and a total disregard for any of the rules. Poor Steve doesn’t even know what hit him” Phil answered as he continued to chuckle and Bruce suddenly made the connection between the stories Tony would sometimes tell of his Aunt Peg and Aunt Angie that always tried to make up for his father’s obsession with finding Steve after the war.

“I know I sure in hell didn’t when I did a stint as her handler she gives Clint and Natasha a run for their money in being a total pain in the ass. I know they had fun with her when she was briefly their rookie before New York happened. Maria who is the poor sod that is her handler now? I need to send them a bottle of aspirin and some Bourbon.”

“You’re looking at her, so make it Whiskey or Scotch” Maria deadpanned “Fury gave her to me to deal with along with the Avengers. Right now I have her stationed in Washington going to nursing school and assigned to the protection detail on Peggy.”

“Agent Coulson, Agent Barton is in the command room wanting to speak to you” JARVIS said.
“Thank you JARVIS! Well the family just got a little bit bigger again. Bruce I am going to be sending your way Bobbi and my science twins. Maria will fill you in but be prepared for some fangirling, the twins worship both you and Tony” Phil said standing up before kissing Melinda and Maria on the foreheads before heading out the door.

Bruce watched Phil head back to the command room before turning back to Maria, “So what is going on?”

“Bruce grab a seat I think you need a chair for this one” Maria said and he knew that wasn’t a good sign for what he was about to hear. Sitting on the chair Phil just vacated he leaned back and raised an eyebrow at Maria. “I need you to run a paternity test on the science twins when they get here but don’t tell them. For right now tell them we are running the test to confirm the paperwork we found on their adoption and in all honesty you will be running that test as well. They just found out they are adopted but I purposely have kept my suspicions on who their parents were to myself. I know who their mother was but I want to prove who the father is before I say anything.”

“Not a problem do you have a sample for me to compare them against for the paternity test?” he asked noting that Maria had said she knew who their mother was and not is meaning she wasn’t among the living anymore. Though Bruce had a feeling that wasn’t why he felt like he was waiting for the other shoe to drop though.

“I need you to compare them to Tony’s DNA” Maria said softly watching him for his reaction.

Bruce felt the other shoe drop was shocked for a moment then he wasn’t as he took off his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose. He and Pepper knew about Tony’s past of jumping in bed with anything with two legs and a pulse before he had found Pepper then himself. Pepper and he had discussed this chance on numerous occasions but thought since they hadn’t had anything pop up in the last few years that they might have dodged the bullet.

“Wait, how old are they if they are working for SHIELD?” Bruce asked trying to get an idea of a time frame.

“Leo Fitz and Jemma Simmons both with PhDs graduated university when they were twenty one and were recruited to SHIELD then. They are currently twenty three and verifiable geniuses” Maria said giving him more information than he asked for but it explained other questions he hadn’t asked.

“Alright I’ll run the test but if it’s positive I want to tell Tony with Pepper there and then we will tell
the kids. Deal?” Bruce asked not knowing how Tony would respond to having not one but two kids. They were adults already but Tony was Tony and sometimes something so simple was a complicated thing and vice versa with his mate. Bruce knew that all three of them had been talking about possibly having children or just a child but it hadn’t gone past more than just talking just yet.

“Deal, I wasn’t looking forward to telling him anyways if it was positive. If you want that honor go for it” Maria said as she moved to sit up fully on the bed as she hissed a breath between her teeth.

“Maria you should be resting” Melinda said as she moved to support the younger woman as her hand going to the side to bring the bed to a sitting position.

“I know but I need to be sitting up for the argument that I am going to have with Bobbi when she gets here. Bruce I’ll need you also to do a soulmate work up on both Bobbi and Jemma but before you do I need to convince Bobbi to call their third” Maria said as she finally relented and leaned back into the bed at Melinda’s silent urging.

‘And it all just keeps coming’ Bruce thought tiredly as he sat back in the seat, trying to take a minute but was interrupted as the door to medical opened up. Sighing he stood up and gave Bobbi a nod as he greeted the two young scientist and as he looked at them he recognized some of the mannerisms and facial features that they shared with Tony. ‘I need to call Pepper’ Bruce thought.
'Damn bus’ she thought as she woke up to muscles that ached all over but instead of opening her eyes to darkness she opened them to light. Groaning she closed her eyes again before slowly opening them trying to get them use to the light again after who knew how long she spent screaming in the dark. The room came into view and she could now see most of it as the table she was strapped on was tilted up with her back to what must be the door. Looking around the room she slowly took stock of all the medical equipment around her as well as the strange objects that littered tables that were pushed up against the walls. ‘Mad scientist laboratory anyone?’ she asked trying to distract herself.

After taking stock of the room she concentrated on her body trying to find if she had any new injuries but she found none other than the more prevalent feeling of achy muscles. The only other thing of note was that she was exhausted despite being passed out for however long she was out for. She couldn’t move again so it meant that Crazy had injected her with more of that paralytic he had told her about last time. Skye heard the door opened behind her but before anyone walked in she heard a voice shout angrily, “Hyde what the hell are you doing?!”

“Working you should try it sometime” said Crazy who must have been this Hyde character.

“Don’t you get cute with me. Deathlok was only suppose to get tissue samples from May and the girl not bring the girl back for you to play with. We only needed to see if the girl and May had anything interesting pop in their blood after their exposure to the staff before I had a team remove it from the archives” said the angry man.

“Yes well I changed his orders and he was only happy to comply when I showed him his son” Hyde said and Skye’s blood ran cold when she realized that these men had Ace. Hyde hadn’t thought twice about experimenting on her as a child what the hell could he have done with Ace.

“You are running a big risk Hyde, I’ve lost contact with my mole on Coulson’s team and the Avengers have gone off the grid. Our masters are getting a little antsy now and talking about pushing up our reveal date because of this stunt. The only reason why you aren’t dead yet for this stunt is because I convinced them you are more useful alive to us then dead.”

“Yeah well your mole had no idea who the girl was when he sent the stolen blood work to us and neither did Coulson or May” Hyde said and Skye listened closely hoping that the angry man would ask the question she wanted to ask.

“Well Hyde why don’t you share with the rest of the class. Who is the girl?” the angry man asked finally exasperation in his voice.
“Oh just Experiment 24 from the Reaper project” Hyde said in a nonchalant tone.

“There is no way..” angry man’s voice raised up.

“I told you idiots that my assistant ran off with the child just before they raided the base and I had to hit the kill switch to make my escape. But you all didn’t want to listen to me. Fine don’t believe me? Here is the blood results of the paternity test” Hyde said with a huff and Skye heard as he passed the angry man a piece of paper.

“Well as I live and breathe, you might just live to see the end of the day Hyde. Who’d have thought that the damn kid actually survived, guess she is just as stubborn and pig headed as her parents” angry man said as he passed the paper back to Hyde. “Send me the results and anything you can gleam from her blood, keep up the experimentations on her. Once you are done we will give her to Whitehall to reprogram” she heard the angry man say sounding pleased as she heard what sounded like the man smacking Hyde on the back before he walked away.

The door opened fully behind her and Skye quickly closed her eyes pretending to be still asleep. “Oh don’t even bother pretending I know you heard the whole thing. Naughty, naughty little Miss Rayne listening in on the adults conversation” he said chuckling but as her eyes opened she saw that it never reached his eyes. Hyde had a long metal case in one of his hands as he looked at her up and down.

“Now that you are awake I am going to run my next test on you, see if you have the same reaction as one of the twins or if you come out something different in the end” Hyde said looking thoughtful as he set the case on a clear space on one of the tables. “I gave you the same formula I had given them so let’s hope you survive the change like they did, so unlike the rest of my disappointing children.”

Skye watched as Hyde unsnapped a case as a small blue glow shone from its depth. ‘It’s never a good thing if shit is glowing’ she thought and even though she was trying to be flippant in her mind she sensed her growing fear. These were men that took normal human beings turning them into monsters and she feared what she could become. She always knew there was a darkness inside of her with everything she had gone through it took everything in her to not to be a monster, to do what was right instead of what is easy.

Maybe the potential for her turning into a monster was always there since this man experimented on her as a child or maybe it was always there but it was there as long as she could remember. Skye wondered what Maria and her parents, if she ever found out who they were, would think of her after she was changed. Hyde reached into the case and turned around holding a scepter with a wicked
blade at the end that had a blue jewel glowing in it.

“Now this little Miss Rayne is the weapon that was used against your father and by all accounts he died from his wounds but we know he is still somehow alive. After we found that little tidbit we started using it for our little experiments only two survived so far but that’s okay I can always have more children” Hyde said smiling as he turned around and started to drag the blade down her naked body. Her mind was going a thousand miles a minute trying to think through everything Hyde was telling her.

“Oh look I can see the thoughts behind your eyes, I know you are so desperately trying to figure out who your parents are. I guess I could tell you because if your survive this Whitehall will want to reprogram you for our use but what is the fun in that….no I will give you one last clue before I start the experiment” he said before leaning in as if he was going to whisper in her ear but he kept looking into her eyes.

“When your father was recently tortured because we wanted to know how he survived being killed the only thing he kept screaming was your name, over and over again” he said watching her eyes and before she could hide it shock and realization must have shown in her eyes because Hyde laughed as he took a step back. AC and May were her parents, she had found them and didn’t even know it. They thought she was dead all these years, carried that wound all these years but they kept going falling apart only to start being put back together recently.

Pain and shock flooded her system as she felt the first cut down her arm and then the next cut down on her other arm. Skye couldn’t move strapped to the table and injected with the paralytic but she could feel everything as Hyde sliced her with the scepter near her major arteries and then pressed the jewel to the open wounds. She wanted to scream as the jewel touched her every time but she couldn’t out loud but in her head she was screaming and crying. Finally with a smile at her Hyde came around and sliced open her chest pressing the jewel to her skin one last time over her heart.

“Now don’t forget to scream prettily for me” Hyde said as he packed the scepter back up in it’s case and left the room as he turned out the lights. Skye was once again in the dark and she felt that small corner in her mind that was the little lost orphan girl whimper and adult Skye wanted to whimper as well but couldn’t. She couldn’t see the cuts but by the pain she could tell that they were bad, bad enough she was going to either stand here strapped to this table and bleed out or pray that Maria and her parents could find her in enough time.

Skye forgot about her third option as a blue glow started from all her open wounds where the jewel had been pressed against her skin. She feared what this was going to turn her into but as the pain and glow increased she felt the paralytic wear off as she first whimpered and then screamed in pain. The screaming didn’t last long as she felt her body slipping away as her limbs began to shake in their restraints her last thoughts on Maria and her parents and what could have been as she slipped into the darkness.
“Bruce said you wanted to see us?” Bobbi asked as she walked closer towards Maria’s bed towing a very bashful Jemma Simmons behind her. The connection between her and Jemma was already forming and she wanted to finish the bonding process but she also didn’t want to push her younger mate. Or do this without Hunter, he might be an ass but he was their ass. Her tiny mate was definitely the baby and innocent of the triad as she was only twenty three compared to her or Hunters thirty one and thirty three, they knew she was younger but didn’t realize there was that big of an age gap.

“Relax Jemma,” Maria said softly from the bed and Bobbi smiled at her friend who was trying to get her newest mate to relax. “Bobbi have you called Hunter?” Maria asked pinning her with stare that meant she was better off not lying to her friend, her sister in all but blood.

“No. It’s not like I can have him meet us here, he’s a merc with questionable loyalties at the best of times. Anyways we are currently not talking to each other, we had another argument,” Bobbi answered her voice not hiding her hurt at the state of her bonding with Hunter. Her and Hunter had always been a mess, she hoped with finding Jemma that might ease up a bit but it wasn’t a guarantee. Both her and Jemma were SHIELD agents through and through though and Hunter was former SAS and currently a hired gun for some very questionable outfits.

“You two are going to be the death of me,” Maria said exasperatedly and Bobbi wondered what she meant by that as her friend put her head back on the pillow and took a deep breath. “Ok what was the argument exactly about this time and if you say work I am going to shoot both of you in the foot” Maria said, then huffed at her when she kept silent. “Damn it, where is my phone?”

“Maria one you don’t know his number and I’m not giving it to you and two you aren’t calling him, we will just have to settle our bond issues when this is dealt with. We can’t risk having my traitorous mate spilling the beans about our investigation to someone for the right price!” Bobbi said angrily and she watched Jemma’s eyes widen in shock and she pulled her tiny mate towards her. Jemma fit so easily against her body it was easy to put her nose in Jemma’s hair and breath in her scent.

“I’m sorry cutie, our mate isn’t the greatest of men but he is ours. Hunter has just been having a bit of a rough patch of it since he got kicked out of the SAS and it has been a downward spiral ever since” Bobbi said softly as she watched Melinda get out of the bed, finding Maria’s phone in her tactical suit that was folded on one of the bedside tables. Maria took the phone from Melinda and snorted at the display.

“Maria..” Bobbi said to argue with her friend, her sister.
“Shut it Bobbi this ends tonight. You two have been driving me batty all because you both are too pig headed bloody stubborn to talk to each other” Maria said before turning to Melinda “Turns out I am not going to be arrested. Fury says to do everything we need to bring Rayne home. He’s approved this being an Avenger issue and said we will have SHIELD support if needed.”

“Don’t you mean Skye?” Jemma asked confused.

“Skye’s real name is Rayne May Coulson kidnapped and thought murdered daughter of Melinda and Phil. Skye or Rayne is also my mate and that is the real reason she was missing for that period of time, we needed time for the bond to stabilize. Oh and Jemma welcome to the family, I hope you have the patience of a saint because you will need it with your two mates” Maria said as she activated her phone.

“Shadow Condition Alpha, call Captain Jack Harkness, speakerphone” Maria said with a roll of her eyes and exasperation clear in her tone as the phone started ringing.

“Well if it isn’t Rose Tyler,” said a clearly British voice over the phone and Bobbi was shocked when it turned out to be Hunter “what trouble do you and my lord and masters have for me to deal with now?” she heard Hunter ask as he shut a door and a deadbolt slid home.

“Can it Hunter. What’s your status?” Maria said giving Bobbi a glare when she went to say something because Hunter wasn’t an agent so why the hell was she ordering him like he was.

“I’m in my bolt hole in Venice after finishing my latest job and I just made the evidence drop to my local MI9 handler. The little shit is so new he squeaked Maria and almost blew my cover” he said as she heard him open a bottle of beer against the counter.

“Put the beer down Hunter, I got an assignment for you” Maria ordered and Bobbi heard a groan from Hunter.

“Fuck off Maria, it’s one beer which you know I can handle after that mess we were in, in Dublin. Anyways I’m sure your sister told you we’d recently saw each other and it ended in bloody disaster like usual” Hunter cursed as she heard him finally take a drink of his beer. Bobbi looked shocked at Maria as she rolled her eyes but had a tint of red in her cheeks from anger or embarrassment she wasn’t sure. But that didn’t matter, because one Maria knew Hunter and how to get a hold of him and two it it sounded like Maria had Hunter working for her which meant he wasn’t a merc like he led her to believe since she’d known him or was this a new development?
“Don’t even get me started on Dublin Hunter, I still owe a favor for getting rid of that video evidence! And yes I know it ended in disaster, I had to pick up the pieces left by your inability to just tell your mate, as you put it, the bloody truth. You aren’t the bastard you led her to believe when you first met. If I had known sooner that you were our source known as ‘the Doctor’ I would have gotten you the permission to tell her sooner but you’ve had it for almost two years Hunter. Two years and instead you have been letting her believe the lie and fighting with her because she keeps trying to get you to turn your life around because she has no idea you’re one of us!”

“I don’t work directly for you, you are just on the joint task force with my CO from the SAS only because I kept ending up in tangles with your agents. Then of course was the whole one of my soulmates was one of your agents, which I only found out months later when she tried to start recruiting my ass….And what the hell am I supposed to say Maria?! ‘Sorry love, I’ve been lying to you from day one because I was so far deep cover even I am having a hard time separating the real me from the cover me anymore. I’m really a good guy playing the god forsaken big bad wolf, just ask the woman you think of as a sister. She is one of my bosses though we didn’t realize it till she demanded a fucking face to face meeting with MI9’s source of intel of all that goes boo in the bloody fucking night.’ Yeah that will go over greatly Maria, probably with one of Bobbi’s fucking right hooks to my face” Hunter said and she heard him throw the bottle in anger against a wall.

“No, it’s easier this way. She can’t get hurt this way if something happens to me because we know one of these days my cover is going to be blown and you or my bosses will not be able to get my ass out of the fire in time. At least she has our third to find comfort in when it happens because Maria it’s getting bad in the shadows and I honestly don’t know how much longer it will be…” she heard Hunter say defeated to Maria on the phone as he left the last bit unsaid. Bobbi felt the tears in her eyes and could see the fear in Jemma’s eyes as her tiny mate’s face pressed against her chest as they both silently cried.

Maria looked at her and raised an eyebrow clearly telling her the ball was in her court. She had done the work to get Hunter to say the words that he feared telling her, it was up to Bobbi what to do with it. That was the secret he had been hiding from her all these years they been together that she had sensed but he would never let her in on. As it turns out not because he didn’t want to but because he couldn’t and then it was just fear that kept him silent.

Bobbi opened her mouth once, closed it, opened it twice and took a deep shaky breath “That is all you had to say, you big doofus” she finally was able to say softly but knew he heard her when he sucked in a breath.

“Oh bloody hell, Maria you play dirty” he groaned and she knew he had his head in his hands rubbing at his face. Bobbi didn’t need to see him to know what mannerisms she would be seeing if he was in front of her instead of hundreds of miles away.
“You two didn’t leave me any damn choice” Maria said tiredly as she leaned back in the bed and closed her eyes.

“No I guess we didn’t. Hello love, having girl time with your sister?” Hunter asked trying to distract her.

“Something like that…but I am also with a certain someone else” Bobbi said pausing to place a gentle kiss on Jemma’s forehead before she turned the woman around in her arms so she was facing the phone. Hunter couldn’t see them but Bobbi wanted them both facing his voice. She had turned her back on Hunter to many times to count in anger and she wasn’t going to do that again to him. Jemma pressed up against her front and Bobbi took comfort in her presence.

“Oh?” Hunter asked and Bobbi heard the hope in his voice.

“Lance Hunter, I have no idea what you are but meet Jemma Simmons SHIELD scientist and our third” Bobby said making the introductions.

“Hello Doctor,” Jemma said her voice softly laughing at the code name they had just learned about and Bobbi rolled her eyes because she now had two brits with a british sense of humor.

“You sound as cute as a button,” Hunter said to Jemma and she felt her mates body tense then relax into hers even more. “Love please tell me she is cute as a button” Hunter said to her and she heard the smile in his voice.

“Oh I’d say she puts the button to shame she’s that cute, love” Bobbi answers as she pressed a kiss to Jemma’s hair as her arms tightened around the smaller woman.

“Okay as much as I hate to interrupt this..Hunter I am sending you coordinates, get your ass here and be ready for a party” Maria ordered.

“And what pray tell boss lady am I supposed to tell my handlers for my disappearance?” Hunter said but she could hear his moving around in his apartment.

“Send protocol 69 in an email to your C.O. he will know what happened and give you time” Maria ordered and smirked when they all heard Hunter groan.
“You and your fucking rules...at least I like this one” Hunter said amused as Bobbi heard the sounds of Hunter checking his weapons before he started packing them. “Alright got the coordinates Maria, I’ll be there in less than two hours. And loves, I’ll be there soon so don’t do anything I wouldn’t do” he said before hanging up the phone.

“How long?” Bobbi finally asks in the silence.

“I found out a little over two years who he really was but he has been deep cover for the SAS and MI9 for years and it took me a long time to convince the other heads to give him permission to tell you who he really was” Maria said before she hissed a breath between clenched teeth as she stiffened in the bed. “Ringing in round two!”

“Maria?!” Bobbi and Melinda yelled at the same time as they watched Maria’s eyes roll into the back of her head as she started to seize and the alarms on the machines hooked up to Maria went crazy.

“Bruce!!” Bobbi yelled as both her and Jemma ran for Maria’s bedside. Rummaging quickly through the medical cart she pulled out the Ativan. “Pushing the Ativan, Jemma get an oxygen mask on her” she said as Bruce ran into the room with Fitz behind him as he held a gauze pad to his arm. Moments passed with no change in Maria’s condition as she steadily got worse.

“We are going to need to tube her. Bobbi push another round of Ativan. Fitz get Melinda out here” Bruce ordered as they rushed to stabilize Maria.

“How is she?” Phil asked Bruce as he came out of the room with a grim expression on his face. Melinda felt her fear like a vice grip around her heart as she fought to keep control of her emotions. Maria had never had a seizure before so whatever the bastards that had Skye/Rayne were doing to her daughter is what caused it. Which also meant that Skye/Rayne right now was going through it as well and she wasn’t able to protect her daughter.

Melinda felt like a failure as a parent. Rayne had been kidnapped hours after she was born and had been experimented on, found only to be placed in the uncaring foster system forced to move never gaining roots and now she was being tortured for information or experimented on. She wasn’t sure which of those last options were the worse of the two scenarios, either way it was going to be another set of physical and mental scars that her daughter would have to carry with her. Skye/Rayne had Maria her soulmate but it didn’t mean that either of them would come away from this experience unscathed.
“Right now we have her stabilized. We were forced to intubate her as her oxygen levels are still dangerously low for some reason. I have Simmons and Bobbi running tests on her blood as we speak hopefully to give me some clue but honestly I think it’s because of her connection with Skye..Rayne” Bruce said rubbing at his face.

“Don’t worry Bruce none of us know what to call her either. She is Skye the lost hacker with a sarcastic wit a mile wide and she is also Rayne the little baby girl we thought we lost all those years ago” Melinda said as she felt Phil’s arms tighten around her. “When can we go in to see Maria?”

“Now, but only two at a time for now. Fitz come with me I need to finish drawing your blood” Bruce said before heading back into the medical wing quickly followed by Fitz.

“Is there any update on the search for Sky...Ray..our daughter?” Melinda said struggling to decide what the hell to call her daughter. It was just like she told Bruce a moment ago. They knew the young woman that was missing as Skye her rookie but they now knew she was also Rayne their long thought to be dead daughter...it was so crazy and absurd it was hard to fathom any of it.

“I lost the trail of the vehicle after it got to one of the main roads around where she was taken from. JARVIS is looking to see if there is any video footage of the road but the way they were heading is all rural mountain areas with small towns here and there. My gut says that one of those towns is where they are hiding but which one is the question” Clint said as he leaned against the wall across from them with Natasha in his arms.

Melinda had noticed that the two were lately in more physical contact than usual, she guessed it could be from the stress of finding out about her and Phil’s daughter but something told her that wasn’t it. There was almost a sense of contentment coming from the two assassins that she thinks was missing but that didn’t make sense. No something was up between her two friends that were her and Phil’s surrogate siblings and she would pry to find out after they found her daughter.

“I think it’s time we interrogate Ward. Even though we haven’t heard back from Tony, Hand and Hartley yet we all know he has got to be the mole” Natasha said and Melinda couldn’t help but agree with her assessment. A part of her wanted to be in the room, turn off the cameras and beat the ever living shit out of Ward for his betrayal but she knew that wouldn’t work or do any good.

“You all go interrogate Ward, I’m going to go sit with Maria. I don’t trust myself enough around him not to kill him on sight” Melinda said honestly to the group and didn’t see any sign of judgement for her feelings or decision. Phil’s arms tightened around her again in a sign of support before he let her go.
“Let us know if anything changes” Phil said softly and she turned around to kiss him lightly on the lips before leaving them in the hallway. The doors to medical opened up with the swoosh and she could hear the four scientist over in the corner talking lowly as they went over the results of the blood work. None of them were MD’s but she didn’t trust anyone else with any of her family. Though eventually they would need a doctor and she made a mental note to have someone start checking out some medical personnel for them to use.

Melinda paused for a moment pain gripping her heart as she took in the still form of Maria. She wished it was the lighting but Maria looked pale and somehow small laying against the white sheets of the hospital bed. One arm was now hooked up to an IV, the tube down her throat just looked unnatural while the steady rhythm of the heart monitor ticked away the seconds into the low hum of the room. Taking a deep breath she pulled herself back from the brink of the abyss of her grief, sorrow and all the other plethora emotions she was feeling at the moment and made herself enter the room.

Walking over she gently touched Maria’s cheek while giving her a kiss on the forehead. “Come on kiddo, it’s time to fight” she whispered before sighing. Grabbing one of the chairs she pulled it back towards the bed and sat down as she reached out taking one of Maria’s hands in her own. Melinda wasn’t a religious woman but she did believe in the power of thought so leaning over Maria’s hand she sent silent strength to her daughter’s mate.

Tony cursed as he got shocked again by another live wire as he tried to trace the unknown phone connection he had found in the planes communication systems. It was almost three hours later and he was just now finding the damn extra communications line. He heard a chuckle behind him and he glared at Agent Hartley as she stood in the doorway “I have a funny feeling you are a sadist agent” he grumbled as she cut into the wire again and gritting his teeth he quickly spliced a connection.

“Not quite Mr. Stark but watching you get zapped every so often is a bit entertaining” she answered back with a smirk before walking into the room and crouching down to eye level for him. “What do you need me to do to help? Victoria has already finished tossing the rooms and is updating Coulson on what we found, or what we didn’t find.”

“Bring me my laptop I finally found the damn extra line from the plane schematics you all gave to me” Tony said as he placed a clamp on the wires now to keep them together. Sitting up he took the laptop that Hartley handed him as he sat cross legged on the ground leaning against the communications receiver.

“We need to trace this connection fast” Agent Hand said coming into the room as she glanced down at him with her arms crossed. The look might be one aimed to make him cringe but he was a soulmate to Pepper Potts and her looks could kill when she was pissed at him...not to mention living
with the femme fatale that is Natasha ‘Black Widow’ Romanoff and the total hard ass that is Maria ‘Commander Athena’ Hill. Being glared at by females that could wipe the floor with him and probably do it without a second thought was something that he had gotten quite use to in the last year.

“Glaring at me isn’t going to make this go faster,” Tony said as he began the hack into the signal.

“Yeah but we are running out of time Mr. Stark. Maria is currently unconscious and intubated after she had a seizure and Coulson just informed me that Ward is dead. Apparently once he realized that he had been made he bit down into a hollow tooth and ingested Cyanide” Hand informed him.

“Name is Tony. You say Mr. Stark and I look around for my father. JARVIS time for subtlety is over, let’s punch this shit” Tony said as he concentrated mainly on the hack but a part of his mind worried for the safety of Pepper. He knew that Steve and Agent 13 would take care of her but he still worried because he was starting to get a bad feeling this was all going to blow up in their faces soon.

Pepper valiantly fought back a smirk as she watched Steve stutter and blush when it came to interacting with Sharon Carter one of his mates. Sharon Carter it turned out was one of those Carter’s as the granddaughter of Tony’s Aunt Peggy and Angie Carter and the woman was very much like her grandmother's. It was amusing as hell to watch Steve fumble around like he was drowning around the tiny blonde spitfire.

She had a sense of humor very much like Tony’s but she had a better filter for it than her more outgoing of mates. Bruce’s sense of humor wasn’t much better but his was more hidden away with dry wit that went hand to hand with his being the timid one of the three. Pepper was going to let it go on for a few more moments before she took pity on Steve and went to rescue her very old fashioned friend. Maybe she wouldn’t talk to Steve though, she might have to go straight to the source and talk to Sharon before she gave the poor Captain a heart attack.

Her phone ringing pulled her attention away from the scene before her as she pulled it out and saw that it was Bruce. “Hey Bruce” she said walking towards her bedroom and leaving the two new soulmates behind her in the livingroom.

“Hello beautiful, I need to talk to you” Bruce said and his voice had a strange quality to it that worried her instantly.

“Are you and Tony okay?” she asked fear lacing her tone but it was one of her biggest fears that something would happen to either her mates or both. They had dangerous lifestyles but she wouldn’t
ask them to give up being Avengers because scary enough despite the almost dying on both of their parts on numerous occasions the Avengers were the best thing that happened to her two mates.

“We are are okay Pepper, I promise but you know how you and I always talked about Tony’s reputation before he met either of us?” Bruce asked and Pepper felt herself drop onto the bed behind her. Of course they discussed Tony’s ‘man whore past’ as he had explained it to them, they had found each other so late in life, she couldn’t blame Tony his loneliness and neither did Bruce.

“Skye?” she asked almost afraid of that answer and Bruce laughed easing the tension in her shoulders just with the sound.

“No she is actually Phil and Melinda’s daughter that was kidnapped after she was born and they thought was murdered years ago. It’s been a shock to them” Bruce answered and something in his tone said there was something she was missing.

“Bruce I’m missing something in that sentence...wait what do you mean ‘them’?” Pepper asked as her very analytical mind took apart his sentence.

“Phil is alive, Pep. He somehow survived being stabbed through the heart by Loki. Fury ordered it to be kept secret and forced Maria to lie to all of us or lose her job and you know until Skye, SHIELD is all Maria had in her life. We were starting to fill that hole and it must have killed her inside to keep so many secrets” Bruce said softly and Pepper sat there in shock for a few minutes before snapping out of it.

“Okay we are having a family meeting once this whole mess is over but that isn’t why you called me Bruce” Pepper said keeping her temper in check.

“No it isn’t. Two of the members of the team Skye was on had lied on their forms about their families. Maria found it when she went digging trying to find their leak. The two scientist on the team actually had no clue that they were adopted let alone that they were twins but if you watch the two it’s like they were never separated at birth, it’s actually kinda cute. Anyways Maria had a suspicion and had me run the test with fresh blood samples to confirm it but they are Tony’s.

“I’ve met them Pepper they look like him and even have some of the same mannerisms. They are geniuses just like Tony. Dr. Jemma Simmons has doctorates in Biology and Chemistry and just today found her two mates in Bobbi Morse and her other mate that I haven’t met yet. While Dr. Leopold Fitz has a doctorate in Engineering they are both only twenty three” Bruce Finished softly and she knew he was waiting for her reaction…
“Well damn…” she said and heard Bruce’s chuckle. “Okay you need to tell Tony. I wish I was there but he needs to know they are his children and if we kept this from him and something happened to either of them while this is all going on….No you need to tell him Bruce.”

“I know Pep, but I wanted to give you a heads up first because even though they are Tony’s children they are now ours as well.”

“Excuse me Agent Romanoff but I have an unknown motorcycle entering the property” JARVIS said getting her attention from the video she was watching of her earlier interrogation of Ward.

“Sound the lockdown JARVIS tell Clint I want him up on the roof and Bobbi to meet me outside. Everyone else I want guarding medical” Natasha ordered as she grabbed an M4 on her way towards the front. She met Bobbi just at the front door as they both exited and quickly took firing positions.

“Agent Romanoff, sir has just informed me they are five minutes out. I have warned him of the intruder and he said that Agents Hand and Hartley will provide back up” JARVIS told her in her ear.

“In position Widow” Clint radioed in as the motorcyclist drove up and came to a stop. He must have noticed he wasn’t alone and had guns pointed towards him because he slowly turned off the bike and kept his hands visible.

“Rider take off your helmet” Natasha ordered as a black sedan pulled in behind the motorcycle and she watched as Hand and Hartley took cover behind open car doors. Slowly the rider lifted up his hands and removed his helmet revealing his face and she heard Bobbi chuckle beside her.

“Damn it Hunter! Are you trying to get shot?” Bobbi yelled standing up as she clicked the safety on her gun.

“Sorry Love I did try to call but neither Maria or you answered and I panicked” Hunter said with a sigh as he sat on his bike with his hands still in the air.

“Stand down, it was a friendly” Natasha radioed as she stood up once she realized this was the elusive Lance Hunter that was Bobbi’s troublesome mercenary for hire mate. She watched as Bobbi
and Hunter shared a passionate kiss to the catcalls of Tony which earned him a middle finger from Bobbi over Hunter’s shoulder. The door opened behind her and she turned to see Phil escorting Jemma to the front door. The young scientist slowly went to go greet her third mate for the first time in person and she couldn’t help but hide the soft smile at the scene.

Tony approached her with a raised eyebrow and she shrugged “They are a triad that was just completed. Bobbi and Hunter found each other years ago but hadn’t found Simmons till now. I’m guessing Maria made the call to get him here because I know Bobbi wouldn’t have on her own since without Simmons those two fight like cats and dogs.”

“Good for them, anyone else amused our little family keeps growing like crazy recently. We just need Capsicle to find his mates and all the Avengers will be bonded” Tony said as they walked into the house leaving the three new soulmates outside to greet each other. Hand and Hartley followed behind them talking softly with Phil.

“He did. Well one of them at least when Maria activated Kaleidoscope. Agent 13 called Steve ‘boy scout’” she said smirking and wondered how those two were getting along without their third because Sharon could be a real spitfire at times.

“Sharon?! OMG” Tony asked howling with laughter as they made their way into the command center. “I can guarantee you poor Capsicle doesn’t even know what hit him. Thanks Tasha I needed that laugh.”

“Anytime Stark, now what did you find?”

Lance Hunter watched his fireball of a mate approach him waiting for the slug to the jaw he deserved for not telling her the truth but instead was surprised when she leaned in and kissed him. Wrapping his arms around her waist he pulled her towards him and sat her on the bike in front of him as they kissed. He heard a catcall from somewhere behind him but he didn’t care but smirked into the kiss as he felt Bobbi lift up a hand behind him as she flipped the offender the bird.

Bobbi pulled away from the kiss and looked towards the house directing his attention to small petite brunette woman as she climbed down the stairs. A small smile played across Bobbi’s features and he assumed that this young woman was their elusive third, Jemma Simmons. She approached them with a small smile but he could tell she was hesitant, it wasn’t because she was afraid no it seemed like they had a very shy third mate, which actually balanced them out because Bobbi and he were definitely not shy or quiet.

He watched as Bobbi stood up and walked over to their mate just before she left the stairs and stopped her for a moment with a gentle kiss. In that moment Hunter knew that he was one very lucky
bastard despite the sins on his soul as he watched them. His skin itched but he sat there waiting for his two mates to come to him. Slowly the kiss broke off as his two mates rested their heads together and he felt his heart warm at the sight before him.

“As cute as a button” Hunter finally said interrupting the moment and watched as Jemma blushed. Bobbi laughed that unfiltered laugh of hers that he craved when they were together as she kissed Jemma’s forehead and taking their mate’s hand brought her towards him.

“I told you she puts the button to shame” Bobbi lightly teased as she slipped behind Jemma bracketing their tiny mate in between them. Hunter slowly reached out and waited for the nod from Jemma before he touched her cheek softly and he sees Bobbi soft smile over Jemma’s shoulder.

“You both did the exact same thing, touched me like I was going to fade away right in front of you. Why?” Jemma asked softly confusion in her eyes and he swallowed past his fears to give her the answer.

“Bobbi and I found each other years ago, without you though Cutie we fought like cats and dogs because we needed to find you and as time passed it got harder to be near each other. We wanted you our third as much as we wanted each other and when you dream for so long for something...It’s a very big shock when it becomes real” Hunter said softly as he placed a single finger under her chin and watched the understanding in her eyes.

Slowly they leaned forward and their lips met in a soft gentle kiss. It was a very timid first kiss which was a stark contrast compared to his and Bobbi’s earlier kiss that had been a battle of wills with lips, teeth and tongues. He sensed it as Bobbi pressed more against Jemma’s back pushing her more into his body and his arms instantly wrapped around a tiny waist as he nipped at Jemma’s bottom lip. Jemma immediately responded to him with a moan as their tongues meet in a slow dance.

He felt it as tiny hands gripped his shoulders as another larger but definitely feminine hand grips his bicep while another arm circles just above his own around their mates tiny waist. Jemma moans in their arms as Bobbi pulls hair away from a delicate neck and starts kissing down it before kissing back up it as she whispers huskily “You have no idea how long we have waited for you Jemma. You are so damn sexy, yet so small, you fit in between us like a glove and every sound you make I know is driving both of us mad with need.”

“Tell us where your marks are love,” Hunter says as he breaks off the kiss, allowing her the ability to answer and starts kissing and sucking on the other side of Jemma’s neck.
“Bo... Bobbi’s mark is on my... lower back and your mark is on my stomach” Jemma moaned blushing as they both went back to kissing her neck.

Bobbi suddenly broke off kissing Jemma’s neck with a groaned out “Damn it Tasha, you have horrible timing.” Hunter laughed as Jemma dropped her head to his shoulder and groaned because they all knew what that meant. “After this shit, I need a damn vacation. We will be there in a few minutes” Bobbi growled out.
Chapter 27

Phil watched as Bobbi walked in hand in hand with Jemma who was also holding onto the elusive former Lt. Lance Hunter’s hand and had to check his first reaction not to like the man. He had never met Lance Hunter but he had dealt with Bobbi often enough after she spent anytime with the man that was one of her mates. The usually happy and energetic scientist turned specialist usually came back sad and subdued from their encounters but he watched as the man walked in with a look of love and shock written all over his face.

He also had to swallow back his reaction to kick the man out of the room because he was a known mercenary, a gun for hire after being kicked out of the SAS on a disorderly conduct charge after striking a superior officer. Phil had no idea why Maria had brought him in on this but she had to have her reason even though they now were unknown as she laid in medical unconscious.

“Agent Coulson. Dr. Banner wanted me to tell you that Deputy Director Hill is awake now and insisting they take the breathing tube out of her” JARVIS said to the room.

“What the hell happened to Maria?” he heard Lance Hunter ask Bobbi as she turned to tell him. His face became a mask of stillness before he pulled his two mates into him.

“JARVIS open up the comlinks between the command center and medical” Tony said surprising him because he had no idea they had those and watched as on the screen they got a shot of inside medical. Bruce was standing next to the bed arguing with a clearly upset Maria while Mel stood next to her bed whispering in Maria’s ear trying to calm her down. “Bruce how is she?”

Bruce stopped arguing with Maria as he looked up towards the comlink on his end, “Maria just woke up, her oxygen levels are still low but she wants the tube out. I don’t recommend it but if I do it she needs to keep on an oxygen mask.”

Phil watched as Maria signed something and heard Melinda snort. “Mel?” he asked.

“Maria says ‘She will wear the damn mask but if Bruce doesn’t remove the tube she is going to do it herself and shove it somewhere painful’” Mel said trying to hide her smirk and failing.

“There is the bedside manner of the Maria Hill we all know and love” Bobbi quipped smirking and he heard a snort of laughter from both Hartley and Hand. “Bruce if I was you I’d do it otherwise she is going to kick your ass.”
“Fine” Bruce said as he made ready to remove the tube. Phil watched at Mel assisted him in removing the tube and tried not to wince at the remembered pain. After New York he had woken up with a tube down his throat and if he hadn’t been restrained probably would have went bezerk from his reaction to it because the last thing he had remembered was dying. Shaking his head he cleared it of the thoughts down that path, down that path laid madness and he tried to avoid thinking on it.

“Alright better Maria?” Phil asked slightly smirking as Bruce put an oxygen mask on her face and glared at her when she went to remove it. He watched her sigh before signing something to Mel.

“Maria says ‘Quit gloating Phil’” Mel said smirking and he watched as his mate pushed Maria over on the bed and climbed in with her. His mate pulled the younger woman into her arms and started running her hands through Maria’s hair in a comforting gesture. It was surprising to see Maria not resist the attention as she leaned into Mel and it was a sign of how much she was hurting to take the comfort without a fight.

“Alright Tony, what did you find?” Phil asked turning towards the man in question. He watched as Tony typed something into the center table as he brought up an image of a map.

“Okay we are here” he said highlighting their location in green. “Where Skye err...Rayne, fuck it where the mad hacker was captured is here” he said highlighting the location in black. “Now I found the hidden comlink on your Bus and was able to hardwire hack the link to triangulate it. The signal is going somewhere in this area but I’m losing it in the mountains” Tony said highlighting an area of the Italian Alps that was centered around Sendrio, Italy but Phil knew that the area had lots of small mountain villages in it. “I’m trying to pinpoint it more down but I’m honestly not sure if I can” Tony finished.

Phil’s attention was diverted from the image of the map by seeing Maria signing towards Mel and Lance Hunter looking between the map and the comlink for medical. “Um Hill...I might have a case nine” he heard Lance Hunter say and his eyes narrowed in on the mercenary and had to fight down his instincts again not to throw the man into an interrogation room.

If Maria had taught Lance Hunter the rules that he and Mel had taught her all those years ago and the brit used case instead of rule...nine was ‘I have information I can share but it’s private, or it’s so classified I need permission to say it’ of course with the mercenary he was probably telling Maria he had information to sell her for all he knew. Lance Hunter obviously knew Maria and vice versa but his temper was near its end and he was tired of all the damn secrets.

“Maria says ‘Hunter you have permission for Jericho’” Mel said looking at the comlink. Phil looked at the young man and watched as his face finally relaxed fully and the tension left his shoulders.
“You do know that my cover might be blown after this Maria?” he heard Lance Hunter say softly looking into the comlink and not looking anywhere else. Cover? Was Lance Hunter an undercover operative that he didn’t know about?

“Maria says ‘She knows but there is more at play here than just her missing mate, there are super soldiers by this Centipede group and the chance that SHIELD is totally compromised. The group here she trusts with her life but more importantly your two mates lives as well!’” Mel said.

“You fight dirty Maria, should have known that after Dublin” Lance Hunter said chuckling humorlessly. He finally looked at Phil “I know you don’t trust me mate and I wouldn’t either with my reputation being what it is but I’m going to reach inside my jacket for something. Might be a good thing I took it out of the safe, it usually stays locked up” he said and slowly lifted his jacket open he unzipped a pocket, reaching inside he pulled out a small black case.

Phil was surprised though when the man first handed it over to Bobbi with a sad look on his face. “Sorry love, I would have told you sooner but I didn’t have permission and when I finally did...I didn’t know how you’d react and with everything else getting more dangerous I hoped if anything happened to me you’d be able to find our third and move on without me” he said softly to Bobbi and Phil watched as tears made her eyes turn glassy. He watched as Bobbi handed over the case to Jemma before she kissed Lance Hunter.

Jemma’s reaction was one of stunned shock as she looked at whatever was in her hand only snapping out of it when there was a resounding crack as Bobbi smacked Lance Hunter in the face. “You are not leaving us Lance Hunter, not now, not ever. If I ever hear you talk like that ever again I’ll shoot you myself. Are we clear?” Bobbi said her voice breaking. Jemma handed over the case to Natasha before moving towards her mates and was bracketed between them as she kissed Lance Hunter softly.

Phil looked confusedly on the scene but heard a snort from Natasha as she gave Lance Hunter a look of respect. “His reputation does precede him but for all the wrong reasons. Meet Major Lance Hunter of the British SAS and an Agent of MI9.”

Phil looked towards the comlink to medical and watched as Maria signed to Mel. “Maria says ‘Sorry Bobbi as soon as I found out who he was I got him the permission to tell you. Hunter here has been undercover for just a few months before you two met as a mercenary for hire and has been the source of a lot of our intelligence on the weapons for trade and hired guns being used in Europe.’”

“Well Major Hunter I’ll be happy to hear any information you have for us” Phil said smiling softly towards the man as he hugged his mates to his side. He knew how hard the job could be and to be
undercover for so long and to meet your mate who thought the worst of you because she first met your undercover persona and not your true self.

“Just call me Hunter please but you can restrict your search to a little city or village called Cordova in that area. I just came back from a transporting job for a major player in the darker sides of scientific research but I only dropped off a package to him” Hunter said looking towards him.

“Who was the player?” Phil asked as he watched Tony start narrowing down his search and Fitz approached the man to help him. He spared a moment to smile softly as Tony waved Fitz over and showed him what he needed him to do.

“Ian Quinn” Hunter said and Phil cursed. “I take it you’ve met the slimy bastard then.”

“You can say that, it’s probably why the reason Skye/Rayne was taken she went undercover briefly for SHIELD and Quinn didn’t take being made a fool by her to well” Phil said watching as both Maria and Mel stiffened at the news. “What was in the package?”

“I don’t know it was me and three other local players. There was never a time I could get it alone to take a peek inside” Hunter said shrugging his shoulders.

“Bobbi read in Hunter on everything” he said watching as Maria gave him a nod of approval and watched as Bobbi left the room with Hunter and Jemma in tow. Mentally making note not to disturb them for a while if he could avoid it, if he had to he was sending in Natasha to get them because he was so not walking in on that.

“Tony, Fitz once you get the location I want any type of surveillance you can hack your way into” Phil said as he watched the two men continued to work.

“Get over here Natasha. Time to see if any of my lessons on hacking has stuck” Tony said and was surprised as the woman that he thought of as a little sister came over to the table without causing any bodily harm to the man.

“A lot of things have changed brother” Clint said next to him and he barely suppressed the urge to jump because he hadn’t heard the man. ‘You could say that again’ Phil thought not for the first time in the last few days.

It was around 0000 when they had finally tracked down the last signal transmission to the tiny
hospital in the small village of Cordova that was used mainly by locals and the occasional ski accident. The hospital was a tiny two story building with a basement that was said to be not in use except for storage but they were sure that was where they were keeping Skye.

For sanity sake he and Mel had both started referring to the hacker that was their daughter by her chosen name of Skye because they still had to tell the young woman that they were her parents. That was going to be an interesting conversation but first they would have to let her heal and deal with the increased strength of her bond to Maria. With everything else going on they didn’t want to overwhelm their daughter, hoping to be able to give her the time she needed to adjust after this last ordeal.

By 0900 they had a plan, it was a simple plan but it would work in a pinch. It was around that time though that Bruce had come into the command center and ordered everyone to bed. They were all exhausted and wouldn’t be moving on their plan till they had the cover of darkness again so they had no excuse to get some shut eye. The man had even offered anyone who needed it sleeping medication that he guaranteed that wouldn’t leave them feeling groggy once they woke up in a few hours.

Phil had watched as Bruce ordered JARVIS to direct everyone to their bedrooms as he got up and headed to medical to see Mel and Maria. He walked in and dropped into the chair placing his head on the bed careful not to wake them up. Closing his eyes he felt it when Mel moved her hand and placed it against his cheek and he moved his head without opening his eyes and kissed her palm.

“Mel, Phil go get some rest” Bruce said as he walked in with a tired Tony in tow behind him. “I had JARVIS give you one of the rooms next to the medical wing and I promise I will wake you if anything changes with Maria but you both need rest. Especially you Mel if you are to be any use as a pilot tonight.”

“Go on you two get some rest. I’ll be alright” Maria said weakly and Phil lifted his head to look at his boss, their rookie, the woman they thought of as a daughter and now was their daughter in law and sighed. Standing up he pulled Mel to her feet before they both leaned in and kissed Maria’s forehead.

“Take it easy Kiddo, we will be back in a bit” Phil said as he and Mel slowly left the medical wing and followed JARVIS instructions to their room. They stripped out of their clothes and slipped under the covers, he laid down on his back and felt it as Mel placed her head on his chest. Leaning down he kissed her forehead before he felt sleep take them both.
Groaning she woke up with a start realizing she wasn’t in the same room, nor strapped to the cold metal table. She now had a bright light shining in her eyes as she hung from a chain that was wrapped around her wrists. The pain in her shoulders as her body slowly twisted in her bonds let her know that at least one of her shoulders was dislocated but she tried to block the pain and was surprised when it worked almost instantly.

‘Well at least if I’m turned into a monster I get that ability’ she thought darkly as she looked down her body and saw that the multiple cuts to her body were scabbed over but not healed. ‘Guess super healing would be too much to ask for’ she quipped to herself trying to keep herself distracted from her panic or she was becoming unhinged either way it still wasn’t good. Yelling outside the room was another distraction for her to focus on as she was still fighting her inner panic because she knew something had changed.

“What the hell are you doing with my patient?” Hyde yelled and she knew if he wasn’t the one in charge of her current predicament then she had a new monster to deal with.

“My mole is dead, I’ve been given orders to bleed her for information then to break her and leave her for a lesson for Coulson” the angry man from earlier said. “Guards take Dr. Hyde to my plane we are going back to the castle, he is done here. Jurgensen get to work” she heard as she fought down the panic, silently praying that her family would find her soon.

The door opened slowly and Jurgensen came in with eyes that were cold and uncaring and Skye tried to not show her fear. She knew from multiple not so great foster placements that you never showed the monster your fear, you held it tightly to you, used it to become stronger and less afraid. Jurgensen didn’t say anything just looked at her like she was an interesting piece of meat before he struck out punching her in her ribs.

Pain blossomed from the area and she willed herself to ignore it but in doing so she sensed Maria more clearly. It wasn’t that her mate was nearby no it was the connection they shared had gotten even stronger in her transformation. For a moment Skye took comfort in it but now she began to fear it as another punch landed, this time to her stomach and she felt Maria’s pain as her mate suffered for her through the connection. Closing her eyes she willed the pain away from Maria but with her new ability she had a choice it was either her or Maria that suffered. She heard a crack from her ribs as another hard punch landed on her barely healed ribs before she made her choice.

Gritting her teeth in a snarl of defiance she hung there by her arms trying not to show her fear or her pain as blow after blow landed on her body. She tried to stay awake for as long as she could but soon the darkness was slipping into her vision her body not able to take much more. ‘I love you Maria’ was her last thought before the darkness swallowed her whole.

Maria watched as Phil and Mel slowly stumbled out of medical, she knew they were exhausted as well as everyone else. But she didn’t want them to see another episode of her and their daughter
being tortured as she felt the pain start up again. Gritting her teeth she tried to focus on the matters at hand, she needed to get updated and only then will she maybe let Bruce give her something for the pain. She was grateful to Bruce for forcing everyone to go try to get some sleep, though she doubted that three of the five rooms being in use at the moment were actually sleeping. Lifting up a hand she motioned for Bruce to come closer as she needed to ask him a few questions.

“Do you need anything Maria?” Bruce asked as he checked her vitals and she watched as Tony joined them standing at the foot of her bed.

“Did you run the test?” Maria asked ignoring Bruce's questions for now and knowing that Bruce would know what she was talking about.

“Yes and your suspicions were right like always and I’ve been told to handle it now rather than later” Bruce sighed as he pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Of course she is right, she is Maria Hill. Now what is Maria right about this time?” Tony asked as he sat down finally in the chair next to her bed and she watched as Bruce chuckled humorlessly as he looked at his mate.

“The reason that Simmons and Fitz were under suspicion of being double agents were because they lied on their SHIELD intake forms about their family history. Turns out they didn’t lie, they just had no idea. They were twins separated at birth after their mother died during childbirth without saying who their father was. Maria had a suspicion of who the father could be and asked me to run the DNA while also confirming that they are twins…” Bruce said pausing looking at Tony and not seeing the man putting two and two together.

“Congratulations Tony it’s twins” Maria deadpanned and Bruce shot her a dirty look. “Hey you were trying to find the words, I did it for you” Maria said with a shrug as she glanced towards Tony. Bruce turned towards his mate and saw the shock written across his face as he processed it.

“You mean my daughter is probably right now doing…” Tony said as he stood up to leave medical and Bruce was forced to grab the back of Tony’s shirt to stop him.

“Oh no you don’t Tony. Jemma is a grown woman who can make her own decisions” Bruce said as he hugged his mate from behind and held him there in the room. “Jemma and Fitz also don’t know yet about you. They know that they were adopted and that they are twins, thats it. I wanted to tell you and Pep first before we had to tell them.”
Bruce felt Tony sag in his arms as his mate finally turned around in his arms and hid his face in the crook of his neck. “I didn’t know” Tony said softly.

“I know love but it was always a possibility and one that Pep and I have talked over at some length about and accepted. They are family even if they are yours before you finally found Pep and I. We will love them because they are a part of you and that is all that matters” Bruce whispered to Tony as he kissed the other man’s temple.

A hiss of breath escaped between her teeth as she felt pain in her ribs and knew this was something different. Maria felt her connection with Skye all that more sharper and welcomed the pain if it meant her mate could feel her presence back as well. But with this new connection she knew that Skye was being beaten and she wished with everything she had that it would stop soon. She heard Bruce rummage in the drawer next to her as Tony took her hand in his and she gripped it as she tried to push through the pain to try to comfort her mate.

A warm sensation flooded her body but she knew Bruce hadn't injected her with anything yet. Bruce hesitated as her body slowly relaxed the muscles that had been tensed up from the shared pain "Did it stop already?" he asked softly worry evident in his eyes.

"No but I can't feel it as strongly anymore. It was sharper this time like our bond is stronger for some reason but now it's like I'm sensing everything through water" Maria said softly reaching out in her mind towards the connection that is Skye...Rayne...her mate. Before she couldn't sense or 'see' the connection but right now she could and she’d take any bit of pain just to feel her mate in that moment. ‘Love you sweetheart. We are coming.’

Jemma walked tiredly sandwiched between her two mates as they walked to the room that Bruce had assigned to them earlier saying they would need larger accommodations and that he needed Bobbi and herself closer to medical. She had blushed and hidden her face in Hunter’s chest as both her mates chuckled at her embarrassment neither of them slightly embarrassed by what the doctor said. Of course they weren’t somewhat fangirling over the fact that both her and Fitz finally got to meet the famous Dr. Banner or Tony Stark, two of their idols.

She had watched amused as Fitz had been over the moon earlier discussing the night-night guns with Tony but then they had dragged her into their discussion. Somehow they had ended up in a lab that was next to medical as they went over the specs and arguing as they tried to figure out how to upgrade the weapons. Bruce had then come into the lab looking to see what all the noise was about and had been sucked into their skull session.

Halfway through the night and too much coffee by the feeling of the pending crash, she had felt a pair of arms circling around her waist. It was surprising enough that it honestly had made her jump at the contact, or maybe that had been the coffee but she still had heard Bobbi chuckle at her. “Careful there cutie, I only wanted to come check on you and bring you all some sandwiches. I doubt anyone
has eaten anything in the last day and we all need our strength” Bobbi whispered into her ear placing a soft kiss just below it that made her knees go weak much to her mates smug amusement.

Several hours later of redesign and tinkering with the formula they finally were ready to put it all into production. Both her and Fitz had been amazed as Tony’s AI JARVIS had taken over and started up the machines to make it happen. While Bruce had just smiled at them softly before shaking his head and going back to medical to check on Maria. They had gone into the command center just as all the specialist and agents were able to agree on a plan. An hour later she found herself in front of the door to the room that was hers and her mates while they were here.

For a moment she blinked at the door but the feeling of Bobbi’s arms around her waist made her instinctively lean back into her body taking comfort in the support. “Come on cutie you are falling asleep standing up, let’s get you into bed for a bit of a nap” Hunter told her as he opened the door with a worried look on his face directed to her. Jemma felt it as Bobbi easily scooped down and lifted her up carrying her bridal style into the room.

Lights came on instantly in the room at their entrance and she pressed her face into Bobbi’s shoulder with a groan. The gentle sway of Bobbi carrying her lulled her tired mind as she fought to stay awake, to spend the limited time she had with her soulmates. She felt it as Bobbi sat on the bed her and Hunter talking in low tones. “Cutie we are going to get you changed into something more comfortable is that okay?” Bobbi asked her and she felt herself sleepily nod as Bobbi and Hunter slowly began to undress her.

Several minutes later she was in what felt like boxers and a tank top as she was moved to the center of the bed. The bed dipped again as she felt her mates bracket her again between them, gentle kisses placed to her forehead and temple as she let the safety of their arms around her lull her finally into sleep.

Natasha softly closed the door turning around to lean against it as Clint put his hands on her waist as he stepped into her and kissed her. Her arms went around Clint’s neck as she threaded her fingers into his hair pulling him closer. His hands slid up the front of her body as he went to unzip her field suit and his hands caressed his way up her body again. Lips and hands touched every part of exposed skin as he gently helped her out of the field suit before she stepped out of it and kicked it off to the side.

Clint’s eyes drank her in as she stood there before him naked like she was something precious and she felt as her need for him heated up again. Reaching forward she grabbed him by the front of his pants pulling him closer to her as she quickly unbuttoned them and pushed them to the ground. She pulled on his tank top and pulled it over his head breaking off the kiss for only a moment tossing it as well to the side.
Natasha felt it as Clint broke off the kiss to start kissing down her neck as his hands slid down her waist gripping her thighs. Lifting her up easily and pinning her to the door with his lower body she let her legs wrap around his hips her feet crossing just at his ass. Clint let out a low groan in her ear as she pulled her legs tighter as she grinded against him. “Tasha” he whispered huskily into her ear biting on the lobe and Natasha knew with just that tone in his voice that it would be sometime before they slept.

Isabelle Hartley, Izzy only to Victoria who she called Tori only in their private moments, watched in concern as the young male scientist shuffled down the hallway just ahead of them. Both of them had worked long enough with the SHIELD scientists assigned to the Hub to know a pending collapse when they saw one. Everyone had been pushing themselves too hard recently and many were passed the point of exhaustion. Watching as the young man stumbled almost as if he was drunk over his own two feet that he was barely lifting up had Izzy worried and a brief glance to her mate told her that she was sharing in the concern.

Her mate teased her behind closed doors about her mother hen tendencies that she hid behind her facade of being a total bad ass specialist. Of course Tori had the same tendencies as well that she hid behind her total cold bitch like exterior she wore while on duty. But they both chalked it up to the fact that their missing third was going to be so much younger than both of them.

Tori and her had been born ten years apart almost to the day. They didn’t meet till Tori was twenty six and she had just turned thirty six. Their third though that they had been missing all these years was twenty three years younger than her and thirteen years younger than Tori. It also didn’t help that Tori’s first word from her soulmate was ‘Yes Ma’am’. Hundreds of people said that to her a day at least if she was there they might have a better chance of figuring out who their third was since she actually had a specific sentence but she couldn’t be with Tori one hundred percent of the time.

She knew once in the privacy of their room that they would tease each other over this but sighing she brought her and her mate’s joint hands to her lips and gave them a soft kiss as amused understanding filled Tori’s eyes. At least Tori understood her as she let go of her mates hand before becoming the specialist that she was known as.

It was a good thing that she had such quick reflexes because she had to throw an arm around the young scientist waist as he stumbled again almost doing a face plant. “Easy there Curly” she said as she caught the younger man and pulled him back into her body, realizing she couldn’t remember his name for the life of her through her own exhaustion. Izzy made a mental note to talk to Phil and Mel in the morning about making sure their scientist ate regularly even if they had to drag them out of their labs kicking and screaming. The young man weighed next to nothing in her arms as she maneuvered him to lean with his back against the wall.
“I’m never getting away from that bloody nickname” he mumbled sleepily as his head hung forward with a soft snore. Izzy felt her heart stop for a moment as what he said registered in her exhausted mind. Her shock must have registered in her body language or face to Tori because her mate came over quickly putting a hand to the small of her back with a worried look on her face.

“Have you met him before?” Izzy asked softly briefly glancing towards Tori but looked back to the young man she had pinned to the wall as he somehow slept upright like it was the most natural thing in the world. The audible gasp from Tori let her know the answer, “I wasn’t there was I?”

“No. It was right after you took that bullet in Belgrade, you were still in medical when I met Agent Fitz for the first time” Tori said with a look of dawning horror on her face and Izzy pulled Tori into her body with one arm while supporting Fitz with the other.

“Tori?”

“I sent him on a mission that had a flimsy extraction plan that might as well have been no extraction plan. He only got out because Maria had warned Mel and Phil that they might have to be ready to react. It was a mission that had to be done or hundreds or thousands might have died but I almost sent our third to his death…” she said softly tears in her eyes looking towards the young man.

“Tori, look at me” Izzy commanded softly in that voice she used only for when they were alone. It was the way that they had found balance between their jobs and not having their third with them. In public because Victoria was the higher ranking agent she was in charge, in private though she was Izzy’s. She watched as Tori’s shoulders sagged as they relaxed from her tone because she knew when that tone came out she was in charge and her mate didn’t have to be the bitch she pretended to be any longer.

“You didn’t know Tori and it’s the job that he signed up for. You can’t blame yourself for that, he knew what he was getting himself into signing up with SHIELD and joining a field team” she said watching as her mate took in her words. “Good now, I promise you we will keep him safe even if I have to train him myself. We just found him and we won’t lose him if i anything to say about it” she said and shared a soft kiss with Tori right there in the hallway. The fact that they were able to kiss in such a public place was something new for them, they had hid their relationship for years from SHIELD but with this group of people they didn’t have to hide.

“Now let’s get to bed, he’s exhausted and we aren’t that much better off” Izzy said before stepping forward and cradled the younger man in her arms his head resting on her shoulder as he let out a light snore. Fighting back her laughter at the absurdity of the whole situation so she didn’t wake him up she followed Tori down the hallway to their room. All three of them in the morning needed to have a conversation but for right now all of them needed a bed.
Fitz opened his eyes slowly becoming aware that he wasn’t alone in the bed. He felt a warm breath against his neck while his eyes were looking towards a curtain of dark hair that had a red streak in it that looked familiar but his mind wasn’t cooperating as it fought off the fog of sleep. The last thing he remembered was Dr. Banner...Bruce ordering everyone to bed but he didn’t remember anything else after that. Fitz felt himself begin to panic once he realized he wasn’t in the clothes he had been wearing, no he was stripped down to his boxers.

“Easy there Curly,” a soft voice in his ear said as a strong arm pulled him backwards on the bed into a body that was definitely female but well muscled by her strength. He watched as a hand rested just above his heart where one of his soulmarks sat, the one that was just spoken and instantly an itch he didn’t realize he had eased just below his skin. “You gave us quite the scare last night, we found you stumbling down the hallway but then you surprised us both by saying something to me that we’ve been waiting a very long time to hear.”

Fitz’s heart sped up again but not from panic as the implications of what was said to him hit home and jump started his brain through the fog sleep. He had found them, both of them at the same time and it seemed like they had been looking for him for a while. Taking a deep breath he forced himself to relax and he felt a soft kiss being placed to the back of his neck as the hand on his chest started to trace the words.

“Can..” he flushed red but then took a deep breath “May I see my words?” he asked to a soft chuckle behind him as his mate lifted up her right hand that had been tracing her words on his chest and there on her palm was his writing, ‘I’m never getting away from that bloody nickname’. Groaning he buried his face into the pillow but a strong arm pulled him back firmly while another kiss was placed to the back of his neck.

“It’s alright Curly, yours isn’t as bad as Tori’s” she said showing him her other hand with the words ‘I’m no damsel in distress for you to rescue!’ Fitz couldn’t help but chuckle as he read the words but then his sleep addled brain caught up again and he realized who his two mates were. Isabelle Hartley was behind him holding him while Victoria Hand was on her stomach in front of him softly snoring.

“Oh bloody hell.”

“ Took you long enough to figure out who we are Curly,” said a warm chuckle behind him as another kiss was placed to the back of his neck. “As I said we have been waiting for you for a while, didn’t help that your words to Tori is ‘Yes ma’am’. Do you know how many times a day she hears those words?”
Fitz chuckled softly careful not to wake the mate that was still asleep in front of him “Her words to me are ‘Do you understand your instructions?’ I’ve heard them often enough as well over the years.”

“So our only hope was me meeting you and recognizing you? Fucking hell no wonder it took us so long. I should have been there when you met Tori but I was in medical with a GSW to my shoulder” his mate said exasperation in her tone as her hand continued to trace the line of her words on his chest.

“You have already taken to calling me Curly, what shall I call you both?” he asked softly as he slowly reached out touching the hair that was blocking his mates face from his view and gently pushed it back.

“When we are in public it will have to be as if we aren’t mates but in private she is Tori and I am Izzy. As you can tell we are very different from our public personas. In public Tori is in charge because she is the higher ranking one of us but in private I am in charge” Izzy told him and he felt a shiver at her words. A shiver that he knew she understood when her hand flattened down on his mark and she nipped him on the shoulder causing him to whimper.

“Oh Curly we are going to have so much fun with you” she whispered into his ear seductively and he whimpered again this time loud enough that Tori started to wake up in front of him. He watched as Tori stretched out almost like a cat and she even made a sound that could have been a purr. As she finished Tori opened her eyes and gave him a slow lazy smile as she looked him up and down and in that moment he’d never been so thankful for a sheet that covered him from the waist down.

“Agent Fitz. Dr. Banner and Mr. Stark are looking for you” JARVIS said into their room some hours later after they had all woken up. Currently he was on his back with both Tori and Izzy cuddled up to his sides as he tried to catch his breath. It was a good thing that he was so young otherwise he doubted he would be able to keep up with the two women as it was he felt like he was only in shouting distance of the two of them.

“Did something go wrong with the production last night JARVIS?” he asked as he watched Tori and Izzy start to kiss again.

“No sir. They are needing to talk to you and Agent Simmons about your blood work in the lab” JARVIS answered and he felt his body stiffen in concern. Was the paperwork wrong? He had always felt a deep connection with Jemma since the moment they met, they knew they weren’t mates
but it was always there, that knowing that he would never be alone in this world if he had her by his side. Or did they find something else he thought his mind racing a mile a minute. Could they be sick?

“Curly look at me” Izzy commanded and it snapped him out of his running away thoughts and his inner panic. Concern showed in both her and Tori’s eyes as they looked down at him both of them cupping a side of his face.

“JARVIS tell them I’ll meet them in the lab. Is twenty minutes okay?” he asked.

“Yes Agent Fitz. Agent Simmons requested around the same amount of time. Dr. Banner and Mr. Stark will be waiting for you both” JARVIS said then went silent.

Taking a shaky breath Fitz saw the concern and confusion in his mate’s eyes as they watched him. “They ran blood work yesterday on Simmons and I because they think we are twins, that were separated at birth. Turns out both of us were adopted, I had no clue but Simmons suspected for a while for herself but never said anything to her parents. Bruce took a lot of blood from me yesterday but he said that Deputy Director Hill had ordered a full panel on our blood to make sure there weren’t any other surprises.”

“And now they both want to talk to you and Simmons?” Tori asked and he nodded giving them both a soft kiss before they let him up off the bed. He felt their eyes on him as he searched around the room for his clothes and had to fight back a full body blush.

“In the bathroom Curly” Izzy said finally taking pity on him as she stood up from the bed as well. “Come on Tori let’s go see the doctor, we needed to see him anyways because he will need to do our bonding workups because I sure in hell not letting them be done by anyone in SHIELD.”

Fitz pulled on his pants and looked towards his mates confusion probably clearly written on his face because Izzy walked towards him still naked. A gentle hand tipped his chin back as he met her eyes that were soft in that moment as they looked down at him. “You are not dealing with this alone, I can guarantee you that Simmons mates will be there with her as well” she said softly before kissing him.

“You might want to get dressed Izzy unless you are meaning to go to medical in your birthday suit, wouldn’t be the first time though...” Tori quipped as she finished pulling on her dress shirt and buttoning it up.

“I thought we weren’t ever going to talk about Moscow” Izzy threw back and by the tone it was
playful bantering. Fitz smiled shaking his head at his two mates as they continued to banter back and forth they were clearly trying to keep him from worrying and it worked well enough.

“Agent Simmons. Dr. Banner and Mr. Stark are asking if you can meet them in the lab” JARVIS said causing her to jump and cover herself with a very unlady like squeak. Hunter on the other hand somehow did a combat roll out of the bed with a gun in his hand that he pulled from god only knew where as he looked around the room. Bobbi on the other hand was howling with laughter at their reactions, which caused Jemma to blush and the tension in Hunter’s shoulders to relax.

“JARVIS what do they need?” Bobbi asked as she tried to stop laughing.

“They wish to discuss Agent Simmons and Agent Fitz’s blood work with them” JARVIS said.

“That doesn’t sound good” Jemma said while worrying on her bottom lip as she tried not to panic. She felt soft hands circle around her waist pulling her into Bobbi’s lap and she instantly relaxed with the physical touch as she buried her face in her mate’s neck. Jemma took a deep breath and tried to think through everything but she had no idea what was going on.

“JARVIS tell them to give me twenty minutes” Jemma said as she placed a gentle kiss to Bobbi’s neck.

“Of course Agent Simmons” JARVIS said and the room was silent for a moment.

“Care to fill me in?” Hunter asked as he stood up, starting to pull on clothes.

“Fitz and I might be twins that were separated at birth. Both of us were adopted though I never knew that for sure till yesterday, Fitz had no clue. Deputy Director Hill ordered full medical work ups for both Fitz and I, if they want to talk to us about the blood work then they must have found something” Jemma said softly not able to hide the worry in her voice.

“Well I guess we'll just have to go see the good doctor then, as it is we need him to finish the bonding physicals since we got distracted last night and forgot to do them” Hunter said grinning cheekily at them as he handed both Jemma and Bobbi their clothes.

“Distracted, is what we are calling it?” Bobbi quipped as they stood up and got dressed as well.
Tony kept glancing at the clock then at the door to the lab as his legs bounced up and down while he sat on a chair and waited for his children to come in through the door. His children...that was a strange thought. Up until a few hours ago he didn’t even know that he had a child, let alone two. With his past...indiscretions he always knew it was a possibility but now he had two children both of them geniuses and doctors already despite their young age of twenty three.

“Tony calm down. I watched them with you last night while we worked on the new ICER’s they idolize you” Bruce told him as his mate’s arms came around his chest. Tony leaned back into Bruce’s chest and felt it as his mate pressed a kiss to his temple. This is how they were when Jemma came in bracketed between her two mates at first Tony wanted to object but he felt Bruce give him a squeeze in warning.

“We are just waiting for Fitz,” Bruce said behind him but stopped as the door to the lab opened again as Fitz came in surprisingly bracketed by Agents Hand and Hartley. Tony gave his son an amused questioning look, which caused the young scientist to blush and the two women next to him gave him a fond smile each.

“Dr. Banner we are going to need you to do another set of soulmate workups” Hartley said as she smiled gently towards Fitz and then Hand.

Tony watched it as Jemma squealed and it was with a combination of tackle and a hug that she took her twin brother down to the ground. Both Tony and Bruce bolted to their feet and came around the table to check on the two but he heard their laughter from the ground as they talked rapidly to each other, his heart feeling slightly odd at the sight but he didn’t run from it. Tony was also reassured as he saw his children’s mates all smile fondly down at the pair, at least if anything happened to him or his own two mates his children would be cared for by their own mates.

“Not a problem, I still need to finish up with Jemma, Bobbi and Hunter since they didn’t come see me last night like they were suppose to” Bruce said trying to be the cross doctor but amusement clearly was in his mate’s voice. “All of you will just stay here afterwards and we will get this all done. Now if Jemma and Fitz can actually grab a seat please we can discuss why I called them down here.”

“Good now as you two know when Maria was looking for the leak on your team she came across the fact that you both were adopted and didn’t reveal it to SHIELD. We now know you two had no concrete idea that you were adopted let alone twins. Blood tests confirmed it you are twins” Bruce said as he sat down on the chair next to Tony, both of them watching as Jemma almost knocked her brother out of their chairs with the force of her hug.
“Easy there Cutie, we don’t need you two injured” Bobbi said amusement in her voice as both her and Hartley caught the twins to prevent them from tipping over onto their sides. The two ladies shared an amused look before they all turned back to Bruce.

“Alright, as you know Maria had me run some additional tests to check on your overall health but she had me run another test secretly because she didn’t want to get your hopes up. She figured that you eventually would want to know about your birth parents and wanted me to confirm her suspicions before she told you. My condition for the test was that I told you if the test was confirmed.”

“Who are our parents? Didn’t they want us?” Fitz and Jemma asked at the same time. The questions felt like a stab to Tony’s heart because at the time of their birth he was a bastard not fit to care about anyone, let alone two children but he never knew about them and never would know what might have happened to him or them if he’d known about them. Tony felt Bruce squeeze his hand under the table and he squeezed back before taking a deep breath.

“Jemma, Leo you both are very much wanted. I’m so sorry I had no idea your mother was pregnant, she never told me. If I had known…” Tony said his voice cracking at the end as he took in their shocked faces. “Honestly I don’t know what would have happened if I’d had known, I was a right bastard back then. But I know now, and I’m not going anywhere” he finishes softly tears in his eyes as he looked at his two children, thankful that their mates were there to support them both.

He watched as his children finally snapped out of it as they looked to each other having a silent conversation in that weird way that twins sometimes do. Even soulmates if the connection is strong have those silent conversations just with their eyes and their faces but watching his children do it was something else. “Is it okay if we call you Pops?” they asked at the same time giving him shy smiles.

“For you two, you can call me anything you like” he answered as he stood up holding out his arms as they ran into him and hugged him. They knocked him to the ground and they all laughed soon to be joined by Bruce and his childrens mates. “You two already know my mate Bruce, but I’d like to introduce you to our other mate Pepper. She very much wants to meet you two and will be thrilled to meet your mates as well” he said placing a gentle kiss each to the top of their heads.

“We’d like that as well Pops” Fitz said as they all got off the ground with the help of their mates.

“Good JARVIS call Pepper please, I know she is probably waiting for the call” Tony called out. “Oh fair warning kids, Pepper might be asking you two about grandbabies” he laughed at the stun looks on his kids and their mates as the video screen lit up with Peppers face and they were all introduced to the force of nature that was his mate known as Pepper Potts.
“Mommy when are Ma and Pa coming home?” Lila asked her from her seat at the kitchen island as Laura stood at the stove making breakfast. Cooper sat next to her with the same wondering look on his face as his sister. Laura knew that Cooper took Richard’s death the hardest but he understood that his father died protecting them and would want them to be happy. That his father had sent both Natasha and Clint to protect them when he knew he couldn’t any longer. Her children had always been happy and resilient even though they never had much as they had moved around constantly to avoid detection and had kept to themselves as much as possible.

Laura flipped the pancakes on the griddle trying to give herself sometime to figure a way best to answer that question. The children calling Natasha and Clint, Ma and Pa was a new development one that gave her hope that the children were finally settling into their new home. It also gave her heart a warm happy feeling because she knew how much it meant to her mates for her children to accept them being in their lives. She knew from their conversations that Natasha couldn’t have children because of something that was done to her by her previous employer. They had given up all hope of ever having children, a hope they had rekindled when they had met her and her children.

“I’m not sure sweetheart, I know they miss us and want to be here but they have really important jobs that take them away sometimes” Laura said as she plated the pancakes and turned off the griddle for now. She was about to say something else when the tablet she now carried around the house started ringing with a video call. ‘Speak of the devils’ she thought amusedly as she brought the tablet over to the children and sat it up in front of them.

“Were your ears burning loves? The children were just asking about you” she asked amusedly after turning on the video call as the image of both Natasha and Clint came onto their screen.

“Not quite burning but we did start missing you all a whole lot more” Clint said as he smiled one of his more charming smiles. Laura felt a pang in her heart wishing they were here to enjoy this moment in person, but she made a mental note to call them home if her suspicions proved true.

“Ma, Pa when are you coming home?” Lila asked this time directed through the video screen to her two mates. Laura watched her mates reactions, smiling softly to them through the camera feed as she placed a kiss to her daughters temple.

“Hopefully soon princess,” Clint said softly, both of their eyes shining with unshed tears.

“Good because Cooper and I miss you. And so does mommy” Lila said in the way only five year olds can say the most important things.
“We miss you all so much” Natasha said smiling “Pa and I were thinking once we get home if the weather permits we can go camping.”

“Like a family vacation?” Cooper asked excitedly.

“Yes, just like a family vacation, just us five and the great outdoors” Clint said excitement in his own voice.

“Yay!!” both of the children squealed and even though it was loud she couldn’t help by smile at her two mates as they all watched the children and their antics.

“We got to go Clint,” Natasha sighed as she looked off to the side where a buzzing sound had come from. “Alright my маленькие птенцы we have to go back to work. We only had a few minutes before our meeting and wanted to see you all again before it” Natasha said and Laura picked up on the emphasis on the word meeting, they were about to go out on a mission.

“Love you, be safe” Laura said softly blowing them a kiss.

“We love you all. Be good for your mother” Clint said.

“Love you!” both her kids answered back causing both Clint and Natasha to smile even bigger before they cut off the video feed. Laura kissed both of her children on the head and brought over their breakfast already planning out what to do with the kids today to keep herself distracted and try not to worry for her mates.
Mel and Phil were the first two into the command center after briefly going to check on Maria, she had been asleep so they quietly left hoping that tonight they could bring their daughter back and get the two reunited. It was evident as Maria’s condition continued to get worse that their daughter needed medical care but with the bond being strong they also needed each other near by to heal.

They all feared what they might find tonight and that was why it was decided to keep both her and Phil off the search teams. She would be the closest as a pilot for the Quinjet but Phil was being forced to stay at the Avenger’s base because this organization had already kidnapped him as well.

“JARVIS can you open the links to medical please” Phil asked as they started pulling up maps and their plans on the video screen. Soon Natasha and Clint joined them already in their tactical gear but they carried the bags of their weapons on their backs as they took took a seat on one of the couches pulling a coffee table towards them. Mel watched them worried as she could see the evidence of tears in their eyes as they started to pull out their weapons and begin to check them. Placing a hand on Phil’s shoulder she got his attention silently and looked towards their brother and sister in all but blood, a worried look on his face now as well as he took in their faces. Phil shrugged his shoulder letting her know he didn’t know either what it was all about, she gave his shoulder a squeeze before she walked over to them.

Sitting down next to Natasha she placed her head on her sister’s shoulder and felt it as Natasha rested her head on top of her own. “Care to tell me why you two look like you have been crying?” Mel asked softly and she felt it as the other two shared a look but she stayed silent to give them time to decide if they were going to tell her or not.

“I promise they are happy tears сестра but let’s first get your daughter back safe and then we will tell you” Natasha said calling her sister for the first time in a long time. Her voice was soft almost whispering it to her as the rest of their little ragtag group entered the room all talking and smiling at each other. She lifted her head looking at the little scene questioningly and she wasn’t the only one that was doing it as Clint, Natasha and Phil all had confused look on their faces.

“You will have to come to the tower and see the labs” Tony said as he came in walking backwards clearly talking to FitzSimmons.

“No stealing my scientist Stark” Phil said from the table as he poured himself a cup of coffee. Mel watched as Tony looked to the two scientist with a smug look on his face and she watched them nod to the man. ‘This can’t be good’ she thought to herself.
“Not stealing Agent when they are my kids” Tony said smirking as Phil spit out the coffee he had just been drinking. Mel looked at the two scientist and saw that they were smiling happily at the crazy billionaire. Looking now she saw the resemblance to the man and shook her head in silent laughter because their little crazy family just kept getting bigger and bigger. Poor Phil will be constantly having to fight Tony off the Bus and try to keep FitzSimmons with SHIELD.

“Easy there Phil don’t waste good coffee” Hartley said teasingly and Mel looked at their old academy friend shooting her a half hearted glare. It was then that she realized for the first time that not only was Simmons surrounded by her two mates Bobbi and Hunter but now Fitz was standing there with a hand from both Hand and Hartley on his shoulder.

“I hope you all got your bonding physicals done or I will drag all six of you to Bruce kicking and screaming right now” she said letting her protectiveness for her team into her voice. Hand and Hartley both smiled at her before relaxing enough to pull Fitz backwards to them.

“We did this morning, when Bruce and Tony broke the news to the twins that Tony was their father” Hand said smiling and shocking her by placing a gentle kiss to Fitz’s temple.

“Wait Fitz met you months ago” Phil said confused.

“Do you know how many times a day I hear the words ‘Yes ma’am’?” Victoria deadpanned to Phil to the snickers of everyone in the room. Mel made the decision to start calling both women by their given names, she had a feeling they would be seeing a lot of them soon.

‘Oh Nick is going to have kittens over this’ she thought but couldn’t feel quite bad for him since he was the one that had put such a strain on her and Phil and making them stay hidden. Nope Fury was just going to have to get over it and permanently base us somewhere or we might all start working for Stark instead because arranging leaves for everyone was going to be a bitch in half. She looked towards Phil and she knew he was thinking the same thing, family was everything, they would make it work.

Hunter loved hospitals because even how small they might be as long as you walked like you knew where you were going most staff didn’t think to stop you. There was always a constant web and flow of people in and out of hospitals you were fine unless you did something suspicious. Fitz even though the kid was twenty three both him and Jemma could pass for their late teens if they dressed in the right way. Right now that is how they had made Fitz dress with a backpack over his shoulder as if they were coming to see someone for a quick visit.
Smiling politely at nurses and winking at a few of them that eyed him with interest he steered their way with gentle pressure on Fitz’s shoulder to the electrical room located on the first floor. Hunter took quick stock of the hallway as Fitz worked on the electronic lock behind them. A click of the door let him know that Fitz had it open and disappeared inside with Hunter following as well. The room was tiny and a bit cramped but Fitz quickly got to work and sat himself down on the floor in a corner to give him the freedom to move around in case of trouble.

“Predators in, standby for confirmation” Hunter said over his comlink after pulling it from his pocket and activating it. He unzipped his jacket and took it off revealing his double shoulder holster and double back holster. It was a custom piece and its weight was comforting to him just like a security blanket was to a child. The shoulder holsters held the new ICER guns with a few extra clips while his back holster carried his trusty 9mm’s with extra clips as well.

“Predators in the feed, confirmation of activity in the base but no confirmation on Skyefall. Ready to activate the protocol” Fitz said into his own comlink as he continued to hack into the systems.

“Predators go for activation. Phoenix dropping now” Clint said over the comlinks and Hunter said a silent prayer. Bobbi was on one of the search teams that were going to make their way down the stairs and into the basement area. He knew Natasha was good just by her reputation alone, she was the Black Widow but it still didn’t mean he wasn’t going to worry.

Glancing back he could see the worry also etched across Fitz’s face because his two mates Isabelle and Victoria were the other team that was going down the stairs into the basement area. Hunter knew Fitz’s mates by reputation only as well but what he knew was that they were a forced to reckon with when in the field and pissed off and all four ladies were pissed off. He didn’t tell Fitz it would all be okay though, the only way of knowing that was to be done with this mission so he gave the young man that would soon be his brother in law a soft smile when he looked up. Fitz smiled back an almost wry look before he went back to work hacking the systems.

“Birds in place” Natasha said into her comlink followed by “Warriors in place” by Isabelle. He heard Fitz press a few more buttons and then the buildings fire alarm went off triggering the sprinkler system. Hunter heard yells outside the electrical room as staff ran around trying to cover equipment while starting to evacuate patients. It was part of the plan to get the civilians outside and hopefully far away from the gunfire that was about to start.

“Birds in place” Natasha said over the comlink as she placed the plastic explosives on the door. She felt Bobbi at her back as a reassuring presence covering their six as they waited for the signal.
“Warriors in place” Isabelle said over the comlink. Natasha counted to ten silently and then all hell broke loose as the fire alarm started to sound and the sprinkler system opened up. Pressing the button she turned her head away from the flash as they breached the door and made entry into the basement. Both her and Bobbi were in full tactical gear along with their usual personal weapons, Natasha with her Widow Bites and Bobbi with her Battle Staves.

The M4’s they were carrying were not of the ICER variety that the ‘Brain Trust’ had designed last night only because it was decided if someone was down here they were going to be assumed to be a threat. Maria had been awake long enough before they left to authorize the lethal action, usually SHIELD tried to capture and prosecute but with everything going on they were weeding out the bad guys ranks. All four of them had open comlinks to each other to call out contacts and she heard as both Isabelle and Victoria made contact with a group near where the elevators were.

Natasha and Bobbi moved silently and came across a group that was on their way somewhere as they checked weapons. “Boss says the prisoner is to die before we evacuate” she heard their leader say and her blood ran cold at his words. She looked to Bobbi who nodded and they silently followed the group to a room before they could open it though both of them squeezed their triggers taking down the guards. Bobbi and her quickly made their way to the room and the sight before her made her heart stop beating for a moment and then she saw red as her rage threatened to take over.

“Birds have Skyefall, Warriors to corridor three. Cleansweep, I repeat Cleansweep” Natasha said authorizing the other team to start using grenades if needed to make their way here. Cleansweep was only to be called if the team that found Skye thought she was a CatAlpha or on death’s door.

“Warrior’s acknowledge Cleansweep on our way” Isabelle said. Natasha pushed away her emotions as Bobbi rushed into the room, dropping her medpack and moved to catch Skye while Natasha aimed and shot away the chain that was holding her up. Bobbi caught Skye with a whimper from the woman as Natasha pulled a gurney from the hall using it to have a flat surface to begin to assess and treat some of the more serious wounds. Skye’s body was a mass of black and blue bruising interrupted with red from many shallow and deep cuts that littered her body.

Skye started to whimper as they pressed against some of her more serious wounds. “Shh Skye, my детеныш we got you” Natasha whispered to her niece as she lightly touched her face watching as the girl leaned her head away from the touch. Isabelle and Victoria came into the room and both of their faces instantly shut down as they took in the state of Skye.

“Xena grab the collar and portable stretcher from my bag we need to get her fully strapped down for transport” Bobbi ordered as she continued apply pressure bandages and even more tape.

“We got company” Victoria said as she opened fire into the corridor. Natasha moved instantly out of the way of Isabelle and Bobbi working to stabilize Skye while she took a shooting position at the
Pulling a grenade from her shoulder she pulled the pin and tossed it down the corridor to the screams of the men down there before it exploded. She pulled a second one and tossed it down the other side of the corridor as well and heard screams before it exploded.

“Ready for transport” Bobbi said behind her.

“Predators meet us at Bravo. Xena take the rear I got point” Natasha ordered as she pulled another two grenades tossing them at the same time down the corridor as she walked out of the room. Twin explosions went off to more screams and she brought her M4 up as they made their way back towards the stairs.

“Predators meet us at Bravo. Xena take the rear I got point” he heard Natasha say over the comlink right before twin explosions that were another pair of grenades going off. Cursing Hunter watched as Fitz quickly packed up his backpack pulling the extra magazines from the bag before tossing Hunter the ammo bag.

“Predators acknowledge Bravo” Hunter said as he quickly handed the ICER’s to Fitz to use as he pulled out his own 9mm’s. “If you hit them and they don’t go down yell and I’ll take them out” he told Fitz and waited till he nodded. Opening the door he peeked his head around then pulled Fitz from behind him as they made their way quickly towards the stairs. He quickly ducked behind a corner as they took fire from the corridor that had the Bravo stairs. Taking a deep breath he quickly turned around the corner and shot the two guards.

Motioning Fitz to his side he walked forward slowly as he came upon the guards. Putting a double tap into each of the guards before taking one of their M16s and another ammo bag throwing it over his shoulder. “Take this Lion,” he said handing Fitz one of the 9mm’s and taking the ICER’s back and putting them back in his back holsters. “Predators breaching Bravo-One.”

“Acknowledged, coming up” Natasha said as he pushed open the door and quickly swept it with the M16 checking up and down.

“Bravo-One clear” he said stepping fully into the stairwell as Fitz followed and closed the door behind them before crouching down. Hunter heard the footsteps below him and knew it was the ladies so he turned towards the second floor and kept watch.

“Lion take over for Mockingbird. Mockingbird rear, Jackal you have point with me” Natasha
ordered as they quickly made their way up the stairs. “Phoenix Bravo-two clear. Breaching Bravo-Romeo”

“Phoenix copies” Clint said and they quickly reached the roof door. Hunter pushed left, Natasha took right as they heard the Quinjet as it dropped and opened hatch. They held position as they rest of the team got inside and then slowly backed up and into the hold, keeping ready till the hatch pulled close.

“Secure. Get us back to base” Bobbi yelled from behind him.

“Strap in” he heard Melinda yell back as the Quinjet started to lift off the roof. He reached for the seats as he made his way towards his mates as they and Isabelle started get lines and a breathing tube into the young woman they had come to save. He didn’t know how she was still alive but he was thankful she was because the woman’s mate was his sister in law in all but name and she was the daughter of two people that had enough taken from them.

“Phoenix flight inbound eta three-zero minutes,” Clint radioed in and Hunter could see that the man was in full lockdown so not to lose it, everyone was. They would lose it later in the privacy of their rooms with their mates but for now everyone was cold and professional. Hunter watched as Clint looked on towards the woman “Tell Big Guy we are going to need him to prep the OR.”

“Sir I have an unauthorized Quinjet preparing to land” JARVIS said knocking them all out of their thoughts. It had been two hours since they landed and Bruce had Jemma, Bobbi and Isabelle follow him into the OR where he already had Maria. Everyone else he had kicked out of medical completely they had gone to the command center to at least be able to see through the comlinks but Bruce had JARVIS kick them all out of that as well. So there they all sat on couches and chairs silent, still in their gear at least until JARVIS had spoken.

“JARVIS let them land. Phil, Mel and Fitz take medical. Hawk, Stark roof now. Hecate and Jackal with me” Natasha ordered as she walked out of the door already pulling a fresh clip for her M4 and sliding it home. She heard as both Victoria and Hunter did the same as they easily fell into a wedge formation as they made their way to the back door of the villa that led to the landing pad.

“The Quinjet has landed Agent Romanoff” JARVIS announced as they got to the back door. She motioned for Victoria and Hunter to take firing positions to the sides from doorways leading to other parts of the villa. Natasha kneeled down and took aim and waited calmly as the door opened and in walked Nick Fury like he owned the place, fucking typical. Moving her finger off the trigger she said “Stand down” as she stood up walking towards her boss and then decked the man.
“What the fuck Romanoff” Fury yelled at her as he landed on the floor.

“You and your damn apron strings Fury, it’s going to get one of us killed” she seethed as she turned around and started walking back towards the command center.

Hunter whistled at her “Impressive, remind me not to piss you off.”

“Follow me” she said over her shoulder towards Fury, not waiting for him to get up. She heard grumbling behind her and then the long strides of Fury as he moved to catch up with her.

“Where is Hill? Her internal tracking beacon turned on letting me know there is an issue” Fury asked and Natasha wasn’t surprised that those two had a system similar to what her and Clint have for when they are separated due to missions.

“In the OR as Bruce, Jemma, Bobbi and Isabelle work to stabilize her mate Skye...Rayne” Natasha said with a frustrated sigh as she came back into the command center. “Fitz where are they?” she asked knowing the young engineer would know who she was talking about.

“May refused to leave the door, so I went into my room and pulled out the wingback chair inside it and put it outside medical. I left after Coulson sat down and pulled May into his lap Ma’am” Fitz answered before he went to sit down on the couch next to Victoria but kept his distance since he saw Fury in the room. Natasha knew it was a sign of how wound tight all of them were when she watched Victoria glare at Fury before she pulled Fitz towards her. He went stiff for only a second till he relaxed and laid his head in her lap Victoria smiling down softly to him as she started to run her fingers in his hair. Fitz closed his eyes at the attention and Victoria returned to glaring at their boss. ‘Or maybe we are just a bad influence on her’ Natasha thought amusedly, ‘Nah’.

“Bruce has done all the workups but no ones bonds are being recorded ever in a SHIELD database. As of right now everyone that’s here is an Avenger asset, they might still work for you if you accept our help to plug your damn leak and rot problem but as of right now the Avengers are their own entity” Natasha said turning to her possibly former boss.

“Romanoff don’t even start with me” Fury threatened and she raised an eyebrow at him. “And since I don’t see Agent Ward here I take it he was leak on the 616 team. Where is he?”

“Dead bastard took Cyanide. And trust me Fury my wife hasn’t even started with you yet, what she gave you was a love tap to what you deserve at this moment” Clint said as he and Tony walked into
the room.

“That’s right, as of right now the Avengers are bankrolled by me. We will gladly give you help on cleaning up your mess but we are calling the shots. No more secrets, no more lies” Tony said as he crossed his arms and leaned against the command table. “Oh and don’t bother trying to get Steve to your side, him and Carter got Pepper and Peggy as well safely to New York four hours ago. Well thanks to some help from my future son in law and his contacts. Then thanks to Pepper they have been read into this jolly cluster fuck sandwich we find ourselves in. Oh and I’d be careful next time you see Steve he might just break your jaw, that our give you his patented disappointed face...I’m voting for break your jaw but that’s only one vote.”

Victoria Hand ran her fingers softly through her mates curly hair as his head rested in her lap. Soft snores could be heard from him and she couldn't help the wry amused look she had on her face. It was a strange sensation not to hide who she really was behind the mask she wore so often while doing her job. Here she was Victoria or Tori not Agent Hand the cold hearted bitch now slotted to take charge of the Hub.

No here with the Avengers she was allowed to be who she really was because here she had been accepted easily as part of the team. It was a refreshing change one that she knew Izzy was taking full advantage of because here the roles they had assumed in their relationship were blurred and now with finding Fitz they were changing. If they were part of the team before they had found Fitz the other night now they were a part of the family. A highly chaotic and dysfunctional family but family none the less, but something that her and Izzy never thought they would be a part of because who they were and what they did for a living. A normal family was something neither of them could risk because if something happened to the family they started they didn’t think they’d survive it, especially since they hadn’t found Fitz for so long. But with this three ring circus...it just might work.

SHIELD had been their lives for so long that they hadn't realized what they had been missing until now. They now knew what had been missing and she knew that they’d take the Avengers on their offer if it meant she could keep this feeling. Izzy and her would leave SHIELD easily without a second thought if Fury decided to be his usual paranoid ass and not share information. It was them against whoever had infiltrated SHIELD, there was no concrete evidence on who it was but they’d find it.

Even if Fury decided to be an ass she knew that the Avengers would clean up and out SHIELD because if they didn’t that much resources and power in something that might have a major rot problem was too dangerous to leave alone. No she would have to tell Fury to take his head out his ass, she knew Maria had been telling him to do it now for months and Phil had been doing it as well since New York. Fury would hopefully listen to reason if his one good eye, his right hand and left hand told him to swallow his pride and paranoia and be thankful for the help.
Tori smiled softly and looked up as she sensed Izzy come into the room, her mate was in a pair of hospital scrubs that were clean except for the slight sweat stains on them. Izzy automatically looked around the room in the bone deep threat analysis that was trained into her, taking in where everyone was and seeing their boss. She knew it when Izzy took in the sullen looking Nick Fury sitting in the corner on a chair as he glared at the room at large and was ignored by everyone in it. Everyone seemed to snap out of their own inner thoughts as well when she came in but she didn’t say anything as she walked towards her and dropped on the floor in front of her and Fitz. Tori reached out her other hand and started to run her fingers through Izzy’s hair as well trying to lose herself in the little movements as Izzy rested her head on her knee.

“Should have known, always wondered how you two didn’t kill each other half the time” Fury said with a snort from the corner of the room that drew their attention to their boss.

“I’d shut it while you are still able to on your own Nick, you are on my shit list and I am just about to go to mom and tell her how you are not playing well with others again” her mate said in the deadly cold voice she used when she was on mission. Tori didn’t understand half of what was said but she watched as Fury’s eyes widened slightly before he turned away from them. Looking down at her mate she watched the smug smirk on her face and made a mental note to ask later what that was all about when they were alone.

Next into the room was Jemma and Bobbi the younger leaning heavily onto Bobbi as they made their way into the room. Hunter stood as soon as he saw his mates and rushed over to them as he lifted Jemma easily into his arms and kissed Bobbi’s temple. Bringing them over to the couch he had been sitting on he got Bobbi to sit down then sat next to her as he arranged Jemma to lay against his chest while the rest of her was partially in Bobbi’s lap.

Fitz had woken up when his sister came into the room and Tori and Izzy shared a soft smile as the two twins shared a look before going back to cuddling with their mates. Her and Izzy knew that Fitz hadn’t had long enough to form that type of connection with them but they knew with time it would develop to their level or even more now that they were whole.

They all settled down again to wait for Bruce to come and give them an update on both Skye and Maria, knowing that he was probably right now talking to Phil and Mel giving them the news first. They were all family but Phil and Mel were the young hacker’s parents even if she didn’t know it yet, it had been a shock to read about everything that the family had been put through over the years. No one begrudged the tiny family any moment of privacy or any support they could give them in the days past or the days coming. Tori knew that Maria had always been like a daughter to Phil and Mel but she knew that none of them had ever said anything to the other till now.

Almost another half an hour had passed before Bruce came into the room looking drained and exhausted. Tony, her soon to be father in law...that was going to take some getting use to, ran to his
mate and pulled him over to another couch. Natasha brought the doctor a cup of tea before returning
to her own mate who sat on a large wingback chair and went back to being curled up in his lap.
Who’d have thought that the Black Widow was a cuddler but it seemed like the most natural thing
between the two and she knew the same could be said about her and Izzy.

Tori gently shook Fitz awake and at the sight of Bruce he sat up but not before placing a gentle kiss
to Izzy’s temple. He scooted closer to her as he patted the space next to him where he had been
stretched out and she watched as Izzy smiled a genuine happy smile as she sat on his other side and
reached her arms behind them to touch them both.

Bruce took a sip of his tea and sighed as he leaned his head against Tony’s as he whispered
something to his mate. “JARVIS open a connection with the tower” Tony said and they waited till
they saw the image of Pepper Potts in the video feed, she took one look at everyone on their end and
called for Steve and Sharon. Once those two joined Pepper she watched as Steve put one arm around
Sharon and the other rested on Peppers shoulder. Bruce and Tony looked up into the video feed and
nodded at Steve who nodded and the Bruce started.

“Skye is stable and now that we have her on a bed next to Maria their vitals are staying steady”
Bruce finally said to the collective sigh of the room and the video feed.

“How bad is it Bruce?” Natasha asked and Tori could see the effort the woman was putting in to
keep her voice even and calm.

“Bad enough Tasha, her right hip was re-dislocated again this time fully. We were lucky we only
had to do a closed reduction on it but we seriously need to look into something for her because
eventually there is going to be no simple pop back in place of it. Both shoulders were dislocated as
well and we did the same to them.

“As you saw she was beaten close to death if there is an inch on her body not covered in bruises,
cuts or burns I don’t think we found it. There is also evidence of injections sights, what she was
injected with I’m not sure the tests are running but it’s nothing we’ve seen before so light only knows
what it is doing to her body. Her blood work right now is showing evidence of an infection and her
body is so weak it’s barely fighting it off.

“Skye has multiple broken bones including some ribs that thankfully didn’t puncture her lungs but
she did have some internal bleeding in her stomach which we were able to stop. Right now both
Maria and Skye are in a medically induced coma with enough painkillers to keep them comfortable.
While Skye is on a ventilator and on some of the strongest antibiotics I have access to to stave off the
infection or infections she is fighting” Bruce finished and then laid his head back looking up at the
ceiling.
Tori felt horror at the list of the injuries, she knew it had been bad when they had come into the room to find Natasha and Bobbi frantically trying to save the young woman but she didn’t think it would be this bad. She felt tears in her eyes and for the first time in a very long time allowed herself to cry in front of anyone including Izzy. Looking around she found that she wasn’t the only one crying as there wasn’t a dry eye in the room, even Fury had his head leaned against the wall as tears fell silently.

“Mel and Phil are with them right now but we need to make sure that those two still take care of themselves” Bruce said once he seemed to gather himself together to begin again with everything they needed to arrange.

“We will take care of them Bruce, they are family” Clint said from his chair as he shared a brief silent conversation with Natasha.

“We all will” Steve said from the video feed as he stood there every inch the leader he was meant to be in their world. “As of right now the Avengers are on a war footing, they came after family and we stand together. We are going to end this to borrow a phrase from Tasha ‘with extreme prejudice’” he said with a wry grin before turning towards Fury and broke out the famous disappointed look she heard many junior SHIELD agents talk about in quiet whispers. “I warned you Nick that your secrets were going to be end of you or SHIELD and I might just damn well be a prophet. We are going to clean house with or without your help because I owe it to Peggy and Howard that their legacy doesn’t fall the the ash heap of history.”

“We will follow you Capsicle” Tony said to the man and Tori watched as the Captain just chuckled at the eccentric billionaire. “Now we need to arrange for transport back to the states and get everyone to the tower. Once there the full strength of the Avengers will be concentrated so we can start looking at everything again with fresh eyes.”

“Agreed. Let us know when they are stable enough to travel and we'll make sure the tower is ready. It’s late here so we are going get some rest, call if you need us.”

“Oh don’t worry Capsicle go get laid. Carter friendly warning its been about eighty years if not ever since he got laid. So take it easy on the old man, Bruce isn’t there to zap him back to life for ya” Tony teased to the groan of both Pepper and Bruce. Steve turned a lovely shade of red as everyone tried to bite back their laughter. Sharon for her part only tilted her head to the side before smiling wickedly towards Tony. ‘Uh-oh’ Tori thought and waited for it because she had dealt with the young spunky specialist a few times…

“Don’t worry Tony. Boy Scout here hit the ‘O’ earlier quite a few times” she quipped before cutting the connection to the shocked room.
Maria fought through the warm fuzzy feeling in her head as she tried to wake up, it was that feeling of trying to swim upriver when utterly exhausted but she pushed through it. She knew the feeling was the one she got when on the really good drugs and knew distantly that her mate must have been bad if Bruce gave her those drugs when he knows she hates the feeling of them. Her eyes didn’t want to open just yet but she felt a warm fuzzy presence to her right it was her mate...Skye...Rayne, no both? It didn’t matter it was her mate and that is all that mattered to her as she felt her hand slide over sheets before finding another hand, her mates hand.

Tension she didn’t know she had released from her body as her skin met the skin of her mate and she squeezed the hand in reassurance. With it a new awareness came across her consciousness as her mates hand gripped her own hand back and she she felt her mates fear as if it was her own. Distantly she heard machines to start beeping wildly but she ignored them as she pushed a sense of love towards her mate using it to push away her fear and reassure her, they were safe, she was safe and loved.

“Phil get Bruce” she heard a voice say distantly as she sensed movement around her and then a gentle hand was touching her face and must have touched her mates as well because the fear spiked again before it eased again when Maria pushed more love through the bond. “Come on Maria and Skye push through it” said the voice gently and a part of her wanted to follow the instruction, she always followed that voice but the hand still had a death grip on her hand and she knew...Skye wasn’t ready.

Groaning she opened her eyes and then closed them as the room was too bright. A click was heard and the light lessened against her closed eyelids as she slowly peeked through them again. This time the light was bearable as she opened her eyes and turned towards the source of the voice, seeing Mel standing there looking worn and worried. Phil slowly moved into her line of sight as if they didn’t want to startle her and she realized he must have been the one to turn down the light because Mel had both of her hands touching her and Skye’s face.

Turning her head away from them she took in the sight of her mate for the first time in a very long time and saw the horror her mate must have gone through while captured. The evidence was written across her mates body as a mass of bruises only interrupted by the white of gauze bandages or the white plaster casts for broken bones. While the sound of a ventilator dragged her eyes from the sea of black, blue and white of her mates body it made her look at the tube down her mates throat that seemed to make her even more fragile than she knew her mate was. She watched the steady rise and fall of her mates chest and let go a breath she hadn’t realized she was holding as Bruce came into the room followed by Bobbi.

Ignoring them though her eyes went back to Skye’s face and body cataloging every injury into her memory because once this was all over and done with whomever had done this was going to wish their father never looked at their mother. Squeezing once more she was answered by two squeezes back and she felt hope blossom in her chest for a moment before she forced herself to her side ignoring everyone in the room telling her to take it easy, it was easy to do even though she was
awake the voices were distant as if they didn’t matter at the moment.

Maria concentrated on the newest part of their bond and focused on the emotions they were both feeling and sharing. She felt her anger and sadness for what she was seeing it with a deep breath locked it away behind a door in her mind, she’d deal with that later for now it wasn’t helping. Next she concentrated on Skye, it was a wonder her mate wasn’t in a constant state of full blow terror after going through what she had but she wondered if that was Skye knowing she was here as well with her on some level. Slowly so not to overwhelm her she let her mate feel the love she felt for her, let her feel the feeling of safety of family she felt at the moment with the other people in the room.

Carefully she brought her mouth towards Skye’s ear and began to whisper as the love she felt washed away the fears and the pain. “Come on sweetheart time to wake up for me.” Skye squeezed her hand back again and she brought their joined hands up to her lips, placing a gentle kiss to her knuckles. “Come on love, I promise you are safe and there are people who love you that want to see you. I love you and missed you so much. I’m here and not going anywhere. I need you to wake up sweetheart, I promise as soon as we can I’m going to take you dancing. Do you remember our last night at the tower? You were so gorgeous in that dress, the moment I saw you in it I was speechless and knew I was the lucky one.”

“Or we can go on that vacation you made me promise you, just us no distractions or no one able to walk in on us” she said the last with a humor in her voice because she could swear Skye knew what she was about to say before she said it because she felt her mates humor before she said the last part. “Come on love, I need you to wake up for you to get better and for any of that to happen. Our little family has gotten so big over the last few days and there are so many people that are here that love you because you are so special”

Maria watched as Skye’s eyes fluttered and she said “That’s it love, open those beautiful brown doe eyes for me to get lost in.” Slowly they opened and Maria ignored protesting muscles as she propped herself up to look into her mates eyes. She felt the tears in her eyes fall as she whispered softly “Hey beautiful.” Recognition was in Skye’s eyes when she looked at Maria and she watched as her mates eyes softened almost in greeting back to her.

“Skye are you ready to get that tube out?” Bruce asked and fear momentarily spiked from her mate but she felt it as Skye stamped down on it before she turned her eyes away from her to look at the doctor and nod. Maria squeezed her mates hand and felt the answering squeeze back but it was almost a death grip now as emotions flickered across her face and the bond as her eyes landed on Mel and Phil. The emotions were cascading wildly and Maria had a feeling why that was, her mate somehow knew the truth of who she really was and wondered if they were fighting the same group now that originally kidnapped her mate as an infant. Bruce looked worriedly at her mates vitals that had started to spike wildly to go along with her out of control emotions “Skye I need you to calm down for me, okay?”
Pushing away her own chaotic thoughts Maria brought her other hand to touch Skye’s face softly. Thumb gently caressing her mates face till she turned her head to look solely at Maria with brown eyes that were so open in that moment. “Hey beautiful, I need you to calm down, it will all workout I promise you. I’m here, they’re here and none of us are going anywhere anytime soon if we can help it” she whispered into her mates ear and felt it as she calmed down before the machines caught up and stopped alarming.

“Okay I’m going to remove the tube, I need you to take a deep breath in and when I pull I want you to push it out. It’s going to be uncomfortable but I am pretty sure you will be able to breath on your own without it. On three. One. Two. Three” Bruce said as she pulled on the tube. Maria watched as Skye blew out and choked as the tube came out of her throat and she squeezed her mate’s hand letting her know that she was there with her.

The tube came out and Bruce put it on the tray that Bobbi was holding as he grabbed his stethoscope and started to listen to Skye’s lungs as she watched her vitals. “Good Skye you are breathing on your own now” Bruce said taking a step back as Bobbi came over with a cup and put the straw to Skye’s lips and then to Maria’s as well.

“Please tell me you got the license plate of that bus?” her mate said to her with a slight groan in her voice.

“Nope sorry, totally missed it” Maria quipped fighting back the smile and giving it up as a lost cause.

“You would be a smart ass” her mate said smiling back softly with an eye roll.

“Takes one to know one sweetheart” Maria said before she couldn’t resist any longer and kissed her mate gently on the lips as she let her mate feel the full force of her love for her. She heard a gasp from her mate as she pulled back from the kiss with a wicked grin on her face.

“Skye are you okay?” Mel asked concerned and Maria kicked herself in the ass because they were worried she was hurt, they didn’t know that the bond had strengthened even more since this nightmare had all started. They were 1 in 500,000 pairs that were blessed with a double bond, where it wasn’t just the touch sensitivity but also the emotional and mental connection. For their safety their names would never be published but Bruce was about to get the chance of the lifetime to study their bond.

“My fault” Maria said as she looked into her mates brown eyes. “Bruce we are going to need you to do another work up on us, it seems we have both the touch and emotional/mental bond now.”
“Are you sure the chances of that are..” Bruce said.

“I in 500,000. Oh we know Bruce, but it was Maria whispering me and making me feel the love and safety through the bond that got me to wake up. Otherwise it would have been a while I was too afraid…” her mate said softly to the doctor who nodded in understanding.

“Alright we will do it along with your other treatments. Bobbi can you get Jemma and Isabelle and meet me in the lab in thirty minutes?” Bruce asked.

“Of course Bruce” Bobbi said smiling softly at the doctor “It’s good to see you two awake. I’ll let the others know you’re up.”

“Can you tell them we love them but not ready to have visitors just yet, we will send word when we are ready?” Maria asked of her friend, her sister.

“Of course Sis, rest up” Bobbi said before leaving.

“I’ll be in the lab. Press the call button or ask JARVIS and he will get me if you need me” Bruce said before leaving as well. With them gone it was now just her mate, Mel, Phil and herself left in the room and she knew that Mel and Phil weren’t going to say anything just yet to Skye/Rayne but she had a feeling her mate already knew.

“Love can you help me sit up?” her mate asked and she twisted pressing the elevation button on her side of the bed as she brought them not quite sitting up but not anymore almost flat. Only stopping when she felt a shot of pain spike through the bond and then she eased it down just a hair. Maria knew that Skye/Rayne wanted to be somewhat upright for this conversation, she didn’t want to miss anything of it while she was laid back on the bed not able to see.

A cascade of emotions flooded the bond again as Skye/Rayne got a good look at her parents for the first time since her capture and torture. If Maria had any doubts lingering that her mate didn’t know the truth they vanished when she watched it and felt it as her mates eyes softened as she took in Phil standing behind Mel with his arms around her waist. The sense of family she felt was so strong it made her eyes tear up and she squeezed Skye/Rayne’s hand as she sent the feeling of affirmation through the bond. Her mate turned to her and she felt a silent questioning from her on the bond and Maria nodded her head once while they stared at each other.
“Skye, Maria are you two okay?” Mel asked interrupting the moment and breaking them a bit out of the connection. Using the bond to communicate this way was new but it seemed to work in its own weird way and she couldn’t wait to see what else they could do. Amusement came across the bond and she couldn’t help but smirk as she let out a small chuckle. Maria felt it as her mate marshalled her courage to say whatever it was she was going to say as she took a deep breath.

“My name is…Rayne” her mate said softly her voice breaking at her name, as she watched her parents reaction. Maria squeezed her mate’s hand and watched as tears filled both the eyes of Mel and Phil as they stood there in shock. It took a moment but soon both of them shook themselves out of their shock and moved to the side of the bed that Rayne was on.

Mel reached out a tentative hand cupping Rayne’s cheek softly as she brushed away her daughter’s tears. All of them were crying silent tears as they looked onto each other for what seemed like forever. Rayne tilted her head into her mother’s hand and kissed her palm gently which seemed to snap them all out of their silent staring.

“Oh baby girl, we are so sorry. We didn’t know, if we had known…” Phil said his voice breaking at the end as he took Rayne’s other hand in his own while his other hand rested on Mel’s shoulder.

“I know..Mommy and Daddy, I don’t blame you” Rayne said her voice unsure on the use of the titles but she relaxed when both Mel and Phil gave her a soft smile. Rayne turned to her and smiled softly and Maria carefully placed a kiss to her mate’s lips. A smirk crossed her mate’s face before she teasingly said, “I guess that means that these two are now your in-laws love.”
Laura let the cool tile soothe her pounding head as she laid there next to the toilet. She would be forever grateful to the Harpers taking the children last night for a sleepover with their own grandchildren that had come to visit for the weekend. They had run into Laura with a troop of grandchildren in tow at the local store, the children automatically starting to make friends in they way children did.

Jackie and Jenny Harper had left their husband Michael to deal with the children while they had come to greet Laura and check up with her, as the retired triad had taken to keeping an eye out for her and the kids while Clint and Tasha were away. Both women had automatically hugged her and that is when they had noticed the attempted concealing of a pregnancy test in her basket. They had hugged her again and had started fussing over her like a pair of mother hens which was surprisingly a good feeling as they told her that Cooper and Lila could stay the night tonight with their troop while she took sometime for herself and took the test.

Here she was the next morning waiting for the test to finish while she had a bout of morning sickness that was worse than usual. Usually she didn’t get morning sickness and if so lightly but this time it was worse, or it was just her nerves giving her problems. Either way the cool tile was just what she needed to ease the pain in her head as she waited for enough time to pass for her to get up and check the test. Minutes passed this way till the timer she had set on her phone beeped telling her it was time. She already knew what it was going to be but she wanted the visual confirmation as well.

Slowly pulling herself up off the floor she pulled the lid down on the toilet and flushed it as she sat down and looked over at the test on the sink counter. Two pink lines were staring back at her and she couldn’t stop the small soft smile crossing her face even if she wanted to. She wished that Clint and Tasha were here right now but she knew they were still waiting for their niece to wake up. The call she had gotten after their last mission had made her heart ache for her two mates because both of them had a haunted look in their eyes. She had wanted to just hold both of them till the look went away in their eyes, but she wasn’t physically there so she did the next best thing she could do she listened. Laura had listened as the two told her about everything they had learned since they had left her and the kids at the farm.

At the end of the story her heart didn’t just ache for her mates but their extended family as well because that is what they were. Family wasn’t always about blood, no family was also those that you choose to have with you on this journey. Laura didn’t just worry for her mates, she worried as well for their family because you could only take so much before you broke and when one broke the whole family felt it.

The sound of an incoming video call pulled her attention away from the little stick in her hand with the two little pink lines, she didn’t even remember picking it up but she carefully put it down and quickly went to the bedroom. Hitting the acceptance key she sat on the bed and put the tablet
propped up against her legs. “Hello loves. How is our niece?” Laura asked smiling softly to her two mates because their family was now her family and vice versa.

“Awake finally though we haven’t been in to see her just yet. Right now Mel, Phil and Maria are with her,” Tasha said as she leaned against Clint’s chest with his arms around her. It almost looked like her mates had the same idea as her as they were propped against a headboard.

“Where are the kids? We would have thought they would be awake by now” Clint asked her bringing a small smile to her lips.

“They are over at the Harpers, the grandchildren are here for the weekend and the whole lot became good friends so they had a sleepover last night. This is my first morning ever not having the kids with me so I’m glad you called it’s a little odd to be honest” Laura said as her two mates chuckled.

“Well hopefully we will be home soon to keep you...occupied,” Tasha said as her mates eyes caressed her body and Laura felt herself shiver.

“God I love how you react to us even when we aren’t physically there” Clint said huskily as Laura watched his hands start to roam Natasha’s body. Damn pregnancy hormones or maybe it was just the pull of her mates but Laura was instantly turned on by the display on the video screen.

“When will you be home? I’ve missed you two being in bed with me,” Laura asked as one hand caressed her stomach and the other rubbed at her breasts that were overly sensitive.

“As soon as they are stable to transport. We just got to get them somewhere safe to recover and then Clint and I will be home with you and the kids hopefully for a bit. We’ve missed you красивый” Tasha said and Laura watched as Clint lifted off Tasha’s shirt revealing her breasts that were covered in a black bra. Clint’s hands went to the front of the bra and unhooked it as his hands then cupped Tasha’s breasts rolling the nipples between his fingers.

“Take off your shirt, let us see you” Clint husked before he started to kiss and nip at Tasha’s shoulder and neck. Laura leaned forward and pulled her tank top off revealing her breasts to her mates, watching as both of their eyes darkened when they got a good look at her. She brought her hands to her nipples and pinched them between fingers just like Clint was doing to Tasha, which made both of them groan.

“Oh красивый, I wish I was there right now I’d have Clint holding you like he is holding me while I
was right between your legs eating you out. I want to taste you on my lips and feel your hands in my hair as you can’t decide if you want more of my tongue or can’t take anymore of it. Your hands in my hair gripping, pulling as you cum over and over again for me” Tasha said and Laura let out a whimper because she could picture it and she wanted it. “Touch yourself красивый, don’t torture yourself let your fingers be my tongue for now.”

Laura let one hand slide down her stomach fingertips dragging over the life they had created the first time they were together. Her mates didn’t know about their surprise but they soon would as soon as they got home and she could tell them face to face. She wanted to be there with them as they heard the news and wanted them there when they all told the kids. But that would all have to wait till they got home, for now her fingers continued down and slid under her sleeping shorts and into her underwear.

“Fuck Tasha” she moaned as her fingers found herself already hot and wet and oh so overly sensitive from the pregnancy hormones, it wasn’t going to take much to bring her to climax as she watched her mates through the video. Clint had his hand down Tasha’s pants as well as they mimicked each others movements.

“Is that how you want us first when we get home Laura? Tasha eating you out while I hold you? With every movement of your hips dragging your ass against my dick as it swells to get ready for you two?” Clint asked and bit back a groan as Tasha moved her hips to move against Clint’s fingers and she knew Tasha was also rubbing against Clint’s cock.

“Yes” she moaned her fingers flying against her clit as she watched her two mates.

“What else do you want, tell us and it’s yours красивый” Tasha moaned as she worked herself against Clint’s fingers and by the look on both of their faces they weren’t far from cumming, which was good because she was almost there.

“I want you both inside me, holding me between you two while we all fall apart together. Fuck loves I’m so close, please” Laura begged. Then she watched as Clint bit down on Tasha’s shoulder causing Tasha to moan and that was her undoing. “Fuck loves yes, I’m coming.” Laura screamed out as her body seized up and she watched transfixed as both of her mates followed right after her their own moans joining hers.

Her breathing slowly evened out and she could hear Tasha and Clint's breathing as well through the video. Opening her eyes she watched her mates as they kissed slowly. ”That was...” Laura said as she stretched and heard the chuckles from her mates.
"We know красивый, didn't quite have that in mind for when we called but I'm not complaining" Tasha said with a low throaty chuckle.

"Hmm well I'm not complaining either" Laura said as she smiled softly. "I'm glad our niece is awake I was thinking you two showed me those guest houses you have built on the back side of the property. Why don't you have the family come here while she heals? Peace and quiet might just be what everyone needs."

Laura watched as Clint and Tasha had a silent conversation with their eyes as she slowly rested her hands on her stomach. "We could suggest it but only if you are sure love" Clint said finally smiling softly at her.

“They’re family bring them home you two” Laura said and smiled as her mates smiles seemed to grow even bigger. Pressing her hands to her stomach a little more firmly she thought 'Family is family and I want all of my family together to share this news.'

Maria closed her eyes for a moment after the doors to medical closed behind Mel and Phil as they went to go update their growing family outside on their daughter’s condition and Bruce who had come to do a check up and update them on the damage done to Skye/Rayne’s body. Her mate’s hand squeezed her own bringing her attention back to the woman she loved as her blue eyes met scared brown. “Hey sweetheart” Maria said softly reaching out a hand to cup her mate’s cheek as she let her love she felt for the tiny woman through the bond.

“Hey yourself, I knew it was bad just didn’t realize it was that bad” she said and Maria could tell she was making an effort not to cry.

“It’s okay to cry love if you need to” Maria said watching as brown eyes filled with tears and an emotional whirlwind hit her from her mate’s side of the bond but she gently held her mate while she broke down. They both had known that it was going to be bad when Bruce gave them the butcher bill but neither of them had been ready for it to be quite this bad. Add on top of that all the emotional stuff with finding out that Mel and Phil are her parents and that Mel was a match for when the cancer returned. It also didn’t help that she felt her mates confusion and warring emotions whenever someone had called her either Rayne or Skye during the last few conversations.

“I’m Rayne May Coulson but I’m also Skye the orphan, the hacker and now level 10 agent of SHIELD that is the main point person for the investigation besides you into the dirty agents that we know are in our organization. I’m also your mate, the mate to the Deputy Director of a super secret spy organization that protects the world in general against everything that goes bump in the night and
things it isn’t ready to face. I’ve been kidnapped, experimented on, tormented and abused most of my life and I’m so tired of fighting for everyday. I won’t give up Maria but I don’t know how much more I can take…” she said her voice breaking into a fresh set of tears.

Maria held the tiny woman in her arms as she fell apart trying to give her mate the sense of safety she needed to feel to finally let everything go that had been holding her down for all these years. A breakdown was inevitable for her tiny mate and Maria held her as she cried and cried with her. She doesn’t know how long they laid there in the hospital bed crying but soon the tears slowed to a stop as they now laid there exhausted and spent.

“You know that is a lot of things to be and feel all at one time but remember love that you can be anything or anyone you want to be. I’ll be with you every step of the way, no matter what you choose to do with your life” Maria said as she ran her fingers through her mate’s hair.

“I’m just afraid of hurting and disappointing everyone.”

“I know but all that matters is what you want love, your parents will tell you the same thing if you ask them,” Maria said softly kissing her mates forehead and looking into her brown eyes that had so much confusion and uncertainty in them.

“What if I don’t know what I want or who I want to be? For someone never knowing love the only thing I know for certain is that you are my mate and I am yours. That I love you with everything I am and know you love me just as much because of our bond..”

“Then take the time you need to figure everything else out, you will have time while you heal. Who is to say you can’t be both Skye and Rayne?” Maria asked hoping she could help her mate through this identity crisis.

“What do you mean?” her mate asked.

“I mean that you choose to be Skye but you have always been Rayne May Coulson, you just never knew about that part of you. So who is to say you can’t be Skye Rayne May Coulson? No matter who you are or who you choose to be you are my mate, my love that won’t change. The love your parents have for you won’t change with your name, they loved you even when they only knew of you as Skye and they love you just the same that they now know that you are Rayne. The love our family that has grown insanely large in the last few weeks feels for you hasn’t changed in any shape way or form from when they knew you only as Skye to now knowing that you are also Rayne” Maria said looking into her mates brown eyes and feeling the chaotic emotions from her through the bond but as she talked the storm of emotions seemed to dim as her mate thought through everything
she was saying.

“I can be Skye Rayne May Coulson?” she asked.

“Yes you can be if that is what you choose and she can be anyone or anything she wants to be. This is your fresh start, I got one years ago when your parents found me three bottles of scotch into a binge after I had been discharged from the Marines” Maria said kissing her mates lips softly before pulling back, the need to keep touching her mate to reassure herself that she was actually there but it would be sometime before anything more than kissing could happen.

“I think I want to be Skye Rayne May Coulson, mate to Maria Hill and an Agent of SHIELD” Skye said softly before pulling Maria down to her lips and kissing her fully. Maria lost herself in the feeling of kissing her mate but was still mindful of putting weight onto her mates body.

“Agent Romanoff, Director Fury is on the video line for you and he says it is urgent” JARVIS said startling both her and Clint as they talked to Laura over video.

“I’ll let you two go, love you” Laura said to them before blowing a kiss and ending their video call. Natasha sighed as she and Clint quickly made themselves presentable for their boss or ex-boss, he hadn’t quite admitted to the Avengers that he needed help but they were still going to shove it down his throat.

“Open the comlink JARVIS” Natasha said as she stood up and faced the video screen. A moment later Fury was seen on her video screen in a darked out room “Director?”

“Romanoff, I just got word from one of my contacts in the darker side of things there is a price on Skye/Rayne’s head. That girl must have heard something she wasn’t suppose to while being held because the price is really high. I’d suggest moving her as soon as you can to somewhere more defendable or untraceable and I don’t want to know where” Fury said.

“Got it, Director we will be in contact. JARVIS sound the lockdown open the comlink to medical and get Avenger Tower on the line as well and patch them through to the Command Center” Natasha said as she pulled on her comlink and dropped herself into their tactical net radios. “I want everyone in full tactical gear and bags packed in ten minutes. Mel, Phil and Victoria to the Command Center. Tony, Clint and Hunter on the roof you have overwatch. Bobbi and Isabelle you have medical. Bruce, I need you to give me an assessment if our patients can be moved and FitzSimmons you are to assist Bruce with anything he needs” she ordered as quickly pulled on her tactical suit and threw what few belongings into another bag. Clint started handing her, her weapons as she double
checked them before stowing them on her person. They walked out of their room and she pulled Clint into a deep kiss before pulling away and pushing him towards the stairs. “Go be my eyes.”

“On it” he jogged off and she could already hear Tony in the air in his suit as he took station over the house.

“They can be moved but it has to be as stable as we can make it. Though she is awake Skye is still in critical condition” Bruce answered as she watched him enter medical via the comlink just as she came into the Command Center.

“Understood, we will try to make this as smooth as we can. I need you to ready Skye for transport. How long do you need Bruce?”

“About thirty minutes” Bruce answered as he started getting medical gear organized “Do we have room for the gurney or do I need to transport her using a backboard?”

“Gurney is fine, you got thirty minutes Bruce make it happen” she said before looking towards Maria on the video feed next to her mate who looked scared. “Maria I need you in full tactical gear for this we need to get your mate somewhere secure and fast. Fury got word from a contact that there is a price on Skye’s head, we will debrief once we are somewhere safe but for right now first priority is getting her somewhere off the radar.”

“Where to Avenger Tower?” Tony asked over his link in his suit.

“No Clint and I have somewhere that is completely off radar and off anyones books but we also need to get some people back into place to continue our investigation. I know our original thought was to get us concentrated for strength but that way we are too visual of a target, especially at the Tower and anywhere SHIELD run is out of the question. No Clint and I have the perfect place. Mel can you take Maria her tactical gear then you and Isabelle start preflighting the Quinjets, please”

“On it Tasha” Mel said as she gave Phil a kiss before leaving the room.

“Victoria and Isabelle I want you two back at the HUB once I can get my network tied into Skye’s hidden network we will be in touch and able to help you out with the research side of the investigation. I know you want Fitz with you but I think any members of 616 are going to be targeted and the HUB is just too easy for someone to get to him” Natasha said looking to Victoria that didn’t look happy.
“Agreed but we both want Fitz to start training to be a full field agent. It’s getting too dangerous to keep him and Simmons just as scientific non-combatants and from what I have read of the mission reports for 616 that is an impossibility for them” Isabelle said over her comlink from outside guarding medical.

“I agree with that assessment as well, I promise you that both Fitz and Simmons will be given a crash course in what they need where we are going” Natasha said and she watched the two young scientist blanched at the thought as they helped getting gear together for Bruce.

“Tony and Bruce I want you two back at the tower, make the Avenger presence known. Steve and Sharon as soon as they get there report back to Fury but keep us in the loop. Tony set them up with everything they need before they leave.”

“Got it, give the Capsicle and his mate plenty of toys” Tony said but she chose to ignore him.

“Um Tasha, Skye is going to need an actual doctor to check her out daily” Bruce said.

“And she will have one, Clint and I have someone we trust. Hunter I need you to report back and see if you can dig us up some information but if you feel the heat call us and we will get you out of the fire. You’re family and we take care of our own. Got it?”

“Got it,” Hunter responded from the roof.

“For right now Bobbi you are with us. Clint and I might tap you as a trainer for the science twins but you will also be our medic to assist the doctor we will have on call.”

“Got it how are we doing the travel?” Bobbi asked.

“By Quinjet and then we will pick up the Bus. Queen1 will have Isabelle as pilot with Clint, Phil, Bobbi, Hunter, Victoria, Tony and I. Queen2 will have Mel as pilot with Bruce, Fitz, Simmons, Maria and Skye. Queen1 will drop first and we will provide ground security for the transfer except Tony. Tony I want you airborne and working with Queen1 on air support.

“Queen2 will then drop. Mel I want you getting the bus preflighted while they transfer Skye and get
her secure for take off. Once she is inside Clint and I will take Queen2 and get it airborne to provide cover, Queen1 will then drop and pick up Victoria and Hunter. Everyone else is to get in the bus once Mel says they are ready for takeoff. Queen1 and 2 will continue to provide cover during take off. After that Queen1 can go to the HUB while dropping Hunter wherever he needs to get to. The rest of us will continue towards New York, Tony Queen2 will be the prototype that I know you have invisible even to SHIELD can you make the Bus that way?"

“Easily I’ll need Fitz’s help but it will be easy” Tony answered.

“Ready for transport Tasha” Bruce said.

“Good we are on our way. Pairs that are getting separated once we are outside and Skye is loaded you have ten minutes to say your goodbyes. I wish I could give you longer but we need to get out of dodge” Natasha said as she walked out of the Command Center and headed towards medical. She shouldn’t even give the ten minutes but she was growing soft because of Laura and the kids and couldn’t find it in her to care about the loss of that edge.

“Hunter go see your girls” Clint told him as they kept watch over the group moving towards the Quinjets from the roof.

“You sure?” Hunter asked as he kept scanning the area with binoculars.

“Yeah I’m sure, Tony give your son in law a ride. Hunter clench,” Clint said with almost humor in his voice. Hunter looked at him suspiciously and clueless before he heard his future father in law behind him grabbing his shoulder straps before he took off again. Hunter knew he squealed like a girl as he was lifted off the roof and flown towards the jets. Both Clint and Tony’s laughter filled his ears over their comlinks as Tony finally set him down just a few feet from the jets and took off automatically back into the air.

Hunter dropped to his knees and kissed the ground as Natasha watched him with an amused smirk before yelling for his mates to come say their goodbyes. Standing up he opened his arms before both Bobbi and Jemma hugged him tightly as he kissed their foreheads. “I love you both, please stay safe and you know how to get a hold of me if you need me” he whispered to them as he looked into their eyes.

“Promise, I’ll keep this one out of trouble” Jemma said indicating Bobbi with an impish smirk.
“You better stay safe as well mister” Bobbi said shaking a finger at him and then poking him in the chest.

“I promise my loves,” Hunter said as he kissed first Jemma then Bobbi deeply and then pulled them in for one last hug of them all together with Jemma pressed into him while Bobbi sandwiched their smaller mate between them.

Taking a step back Hunter fought back the tears as Jemma went to join Fitz on the Quinjet. His future brother in law taking Jemma in his arms as they walked and disappeared as the cargo doors closed. He felt his hand being gripped by Bobbi and he squeezed her hand back before they disappeared as well into the other Quinjet.

Izzy was fighting a losing battle against not crying, they had just found Fitz and now they would have to part from him. Their bonding was completed but being separated would still suck because all she wanted was her two mates safe and at her side. As much as she wanted to argue the point she knew Fitz would not be safe at the HUB, it was a snake pit at the moment. They only had one maybe two agents they could trust fully and even then that would not be enough to keep Fitz safe.

No, their young mate would be safest wherever Clint and Natasha was taking them because the assassins knew how to disappear in plain sight and would also begin teaching not only Fitz but Jemma as well how to protect themselves. She felt a tap on her shoulder and pressed for the chair to back up and turn so she could get easily and greet her two mates. Pulling Fitz into her arms she kissed the top of his curly head as Tori sandwiched him between them and whispered something into Fitz’s ear.

“I promise” he said turning his head and capturing Tori’s lips with his own. Izzy watched the gentle kiss with a warm feeling in her chest that increased when her two mates broke it off and leaned against each other as they looked at her with love in their eyes. “I love you both so much, please stay safe for me” Fitz said softly.

“We love you too Curly” Izzy said before leaning down and kissing Fitz and felt him shiver in her arms as she nipped his lip. “You’re ours once this is all done with. Vacation no distractions, no interruptions.”

“Hmm I like the sound of that” Tori purred as they hugged one last time. Izzy saw tears in both of her mate’s eyes and she had to fight the urge to tie Fitz down to one of the jumpseats in her jet.
Instead she reached out and wiped away a tear and kissed his forehead one last time. Tori did the same as she did before they watched Fitz nod to them before turning away from them and walking out of the jet.

She felt a hand on her face and she looked at Tori with tears in her eyes. “Come on love, we have work to do” Tori told her and Izzy watched as the woman she loved once again became something she hated to be at times to get the job done. Taking a deep breath she closed her eyes and once she opened them again and the breath was released she was once again someone she truly wasn’t.

Natasha kept the Quinjet riding station to the Bus as they flew over the North Atlantic, they had put off docking with the Bus as long as they could to give Tony and Bruce time with their kids. Kids, they were twenty three year old geniuses but they were so young, so innocent they wanted to give the little family that much. Natasha actually hated it that they couldn’t give them time to meet Pepper face to face but she needed to get her family to ground.

Clint knocked her out of her thoughts as he placed his hand on her shoulder “We need to dock Tasha, we gave them as long as we could.”

“I know” she said softly before activating her radio. “Queen2 to 616”

“Go for 616” Mel answered.

“Maintain profile, we will be docking. Tell Tony and Bruce it’s time to leave” Natasha said.

“Copy Queen2. See ya in a few” Mel said as Natasha pulled up on the stick and pulled above the Bus as she slowly lowered the Quinjet to dock with the top hatch.

“Dropping tube, five feet, two feet, one foot, contact. Engaging tractor lock, good lock” Clint said as they performed the difficult maneuver. Getting up she quickly stretched before grabbing her gear bags and taking them the hatch. Clint opened the hatches and dropped down into the Bus before he started catching their gear, they’ve been here before but this was a different Bus and whole different time even if some of the players were still the same.

Slowly she lowered herself down into the Bus and was caught around the waist by Clint as he gently brought her to her feet and kissed her softly. For a moment it took her by surprise but she kissed him
back before he pulled back with a gentle nip to her bottom lip. “Guess I’m not the only one having nostalgia?”

“Nope. Love you Tasha, seeing you like that, it was like no time had passed by and it was just all still so new to us” Clint said before kissing her forehead. “I can’t wait to be home.”

“Makes two of us” Natasha said softly before she heard voices heading their way. She turned around in Clint’s arms and watched as Tony, Bruce and FitzSimmons came into the room followed by Bobbi. Bobbi peeled off and stood at the door giving the little family some space as they hugged. They watched as Tony whispered something into his kids ears before taking a step back his eyes shining slightly in the light. Bruce gave the kids a hug as well before following Tony over to the hatch.

“Bus is totally untraceable. Take care of them for me will you?” Tony asked as he stood at the foot of the ladder.

“Of course Tony, they are family and we take care of family” Clint said giving the billionaires shoulder a squeeze.

“Radio to us when you are ready to break off and we will disengage the tractor from this end for you” Natasha said before heading towards to cockpit to take over for Melinda. They weren't even going to use the auto pilot for this trip because she didn’t want these coordinates on any electronic database.

Walking into the cockpit she squeezed Mel’s shoulder as they quickly switched positions as she took the primary seat and Mel moved to the back up. Pulling on the headset she took a moment to read the instruments while she waited for word from Tony.

“Stark to 616”

“616 go ahead”

“Ready to disengage, standing by for signal” Tony said.

“Disengaging in three, two, one” Natasha said as Mel pressed the button to kill the tractor and she put the plane to drop a few feet while Tony got the Quinjet clear.
“Stark clear, take care friends, see you soon” Tony said before turning away more north towards New York while she kept the plane heading west.

Moments passed in silence between her and Mel as they looked out into the cloud filled night. “So where are we going Tasha?” Mel finally asked the question she knew her friend had been dying to ask.

“Home,” Natasha said simply.

“Clint we are about thirty minutes out, I’ll need your help up here” Natasha’s voice came over the com pulling his attention from his conversation he was having with Phil. They had been sitting at the foot of the stairs near the lab where Skye was sitting up on the gurney with Maria next to her catching up with her friends. “Everyone else strap in for landing it shouldn’t get bumpy but just incase.”

“Coming” he said through the com system as he stood up and stretched. Walking over to where he had stashed their bags in the lab he reached in for his tablet and started loading up the house defense systems. It was around 6pm and he knew the kids would be up and probably out in the yard playing while they landed so he pulled out his phone while he walked to the cockpit followed by Phil. Dialing Laura’s number he brought the phone to his ear.

“Hello love” Laura said over the phone and he could hear the kids playing in the background.

“Hey we are about twenty minutes out” Clint said as he came into the cockpit.

“Alright I’ll get the kids inside. They don’t know yet that you are coming so be prepared for them to be excited, see you in a few” Laura said before she hung up the phone. Putting the phone in his pocket he ignored the questioning look from Phil as he traded places with Mel. Usually Mel and Tasha could handle the landing on their own but he and Tasha had decided earlier that they would be the ones to fly here and land here.

“Approach is clear” he answered when Tasha gave him a questioning eyebrow and watched as the tension left her shoulders. He reached over and gave her shoulder a squeeze before he started deactivating the houses air defenses that were hidden by haystacks around the property. “Defenses are down, lights are on, we are good to land,” Clint said as they made their final approach and he got the good first look of home since they left Laura and the kids there.
“Here Phil hold this” Clint said as he quickly looked back and handed his brother the tablet before grabbing the secondary yoke. Mel and Phil’s faces were of questioning curiosity but they would learn soon enough. It wasn’t like it was a secret they kept for long, they had just found Laura and the kids but it was still a secret. He silently hoped that there would be no more secrets in this family, he was getting tired of it.

“Clint drop the landing gear” Tasha said knocking him out of his thoughts and he did as he was asked putting all his concentration in getting the Bus down safely. They had landed Quinjets here once or twice but nothing as big as the Bus and though there was enough room, one wrong move and it could all end in disaster and his family was on the ground and in the air with him.

“Engage Hover in three, two, one. Hover engaged” Tasha grunted as they both fought to keep the plane steady as it slowly lowered to the ground. They felt the plane bounce slightly when the wheels touched the ground before they killed the engines. Laughing he pulled Tasha over for a kiss before he got up and took the tablet back from a clearly in shock Phil. Bringing the tablet back to the screen he needed he turned back on the air defenses. “Defenses are back online.”

“Alright ladies and gents we have arrived. Leave your gear we will grab it after dinner. Maria and Skye you should be able to use the wheelchair here and if you get stuck we will help ya out” Tasha said over the com system before making a beeline out of the cockpit and Clint quickly followed her feeling like a kid at christmas.

As they came into the cargo bay they saw that was Skye in the wheelchair and not quite looking happy about it. Clint knew his niece had issues with asking for help and a wheelchair that was manually pushed was the epitome of needing help for someone in her condition. Before he could say anything though Maria bent down and whispered something into her mate’s ear causing the woman to smile and shake her head.

Clint watched as Tasha walked over to drop the cargo ramp of the Bus and he quickly went over to stand next to her. He felt her hand grip his own and he looked over to her as they both wished the cargo ramp would drop faster, tears were in her eyes and he knew for once they were happy tears. This side of Tasha was a rare thing and any glimpse into it he cherished because this was the woman she could have been before the red room got to her as a child. They heard everyone come up behind them as the ramp finally lowered to the ground.

“MA! PA!” two high pitched voices yelled from the back porch as two little figures jumped down and came running for them. Quickly sharing a look with Tasha they both gave an impish smirk to each other before they ran off the plane and scooped up the two children and spun them around to squeals and giggles from the pair.
“Easy there loves spin them high enough they might fly away” Laura said approaching. Tasha and him had the same idea as they pulled Laura into the group hug sandwiching her between them as they gave her a gentle kiss each on the cheek. “Welcome home loves.”

“It’s good to be home,” Clint said before turning to his other family that was still in shock standing on the cargo ramp of the Bus. Walking his little family towards the Bus he smiled softly as he began to make introductions. “Everyone I’d like for you to meet Laura, mine and Tasha’s third and our children Cooper and Lila.” The introduction seemed to knock everyone out of their shock as they finished coming down the ramp.

First them to reach them was Mel and Phil still a bit shocked but Clint saw that his brother and sister in all but blood had an understanding look in their eyes as they came to stand in front of his little clan. “Laura this is my brother Phil and his mate my sister Mel. Kiddos I’d like you to meet your Aunt Mel and Uncle Phil. Next are your cousins, that’s Maria and Skye over there but you need to be careful when you give her a hug because she is a little hurt at the moment. Okay?”

“Okay Pa” Lila said and Cooper nodded at him.

“Then next to them is Bobbi, she is the really tall blonde lady and next to her is Jemma one of her mates while Fitz is Jemma’s twin brother” Clint finished as he put down Lila as Tasha put down Cooper so the kids could mingle with the adults. He shared a soft look with his mates as the kids happily went to give everyone hugs and greetings.

“You all must be hungry. Come inside dinner should be done in a few minutes” Laura said as she pulled both Clint and Tasha with her towards the house but they both stopped her as they bracketed her between them. Her pulse quickened as she felt both of their hands on her waist as Clint bent down and captured her lips in a passionate kiss that left her head spinning once it broke apart. She looked into his gray eyes and saw that the pupils were blown wide.

Gentle hands turned her around in their arms before she was kissed by Tasha so deeply that it stole her breath away and made her knees go weak. Clint's arms tightened around her waist holding her up against him as Tasha broke off the kiss as well. As Tasha's emerald eyes met her brown ones she took in the pupil blown eyes and the smouldering fire just beneath them. "I missed you too" Laura laughed breathlessly as her mates held her between them.

"Now come on you two I don't want dinner to burn in the oven” she said swatting at their stomachs that at that time decided to growl. Rolling her eyes she pulled both of them by a hand and led the way back to the house. At the porch she let go of Clint's hand knowing he would need to help lift
Skye's wheelchair up the steps and continued inside with Tasha behind her.

Laura went to the oven and looked inside seeing that the cheese wasn't fully melted just yet so set the timer for another five minutes as she felt Tasha's arms circle her waist and rest on her stomach. She felt her pulse quicken again for a moment thinking that her red headed mate somehow knew her secret but realized there was no way. Instead she listened and knew everyone was still on the porch trying to get Skye’s wheelchair up the stairs and answering the childrens never ending questions.

Slowly she reached for Tasha’s hands and placed one on the right and the other on the left sides of her stomach and squeezed her mates hands hoping she got what she was trying to tell her because at that moment Laura’s words were failing her. The point she was trying to make must have gotten across to her red headed mate because she felt her mate stiffen momentarily behind her. A kiss was placed gently behind her shoulder blades before hands slid down to her hips and turned her around. Green eyes shining with tears met her own brown and she hadn’t realized she was crying till that moment when Tasha’s hands gently brushed the tear from her eye and cupped her face. “Are you sure красивый?” she asked softly.

Laura nodded as she rested her head on Tasha’s watching as emotions cascaded in her mates eyes but happiness was there as her mate softly smiled up at her. “Oh красивый you don’t know how happy you just made us” Tasha said as she softly kissed Laura as if she was afraid she would break, like she was the most precious thing in the world. Tears were in her eyes again as Tasha knelt before her and kissed her stomach as she gently ran her fingers in Tasha’s hair.

Clint took that moment to walk in the door from the back porch and he stood there shocked for a moment taking in the scene before him, everyone behind him at a standstill wondering what was going on. Laura watched as confusion then a questioning hope filled his eyes as he looked at her and she held out her hand to him as she nodded her head in confirmation as she softly smiled. She doesn’t even see Clint move, one minute he was blocking the doorway and the next he was kissing her as his hand went protectively over her stomach. Breaking off the kiss he knelt down to kiss her stomach tenderly as he started to whisper something to their child inside. Laura’s hand shakily went to run itself in Clint’s short hair as Tasha stood and came around to hold her from behind.

The timer going off for the oven made her jump and pulled her away from her thoughts and the comfort of having her mates close to her. Of them finally knowing that their family was about to get a little bit larger and her relief that they were just excited and happy as she was in this moment. Laughing she reached over to the oven and pulled down the door to peek inside before closing it and pressing the button to turn it off. Clint stood up with tears in his eyes as the children came around the kitchen counter both of them looking between the adults with worry filled eyes as they saw them crying.

“Mommy why are you and Ma and Pa crying?” Lila asked always the more vocal of her children while Cooper was happy enough to just let his sister lead the way. Clint bent down and scooped up
both kids in his arms making pretend grunting sounds as he lifted them up in the air to the children’s giggles. Laura felt Tasha’s arms circle her stomach again hands protectively covering it as a kiss was placed just below her ear.

“They are happy tears my маленькие птенцы” Tasha said softly.

“Very happy tears kiddos” Clint answered grinning from ear to ear as his eyes couldn’t seem to leave Laura’s as love and happiness shined in them.

“But why?” Lila asked tilting her head to the side slightly confused.

“Because my little ones Mommy has a baby inside her tummy” Laura said trying to explain it to her little ones.

Dinner had been a loud affair with two kids and everyone congratulating Clint, Natasha and Laura on the news of their newest addition to the family. Her parents had sat at the table even more lively than she had ever seen them as they laughed and told stories to Laura, much to the embarrassment of Clint and Natasha. Bobbi occasionally told additional stories as it turned out the two assassins had also been her S.O.’s when she had come out of the academy.

Jemma her friend sat curled up next to Bobbi leaning against the taller woman with a soft smile on her face that had Skye happy for her friend. With her gift she could tell that their bond was strong and might even reach the levels of her and Maria’s bond before she had been tortured and experimented on. She felt her emotions spike at the last bit of that thought and felt Maria squeeze her hand in comfort and reassurance as her mate sat next to her.

Her eyes next traveled to Fitz as the kids sat with him at the the kitchen counter as he did magic tricks for them that made them laugh and clap.

She had watched earlier as the children went from adult to adult unafraid and unencumbered with the fear she felt at their age to sit in their laps and talk to them each briefly. The children had even come and while on Maria’s lap they talked to Skye about everything and anything.

‘Is this how a family was suppose to be?’ she thought sadly as she thought back on everything she had lost because of some crazy scientist with a god complex. She had never known her mother’s love or her father’s protectiveness and as she watched Natasha, Clint and Laura with the children she realized for the first time fully what had been lost.
She felt Maria squeeze her hand again her mate had been a solid presence and source of comfort to her throughout the night as she hid behind laughter and smiles while dealing with her wild emotions. Skye looked into worried blue eyes and knew what her mate was asking her in that moment went just a look and an emotion ‘Are you okay?’ Shaking her head minutely she let her mate know she needed a moment away from everything, that she felt the mask she had been keeping up falling away.

Love and understanding filled blue eyes and came to her through the bond and she held onto the feeling as Maria stood up and pulled her wheelchair back from the table. Their leaving the table caught everyone’s attention and she wasn’t sure what to say but Maria took care of that for her thankfully. “We are going to go rest for a bit on the plane, Bobbi can you help me get Skye down the stairs?” Maria asked as Skye leaned her head back and closed her eyes. It wasn’t a lie, she was exhausted just not physically, she was exhausted emotionally and wasn’t sure how much longer she could hold it together for.

Skye felt the night air hit her skin and though it was cool it wasn’t uncomfortable as she felt the chair lifted and she was carried down the stairs. The wheels of the chair hit the ground and she felt a gentle kiss on her brow that surprised her enough to have her open her eyes and look into her father’s face lined with worry, sorrow and understanding. Another kiss to her brow had her turning to look into her mother’s face that was the same as her father’s.

Biting her lip she fought back the tears that threatened to spill out because what little defenses she had left were crumbling around her. A gentle hand on her shoulder, this time from her mate as Maria kissed the top of her head letting her feel her emotions fully. Unconditional love and understanding of the loss she was feeling flowed through the bond the last bit of her defenses crumbled in that moment as a sob escaped her throat.

Her parents were there in an instant holding her between them as she cried for everything they had lost and could never get back. She felt her tears against her face as they fell but she felt her parents tears as they held her. Skye shook and broke for the second time since she had woken up and she felt Maria’s heartbreak as her own because to prevent things like this happening was why they did the job they did. No one was able to stop anything that happened to her as a child but she survived but she felt that heartbreak turn into determination as they both silently vowed to put an end to it.
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Skye heard it through her tears as her mother started humming a nameless lullaby to her, holding her tight as she broke again. The torrent of her emotions just under her skin like a fire that was threatening to consume her whole but she wasn’t alone. For the first time in her life she realized fully and without doubt that she wasn’t alone, that she had Maria and her parents there with her no matter what. That she had the strange group of people in the house and spread now across the world that were here family. Not all of them by blood, but by choice, by the bonds that held them together against the world.

Maria’s hands rested on her shoulders thumbs lightly rubbing as her mate stood behind her as a steady presence in the chaos of her emotions. She didn’t know how her mate was doing it, dealing with not only her own emotions but now Skye’s chaos as her demons were just skin deep instead of carefully hidden away. Tonight once it was time to go to sleep she knew it was going to be hell in her mind and she let out another soft sob in her parents arms because she was so tired of fighting.

“It’s alright baby girl, let it out. Don’t hold it in, it will only destroy you in the end. Don’t make the same mistake I did, please let it out” she heard her mother say, her voice breaking slightly at the last part. She felt it as one hand left her shoulder and knew that Maria had reached to comfort their mother. Skye knew that before she knew them as her parents Maria had already thought of them as her own. They had taken and put her mate together and she knew between them, Maria and their family she would be put back together as well. She would never be the same as she once was but she didn’t cry for the loss of the person she once was because the future held so much promise.

Skye pulled her mother closer and felt a gentle kiss to her temple as her tears finally seemed to be at an end. From crying herself out or from her thoughts taking a turn away from the all consuming sorrow and sense of loss she had been feeling, she wasn’t sure but she would take it. Her father pressed a kiss to her other temple, then a kiss to her mothers temple as he stood up watching them with a soft smile and eyes still watery. Skye released her tight hold on her mother and took a deep breath as she watched the woman stand up looking down at her.

“I have an idea, follow us you two” her father said as he gently took her mother’s hand and led the way towards the plane. Skye looked up and back towards Maria as her mate pushed her wheelchair. Blue eyes met her own brown and her mate smiled while pressing a kiss to her forehead letting the curiosity she was feeling cross the bond.

Skye sent Maria a silent thank you across the bond knowing that her mate would understand what for, none of this could be easy on Maria but she was putting Skye first. A hand squeezing her shoulder let her know Maria understood and would be there for her, pulling the hand to her face she kissed her mates palm before resting her head in the hand for a moment. Tenderness and love flashed through the bond and she sent the same back to her mate.
As they followed her parents she let her gift and its new strength see the bond her parents shared. With her gift their bond had always felt off and not just because of the way they acted around those that didn’t know they were soulmates. Since the Berserker staff incident and her father’s kidnapping she felt the bond as it slowly repaired itself as it became more stable. Before she couldn’t understand why if they had been a soul mated pair for so long why the bond felt so unstable. Now though she understood why it was as she realized in her mother pain and guilt that she had pushed her father away trying to protect him but it had damaged both of them instead in the long run.

Now she hoped her parents would get the time they needed to heal fully before the next shoe dropped. She didn’t want to be pessimistic but she didn’t believe for an instant that their family would be left alone, nor that something big wasn’t brewing. No if she had learned one thing from her capture and torture it was that everything was connected and that they were trying to solve the puzzle before the ball dropped. The Bus came into view and she watched as her parents shared a look and her mother shook her head fondly at her father.

“Stay here a moment” her father said disappearing inside with her mother and she felt amused recognition through the bond as Maria parked the wheelchair at the foot of the ramp. Curiosity almost had her asking the question but soon her parents reappeared with two of the training mats between them.

“Um, I don’t think I’m up for some sparing Mom and Dad” Skye said as they dropped the mats on the cargo ramp. Her parents paused for a moment at her words and shot her a happy smile before they both smirked at each other.

“Get the pillows Phil” her mother said sending her father back into the Bus as she walked towards Maria and her. “No sparing for you young lady, at least till those casts come off” her mother said giving a dark look at the casts on both of her lower legs before shaking off the look.

“Come on let’s get you out of that chair” her mother said as both her and Maria connected their arms under her legs and behind her back and lifted her from the chair. Carefully they walked over to the mats just as her father came back carrying a small stack of pillows. Skye was placed gently onto the mats with a pillow behind her as her father disappeared again inside but soon the lights of the Bus’ interior turned off and she was greeted with the night time wonder of a thousand stars.

“This is something your father and I did quite often when we were first together and also almost nightly when I was pregnant with you” her mother said.

“Almost nightly Mel? If we didn’t do it Nugget somehow knew and wouldn’t let you sleep till we
went outside and looked at the stars. The only other nights she let us get away without going outside was the nights it was raining” her father said amusement in his voice as he pulled her mother down onto the mats before tossing a pillow at Maria. Skye waited till everyone was situated on the mats with their pillows, she was surrounded by her family with Maria to her right their hands intertwined and her mother and father on her left. She held her mothers hand feeling its warmth and strength as they laid there quietly looking at the stars.

She had so many questions that she wanted to ask her parents, so many things she could tell them about or even things she needed to talk to them about but she didn’t know where or what to start with. “When is my birthday?” she asked suddenly and blushed because that wasn’t quite how she meant to start the conversation but the thought had popped in her mind her birthdate had been listed as the day she was dropped off at the orphanage.

“April 24th, 1990. You were born two weeks late, if you hadn’t come out by the next day they had scheduled to induce labor” her mother said tears in her eyes. Skye watched as her father wrapped her mother in his arms and whispered something to her. Whatever it was had her mother take a shaky breath that she released before leaning her head for a moment on his shoulder.

“Taurus no wonder I’m stubborn” Skye said trying to make everyone laugh and was successful as both her parents and Maria laughed.

“She gets that from you” her mother and father both said at the same time looking at each other with shocked expressions on their faces.

“She gets it from both of you” Maria said with a snort, dragging her parents attention to her and she just smirked back at them with a raised eyebrow. “Don’t even deny it, you both can be damn stubborn if you choose to be.” Skye busted up laughing at her parents reaction to what Maria said because instead of arguing they both stuck out their tongues at her mate and their boss like a pair of five year olds.

“A few moments ago you called me Nugget, do I even want to ask?” she asked amused as her parents shared a small chuckle next to her.

“When your mother was pregnant all she wanted was McDonalds Chicken Nuggets. I joked around we were having a little Nugget one night and the nickname stuck” her father told her as they all laid there looking at the stars.

Natasha sat there at the table, letting the sense of family and love wash over her as she listened to stories and laughed at some as well. She had been worried earlier when Maria and Skye had left so
abruptly but when she got a glimpse of her niece's face she understood what was going on. With a glance to both Mel and Phil who had an identical look of worry on their faces she had watched the silent conversation between them before they stood and joined Maria and Skye as they left out the back door. Natasha knew that Skye hadn’t realized her parents had joined her and she wondered when those two were going to tell Skye the truth of her parentage.

Out of the corner of her eyes she had watched as her kids had gone from adult to adult demanding attention and getting to know their family. She was thankful to every deity and even some non deities that Cooper and Lila were still innocent, trusting and loving. By their age both Clint and her had been broken of those feelings and she silently vowed that neither of them or the small miracle in Laura’s stomach would know what that was like.

Even though this was her family she still watched the children and she noticed she wasn’t the only one as both Clint and Laura kept an eye on the kids. She never thought she could be a parent but with meeting Laura and the children those instincts that she had been afraid had burned out of her by the Red Room like they had ripped away her only chance of having children. But the instincts were there and she knew her mates would use the presence of those instincts to remind her that she was still human despite feeling like a monster at times.

Lila tried hiding a yawn from the counter as her and Cooper watched Fitz do magic tricks with coins and cards. Smiling softly she made a mental note to pull the video from the house security footage and send it to Victoria and Isabelle once they had the secure network tied into Skye’s system. The young engineer was quite good with the kids and she knew he was thankful for the distraction they provided him because she knew he missed his mates. Natasha hated the fact she had to split up the newly mated triad so soon after meeting each other but she had no choice, their group had made her the security officer for a reason, they knew she would make the decisions needed to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Cooper yawned as well and glancing at the clock she realized it was well past both children’s bedtimes. She caught Laura looking at the clock and then at her children with a soft smile on her lips, Natasha leaned over and kissed Laura’s cheek before pushing away from the table. “Bedtime little ones.”

“Aww Ma, we aren’t even tired,” Lila said as she tried to hide another yawn.

“We can see that” Laura said with fond amusement in her voice as she came to stand next to Natasha as their hands joined. “Come on you two, say goodnight. Then time to march upstairs.”

“Goodnight everyone” Lila said with another yawn while Cooper just waved. “Pa will you read us a story?”
“Of course Princess but first go get ready for bed, I’ll be up in a minute” he smiled gently to the kids as they both grinned at him then ran for the stairs. Natasha heard Laura chuckle next to her as her mate pulled her after the two children.

“Wash your faces and brush your teeth” Laura called out as they slowly went up the stairs hand in hand.

Clint watched as his mates followed behind their children up the stairs hand in hand and he didn’t even bother hiding the soft smile. They would have a third child soon enough running around the house adding to the chaos the other two already created so easily. He couldn’t wait because he and Tasha had always wanted a large family, it was something they couldn’t have when it was just the two of them but now they had the chance.

“Go after them Clint, we will take care of the dishes” Bobbi said pulling him out of his thoughts. His rookie was giving him a look that said for him not to argue and do as she said. It was a look that their rookie had learned from Tasha and though it wasn’t quite up to Tasha’s level it was damn near it.

“You sure?” he asked standing watching as both Bobbi and the scientist started piling up the dishes on the table. Bobbi shared a look with her mate Jemma then with Fitz before nodding back to him and then nodding her head towards the stairs. “Thanks, just rinse them and throw them in the dishwasher” Clint said before turning to the stairs and taking them two at a time to catch up with his family. He came up the stairs just as the kids came out of the bathroom with faces washed and teeth brushed. Scooping both children up and throwing them over his shoulder he heard their peels of laughter as he carried them towards his room.

Tasha peeked her head out the bedroom door at the sound but rolled her eyes fondly at him before opening the door fully. Walking in with the children over his shoulder he walked over to the bed and dropped both munchkins on it and started tickling them. Their easy laughter was a balm to both his and Tasha’s heart that were still very much scared and open from their latest mission to rescue Skye.

“Pa no more” Lila squealed and he took a second to glance at his mates. Laura this time was behind Tasha and holding her as they watched him with the kids, he could see that Laura was whispering something to Tasha but couldn’t hear what it was over their children’s laughter.

“What ya think Loves, think I should stop tickling them?” Clint asked as he increased his tickling.

“Hmm iono” Laura said pretending to think “What do you think Tasha?”
“Hmm are my маленькие птенцы ready for bed?” Tasha asked the children.

“Yes” both children squealed and he tickled them for a moment longer before he stopped.

“Alright one story and then bed time” Clint said as he dropped down on the chair next to the bed and watched as the kids got in under the covers. They would fall asleep in the bed as he read to them and after the story he would carefully carry them to their own beds. It had become a nightly routine for all of them when he and Tasha were here those first few days with them and he was thankful for its familiarity in that moment.

Before he could open the story book and start the story though Lila asked the question he should have known the curious five year old would ask “Why is Skye hurt?”

Sharing a look with his mates he knew all three of them wanted to protect the children from the horrors of the world but they didn’t live in a perfect world. No, with his and Tasha’s job being what it was there was a high chance that either of them or both of them would come back from a mission either injured or dead. They had this discussion with Laura over their first week with each other, not hiding their mate from the reality of being with them and they had all decided to tell the children a watered down version of the truth till they were older. If he had his way his children would never know the world that he and Tasha were a part of but he doubted he would get his way, fate was a right bitch at times.

Laura and Tasha came and sat on the bed with the kids and snuggled up with them as they waited for him to tell the children the version of the truth that was for them. His two mates trusting him to make the right decision in what he told the kids. “Do you remember before Ma and I left that we all sat down and told you that the reason we had to leave was to go chase after some bad guys? Just like your father did?”

“Yes Pa” Cooper said surprising him, his son was usually the quiet one, almost mute at times. Laura said that was nothing new he had been that way since he was a toddler only coming out of his shell when Lila had been born.

“Well your Aunt Mel and Uncle Phil along with your cousins that you just met all work with Ma and Pa in chasing after the bad guys. Chasing after the bad guys can be dangerous and this last time Skye got hurt but she will be okay in a while. That is why she is here so she can take the time to heal and be with the family” Clint said as he watched his children’s reactions.
“Could you and Ma get hurt like Skye?” Cooper asked softly with fear in his eyes and Clint hated that he couldn’t protect the children from his and Tasha’s reality. He shared a sad look with Tasha because he knew she was thinking the same thing.

“Your Ma and I could but we promise to always try to come back home to you guys. We love you two very much and you give us a reason to always try to come home. Okay Buddy?” Clint asked fighting back the emotion in his voice trying to be reassuring to the children.

“Okay Pa. Can we have our story now?” Cooper asked and Clint almost laughed in relief as the topic was changed. Opening the story book to the next story he relaxed into the chair as he began to read.

Natasha closed her eyes and took in the scent of the little girl asleep in her arms as she carried Lila to bed. Gently she bent down and put the small girl in her bed that was covered in disney princesses and fairies. When they had taken the kids shopping they had spared no expense in decorating the rooms to each of the kids tastes in hopes that it would make them feel more at home. Clint and her knew that Laura and the kids had lived light before they had met having to be able to run at a moments notice if Richard felt they were in danger.

She hoped they would never have to move the kids, that this small farmhouse and homestead would be where they could finish growing up. As well as grow up with any amount of younger siblings that their little family was blessed with over the next few years. The three of them had all talked about having more children they just didn't expect it to happen so soon, but it didn’t matter because there soon would be another little one for them all to love and spoil.

Kissing her daughter’s forehead she pulled up the covers and moved out of the way as Laura moved in to do the same. Taking her mate’s hand she pulled Laura out of the room as they traded spots with Clint and went into Cooper’s room. They both kissed Cooper’s forehead and watched as he turned over in his sleep as he pulled his, much to her amusement, Captain America bed sheets up over his head. She wondered how her son would react when he learned his Ma and Pa not only knew Captain America but that they worked with him.

“You’re thinking about it again” Laura said quietly amused as she pulled Natasha out of the room.

“Can you blame me?” Natasha asked as she wrapped her arms around Laura’s waist hand protectively over the non-existent but soon to be baby bump.

“No I can’t. When are we going to meet the good Captain and the rest of the family?” Laura asked leaning back into Natasha’s embrace her hands running up and down Natasha’s arms.
“Once we deal with the current crisis, hopefully soon after that but right now Tasha has us strategically spread out so we can respond faster” Clint said as he came into the hallway and leaned down kissing Laura softly.

"And so you aren't such a tempting target all together" Laura said what Clint had left off of that sentence.

Natasha smirked at Clint, their mate might be civilian but she was a sharp one that knew her stuff. They had Richard to thank for that because he had apparently been a history buff that loved to talk military and political strategy to Laura. And as they learned with conversations with Laura over those first few days she could hold her own in any discussion or debate. "Yes that as well. I had to get Mel and Phil's team somewhere off radar to lay low for a while at the same time as being able to continue the investigation. But come on we need to show everyone to the guest houses and get them settled for the night" Natasha said as she slid her hands from Laura's stomach and took one of her hands in her own.

They came down the stairs just as the two scientist finished loading the dishwasher and Bobbi wiped down the counters and the table. "Thank you, you didn't have to do that” Laura said next to her.

"Least we could do since we've seemed to be invading your home” Bobbi said rinsing off the sponge and putting it down on the side of the sink.

"Invade away, you are all family so it's your home as well. Now you all must be tired so follow us and we will get you all settled into the guest houses" Laura said pulling Natasha after her. Natasha smiled at the slight shocked look on Bobbi's face but knew that Clint would handle it as he made sure the science twins and their rookie followed.

“I remember nights like this” Natasha said as she came to stand at the foot of the ramp of the bus. Mel gave her and Laura a gentle smile as her and Phil continued to lay there looking up at the stars, as they continued to enjoy each others company. It had been years since they did this, to many memories associated with this simple act that had haunted them but with the return of their daughter the hurt didn’t stab at their heart as hard as it once did. “Where are the lovebirds?”

“Upstairs sleeping in my old quarters. Skye was falling asleep and Maria carried her up there a few minutes ago to let her rest somewhere more comfortable and familiar to the both of them” Mel answered as she watched Clint join step up behind his two mates as the rest of the group continued past them to most likely grab their gear.
“That’s understandable, kids been through hell” Clint said as he wrapped his arms around the waists of his mates. It was a good thing to see Clint and Tasha so relaxed and happy she knew her brother and sister in all but blood had suffered and struggled the last few years. Finding out they had a third was a shock and she had a feeling there was a story behind it and she made a mental note to ask Tasha when they had a moment.

“Since they’re staying here, I’m assuming you want to stay with them on the plane tonight or would you like to move into the guest house set aside for you four?” Clint asked dragging her out of her thoughts and back to the now assembled group around them.

Mel felt Phil’s hand squeeze her own and she knew he was leaving the decision up to her but there was nothing to decide. “I think we will stay here tonight incase they need anything.”

Fitz followed behind his sister and her mate as they were led into one of the guest houses at another end of the property. They came into a spacious living room and he looked around trying not to feel lonely in that moment as he could easily see Izzy and Tori here enjoying the quiet the farm. His mates had talked about taking a vacation after everything finally settled down and he wondered if this might be an option for them or something similar, going to a beach resort wasn’t his idea of fun. He was raised in Scotland and burned easily if out in the sun for too long.

A hand on his shoulder made him jump as it brought him out of his thoughts about his mates. He turned and saw Natasha look at him with a soft understanding smile that at first he thought was weird to see from the famous Black Widow, but he was learning fast the public persona and the private persona’s of earth's mightiest heroes were two very different things.

“Once Skye is up and able to I’ll have you two connect the secure network Clint and I have set up here to the group's network Skye has. After that you should be able to talk to Isabelle and Victoria whenever you want to and they are available. I’m sorry I had to separate you three but I promise when this is all over you three are welcome here for some downtime if you want it” Natasha told him giving his shoulder a squeeze before walking towards the door.

“Thank you,” he called out.

"Don't thank me just yet, training starts at 0600. Be on the front porch or face my wrath" Natasha said not even turning around as she walked out the front door. He looked towards his sister and wondered if his face looked like that as well. Bobbi his soon to be sister in law on the other hand was trying not to smirk and Fitz wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not, definitely not a good thing.

"Alright bedtime for you two. Trust me, be up and dressed by 0600 with comfortable workout clothes on" Bobbi said looking between Jemma and her twin brother. She watched as Fitz nodded
and began to head up stairs with his bag but Bobbi stopped Jemma from following right away. Pulling her mate into her arms she took a deep breath of Jemma's scent.

"Bobbi are you okay?" Jemma asked worry evident in her voice.

"I'm alright Cutie just wanted to give Fitz a moment to pick a room and get settled. I know what it's like to be separated from one's mate or mates and to be around other soulmated couples, it's hard” Bobbi said softly as she held onto Jemma in her arms. Just over a week ago she was in Fitz’s shoes for years and knew how much it hurt when seeing other couples and not being able to be with your mate or mates. She was worried about Fitz but she would try to be there for him as much as she could, he might not be her mate but he was Jemma’s twin and she would love him like a younger little brother.

It was the bonds of family and mates that held them all together this last week and she was determined to keep that bond going because they would all need it. Anyways she owed it to Isabelle and Victoria to keep an eye on their mate, she knew they would be doing to the same for her if they were in her shoes. “Are you worried about Fitz?” Jemma asked her with a worried frown on her face.

“Yes but we’re family and will keep an eye on him” Bobbi said without hesitation before she bent at the knees and hooked an arm behind her tiny mates legs lifting her up bridal style. Bobbi heard Jemma squeak before burying her face into Bobbi’s neck as her mates warm breath sent goosebumps down her skin.Quickly she climbed the stairs and went to the farthest room she could from Fitz’s in hope that they didn’t disturb him.

She felt soft lips against her neck as she kicked the bedroom door shut and with little effort she had her tiny mate with her back to the door. Jemma’s legs swung around and wrapped around her waist as their lips met in a very demanding kiss that left her head spinning. Breaking off the kiss she started to trail nips and kisses down Jemma’s jaw to her neck before settling on a pulse point that made her mate shudder against her.

“Bobbi,” her mate moaned her name as her legs clenched around her waist and her fingernails dug into her shoulders through her shirt. She loved the sounds Jemma was making for her as she swore she would have an orgasm just from the sounds alone. Bobbi kept her left hand underneath Jemma’s ass as she trailed her right hand between them and made quick work of the snap and zipper of her mate’s dress pants. Fingers deftly slid into panties and were welcomed with warm wetness that were her mates core.

Her fingers brushed against Jemma’s clit causing her mate to let out a squeak that sent a rush to Bobbi’s own core as she let out a low growl from her chest. “God I love the sounds you make”
Bobbi husked into Jemma’s ear as two of her fingers pushed past her mate’s clit and pushed into her entrance causing another moan from the tiny woman. She felt Jemma’s walls clench around her her fingers as she quickly added a third finger and started rolling her hips into each thrust. “That’s it cutie, let go” Bobbi whispered into Jemma’s ear before she captured her mates scream with her lips in a searing kiss and came undone with her mate.
Chapter 31

“They’ll be alright Tony,” Bruce said placing a hand on his shoulder in comfort and knocking Tony out of his thoughts as he worried about his children. Children, only a few days ago he had no confirmed idea that he had any children but now that he did, he found he could hardly think or worry about anything else. Jemma and Fitz were smart and he knew they could outsmart any villain they were put up against but in the life they lived smart wasn’t everything. No you had to be strong, quick and sometimes ruthless and he hated that the two young scientist would soon probably learn that lesson. He knew it was hypocritical of him to try to pull his children away from this life because he really didn’t want his two children near it with a 100ft pole but they were adults already and unknowingly followed in his and their grandfather’s steps.

“I know, but I wish they were here or we were there. I understand why Tasha had us split up but that doesn’t mean I have to like it” Tony said as he began making adjustments to the Quinjet as they were on the final approach to the tower. “Ready to be home?” he asked trying to keep his mind on something other than his worry.

“Yes, I’ll be happy to see Pepper and you know once this is all over the kids will come home and see all of us. I know Pepper is wanting to meet them in person instead of just over a video conference” Bruce answered as they landed on the helipad of the tower.

“That will be something to see. Our two grown children being mother henned by Pepper while she also simultaneously plans both of their weddings to their mates, who will all be there all shell shocked by the hurricane force that is our mate…” Tony said chuckling as they left the back of the jet.

“Missed you too Pep” he grunted on impact as he was tackled by the firebrand and only kept on his feet because Bruce decided to sandwich him between himself and Pepper. Tony kissed Pepper’s temple and held her close as he looked over her shoulder to Steve and Sharon that were standing in the doorway to the tower and he realised even here in the somewhat safety of the tower both Sharon and Steve were armed. He shared a look with Steve, an understanding passing between them before he nodded his head towards his friend.

In a million years he never thought he’d be friends with Captain America, not because he had been missing for decades but because he had felt instant jealousy towards the man when they met. Tony had a few good memories that he shared with his father but his father’s obsession to find Captain America had made him an absentee father. Though to hear it from Steve and Peggy it seemed the Howard Stark that he grew up knowing wasn’t the same man who had served with Steve during WW2 let alone the man that Peggy and Angie knew before they had all started SHIELD.
There was a story behind the differences between the Howard Stark he knew and the man that Steve, Peggy and Angie had known. He sometimes went to ask about it to either Steve or Peggy but he was afraid to ask them what the hell happened. Though something told him it was time to grow a pair and that he would be asking his friend tonight before he left back to Washington and Peggy when she had a lucid moment. Tony was a father now and even though his children were grown up it didn’t mean he couldn’t make the same mistakes his father had made with him.

“Come on let’s get inside so we can all talk and I can get Steve and Sharon all their cool new toys” Tony finally said with one final squeeze to Pepper as he reached down and took her hand while Bruce went to take her other hand. “Come on Capsicle and Mrs. Capsicle, I need to load you two up with toys before you go back to Washington and into that hornet’s nest. I’m going to give you extras just in case you find someone you can trust.”

Walking into his lab he started opening up the different safes hidden in the walls and started pulling out electronics and piling them onto his work tables. He pulled out the newest version of the Stark Phones and Stark Pads that he had already added extra bells and whistles to them for just Avenger use. Looking into the safe he knew he would need to have JARVIS start another batch on one of his fabrication floors because something told him they were going to need them.

“Alright how many people in Washington do you know that you can trust?” Tony asked as he started programming the phones to use only the secured network that Skye had set up the last time she was here. The girl was a genius with coding and hacking, so much so that he looked forward to a time where he could pick her brain on a few projects that he had in his mind. Let alone to see how much trouble they could get into while hacking shit they weren’t suppose to for fun.

“Honestly I don’t know who to trust anymore, though the Sam Wilson guy that helped us get Pepper and Peggy out of Washington lives there and he said if we needed him to let him know. I don’t really know anyone else, other than Fury and I trust him as far as I can throw him...Well actually not even that far to be honest” Steve said with a shrug.

“I’m with Cap on this, I think we can trust Sam. We can trust Nick even if I owe him a punch to the jaw for all of this but I also have my older brother but other that I don’t trust anyone at this time in Washington” Sharon said as she leaned against the wall totally relaxed but Tony knew that if anything were to happen her gun would be in her hand ready to go before he could even blink. Sharon had that deadly quiet confidence that he associated with women like Natasha and Maria...there were more women to that list now but the way she moved screamed those two off the top of his head.

“Wait, I thought Kevin retired?” Tony asked finishing up with the twenty Stark Phones and beginning on the twenty Stark Pads, he knew he was probably giving them to many but it never hurt to have extras and it wasn’t like he could make more.
“He wanted to after New York but Fury wouldn’t let him, put him on the payroll as a consultant and now I know why. Kevin is not going to be happy once he finds out about all of this which reminds me I need to ask Maria to bring him in even though I know what her answer is going to be” Sharon answered with a shrug.

“You will have to try calling her in the morning or afternoon, wherever Clint and Tasha took everyone is apparently so secure that no preset electronics will work in the area. Skye and Fitz are suppose to plug in our secured network into wherever they’re at in the morning, afternoon at the latest” Tony said as he watched Bruce and Pepper start getting bags together of accessories for everything and packing everything together for him.

Finished with the Stark Pads he walked over to one of his own Stark Pads for the lab that was tied into one of his screens. Pulling up a world map he started highlighting known SHIELD bases started highlighting their own placements. He also pulled up the numbers of already confirmed clean and dirty agents that Maria and Skye had on the server and labeling where they were. Then he also added where the Avenger bases and hidden caches were and added where Skye had been found. “Tasha is right to spread us out but we also need to start consolidating where we’re at...What ya think Cap?” Tony asked as he stared at the screen with the map.

Tony felt Steve lean against the table next to him and looked over to see the folded arms and the slightly tilted head that was Steve’s thinking pose. “Has anyone seen this other than us?” Steve asked after a moment.

“I don’t think so, I’m a visual person so I wanted to see the information out on the map and labeled to see if there was anything we were missing. At the moment it’s not that we are missing anything it’s that we are spread still pretty thin” Tony huffed as he stared at the map. “I’ll make sure once the other groups make contact that they see the map and I’ll try to keep it as up to date as I can as information comes in.”

“Good, so are all the Avenger bases like Italy?” Steve asked.

“More or less. Washington is one of the more locations, which means I’d feel better if at least you and Sharon stayed there that way JARVIS can watch both of your backs. That and I don’t trust anywhere that SHIELD has you cubbyholed at, it’s probably bugged and we can’t get rid of the bugs without possibly tipping our hand.”

“I didn’t see anything special about Washington other than the defenses” Steve said as he shot Tony a sceptical look before going back to staring at the map.
“When you land ask JARVIS to give you the grand tour, he will show you what I mean. Use the house as a base of operations but don’t forget to enjoy your time with your mate” Tony said smirking at Steve’s blush. ‘Sometimes it’s way to easy but it’s still fun to tease Capsicle.’

Sharon looked up at the map on the screen and shook her head. Tony was missing SHIELD bases, they were old SSR/SHIELD bases that were mainly mothballed but both her and Kevin had been raised by their grandparents inside SHIELD after the death of their parents, some of their best childhood memories were oddly in those old bases. If Tony didn’t have access to the list of old SHIELD and SSR bases then that meant they weren’t listed on any of the SHIELD databases, which meant Fury was still keeping secrets because she knew three of her cousins were stationed at different ones.

Of course her cousins didn’t officially exist anymore, as far as the world was aware they died with her Aunts and Uncle in a car crash on the way to the funeral for her parents after they had died in a plane crash a week before… ‘Son of a Bitch’ she thought as her trip down memory lane to a time when her world and family had been falling apart at the seams brought everything into that crystal clear realization of seeing the big picture. She knew she couldn’t avoid the question she didn’t want to ask any longer.

“Sharon?” Steve asked her as he placed a hand gently against her cheek startling her slightly from her thoughts and bringing the realization that she had been crying silently as his thumb wiped away a tear. Looking into his crystal blue eyes she could see concern for her as he looked down into her own blue eyes that she knew were showing all the pain she was feeling. She let herself have one moment of weakness as she leaned into Steve’s hand and kissed his palm before she closed her eyes. Taking a deep breath to find her center like Grandma Peggy had taught her all those years ago she forced herself to focus on the issue at hand, it was okay to cry but sometimes a good cry had to wait for the disaster to pass first.

Opening her eyes she pulled away from Steve’s touch and she felt a pang of loss and guilt at the hurt look in his eyes but it was soon replaced by his understanding. Her soulmate was a good man and though she had hinted they had already completed the bond, the truth of it was they hadn’t yet, there hadn’t been time. With everything going on duty and the obligation of family kept them too busy to complete the bond let alone talk about the fact they had a third somewhere that they were yet to find. Or the fact that she knew more of the backstory of what really happened in WW2 and that she knew the truth of Uncle Howard’s obsession with finding the man that was now her soulmate.

Sharon pulled out her phone and paused for a moment before she flipped the phone over and popped it open. Quickly pulling out the current SIM card she placed it on the table before grabbing her locket and opening it to have another SIM card land in her hand. She knew everyone was staring at her as she put the new card in the phone and turned it on. Once the screen booted on, the security protocols that she used to contact family members kicked on as well. Pressing her thumb to the scanner built into her phone she said “Call Uncle Nick.”
“Uncle Nick?” Steve asked as he stood next to her with a raised eyebrow.

“Sharon what’s wrong?” Nick finally answered interrupting her conversation with Steve.

“What’s wrong Uncle Nick? More like what isn’t wrong at the moment but first answer me this, the plane crash wasn’t an accident was it?” Silence greeted her on the phone and confirmed her fears but she was going to make him say it. “Uncle Nick?” she growled barely keeping her anger in check. Her anger management issues that she’d had since she were a child were the reason she was only a level 5 SHIELD agent despite being a legacy.

“No it wasn’t but your grandparents were never able to prove it or prove who” Nick sighed as he answered and by his tone of voice she knew he was pinching at the bridge of his nose.

With his answer she let go of the breath she didn’t realize she had been holding and the tension left her shoulders. With that one answer this whole investigation turned from trying to cleaning up SHIELD and preserving her family's legacy to something totally personal but that realization brought on it’s own new sets of worries that were old worries but now more sharper and more defined in her mind and her heart.

“Second, I know you are hiding more information,” at this she heard Nick start to protest but interrupted him. “Save it, you forgot you put the triplets in charge of locations I know are magically all of a sudden not on any SHIELD databases, so I am giving you the chance to come clean and also I’m telling you I’m activating Noah’s Ark. Send the data to Tony or I will give him what I know you have twenty minutes” she said hanging up the phone.

“Fury and his damn secrets” Steve growled as he ran his fingers through his hair and tried to calm down.

“Secrets can be a good and bad thing Steve, some secrets have kept my family alive. When Peggy appointed Nick as the Director of SHIELD he didn’t just become the keeper of SHIELD’s secrets, he became the keeper of the legacies” Sharon said before being interrupted by Tony.

“There is that damn word again, what do you all mean by legacies?”

“I’m a legacy by being third generation SHIELD. You are a legacy because you are second
generation SHIELD” Sharon said before being interrupted by Tony again.

“I’m not SHIELD.”

“The Avenger initiative was started by SHIELD. Actually by your father, my grandmother and Colonel Phillips when they realized they needed someone like Steve and the Howling Commandos on a permanent basis. They had something similar but never like it is now. You can argue it till you are blue in your face but you are a damn legacy and your kids are now damn legacies because they are third generation SHIELD just like me” Sharon said as she pulled out a Stark Pad and Stark Phone and started working.

She watched out of the corner of her eye as Steve held up his hand to stop Tony from arguing before he asked “Okay for the sake of not going around in a circle what does Fury being the keeper of the legacies and Noah’s Ark mean?”

“It has been his job for years to make sure the legacies survive and I am about to expose those to our group who exactly we are. Other than myself and Kevin most of the legacies are now hidden in plain sight inside SHIELD under either assumed names or partial names to protect themselves. We have more allies than is listed on Tony’s screen and that is one of the things I realized when studying the screen. None of the legacies are listed under the Allies column, nope I see two legacies in the suspected dirty agents because their backstories written by either Nick or my grandmother to keep them safe didn't hold up to Skye's program. I never fully understood the paranoia until now when I was staring at that map, if someone had been infiltrating SHIELD and had access to the legacies and started picking them off…”

“You asked Fury about a plane crash...your parents death wasn’t an accident was it?” Tony interrupted again.

“No it wasn’t, Uncle Nick just confirmed my suspicions that I’ve had since I was a teen, which means…”

“Fuck me, that is why he was so pissed I went public with the whole ‘I'm Ironman’ thing isn’t it?” Tony asked dragging his hands through his hair and then she watched as he froze as the realization fully hit him and what it most likely meant about his parents as well.

“What is Noah’s Ark?” Steve asked dragging her attention away from Tony and back to him but Sharon gave a quick look up to Tony seeing that both Bruce and Pepper were now bracketing him between them as he stood there staring off into space and mumbling under his breath.
“Noah’s Ark is the activation of Code 99 to the surviving members of the Carter family legacy” Sharon finally answered as she turned back to the tablet and started putting out the Code 99 to her family. “I don’t know what Nick has set up with the other families but if he’s smart he activates their emergency protocols because I have a feeling this is going to get uglier soon.”

Across the world one simple text went through a number of hidden back servers and back doors that bounced the signals in such a convoluted way that no one would ever be able to track it down from source to recipients. Across the world one message rang, beeped, dinged and sang its arrival and changed the lives of fifteen different members of the Carter family hidden in plain site. The message received had never been used before but that only meant this was not to be taken lightly and fifteen members started making arrangements because the message was clear: Attack imminent. Allies will approach with prearranged codes. Those that can, go home.

Izzy leaned against the back wall of Tori’s office as her mate upon arrival at the Hub had to deal with an issue that she made a mental note to kick Nick in the ass for not telling them about. Apparently when Nick left and took the body of Grant Ward with him he had dropped it off at the Hub in cold storage labeled as a John Doe attached to her and Tori’s investigation into Ian Quinn and Centipede. Nick hadn’t even bothered to pull the traitor’s personnel file to see who the next of kin was, nope he left it to them to arrange the autopsy which they would need to be present for with a recommendation of the doctor to use for it but that also meant that as far as SHIELD and whoever else thought that Grant Ward was still alive.

“I can hear you scowling” Tori said as she leaned back into her chair and turned giving Izzy a look that clearly said to spit it out.

Sighing she ran a hand in her hair, it was a nervous tick she had picked up when her hair was almost a buzz cut during her Marine years but the tension in her body didn’t ease. Nope she doubted that she would feel totally comfortable in a SHIELD facility for a long time if ever again, especially compared to the feeling she now missed being around those she could now call family. “I think we need to start bringing in senior level agents or specialists to help us with our situation, we need people we can trust in a lockdown situation and I’d rather have the extra security because I can’t always be here to watch your back or you mine.”

“I agree with you, I also have yet to name my deputy. I’d name you but you are a specialist not a paper pusher and anyways you would totally kick my ass if I did. What about Blake? He is on the short list of agents that I trust to be competent enough and he only has one or two flags in our check of him. Knowing Blake though like I do I can see why he hid it, he is a damn legacy and probably wanted to be treated like any other agent and earn his place instead of people thinking he got it just because he is the grandson of Chester Phillips and that we only found because of Skye’s magical program.”

“I’ll give you that and with we know now I don’t blame him on hiding it. Let alone the fact he had a
family but we don’t know what happened to his daughter. The fact that her last location was South America which is a hot bed for everything seedy has me worried” Izzy said as she walked over the electronic white board and pulled up Blake’s information on it to look at it again.

“You and I both know that his daughter is most likely dead though I doubt he has given up hope with all the trips over the years to the region” Tori answered from behind her as her arms circled around her waist.

“Can’t say I blame him on not giving up hope on finding her, I’m not a mother but if something happened and you or Curly went missing without a body I’d keep looking too” Izzy said softly as she pulled Tori around to stand in front of her. This was a new development in their bond, though they were affectionate with each other in private this was still Tori’s office and they were discussing work but she needed her mate in her arms. Izzy knew it was probably because they had met their third and the bond was still stabilizing, she knew they should’ve had more time together before separating but Natasha had been right to split the group up, all together like they had been was just too tempting a target if anyone had any inkling that they knew about the disease inside of SHIELD.

“Alright that is one person we can trust who else do we have on the list?” Tori asked after a few moments of Izzy just holding onto her mate.

“There are only four more people that we’ve checked out that I trust: Jacobson, Baylin, Chaimson and Palamas. Once we bring them in they might know more people we can check out and bring in or at least we can arrange to do certain things if it’s needed” she said as her and Tori started planning their next moves.

“Bloody hell Idaho are you trying to get killed?” Hunter exclaimed as he opened his apartment door to find his friend in his kitchen eating a sandwich and drinking one of his beers. He quickly removed his hand from the handle of one of his 9mm under his jacket but he kept his muscles loose and ready as the adrenaline was pumping in his veins because he smelt the metallic smell of blood in the air. His instincts were screaming at him that something was wrong and his eyes slowly checked around him as he dropped his bag at the door but kept his keys in his hands as he walked to the fridge and pulled out another beer and opened it on the counter.

Leaning against the fridge he watched Idaho as he finished his sandwich before he finally got sick and tired of the silence. No one else was in the apartment, well at least anyone else that was alive but that wasn’t all that reassuring to him when he could tell that Idaho was tense as hell, something was up and he had a feeling he wasn’t going to like it. Idaho was a good guy despite him being in the mercenary business, he was one of those that got a ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ discharge and did what he had to do to support him and his soulmate. He’d never met Idaho’s mate but he knew that the man stayed in the states going back to school so he could support them so Idaho wouldn’t have to do this type of work anymore but to do that Idaho would need to do this work till his mate graduated.
This life was one that ate some people up from the inside out, he knew that he hid his issues behind snark and wit while Idaho was one of those that turned to religion or at least even more to religion in Idaho’s case. Hunter remembered having to take his friend to a church after a particularly bad job that left both of them in bloody and in pain but at least they were alive, not everyone had gone home or to church after that job.

“Do I even want to know why you broke into my place and made yourself comfy?” he finally asked and watched as Idaho slowly lifted one hand towards his own jacket then with his other hand and reached in and pulled out a piece of paper sliding it on the table towards him. Reaching for the paper making sure to stay out of arm’s reach of Idaho he unfolded it and then mentally cursed as he saw the contract sheet with his photo from a CCTV camera that they must have missed in Italy that showed him near the hospital on it and another more clear picture of him as well as other general information on him.

“That went out this morning with a price on your head. I don’t know what you did but you pissed off our last client enough that he wants you dead yesterday and willing to pay for it. Already had to deal with one guy he was waiting for you in the living room, I want to know why you took a job without me because from what I hear you were with pro’s” Idaho asked as she sat back in the chair but kept his hands visible.

Hunter looked at the sheet and tossed it on the table as he took a sip from his beer trying to think everything through. His cover was partially blown, at least the sheet didn’t have his real details only his covers details so his real identity was probably still safe but it meant he needed to call Izzy and Tori to get him the hell out of here. Looking towards his friend he really hoped he didn’t have to kill the man to escape because Idaho was a good guy only trying to get by with the hand he was dealt. He had asked for permission to turn the man in front of him, to make him a somewhat partner in this investigation but he had been told no. Even though his country was going towards equality for all soulmates, it didn’t mean he didn’t work for some very conservative stick in the muds that had only seen the ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ discharge.

Well things had changed because he had a funny feeling his bosses weren’t going to be pleased with him and it looked like SHIELD was going to be the one to catch his ass. ‘Damn I owe Maria that bottle of scotch’ he thought when remembered their bet from when they met. She had been it was going to be SHIELD to pull his bacon out of this mess because it would take his immediate bosses too long to react. Looking at Idaho he realized he was going to have to take a risk and hope his instincts on Idaho and his reading of the situation were correct.

“Not a job, it was personal. My mate and her sister called needing help, my sister in laws mate was kidnapped and they needed my help to get her back” Hunter said taking another sip keeping his muscles loose and praying he didn’t need to defend himself.

“You said you hadn’t met your mate” Idaho said hurt clearly in his eyes because he had lied on
numerous occasions about not having a mate.

“Mates, but I had met one of them a few years back but I kept it quiet because of who she is. Safer for both her and myself if no one knew of our connection, let alone that she even existed in the first place” Hunter said and watched as understanding crossed Idaho’s features.

“Alright Hunter I get that but you do know you now have to disappear, either with her or without her because this isn’t going anywhere” Idaho said as he leaned forward slightly and tapped the contract sheet.

“It might not be going anywhere but I can disappear quite easily enough for now, but I got two questions for you Idaho and I want you to answer them truthfully and also keep an open mind.” Hunter said finishing his beer and placing it on the counter behind him.

“Ok shoot” Idaho said with a smirk. Cheeky bastard.

“Are you here to help me or…?” he asked waving his hand at the contract sheet on the table.

“Help if you need it, I owe you one after Shanghai and I pay my debts even if that is a fuck ton of money” he said indicating the contract sheet. “And the other question?”

“Do you want out of this life?”

“You know I do, but I have someone to support back home” Idaho said leaning back into the chair again but hope was in his eyes.

“And if I could guarantee that you would be able to support your mate and do it by doing something with meaning?”

“Than sign me up, but we are mercs Hunter no one except someone completely shady will hire us, and you have this price on your head to deal with. Don’t worry about me, worry about yourself, I’ll just say I found the dead guy in your living room and you were long gone if they ask.”
“I’m going to reach in my jacket and pull something out just remember what I am offering okay?” Hunter said as he lifted his jacket and opened up the hidden pocket and pulled out this time two leather wallets. One was his credentials with the SAS and MI-9 and the other was newer, Maria had slipped it to him before they had left the Italian villa to split up. Inside was credentials that made him a level 10 agent of SHIELD with the rest of the group that was her investigation team.

Tossing them on the table towards Idaho he slid to the side and opened the fridge pulling out two more beers and opening them up on the counter again. He watched as first anger then shock crossed Idaho’s face before Hunter took a step to the counter and put a beer in front of his friend “So my question stands: do you want out of this life?”

“Fuck these are real aren’t they?” Idaho asked him as he looked up at him. Hunter nodded and waited for his friend to answer. “Count me in.”

“Good to hear, do you need to go back to your place for anything?” Hunter asked as he signalled for Idaho to follow him into the living room and saw Idaho’s shake of head indicating no. Seeing the body of Jurgensen with a large kitchen knife in his back and a bullet to the back of the head was a stark reminder of what he almost walked into. It was only hours ago that he had said goodbye to Bobbi and Jemma and it was almost a final goodbye. Shaking his head he pulled his thoughts back away from that avenue because he didn’t have time to let his mind go down that dark rabbit hole.

Pulling the side of a frame away from the wall he put his hand on the hidden hand scanner opening up his vault that was hidden using space from his kitchen cabinets. A low whistle behind him had him smirk as his friend took in the small arsenal just hidden behind the wall. “Damn Hunter are we storming Fort Knox?” Idaho quipped.

“Nope but we are taking what we can in your truck till we can meet up with my exit strategy” Hunter said as he pulled out the Stark Phone he had been given by Tony right before the hospital mission. Pressing his thumb to the scanner that unlocked the phone and turned on the security features before saying “Shadow condition Alpha, call Izzy”.

“Hunter what’s the situation?” he heard Izzy ask with her voice that was low and gravelly and heard a moan in the background telling him that he was clearly interrupting something that those two were going to take out on his hide for later once he was safe.

“Sorry to interrupt you two but I have rule 26 in spades at the moment and need an extraction for two” Hunter said as he watched Idaho grab two gear bags before he started packing up the weapons.
“Two? And where are you at?” Izzy asked for details.

“Yeah one the guys I’ve worked with and been trying to get permission to turn just saved my ass. We missed a camera outside of the hospital and my face was seen by my previous employer, I now have a hefty sum out in the market for my head and I’d like to keep it where it’s at the moment.”

“Shit, where are you?” Izzy asked again.

“We’re in Venice in my now compromised cover’s apartment. We are currently packing up a few toys for the road before the neighbor’s call about the smell of the dead body in my living room” Hunter deadpanned as he moved to another picture and opened up another safe that had fake ID’s and papers as well as a shit ton of money.

“Hunter he’s only been dead two hours the smell can’t be that bad” Idaho said and Hunter had forgotten that the man had worked in tanks and had burned out all sense of smell years ago.

“Dead bodies no, but Jurgensen had an aversion of water and anything that could be construed as personal hygiene and he reeks, be grateful you can’t smell him” Hunter quipped back as he heard Izzy and Tori talking through the phone in low tones as they tried to arrange the extraction.

“Alright can you two get to the base at Parma?” Izzy asked.

“Yeah we can be there in about two hours give or take” Hunter said once he was done splitting up the cash and handing a stack to Idaho.

“Good, Izzy will meet you there and send me pictures of you two so I can arrange for ID cards for you both as SHIELD agents” Tori said.

“I’m good Maria slipped me a badge and credentials before we all split up. I’ll send you Idaho’s ugly mug if it doesn’t break my poor phone” he quipped with a glared ‘hey’ from his friend.

“Two hours Hunter stay safe we’d rather not have to tell your mates that something happened to you” Tori said softly into the phone and it caused him to smile softly.
“I know. See ya soon” he said before hanging up and quickly grabbed one of the now packed bags. “Let’s blow this popsicle stand.”

“I guess it’s good we talked to Blake and Palamas before we called it a night” Izzy said as she rubbed at her face trying to wake herself up. She was running on empty the last few weeks have been nothing but go, go, go and dare she admit it but she was starting to feel her age.

“Who are you going to take with you?” Tori asked as she turned on the pot of coffee in their joint quarters. When they had received the call they had been in a heated make out session on the living room couch that had been slowly turning into something more, sighing because despite her wanting to finish what they had started she had to wake up and fly a plane back to Italy and rescue Hunter and his friend ‘Idaho’.

“I’d rather take Blake and keep Palamas with you but it makes more sense from an outsider’s point of view that you and Blake hole up in your office since you made him your deputy, while Palamas and I go to Italy to escort an agent back that was undercover as long as Hunter has been” Izzy said as she watched Tori make her coffee the way she liked it and brought it over to her. Taking a drink she sighed as she put her head back against the couch and closed her eyes.

“Izzy are you okay?” Tori asked concern in her voice and she took a deep breath before opening up her eyes to look into the eyes of one of her mates.

“I’m alright love, just tired. I’m serious about a vacation after this shit storm settles, just us and Curly and hours of not being interrupted” Izzy deadpanned as she pulled Tori into her lap. “Can you call Blake and Palamas while I go take a cold shower?”

“You can’t be that worked up” Tori teased stealing a drink of the coffee.

“Oh yes I can be! Anyways it’s mainly to wake the fuck up” she said finishing the coffee and pinching Tori in the ribs in the spot she knew if her fingers were her mouth and she’d sucked and nipped just the right way it would make her mate come undone.

“That was dirty” Tori whimpered in her lap as she squeezed her legs trying to gain some friction to ease her tension.

“Uh-uh none of that” Izzy said in a voice reserved only for Tori and Curly. She placed one hand on her mate’s leg and Tori stopped moving instantly and whimpered again. Izzy loved how Tori responded to her and wished they had time to play this out but she needed to get ready and Tori had
to call the only two people they trusted at the moment at the Hub. Pulling Tori’s face down to her own, she kissed her mate hungrily before she broke off the kiss before whispering “I’ll kiss it all better when I get back.”

“Tease” Tori groaned.

“Not if it’s a promise. Now up! I need a shower and you have to calls to make,” she said but was interrupted by her phone dinging with a picture message, looking at it she rolled her eyes before handing it to Tori. “And you have one very convincing cover identity to create for our newest recruit.”

‘Where the hell is he?’ Izzy thought not for the first time in the last hour as the two hour mark had come and gone with no word or sign from Hunter or Idaho. She had tried to call Hunter but he wasn’t answering his phone and with his phone going ringing till it went to voicemail for the third time in a row she had a bad feeling. Staring at her contacts page she finally clicked on Tony’s name and brought her phone back to her ear, she would need Tony to activate the GPS on Hunter’s phone.

“Iz what’s wrong?” Tony asked as he answered shortening her already short nickname even shorter. Even though they had only met a week or so ago for the first time the absurdity of his nickname for her was something familiar that dragged her inner panic back down to a dull roar in her head. She had just gained this family she couldn’t lose someone this fast, she couldn’t bear the thought of having to tell Bobbi and Jemma that she failed in protecting their mate.

“Hunter called in a 26, he was due to rendezvous with me for extraction back to the Hub but he’s late and not answering his phone, I need you to turn on his tracker and tell me where he’s at.”

“Fuck, this night just keeps getting better and better. Alright turning on the tracker and uploading it to your phone also pulling up any satellite feeds we have of the location. Looks like he is just off the road in a forested area just east of Parma. Tracker puts him stationary for about twenty minutes. Damn I don’t have a satellite in the area to get a picture of what is going on for at least twenty minutes” Tony said as she heard the clacking of a keyboard and talking in the background.

“Well according to the GPS it’s going to take us at least forty minutes to get there. Palamas gear up! Tony do me a favor conference in Tori for me so we can fill her in” Izzy said as she put the phone on speaker and started pulling on her tactical gear.

“JARVIS conference in Tori and also call Tasha on her old phone. Izzy I’m on my way” Tony said as she heard his suit start to assemble around him “And why the hell are you and Tori not together we are suppose to stay in pairs.”
“We are. JARVIS check the database for Tony, we updated our list, before this all dropped late last night err sorta way too damn early this morning” Izzy said as she finished pulling her weapons and headed out to the standard issued SHIELD suv she had the foresight to snag earlier.

“I’m sorry Izzy, I shouldn’t have snapped,” Tony said but was interrupted as by Tasha.

“Holy shit a Stark apology. JARVIS please tell me you have that recorded” Tasha snarked but Izzy could hear the worry in her voice as she made them aware of her presence on the line.

“Of course” said JARVIS and somehow for a computer it sounded rather smug.

“If we are conferencing in this can’t be good” Tori said in greeting and she could hear Blake in the background with her.

“Nope for those just ringing in Hunter called in a 26 late last night and he and a friend he was bringing was supposed to rendezvous for extraction in two hours, it’s now been three and I haven’t been able to reach him on his cell. Tony tracked it and I’m on my way with Agent 33 while Tony is meeting us there to provide support” Izzy said as she moved the tracker to her Stark Pad while Kara drove. Usually she was so much of a control freak to let anyone else drive but she needed her hands free to look at the satellite feed once they got anything.

“Shit, satellite feed?” Tasha asked.

“Will be in position in fifteen minutes” JARVIS answered.

“Alright, Clint went to go get Bobbi and Jemma. Fuck I wish I had Skye and Fitz do the network tonight but everyone was just so damn exhausted when we arrived” Tasha said.

“Love do you need me to get them?” a female voice asked softly from Tasha’s end of the phone.

“Yes and call Clint to tell him to grab Fitz as well and if you can go get everyone else and meet me at the barn. I’ll put the house on lockdown while we are out there” Tasha said as they heard a quick kiss and retreating footsteps.
“Well sounds like we have another family member to meet” Tony quipped.

“Yeah well it was going to happen in the morning when we got this all up and running. JARVIS might as well patch in the tower to the call, I doubt any of us are getting any damn sleep tonight” Tasha said followed by a yawn.

“We’re here, just keeping quiet while you all figure this out since we aren’t really any help all the way from here,” Steve said over the line.

“I’m surprised you are still in New York, I thought you and Sharon would be back in Washington already” Tasha said as they heard a door close before some beeping. “Lockdown initiated, children monitors engaged” said a robotic voice from Tasha’s side of the call.

Izzy shared an incredulous look with Kara that at least meant that she hadn’t just hallucinated what she just had heard from lack of sleep. That and someone did a spit take with their coffee, probably Blake as the sentence that the computer said registered to everyone on the phone. “Forgot how loud that was. Well that cat is out of the bag” Tasha sighed as the sounds of a night out in the country came back over the phone to them.

“Sir satellite feed is available” JARVIS interrupted and she realised that even though they were all tense they were distracting themselves, trying to ignore it while they waited for the satellite to get into position.

“Put it on my heads up and send it to Izzy and Tori’s pads as well as the tower’s feed. Tasha once you get your network attached to ours let us know and JARVIS will drop the latest fun data dump to you” Tony said.

“I’m working on it and that sounds ominous” Tasha said as Izzy started looking at the satellite feed of the area.

“JARVIS can you zoom in on the area with the smoke and throw it into thermal” Izzy asked and watched as the image blurred for a moment before it came into focus again. “Shit, I see two cars in the ravine, with at least three live bodies. Anyone got this on a bigger screen than me?”
“We do and we are seeing it as well” Sharon said and she sighed because this changed the situation because this wasn’t a guns blazing rescue mission this was a whole other can of worms rescue mission. She knew all standard issue SHIELD suv’s had a medkit and in a pinch it could transport wounded but from what she could tell the cars were down a ravine that bordered one side of the road in a forested area and they didn’t have any type of climbing gear.

“Tony I’m going to need a lift most likely when you get there, we don’t have any climbing gear with us. I have a medkit and can try to get everyone stabilized but we need to figure a way of getting them transported back to base or the closest hospital depending on the severity of the injuries” Izzy started thinking out loud knowing that Tori would help her pull this together on her end because she knew where everything was and what was available to be pulled to help.

“Blake activate the SHIELD medevac unit out of Parma and tell them to head that way but I want them also to transport a team there to secure the site and start the investigation. The team can ride back in the truck, while Izzy and Kara ride back with the injured. Tony can you fly escort back to base?” Tori said as she dropped into operations mode.

“Of course” Tony said as there was a low murmur of voices that it took her a moment to realize was Tasha talking to Maria as she filled in the Deputy Director on what was going on. She soon heard the fast typing of two keyboards and murmured instructions as the group with Tasha started to work to get their network up and running.

“Alright we are about to arrive on site. Switching to tactical comms, Tony do you have the frequency?” Izzy asked as they rounded the final bend and she could see where the two cars went off the road.

“Got it and I’ll patch it into the conference call through my suit, they can hear you but you can’t hear them. I’ll relay if it’s needed between the rest of the group. Comms up. Do you want to go first Xena?” Tony said switching to her call sign for the tactical net.

“Yeah let me grab the gear. 33 secure the site” she said as quickly got out of the truck and grabbed the medkit. Tony landed next to her and took the bag throwing the straps over his shoulders before he quickly scooped her up bridal style in his arms and took off over the edge. Seconds later they were down on the ground a few feet away from the wreckage and she quickly moved out of Tony’s arms.

Looking around she saw Hunter through one of the windows of the truck closest to them and quickly ran over with Tony following close behind her. Reaching out she checked for a pulse through the window and let out a breath she didn’t realize she had been holding when she felt the steady thrum against her fingers. “I’ll get the truck open for you, go check the other vehicle” Tony said as he activated one of his suits lasers and started to cutting into the frame of the truck.
Shaking her head she pulled her M4 from her back and made her way to the other car. There was clear bullet damage amongst the wreckage of both vehicles so she wasn’t taking the chance. Slowly she made her way to vehicle on the passenger side and found that the passenger was dead with a bullet to head while the driver’s neck was at an odd angle.

“Vehicle clear, Hecate be advised confirmation on site this wasn’t an accident” Izzy radioed back while she made her way back to the truck with Hunter in it. Tony had both sides of the truck opened up for her to get access to her patients.

“Hecate copies. Medevac unit is ten minutes out call sign Pedro22. Pedro22 do you copy transmission?”

“Pedro22 copies transmission, update on patients?” Pedro22 asked as she was starting her assessments. For as bad as the crash looked like it could be, Hunter just seemed to have to one large gash to the side of his head but that didn’t mean he didn’t have any internal injuries. Quickly putting a neck brace on Hunter she moved over to assess Idaho as Tony arrived and brought down Kara to assist her.

Tony moved over to her side of the truck as she neck braced Idaho and winced at his injuries. He had at least one compound fracture of his left arm, a large cut to his head as well and a gsw to his right shoulder. While she started an IV on Idaho she saw that Kara was finishing stabilizing Hunter for her.

“Xena to Pedro22 and Hecate, we have two CatAlphas and two DOA’s. Jackal is unconscious male with a head wound and possible spinal and internal injuries. Idaho is unconscious male with a head wound, compound fracture to her left arm, GSW to his right shoulder, and possible spinal and internal injuries” Izzy radioed her assessments.

“Pedro22 copies. Wheels down in two minutes. Medic is going to need a lift down to the site with the rope and basket.”

“Ironman to Pedro22 it would be my pleasure, you have a clear landing spot about 2-0 yards north of the crash site. It’s a little tight but you should have enough room for you to land” Tony answered all quiet seriousness and she might have just met the man but even she knew that wasn’t a good sign.

“Pedro22 copies.......Wheels down” Pedro22 radioed.
“FieldTeam225 on site, securing site” said a male voice of the agent in charge of the investigation team that Tori had sent with the medevac unit. But she ignored their initial chatter as she continued to try to treat and stabilize Idaho’s injuries. Kara was done stabilizing Hunter so she had started to secure all the weapons and bags of weapons in the back of the truck that the two men had brought with them. Moments later Tony arrived with a young female medic.

“I’m Xena that’s 33, help her get Jackal there ready for transport so you can get on the other side of Idaho to help me stabilize him. I can’t get to his GSW from this side” Izzy ordered.

“I’m Velma” the medic said as she moved to assist Kara with Hunter.

She heard Tony move closer to her before her comms went silent all of sudden “Don’t panic I’m jamming our signal down here for a moment. Velma, I’m suppose to tell you ‘Jinkies’” Tony said and Izzy watched as the medic’s shoulders sagged for a moment before she started moving again.

“Are you my ride home?” Velma asked as she looked towards Tony briefly.

“We’re working on it, Izzy when we get to base we are to keep Velma with us. Tori says to use her as a guard/medic for when these two are getting treated. I’ll fill you in when it’s safe” Tony said confusing even more but before she could ask the comms came back up.

“Pedro22 to Velma what’s the status?”

“Velma to Pedro22, one patient ready for transport” Velma radioed.

“Pedro22 copies.”

“Alright take 33 up then come back for Jackal” Izzy told Tony as she watched Velma climb in on the other side of the truck and started stabilizing the GSW to Idaho’s shoulder. They worked in silence till Tony arrived back with the basket as they had gotten Idaho out onto a backboard. Quickly they lifted him into the basket and got him rigged up to Tony.

“Velma to Pedro22, second patient ready for transport” Velma radioed as Tony disappeared to take Idaho to the waiting medevac unit.
“Pedro22 copies. Wheels up when you all get on board.” Soon Tony was back and took one bag of gear and Velma with him first and then a minute later was back for her. Tossing him the medkit and the last bag of gear from the truck to Tony she watched as he put the straps over his shoulders before he was once again lifting her up bridal style and then they were airborne.

Tony dropped her off with the bags and she quickly ran ducking under the blades of the medevac unit as soon as she was inside she shut the door behind her. “Xena to Pedro22, cabin secure.”

“Pedro22 to Hecate, wheels up eta to Parma twenty minutes.”

“Hecate copies. Trauma team is standing by” Tori said as Izzy’s attention was dragged back towards Hunter who started groaning and trying to get up.

“Easy there Jackal,” she said bending down to talk directly to him as she placed a hand on his shoulder holding him down while she touched his face gently with her other hand. She watched as his eyes opened and could tell he was fighting to focus on her face. “It’s Xena you’re safe but injured so I need you to stay still.”

“Bloody hell. Idaho?” he asked groaning.

“Alive. He’s a little more beat up than you but we have trauma teams standing by at the base to get you patched up” she said into his ear. "You got a nasty hit to the head does anything else hurt?"

"Ribs but I doubt they are broken and just all around sore as hell" he said.

"Alright just hang on we're almost there. Xena to Hecate be advised Jackal is conscious” Izzy radioed and heard a sigh of relief from both her and Tony.

"Hecate copies. Trauma team has been updated.”
Chapter 32

Tony handed her a cup of coffee and she gave him a brief smile of gratitude as she took the warm beverage in her hands and stared into its dark depths. It was three hours later and she was currently sitting in Hunter’s room while he finally got to rest after all the tests the doctors put him through. He had been lucky with the worse of his injuries only being the gash on his head requiring thirty stitches, he had a concussion, and the rest of him was just bruises and small cuts. Idaho on the other hand was still in surgery with Velma currently acting as his guard in the operating room.

The local trauma surgeon was pissed about the presence of Velma in the room but she had overruled his objections with one phone call to Tori who had ordered the local base commander to do everything she asked and not to give her any shit, it might be his base but on this she overruled him. There also seemed to be some bad blood between Velma and the trauma surgeon currently working on Idaho she wasn’t sure if it was personal or just the fact that Velma was a medic watching over his shoulder.

All of it added to the mystery of the young medic until she had a free moment to check her Stark Pad and was glad she had years of keeping the shock off her face when she had read the real personnel file for one Angela (Angie) Carter Harper aka Angela Harper call sign Velma. The young medic was part of the Carter legacy a part that she thought was dead but she guessed not.

“As soon as Idaho is out of surgery and stable enough for transport we are taking both of them to the Hub” Izzy finally said as she took a drink of the coffee and grimaced at the taste.

“Yeah sorry coffee here is shit but you look like a frat boy after initiation” Tony quipped earning him a glare from her that had him shrug at her but it wasn’t an apology. Izzy huffed as she turned back to watching Hunter, if Tony was going to be or might as well be her father in law at least he wasn’t a total asshole like his public persona portrayed him to be at times. He had his moments but he was still brutally honest and at the moment she knew he was calling it like he was seeing it. She was exhausted but she had told Kara to rack out for two hours and was due back any moment to either relieve herself or Velma depending if the surgery was still going or not.

Her thoughts were interrupted as a nurse came by the curtained off area to note down Hunter’s vitals. Parma was just a trauma center facility it had everything to treat injuries and stabilize patients but they didn’t have long term rooms so they closest they got was a curtained off area to themselves. “The other agent is out of surgery they’ll be bringing him here in a few minutes” the nurse said before leaving the room and Izzy felt the tension she hadn’t realized she was holding leave her muscles.

“Well that’s good news at least” Tony said and she could only nod as she pulled out her phone and
hit Tori’s contact but not the phone Tony gave them, nope this was the office line that they knew was most likely monitored, it was time to play a game of smoke and mirrors.

“Hand” Tori answered in the voice she used was all business and sexy as hell to Izzy but she also knew it took a lot out of her mate to play the role of her public persona.

“Idaho is out of surgery, once he is stable enough I’m bringing them back to the Hub to recover since Parma doesn’t have long term facilities to care for Idaho. I’ll need a medic for the flight so can you cut me orders for the medic call sign Velma to come with” Izzy asked knowing that Tori was following the conversation and what she was doing.

“Granted the orders will be in the base commanders box in the next twenty minutes. Have the doctor send me both Idaho and Jackal’s files so I can get a doctor assigned to them here and get things arranged” Tori ordered.

“Yes Ma’am. I’ll let you know when we are inbound.”

“Make sure you do” Tori said before hanging up the phone without saying goodbye. Hand and Hartley never said goodbye or greeted each other in a friendly way...but Izzy and Tori did and she smiled gently at her phone when she received a text: Love you, stay safe.

“Why don’t you get some sleep, they’ll be bringing Idaho in here soon and I’ll keep an eye on Hunter” Tony said softly to her and not for the first time she realized he cared about her but not just her he cared about his family and they were now all family. Kara came into the curtained area carrying her own cup of coffee that she was grimacing at and Izzy had to fight back a chuckle at the face.

“Don’t worry we feel the same way about the coffee” Izzy quipped as she stood stretching out her protesting muscles. “Idaho is out of surgery and they are moving him here soon. Once they are stable enough then we are getting back to the Hub.”

“We are going to need an actual medic for the flight, I only have first aid training and you will be busy flying the plane” Kara said walking over to a sink and dumping the coffee before throwing away the cup.

“Already taken care of. I’m going to catch some sleep” she said pointing to the empty gurney to the right of of Hunter that was next to a window. “Once they bring in Idaho tell Velma to go pack a bag she is our medic for the flight home. Hand is cutting the orders now. Wake me in two unless they get
cleared for transport sooner.”

“Got it boss” Kara said taking over her chair she had just vacated while pulling out a deck of cards that got Tony’s attention. “Poker?” she heard Kara ask her father in law as she climbed up on the gurney and closed her eyes. Instantly she was asleep.

Angela ‘Velma’ Harper sighed the long suffering sigh of a junior agent being ordered to do something she really didn’t want to be doing as she packed her duffle as her bunk mates all whooped and hollered at the movie playing on the TV in the joint living room. ‘Packed its more like wrestling with the damn thing since it is almost the same size as me standing up’ she thought once again wishing she was taller. Her bunk mate Sarah, who was just as junior as she was and also the only other female in the squadron sat on her own bed watching Angela pack as she kept saying how lucky she was that she caught this assignment. Angela played along with her bunkmates conversation as she packed but her mind was on other things.

She had received the Code 99 only a few hours before the alert had gone out for them to scramble for a mission and she had been on edge until she had heard Tony Stark of all people say her codeword. Being such a junior agent in SHIELD meant she didn’t have as much leeway when it came to taking leave or having the choice of assignments. Angela knew that once she had read the Code 99 she would have to trust either Uncle Nick or one of her siblings to make arrangements for her to be moved to one of the more major bases with another family member or trusted allies to watch her back.

It had been hard during those hours to just sit there and joke around with the rest of her squadron while they sat around for an assignment but she had to wait, had to patient...something she totally was not good at. The Parma base was an old WW2 era base built by the Italians and Nazi’s that SHIELD had taken over decades ago and turned it into a rapid response base during the Cold War. After the Cold War ended though it became an almost obsolete base that had seen better days but SHIELD still used it for training and to give newer formed units time to work up before rotating them somewhere else. The last was how her unit had been assigned to Parma just six months ago as the squad that had been Pedro22 before them had all been promoted and reassigned to different units.

Her bunkmate had gone silent and she cursed herself for not following the conversation as closely as she should have been but then the last bit of the conversation filtered through to her brain and she sighed relieved as she answered, “Didn’t really meet Ironman, he just gave me a lift down to the crash site then back up” she said as she zipped up her duffle bag.

“Do you really need all that?” Sarah her bunkmate asked.

“My orders just say I’m suppose to report to Agent Hartley for assignment with no information, so it could be only for the flight back or even longer. I’d rather have my stuff with me just in case” Angela said not technically lying, the best lie was a lie dipped in just enough truth to stick up on its
own. Her orders were vague but she had a funny feeling Agent Hand and Agent Hartley had left them like that to give her wiggle room because with the Code 99 she knew she wasn’t going to come back to Parma any time soon, if ever.

Angela lifted the army style duffle bag onto the bed after it was packed and she squatted down pulling the straps onto her shoulders, standing up with an audible grunt. The bag was at least fifty lbs. while she still was in her tactical gear that easily was another thirty lbs. and for a few moments she adjusted straps and buckles till she was able to get everything to sit comfortably. Turning around she smiled at Sarah as her old bunkmate handed her, her M4 as she quickly checked the safety out of habit and clipped it to her tactical suit. “I’ll catch ya on the flip side” she said with a small wave as she made her way towards the trauma center where she had been told to meet with Agent Hartley.

A few minutes and a short walk later she arrived back at the trauma center and walked over to Agent Hartley who was currently suffering the long winded attention of the base commander who was probably trying to get Agent Hartley to take someone more ‘senior’ than her as the medic for the flight back to the Hub. Agent Andrew Jackson was just as pretentious as his name made him sound and it was no secret that the man was as much an asshole as he was a sexist prick. Of course he never showed any sexism to higher ranking agents like Agent Hartley or Hand but he sure loved to talk down to any female subordinates that weren’t in ‘proper female roles’ as he saw them, as well as any male subordinates that refused to kiss up to his pompous ass unless they had connections to higher ranking agents, of course.

Nope Agent Jackson had made his way up the ranks of SHIELD by patronage and sheer dumb luck and a part of her seriously wished to see his face whenever he realized he had a legacy within arms reach that he treated with any given chance like something not fit to be on the bottom of his shoe. Agent Hartley was the first to spot her as she made her way to the two senior agents but when Agent Jackson saw her she could see his face darken to a shade of red that meant a possible vitriol explosion once he took in the fact she had her tactical gear as well as her duffle with her.

“Agent Angela Harper reporting for assignment Ma’am” she said quickly saluting Agent Hartley and ignoring Agent Jackson on general principle. Agent Hartley’s eyes shone with laughter for a moment before they shut back down showing nothing. It was a neat trick and the older female agent certainly had a good poker face but she was a Carter and she had learned how to read and display poker faces from the cradle.

“What are you doing with all your gear Agent Harper?” Jackson spit out at her and she had to fight off the urge to roll her eyes at the man. Opening her chest pocket she pulled out her orders from her pocket and handed it to the man.

“Reporting to Agent Hartley like ordered, sir. My orders state to report for an assignment, not what that assignment is or for how long the assignment is for. I’m a combat medic so that means it can be anything or however long and I’ve alway been taught better to be over prepared than to be caught with my pants around my ankles, sir” she said the last bit and caught the twinkle in Agent Harley’s
eye again before it disappeared. Her answer though seemed to piss off Agent Jackson even more as he turned redder if that was possible and was about to take a breath to start one of his tirades.

“Very good Agent Harper we purposely left your orders vague to see what you would do” Agent Hartley said cutting off all protests and angry sputtering from Jackson who just now looked slightly mutinous and pissed off that he wasn’t able to bring her down a peg or two in front of another senior agent to show how big and bad he was. “For the time being you’re assigned as the combat medic attached to my team since mine just went on leave. Normally I’d take a higher ranking agent but you already know the two patients that we will be mainly responsible for but your record and scores from the academy were the top of your class so don’t disappoint me” Agent Hartley finished taking the orders from Agent Jackson before folding them back up and handing them back to her.

“Yes Ma’am” Angela said and with the tone of voice and just sheer presence of the older female agent she found herself standing at attention without really meaning to at first. She had heard good things about Agent’s Hand and Hartley over the years whenever her siblings or cousins talked shop at the few family gatherings they’ve had and was pleased to realize what she had heard was true, this was an agent that deserved respect not one that demanded it because of her rank like Jackson.

“Good. We are about to move out go see if Agent Palamas needs any help with getting Jackal and Idaho ready for transport so we can get this show on the road” Agent Hartley ordered.

“Yes Ma’am” she said again this time saluting again as she turned away from Jackson and his face of apoplectic shock as she made her way over to where Agent Palamas was speaking with one of the nurses and Tony Stark leaned against the wall with an amused look on his face. It took her a moment but she realized he had probably been watching the whole confrontation and as she neared closer he quickly winked at her before she reported now to Agent Palamas.

Once she got the quinjet airborne she set the auto pilot with the coarse set to the Hub as she leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes for a moment and a part of her wished she could just go to sleep right there but she knew she couldn’t. Nope she needed to go start a conference call between Hand and Blake at the Hub, Steve, Sharon, Pepper and Bruce at Avenger tower and everyone else that was hidden light only knew where Tasha and Clint had them stashed. Izzy knew there was more new files for her to check out but with everything going on she had only been able to check out Angela’s file and that only as a cursory glance because Stark had pulled it up for her to look at.

Getting up she stopped quickly by her go bag and pulled out the electronics jammer she had been given by Skye and Maria when she had met with them. That one meeting seemed like a long time ago but it was only weeks, time wasn’t going slow, it just had been near non-stop for a while now and didn’t look like it was going to ease up anytime soon. Walking to the back of the jet she saw that Tony was sitting down next to Hunter as the two men talked softly on one side of the plane. Hunter was already sitting up and moving around being stubborn but she guessed that stubbornness was to be expected of an SAS soldier. Looking to the other side of the jet she saw Agent Harper checking the vitals on a still unconscious Idaho while Kara was sitting next to them on her own Stark Pad
probably reading all the files on the server she now had access to by the look on her face.

Pressing her foot into the divot in the floor she activated the conference table feature of the jet that was permanently assigned for Hand and her’s use. As the table raised up from the floor she turned around and connected her Stark Pad to the large screen tv that had dropped down from the ceiling turning the tv into the screen for their conference call. Pressing the buttons to activate the cube she waited till the blue light flashed on and became steady before she turned on the pad and started the conference call program and moments later she was greeted by the face of Sharon Carter.

“Hello everyone give me a sec and I’ll get you patched in, we are only waiting for Tasha and their group” Sharon said as the screen blanked for a moment and she could see the screen split into fours with Sharon and the tower group being on the top left and Tori and Blake on the top right, while the bottom two screens stayed blank.

“I thought they’d beat us here” Izzy said as she sat down at the table.

“They probably would have if Tasha the taskmistress didn’t decide to still take poor Fitz, Jemma and Bobbi out for training….I think it was mainly for Jemma and Bobbi though, they didn’t take the news of Hunter being hurt well and needed a distraction and she dragged Fitz along for the ride” Sharon said smirking

“Good he needs the combat training with the way things keep heating up” Izzy said and shared a worried look briefly with Pepper and Bruce on the screen.

“Hey Angie, like the ride I arranged for you?” Sharon asked with an impish smirk.

“Very nice cuz, but I wish it wasn’t because of something so serious” Agent Harper said as she helped Tony bring Hunter to the conference table to sit so he could be part of the call. Not taking her attention off of Hunter the young medic took a look at the mobile vitals monitor she had hooked up to him once he was sitting down. “Face mask or cannula?” she asked Hunter but said “No arguments or you are going back to the bed.”

“Cannula and hopefully Bobbi and Jemma don’t notice it” Hunter grumbled and Izzy watched as the medic started rigging up oxygen over to the conference table for him.

“Five bucks says they see the cannula and give him shit about being out of bed” Tony said smirking at her and Izzy didn’t hide the roll of her eyes at her father in law.
“Not taking that bet old man” Izzy said using her and Tori’s nickname for him.

“Tori what about you?” Tony asked her mate and she smiled when she heard Tori’s chuckle.

“Not a chance, especially since I know both Bobbi and Jemma have read the medical reports I have for Hunter on the server” Tori said and her mate smirked at the groan Hunter gave when he heard that news.

“Not fair, are you trying to have my mates kick my ass?” Hunter whined.

“Why do I feel like I am missing something?” Kara said as she saw down next to her at the conference table.

“Because you are probably so busy reading the investigation files that you didn’t bother to check out the files yet of those you are now working with” Izzy teased. “Don’t worry it’s a lot to take in and I know I have even more files to read thanks to Sharon’s latest data dump last night. I’ll fill ya in on the team but try to keep up. Blake you might want to listen in as well” she said before watching him nod. “Harper are you listening in?”

“Yes Ma’am” the medic responded instantly as she adjusted the oxygen cannula onto Hunter’s head.

“It’s Izzy since technically you are family” Izzy said.

“Then call me Angie” she said as she sat down on the other side of Hunter.

“Alright I guess I’ll start with the Avengers and work my way out...First we will start with Tony here whose mates are Pepper Potts and Dr. Bruce Banner, wave you two” Izzy said and was amused when the two actually did wave. Now Tony had twins before he met his mates that he didn’t know about till just recently. The twins are Agents and Drs. Leopold Fitz and Jemma Simmons you might have heard about them but when anyone talks about them they are referred to as FitzSimmons. Now Jemma is soulmates with Bobbi Morse aka Mockingbird and Lance Hunter aka as Jackal here” she said indicating Hunter.

“Jemma though isn’t the only one with soulmates. Fitz as everyone calls him is both mine and
Victoria’s soulmate, so that makes Tony Stark heaven help me my father in law of just one week”
Izzy deadpanned to the shocked faces of the three people she was filling in and then chuckled when
Tori put a finger under Blake’s jaw and closed it for him as he looked between Tori and herself.

“No wonder you two haven’t killed each other yet, was it all an act or were those real fights?” Blake
asked his amusement coloring his voice.

“We aren’t that bad!” Izzy said with a huff.

“Yes you two are, your fights both verbal and physical are things of bloody legend” Blake said
giving her a look and he wasn’t the only one as her in-laws were also giving her and Tori a
concerned look.

“Fine, most of the verbal sparring matches were real and the physical fights were mainly for show
and fucking foreplay so when she’d drag me to her office I could have a few moments with my wife
without some junior agent interrupting us which has a high tendency of happening,” Izzy admitted
and Tori slightly blushed.

“Tony don’t you say it” Pepper said and Izzy looked at Tony with a raised eyebrow when he closed
his mouth with an audible snap.

“That’s not all isn’t it?” Kara asked as she shaked her head.

“Nope, next I’ll go with Steve since he’s right there and such an easy target. Now Steve just met one
of this two soulmates, the first one being Sharon Carter aka Agent 13” Izzy said.

“Congrats Cuz” Angie said interrupting her.

“I guess I should introduce you to the group incase not everyone is aware. The medic we picked up
in Parma is in SHIELD’s database as Agent Angela Harper aka Velma but her real and full name is
Angela Carter Harper or Angie for short and is the cousin of Sharon Carter and granddaughter of
Peggy, Angie and James Carter” Izzy said to be interrupted again.

“Damn another legacy,” Kara said only to be interrupted by Sharon.
“Oh there are more of us than you think, most of them are hiding in plain sight. I can only talk about the Carter legacy and one other legacy because I grew up with him but we are here in SHIELD and around the world” Sharon said. “Those that could hid in the shadows and they are the lucky ones. Actually I think they only legacies that are ‘out of the closet’ are myself and Kevin my older brother and Tony. We couldn’t hide or fake our deaths and become someone else like most of the other legacies had to.”

“Well we know of one other legacy” Izzy began and got a subtle nod from Blake to go ahead. “I’ll go slightly off on a tangent here before I start on Natasha Romanoff and Clint Barton....” Izzy started to be interrupted again but this time by Tasha.

“Izzy now what are you starting with Clint and I?” Tasha asked as her group came onto the screen and there was an empty chair between Tasha and Clint confirming her suspicions they had a third no one knew about till now, let alone children. To have the Black Widow and Hawkeye as parents when bringing home a date...yeah no thanks.

“Hello Tasha I was just filling in our three newest members on the lovely dynamics and ties of our little group. Which I’ll call out a name and wave your hands so we can all be introduced” Izzy said totally amused and she knew it was all her warped sense of humor and the lack of sleep that was slightly causing her to be slap happy.

“Love you are slap happy” Tori said and Izzy could hear the concern.

“That’s what I was just thinking but I promise to sleep once we arrive at the Hub” she said honestly. “Anyways Bobbi, Jemma and Fitz wave your hands” she waited till they waved and she smiled gently to Fitz. “Hello love, we’ll talk later once I get back to the Hub.”

“You mean once you sleep, yes?” he asked with his light scottish burr and a tone in his voice that meant not to argue with him and Tori on this. Usually it was her that gave the orders in private but with adding Fitz to the dynamic she found herself ganged up on by both Tori and him a few times already and found that she didn’t quite mind it so much. Pick your fights Izzy, happy mates, happy life.

“Alright yes. Now everyone meet Agent Felix Blake but his real name is Blake Chester Phillips and the last known heir to the Phillips legacy. Well until we can help him find his missing daughter, which Skye the information for a Lauran Amanda Blake is on the database we will need your magical program and talents to start looking for her” Izzy said as she watched Skye and Maria put their heads together as they looked at the file in question.
“Now next of the Avenger line up is Natasha Romanoff which rumors are true…” Izzy said and was yet to be interrupted again when Blake did a spit take with his coffee when a dark haired woman came and sat between Tasha and Clint.

“Lauran!?” Blake choked out in shock and totally looking like he saw a ghost.

“Dad!?” the woman she now knew was Lauran Amanda Phillips said shocked as she even looked like she was seeing a ghost.

“Dad?” Clint asked shocked as she watched Tasha lean over and softly talk to the woman.

“Found her” Skye and Maria quipped at the same time and Izzy was temporarily amused as she watched both Mel and Phil that were bracketing the pair between them smacked both lightly on the back of the heads. “Ow damn it mom” Skye said while Maria said “Ow damn it dad.”

“Language” both Mel and Phil said at the same time smirking at the pair.

“Cuteness factor overload” Tony quipped causing almost everyone to laugh and Izzy had to say she agreed at the moment.

“Hey I’m allowed to have my cute moments with my parents I got 23 years of cuteness to make up for” Skye said.

“Well good to know you know...Guess we will introduce you now while those three whisper to each other and Blake gets more coffee which he hopefully wont spit in my living room again” Izzy said shooting the agent a dark look that he just gave her the finger for her troubles…

“Alright everyone should know who Deputy Director Maria Hill is, if not you have been hiding under a rock inside of SHIELD for way too many years. Next to Maria is…..what are you going as?” Izzy asked Skye truly wondering what she was now supposed to call the young hacker.

“I’m Skye Rayne May Coulson, aka Skyefall soulmate to Maria Hill and daughter to both Melinda and Phil May Coulson” she said indicating first Maria then her parents.
“Why am I the only one shocked that Coulson isn’t dead?” Kara asked.

“Because Coulson survived. The file is on the database, good read, should read it sometime when you have time” Tony snarked closing off that topic fast because it was still a sore subject for most of the people in the room. None of them blamed Phil, Mel or Maria, nope all the blame sat on Fury’s shoulders for that whole bag of cats.

“Anyways...Tasha you three okay over there?” Izzy asked.

“Yes, apparently Laura was under the impression that both of her parents were dead” Tasha said shooting Blake a questioning look and she saw him wince before sighing.

“I was MIA for eight months when the jet I was on crash landed in Africa during a mission. The young SHIELD agent assigned to make notifications jumped the gun and he told Lauran’s mom that I passed. We weren’t soulmates we were both blanks that somehow had found someone to be with in the other. By the time I got into contact with SHIELD I was told that Samantha had died in a car crash a few months after my going missing and that Lauran had disappeared somewhere in South America. I never stopped looking for you, whenever I had a leave I went down to random South American countries in hopes I’d find you but I never could” Blake said softly.

“I had no idea you were SHIELD, all mom or you ever told me was that you were in the military that’s why you were always gone” Lauran said and Izzy felt bad because it felt like they were intruding on a very private family moment. Another moment passed before Lauran wiped away some tears before saying “Well we found each other now. Dad I’d like you to meet my soulmates Clint Barton and Natasha Romanoff but something tells me you already know each other.”

“Oh yes but baby girl you were a blank like your mother and I” Blake said trying to understand.

“I was and after yours and mom’s deaths I met someone that was a blank as well and we had two beautiful children, which makes you a grandpa. A little before Richard was killed I had two soulmarks appear on my body but not on his. When Richard died, Natasha and Clint were with him for his last moments and he sent them to find me and the kids to keep us safe and the rest is history” Lauran said.

“Grandpa?” Blake said smiling “I like the sound of that I thought the family legacy was going to die with me.”
“Oh shit!” Clint said has the reality of just who his and Tasha’s third was hit him and by the look of it Tasha as well.

“Loves?” Lauran asked as she looked back and forth between her two mates.

“Um Laura, love, you know how you thought your last name was Blake?” Clint asked.

“It is” she said.

“It isn’t. I’m guessing you go by Laura now instead of Lauren?” Blake asked and waited for a nod from his daughter. “Alright the name that you used all your life isn’t your full real name. To the world you are Lauran Amanda Blake but your real name is Lauran Amanda Phillips. Just like to the world and SHIELD I am Felix Blake but it’s really Blake Chester Phillips and our family has been hiding in plain sight for years because we are one of the founding families of SHIELD. We are what is referred to as a legacy, your mother knew the truth of who I was and who you were because of it but since you always had your heart set on being a teacher I never told you” Blake said as he rubbed his hands against his face wiping away tears that Izzy saw fall but would never say anything about.

“Hawkeye, Widow I need your word that you will keep my daughter and grandchildren safe, they are all I have left in this world” Blake said seriously and staring down the two specialist and Izzy knew that by his addressing their work personas that he was addressing the killers they were known as.

Clint and Tasha shared a look and a hand placed on Laura’s hand under the table kept her from protesting to her father. “You have our word, sir” Tasha said but it was the Black Widow that responded before she took a deep breath and then Tasha was back to being Tasha. “And once you have leave or we can get you here we’d love to have you hear to meet your two children Cooper and Lila and also celebrate with us the coming of your third grandchild” Tasha said gently as she couldn’t stop the smile from spreading across her face as she looked at Laura.

“Thank you Ag…” Blake said before he stopped and took a deep breath. “Thank you Natasha, I would like that very much.”

“Alright now that introductions of this interconnected family is done, let’s start this meeting. First thing, Tasha and Clint mind telling us where the hell you all are?” Sharon said as threw up the map on the fourth screen that up until then was blank and she watched as Tasha and Clint shared a look. “I’m only asking because we are trying to see where everyone is in case we ever need to respond to a situation and also so we have an idea of where safe havens are not only for us but now the legacies
that are going to be our allies and might have rule of 6 situations.”

“I know and for now this information just stays with this group and the legacies on a need to know basis. We have a few other bolt holes, but this one...is home” Tasha said giving Laura a gentle smile and waited till Laura nodded her head. “We are in Blaine county Idaho just an hour or two from Sun Valley. What is that face for Sharon?”

“What face?” Sharon asked nonchalantly as her mind spun around and she tried desperately not to look at Angie but she saw probably same shocked face on her cousin. Could it be coincidence? Something told her it wasn’t, because there was no things as coincidences.

“I’m going to ask you a question but what made you decide Sun Valley, Idaho?” Sharon asked and she knew that Natasha picked up on the importance of her answer because she saw the woman pause and think for a moment.

“It was after we thought Skye was murdered. Clint and I were a mess and your Grandma Peggy actually walked in on us one night having a fight in the gym. She told us to shut up and follow her and it was Peggy Carter so we did what she said and followed her all the way back to her quarters she shared with your Grandma Angie and Grandpa James. You were there too asleep on the couch but your Grandpa James picked up up and carried you to bed.”

“Your Grandmother’s decided to play couples counseling with us that night and actually helped a lot. It was your Grandma Angie that said what we needed was a vacation and told us of the resort in Sun Valley that your Grandpa had taken them to a few years back when most of your family had died suddenly. Your Grandma Peggy agreed and one of her last acts as Director before stepping down and appointing Fury was to grant Clint and I leave for a month to figure things out. Your Grandmothers were right we did need a vacation, we explored the area and fell in love with it and bought land not far away that we could maybe retire to or start a family on” Tasha said the last bit giving Laura’s hand a squeeze as it sat on the table.

Sharon took a moment to take in the story then looked over to Angie, “Coincidence?”

“My name sake at the moment is probably smirking right now down at us,” Angie said shaking her head with a small smile on her face. “Nope I doubt it was a coincidence but I doubt moms and dad know. They might suspect but they’ve been out of the game before they joined” Angie said the last bit pointing to the screen Tasha and Clint were on from her point of view.
“The master manipulator strikes again” Sharon said rolling her eyes.

“Don’t let Grandma Peggy here you call Grandma Angie that” Angie said with a smirk.

“Care to fill us in children?” Tasha said interrupting their bickering in a tone that said Sharon better tell her now or the next time she saw Sharon she might use her for knife throwing practice.

“Fine, I’m guessing you know Jenny, Jackie and Michael Harper?” Sharon asked and watched the shock cross both Tasha and Clint’s faces before the both nodded. “I’m guessing they were the ones you were going to monitor Skye’s condition as a favor to you with some bullshit story?” Sharon asked again to another set of nods.

“Don’t bother with the bullshit story, they are part of the Carter legacy, I’ll officially introduce you, well sorta but we’ll talk about that later, back on track. Jenny, Jackie and Michael are my Aunts and Uncle that faked their deaths with most of my cousins after my parents were killed in ‘88 from what I was raised to believe was an accidental plane crash. Uncle Nick confirmed last night that it wasn’t an accident but my grandparents were never able to prove it” Sharon said and had to take a breath to get control of her emotions but she felt instant calm when Steve placed his hand over hers and gave it a squeeze.

She looked back at her mate and gave him a grateful smile before turning back to her Stark Pad and inputting the newest information. The map now showed not only where their little group was, it also showed where the Carter legacies were in the world. Looking at the map she realized for the first time she had the three main legacies for the first time in years working together knowingly without hiding. Now of the Howling Commando’s legacies she knew who was the Jones legacy if not exactly where Trip was at the moment but she had no idea where or who the Morita, Dugan, Dernier, Pinkerton or Sawyer legacies were. Of the other four possible legacies Barnes and Junior were dead as far as they could tell and Koenig and Falsworth had married into the Carter line.

“Alright on the server will be the updated map with different features programed into it, if you need some type of information splayed out on it let me or Tony know and we will get JARVIS to work on it. But current features are, SHIELD bases, Avenger bases, updated list of all allies and where they are and also any known enemies to SHIELD and the legacies as well as the altercations and major events from this investigation maybe looking at everything laid out will help someone see a bigger picture. Tony where are we on materials and equipment?”

“If we need anything electronic I can either buy it or build it by hand at any of the Avenger bases. If you haven’t received a Stark Pad and Stark Phone that was programmed by Skye or myself let us know and we will hook you up because those are totally secure comms since they are running off a satellite only we have access to. As for weapons, each of the Avenger bases are quite stocked of all the Avenger’s custom weapons but also each has a nice collection of rifles, handguns, explosives and
enough body armor for those I have measurements for. That is another thing if you are new to the group which is most of you since the last two I made body armor for was Skye and Maria need to give me measurements so I can customize your armor” Tony finished.

“Alright next topic up for discussion I’m sorry to ask this Skye…” Sharon said but was interrupted by the young woman.

“You all need to know what happened when I was taken” Skye said interrupting Sharon but she knew that this was coming. Maria and her had discussed it last night after she had woken up screaming from a nightmare after only sleeping for a little over an hour. Her parents both had rushed into the room and it took the combined effort of them and Maria to calm her down. They had asked if she wanted to talk about it but she had only shook her head and told her parents to go try to get some sleep, she had watched the exchange of looks between them and Maria before her mate had nodded.

Skye had spent about an hour in Maria’s lap with her head rested against her mate’s shoulder before she had started talking about everything that had happened. Through out it all Maria didn’t say anything just let her talk as her mate kept holding her tightly against with the occasional kiss to her forehead. When it was over she had cried again till she passed out before Laura had come to get them when they had received the emergency call about Hunter and needed her to help Tasha setup and connect the networks together.

She felt Maria’s hand cover her own as she gripped the wheelchair’s armrest and she forced herself to loosen her grip before looking to her mate. Calm understanding filled her mates eyes but also sadness at her pain and an anger at those that had dared to her hurt. Leaning over she gave Maria a gentle kiss on her mate’s cheek and not for the first time wondered how she got so damn lucky to have Maria in her life.

“I know we discussed this last night but can you do it again sweetheart?” Maria whispered to her as blue eyes met her brown and she felt Maria’s support on whatever she decided. Skye knew when it came to her Maria was always going to be Maria the mate before she was Maria the agent.

“Honestly I don’t know, I know the audio and video recorders were on in the Bus last night because I didn’t think to turn them off..” Skye blushed slightly at Maria’s chuckle.

“That’s alright sweetheart, I think it might be a while before we have to turn those off for that but I get what you are saying. Do you want to give them access and go for a walk or maybe go back to the Bus to rest?” Maria asked leaving it all up to her, it was her decision but Maria would be there for her no matter what she decided.

“I think that would be best, I don’t want to take the risk of having a flashback just yet and telling it
twice and having questions asked might be too much right now” Skye said as she pulled her Stark Pad to her and started to access the Bus’s system on it. As she was doing that someone else’s pad dinged an alert.

“Cooper is awake and heading for the living room” Tasha said.

“I’ll get them and you two can fill me in later” Laura said standing up and Skye had a moment to decide what to do but decided being near the kids might help. Children always cheered her up and she’d like to get to know her little cousins.

“Maria and I will get them for you. I’m giving you all audio of me recounting what happened to Maria, I can’t relive it again so soon after talking about it last night, so we will be leaving. Recording is about thirty minutes, if you have any questions write them down and I’ll answer them later if I can” Skye said putting the audio file onto the server for whoever to plug it into the conference call.

“Thank you Maria and Skye, the kids might be hungry they can have a snack so they don’t ruin their dinner. Lila should wake soon from her nap if she isn’t already up by the time you arrive back to the house” Laura said sitting down again between Tasha and Clint.

“Not a problem,” Maria said as she unlocked the wheelchair and started maneuvering it to the door that lead into the barn proper. Skye heard the door slide closed behind them as Maria kept pushing her towards the house. The stairs that were a hassle with the wheelchair last night were no longer a hassle as Clint and with the help of her dad put together a ramp that Clint had designed and built years ago knowing that eventually they might need to get a wheelchair into the house. Skye had heard Clint tell her dad he always assumed it would only be Tasha or himself that would need the ramp but he was thankful that he had built it all those years ago.

“Hey Cooper” Skye said as they came into the living room to find the young boy trying to figure out the tv “Need some help with that?”

“Yes please usually mom has it already on for me when I wake up from my nap” he said handing her the remote. It took her a moment but she finally got the tv turned on and switched over to Netflix for kids so they could watch some cartoons.

“What cartoons do you like?” Skye asked as they got to the menu.

“Never really watched cartoons so I’ve been picking at at random” he said shrugging.
“Well do you want to try mine and Maria’s favorite cartoon and see if you like it?” she asked paging over to where she knew they had old school Scooby Doo cartoons.

“You watch cartoons like Pa?” he asked eyeing her like he wasn’t sure if she were real.

“Of course! Cartoons are the best aren’t they baby?” Skye asked Maria as she came back in the room with a plate of cut up apples and peanut butter.

“Yes they are especially Scooby Doo, he will always be my favorite” Maria said as she put the plate down on the coffee table and they watched as Cooper digged into his snack. A noise from upstairs announced that Lila had woken up from her nap as well and Maria quickly went back up the stairs while Skye turned on the first episode of Scooby Doo and found herself humming to the song. Just as the song ended Skye heard giggling from the stairs as she saw Maria come down the stairs with Lila on her back and she felt herself smile while her heart warmed at the sight. They shared a physical bond as well as a newly developing emotional bond, so her emotions traveled across the bond and she saw Maria’s soft smile as she took in the emotions Skye was feeling at the sight before her. Gently Maria reached behind her and tickled the little girl causing her to squeal in delight before she grabbed Lila and flipped her over her head placing her next to her brother who pushed the plate closer to his sister to share the apples and peanut butter.

Skye shook her head with a small smile on her lips at the small gesture between the siblings and not for the first time she wondered what it would have been like to have a brother or sister while growing up. A hand on her shoulder squeezed before it dropped to the wheelchair and locked it in place before strong arms lifted her up bridal style from the chair. Skye felt herself chuckle before kissing Maria’s cheek again as her mate carried her over to the couch and placed her gently against the cushions. Maria then placed pillows under her legs to prop them up to help with the swelling before she then sat next to her. Taking Maria’s hand in her own she leaned her head against her mates shoulder and felt a gentle kiss to the top of her head as she smiled and for a time lost herself in thoughts of a possible future that looked like this.
Chapter 33

Silence filled the room other than the breaths of eight adults as they sat at a conference table looking up towards a screen split four ways that was just as equally quiet as they took in everything they had just heard. Skye’s voice no longer was playing but the sound of her voice as she recounted everything she had gone through when captured was going to haunt everyone’s sleep tonight. The scraping of a chair moving drew everyone’s thoughts out of the dark paths they were going as they tried to fully process what they had just heard. Natasha watched as the woman she thought of as her sister quickly left the room barely holding herself together as her mate followed quickly after her.

Taking a deep breath she pushed away from the table, passing by Clint she took the key that he held up the he kept on a chain and had just removed from around his neck and walked to one of the locked file cabinets on the side of the room. Putting the key in the lock she saw the amber light on the keypad and started pressing in the code to open the drawer, any wrong press of the code and the drawers contents would be incinerated. It was a fail safe though they were sure no one knew about this place she wouldn’t risk these files seeing the light of the day. Natasha knew they should’ve destroyed the files and the evidence all those years ago but something always stopped her and Clint from doing it, instead they hid it, secured it and prayed they would never have to expose the secrets within to the light of day.

The drawer opened and looking inside it was just three physical files with corresponding flashdrives attached to their fronts, nothing scary except those three files housed very dark times in her life and she feared the demons she was unlocking. She knew they had no choice, their group needed this information and though she was happy that her niece was alive, she feared her reaction once she saw what her parents, Clint and herself as STRIKE Team: Delta did in her name all those years ago when they thought that she was dead. Natasha paused and she could feel everyone’s eyes on her back and she fought the urge to bolt and run away from this, she had never been a coward but she honestly was afraid to face the people she loved and cared about after they read these files.

“Tasha, we have to” Clint said softly from behind her at the table. No one said anything, you could have heard a pin drop in the room it was that quiet.

“I know, красивый, these files...when you read them understand we were hurting, it doesn’t fully justify what we did or how we handled our pain but we were broken…the thing is though Clint and I have come to accept that we wouldn’t do anything differently in these files and that we would do it again if forced into that position again. This is proof of the demons that hide in us both” Natasha said as she took a breath and pulled out the first file and held it in her hands before handing it back towards Clint.

“Tasha, I’ve told you and Clint I accept you fully. The good, the bad and the ugly because we all have our demons. ‘Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.’ I’m not going anywhere love, you are stuck with me and our children till the
end” Laura said from behind her as her amazing mate wrapped her arms around Natasha’s waist and
leaned into her, holding her tight. Natasha took a deep breath and nodded before pulling out the other
two files, one large the other almost pathetically small compared to the first two files. Turning around
in Laura’s arms she handed the files to Clint and watched as he started uploading them to the server.
Natasha pulled Laura into her body and held her for a minute before releasing her mate to go sit back
down.

“The first file Clint is uploading is the only file on Skye’s original kidnapping when she was born,
leading up to what we thought was her murder. That investigation was completely off the books and
information obtained in that file wasn’t done legally by any stretch of the word or imagination. The
person responsible for the kidnapping and what we believed death of Skye was one Calvin L.
Johnson former level 6 SHIELD scientist aka Dr. Hyde.”

“At the time no one knew Mel was pregnant except for a handful of people since as STRIKE Team:
Delta we had made enough enemies to be paranoid with our safeties even when not on mission. Mel
was put on leave while it was made out like she was playing babysitter for some bogus project, to
Peggy we were treated like family since we had been her security detail when she traveled and had
saved her life once.”

“Yes, Dublin among other instances...During Mel’s pregnancy Phil was put on a desk job unless
Clint and I needed him with us in the field. Phil was overseeing a project that was suppose to be
studying only the files from Project Rebirth but Phil caught Johnson actually performing experiments
on himself. Johnson escaped and STRIKE Team: Delta was tasked with his capture or elimination
but he was always just ahead of us, led us on a merry little chase over every continent except
Antarctica.”

“We suspected he was working with a larger organization but there was no evidence to support it
other than our inability to catch the bastard at the time. Once he kidnapped Skye though all bets were
off we got our confirmation that he was working for a group at the time that was calling themselves
RENS, Revolution and Evolution’s Next Step. Bastard left a manifesto when he kidnapped Skye
and told us exactly what he was going to do to her…” Natasha said and had to take a deep breath to
lock down the horror and anger she was feeling just remembering that moment.

“Officially Peggy and Fury had granted STRIKE Team: Delta some much needed time off and had
someone else take over the official investigation. Unofficially we were told in not so many words to
do what we were told go off the reservation, to get Skye back and to end it with extreme prejudice”
Natasha said and took a deep breath when she felt Laura’s hand in her own. Looking over to her
innocent mate she saw that she was also holding Clint’s hand giving them her silent support and the
three of them shared a small sad smile.
“The second and larger of the files is what STRIKE Team: Delta did after we thought Skye was dead. Officially we were on a security detail somewhere in the middle of no where with no contact...in reality for about six months we all lost our shit. We hunted down and eliminated anyone that was associated with Dr. Hyde and RENS and any of his experiments. We shut down any facilities we came across and tried to rescue any of the children that had been experimented on but we were always too late. Soon we had either completely destroyed RENS or they went even further underground, I thought it was the former but now I’m not so sure.”

Silence filled the room as everyone took in what they just heard “And the third file?” she heard Steve ask and she looked into her friends crystal blue eyes and didn’t see judgement but understanding for what they had done all those years back.

“My files from the Black Widow program under the Red Room. It’s not much, most of the files were destroyed before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but what I have been able to uncover is all there. Even my origins, my conception and who my parents were...are. It’s all there, Skye wasn’t the first child to be experimented, I wasn’t either, but I had hoped this nightmare was over but it’s here all over again” Natasha said before pushing away from the table needing air because she was starting to feel the walls close in on her. She took to the stairs two at a time despite her short legs as she ran upwards towards the surface from the underground complex that was underneath the farm.

She hadn’t had panic attack since before New York, the moment that Phil had called her while she was on mission and had told her Clint had been compromised, after dealing with her mission and she started to make her way to the awaiting jet that would take her to Bruce she had her panic attack. It was always one of their fears when sent on separate missions that they might not be there to save the other, or even get the chance to say bye if one of them was forced to make the ultimate sacrifice for everything they fought for.

Once she was outside she felt the heat of the day hit her skin and she closed her eyes as she lifted her face skywards as she let the sun warm her skin. Natasha felt arms wrap around her waist and a chin placed on her shoulder and she let herself lean back into Clint’s embrace as Laura came in front of her. Opening her arms she leaned her head against Laura’s head as she let the tears she had been holding back since the ending of Skye’s recording fall.

Moments passed this way with only the sounds of nature around them till they heard a childlike squeal come from the direction of the house. Smiling softly she let her mates hold her as she continued to listen to the joyful squeals and laughter of their children and wondered what they were doing. “Shall we go rescue Maria and Skye from the rugrats?” Natasha asked her mates letting them know she was now okay.

“Iono might be good practice for them” Clint said as he wrapped an arm around both hers and
Laura’s waists walking them towards the house.

“Think they are thinking about that already?” Laura asked as they came into view of the yard and they took in the scene before them. Both of their children were in the yard that was just below the back porch playing with Maria who was blowing bubbles using different types of wands as the kids chased after them trying to pop them all. It was a simple scene but Natasha could see Skye sitting on the porch with her Stark Pad trying to record all the action of the kids and her mate.

“By the look on Skye’s face I think she is thinking about it, if not consciously but definitely subconsciously” Natasha said before she walked towards the back porch to sit next to Skye and view the scene before her as Laura continued into the house. “Don’t worry детеныш we are already getting this on tape” Natasha told her niece and smirked at the look she was getting. “You think Clint and I would have this place without cameras covering every damn inch of the thing?” she asked amused.

Skye gave her a look then smirked, “High quality?”

“I could count the freckles of an intruder if I needed to” Natasha deadpanned. “Though there are only cameras in the common areas and covering the property and the road to it.”

“So don’t do anything I wouldn’t want my parents to see in any common areas got it. Though from what I understand from Tony’s teasing of Maria when we were staying at the tower, that is yours and Uncle Clint’s thing” Skye smirked.

“Remind me to hurt Tony when I see him next,” Natasha said with a roll of her eyes.

“Yes тетушка” Skye said with a soft smile to her. Natasha felt her heart skip for a moment at the term before she reached out and grabbed Skye’s hand in her own and gave it a squeeze.

“It’s good to have you back kid” Natasha said softly.

“It’s good to be home” Skye said softly before turning as another squeal of laughter and cheering was heard from the yard as Clint and Maria started competing against each other on who could blow more bubbles for the kids to destroy. Shaking her head she laughed at their antics because they were such big kids at heart and Natasha was glad that Skye was getting to see this rare side of Maria.
This part of Maria was a part the young woman hardly let anyone see and glancing towards her niece she knew it wouldn’t be long before those two had a conversation about children if they hadn’t already started discussing the topic. Out of the corner eye she saw Maria pause and Natasha turned to look at her as she saw her smile get softer as she looked towards Skye before winking before turning back to play with the kids. Laura came out the back door with a stack of cups under one arm and a large picture of Iced Tea in one hand and another with Kool-Aid and Natasha stood quickly to take the cups and the Iced Tea from her mate.

“Thank you, Iced Tea or Kool-Aid?” Laura asked as they placed the drinks on a side table and she started to serve drinks but before Natasha could say anything her phone started beeping with an incoming priority call.

“Romanoff” she answered sighing not looking to see who it was.

“Hello to you too,” Sharon snarked back at her.

“Sorry Sharon, it’s just been every time this phone rings it’s not been good news. What’s up?” Natasha asked pointing towards the Iced Tea and smiling her thanks to Laura.

“Thought you’d like to know the code word to say to my Aunts and Uncle so you don’t get shot at” Sharon said like the smart ass she was known to be and Natasha wished for a moment to be able to reach through the phone and smack her up beside the head.

“Yes, that would be a good thing and can’t you just tell them who we are and that we are coming?” Natasha said sighing and she took a drink of the tea that Laura had handed her.

“Nope part of our Code 99 protocols is that none of us make direct contact with the ‘homebase’ electronically. We use either proxies or mail drops it might be an extreme precaution but the minute they received the Code 99 they were to destroy all family phones, especially if they had grandchildren there with them and they do because it’s the summer and they always have someone’s kids over there then. Sorry Natasha but this is the only way till you can get them one of the Stark Phones. Tell them ‘Red Devils’ and do me a favor and let them know I’ve already got Grandma Peggy safe and already have Angie and Monty in contact with our group…” Sharon said sighing.

“Don’t worry Sharon we will go talk to them and get them in touch with you,” she said softly before hanging up the phone.
“Need to go?” Laura asked worriedly.

Natasha sighed and nodded as she signaled for Clint to come up to the back porch and waited till he arrived “We need to go over to the Harpers...err Carters. Shit this is going to get confusing really fast but either way we need to make introductions and fill them in on what’s going on. I can only imagine what they are thinking and feeling at the moment.”

“Alright just be careful and have them come over for dinner. I was thinking hotdogs and burgers for tonight but we need to do a supply run either tonight or tomorrow after breakfast” Laura told them.

“Make a list, and find out if we have any allergies in the group we should be aware of, I don’t think we do but better safe than sorry. We’ll probably do the supply run tomorrow and see if the Harpers need anything while we do it so they aren’t too exposed” Clint said before bending down and kissing Laura before heading inside the house for the keys to the truck.

“MEL!!!” she heard Phil yell for her as she ran out of the Barn and turned running away from the house she knew their daughter and Maria was. Mel could hear Phil chase after her as she ran down the pathway that she was told went to the other end of the property. She ran her head spinning, her heart pounding as her mind kept replaying her daughter’s haunting words as she had recounted everything that happened. Once she passed two mile markers that Natasha and Clint for some reason had on the path she stopped and with a deep breath she screamed.

Melinda screamed her anger at those who hurt her daughter, her sorrow because no child was suppose to go through that but most of all she screamed at her own failure as a mother to protect her daughter...again. She felt Phil’s arms wrap around her from behind their presence warm and familiar and full of love but she turned around in his arms and with her fists beat at his chest. Her mate did nothing to stop her from hitting and beating on him instead he let her keep going while she just tried to hold her to him, tears in his own eyes and in that moment she felt his pain, sorrow and failure as if it was hers.

They had an emotional bond when they first found each other but after they had lost their daughter and Bahrain she had shut down emotionally. Shutting herself off emotionally from Phil when they had shared an emotional bond hurt her mate but she stupidly did it protecting not only him but herself as well. After New York and getting back together after they had started mentoring Skye and the other young agents under them they had talked at length about their bond and the possible irreversible damage she had inflicted on both of them.

Damage they were willing to live with because despite everything that had happened in their lives they were still in love with each other. If she had learned anything from New York it was that life was too short and she had wasted enough time running and pushing away from her mate. So much time wasted that they would never get back, they had known they were both now too old to try to have a family again and had accepted that but now they found out that their hope for a family wasn’t
as dead as all the hopes and dreams they had for their daughter.

It had only been a little over a week since Skye the young woman they had taken under their wing as their rookie that was just searching for parents that she thought didn’t want her had been captured during a mission. In a twist of fate, that she was starting to believe was a right bitch, it turned out the young woman looking for parents was the daughter they had thought murdered all those years ago. They had found out after she had been taken away from them again by it turns out the same person that had taken her from them when she was only a few hours old.

Slowly she stopped hitting her fists against Phil’s chest, instead grabbing his dress shirt and balling her hands in it as her head dropped onto her mate’s shoulder and cried. The emotions from both Phil and herself was too much but she didn’t dare to push them or Phil away ever again. Melinda felt their joint pain but she was also feeling the love they shared and tried to make her heart focus on that feeling. Phil always told her when they were first together it was their love for each other that was going to be their saving grace.

Soon the tears dried up and she could breath again without it feeling like she was being stabbed a hundred times in her chest. Phil’s arms tightened around her again as he continued to hold her and dropped a gentle kiss to the top of her head but kept his head there as he took a deep breath. “Do you want to talk about it?” he finally asked her moments later as they continued to stand in the middle of the pathway holding onto each other.

“We failed to protect her from Hyde again,” Mel finally said.

“I know but we had no idea she was our daughter, let alone the fact that Hyde was alive and still active” Phil said one arm starting to rub her back slowly.

“Someone has been helping him, someone within SHIELD there is no other way. Our daughter’s kidnapping is connected to this whole mess probably from day one. How far back does this thing go Phil?” she asked the question they hadn’t said out loud till now and knew they would have to raise at the next meeting and start looking into it. They were all so focused on the now that they were neglecting the past, this just didn’t happen overnight. No this was a deliberate progression of events that they were just now getting a glimpse into and had no idea what the endgame was.

“I don’t know but we will figure it out and protect our family as best as we can” Phil said finally as they continued to hold each other. Minutes passed as they were lost in not only their thoughts but in the emotions they were feeling from the other. “Ready to head back?”

“Yeah let’s go check on our girls” Mel said finally lifting her head up off his shoulder. Hazel eyes
met her own brown eyes and in that moment she felt nothing but her love for the man in front of her and his love for her. Phil slowly bent down his head giving her a chance to pull away, her mate forever trying not to push her too fast because he knew her inside and out with all the sharp broken edges that were now slowly coming back together. Their lips met and she cupped his face as she deepened the kiss and they lost themselves in each other for a little while.

Tori watched as Natasha left the conference room followed by her two mates and shared a look with Blake next to her. Whatever was in those files that just was uploaded to the server couldn’t be good, they all had skeletons in their closets. Moments and actions that they wished they hadn’t been forced into doing. Moments and actions that they all wished they could take back and that didn’t haunt them every time they closed their eyes. Tori glanced at Izzy and for a moment saw the same haunted eyes that she saw when Izzy woke up from the nightmares that plagued them both.

The week they had with Fitz, while Maria and Skye had been in the coma was the longest they had gone without one of them waking up in a cold sweat. Of course, they didn’t sleep much that week even though they should have but she couldn’t quite regret the lack of sleep even though they were paying for it in spades now. Tori glanced at Fitz and saw that both him and his twin were both quite pale and was thankful to Bobbi as she watched the young specialist not only try to comfort Jemma, her own mate but also Fitz. She shared a brief glance with Bobbi as the specialist looked to the screen and she nodded her thanks and was more determined to make sure Hunter was safe while he recovered.

“Alright I think that is enough for now. Everyone take a break, read what you can and we will all try to meet up tomorrow” Tori said with a sigh and pinched the bridge of her nose trying to stave off the headache she was feeling.

“Tori?” she heard Fitz’s voice with worry.

“I’m alright love, just a headache. Go ahead with your sister and Bobbi and as soon as we can we’ll call you” Tori promised hoping that Bobbi could work some magic and get the two young scientist smiling again with some type of distraction.

“Promise Curly” Izzy promised as well and they watched as Fitz nodded to them and gave a wave towards Tony before he left with Bobbi and Jemma. “Light what a mess” Izzy said as the connection with their mate went dark.

“You can say that again” Sharon said as she was looking at a tablet in her hand and grimacing. Odds were she was already reading what had just been uploaded to the server and if she was grimacing it wasn’t pretty. “How long before you land at the HUB?”
“Another two hours, I’m taking a roundabout way to try to avoid the nasty storm we flew through on our way to Parma, don’t want to hit too much turbulence with this cargo” Izzy said tiredly as she scrubbed at her face. “We will be there just a little bit before midnight, we would have been there sooner but Idaho’s blood pressure kept dropping when we tried to move him.”

“Alright well I have some good news for you all then, you have another Carter at the HUB and one that will be helpful. Dr. John Montgomery Warder is the head of HUB’s medical facilities but he really is Dr. Montgomery John Carter Harper. You now have the oldest and the youngest of my generation of Carter’s with you, Angie hasn’t found a mate yet, but Monty might need help securing his mate and their son” Sharon said.

“Well that is some good news and that explains why Fury recommended him to do the autopsy on Ward” Tori said as she shared a look with Blake who shrugged.

“I’ve uploaded the real information on Monty make sure you say ‘General Patton’ to him so he knows you are a friendly. Before my cousin joined SHIELD and became a doctor, he did a two year stint with the Israeli Special Forces as a favor to Uncle Nick and has a black belt in Krav Maga, even if you can’t tell it from looking at him.”

“The best operatives are people that you overlook because they seem non-threatening” Izzy said looking at the tablet and then snorting when they both recognized the doctor from last years forced self-defense training they had been forced to teach. “I’m going to kick his ass,” Izzy said and Tori had to fight back her snicker.

“He was holding back when he faced you Izzy” Tori teased earning her a glare from her mate.

“Do I even want to know?” Sharon asked.

“We were the ones forced to teach the refresher course for self defense that’s required for any non-combat personnel last year for the HUB. Your cousin was in one of those classes and Izzy felt bad about flipping him” Tori said with a chuckle.

“Yeah, yeah laugh it up but once I can his ass is in the ring with me” Izzy said with a slight growl in her voice only making Tori laugh harder but stopped when she heard Sharon’s tablet beep.
Well I gotta go call Tasha so she doesn’t get shot at when going over to my Aunt's and Uncle’s place. Let me know if you need anything and I’ll let you know if I’m sending more Carter’s your way or not” Sharon said before walking away followed by Steve.

“I’ll call you two in a few moments” Tony told his mates as they nodded and closed down their connection to the conference call. “And then there were only two” he quipped.

“I’ll call you when we are almost home” Izzy said softly as she cut the planes connection to the conference call as well.

A knock at her office door stopped her conversation with Blake as he sat opposite her as they poured over information and worked to create a plausible cover story for Tony Stark’s involvement in the rescue of their two down “agents”. Of course they were also making files on Hunter and Idaho listing them as agents of SHIELD when that was the farthest from the truth. A cursory search though in SHIELD’s and other agencies databases on both Hunter and Idaho brought her enough information that made it imperative that they create the SHIELD deep cover operative files for both men to protect them.

She knew that MI-9 probably had a similar failsafe for Hunter in case he was ever arrested loud enough that they couldn’t get him out without breaking his cover but Tori was claiming her brother in law and they could get over it as far as she was concerned. Idaho though had nothing to fall back on and if Hunter trusted him and had saved Hunter’s life like he claimed then she was making sure he was protected, anyways it would always be good to have another friend in this mess.

“Come in” she called out as both her and Blake schooled their features as they both double checked the unassuming cube on her desk that still shone it’s very comforting to them blue light. A tall broad shouldered man entered the office wearing a white doctors coat. His eyes were a pale green while his blond hair was long and was gathered behind him in a loose ponytail. “Ah Dr. Warder come in and shut the door” she ordered and if she didn’t know to look for it she didn’t think she would have been able to pick up on the tension in the man’s movements as he followed the order.

The man smiled what Izzy called a ‘good ol’ boy’ smile as it was a part of his cover story inside of SHIELD, as Dr. Montgomery John Warder was from some backwater of a town inside the great state Texas and despite the medical degree he had the disposition of an old school country boy. It was all an act though because Dr. Montgomery Carter Harper had really grown up in a little town in Idaho with all his siblings and his parents that were hiding in plain sight. This unassuming man was part of the Carter legacy and if Sharon’s file on him was to be believed was just as dangerous as Izzy.

“You requested me Ma’am?” Dr. Warder asked and she wondered how much of the accent was real and how much of it was faked as she waved him into the seat next to Blake. She pulled out a Stark
Pad that was tied into their groups network and tapped a few keys as she pulled up the real files they had on Hunter and Idaho.

“General Patton,” Tori said the codeword given to her by Sharon earlier as she handed the Stark Pad over to the man across her desk and watched as his eyes narrowed at her. She held his gaze for a moment before lifting up her eyebrow at the man who finally let his shoulders relax as he took the Stark Pad from her with a chuckle.

“Wasn’t quite expecting that so soon” he said before looking down at the pad as his eyes narrowed again. “These are my patients that are suppose to be inbound soon but these aren’t quite the files I have on them.”

“No I daresay not,” Tori said as she leaned back in her chair and fixed the doctor with her best intimidating stare but it just rolled over the man like oil and water. A small smirk pulled at the corner of her lips before she said “Hunter really is a deep cover operative that was compromised but he isn’t quite SHIELD’s, while Idaho isn’t an operative or anyones to claim but as far as SHIELD is aware, they’re ours. You will be the only one treating them with the knowledge of just who they really are and with their real medical histories as far as I can give you.”

“As for what caused us knowing your true identity, your families Code 99 was called out by your cousin Sharon. Your grandmother has already been moved and is safe at the moment while your sister Angela will be on her way here with your newest patients. Sharon is in the process of getting in contact with everyone else but it’s taking time and said that you might need assistance with your wife and son?”

“My son at the moment is at my parents, my wife is currently at my mother-in-law’s in Israel and she can take care of herself quite well and anyways no one will want to risk poking at that old dragon” he said with a chuckle before sobering up. “What’s going on Agent Hand?”

“Call me Tori, since we are all family here” Tori said chuckling at his questioning look. “You are Sharon’s cousin and Sharon is now bonded to none other than Steve Rogers. Steve is one of the Avengers as you know, but what you don’t know I’m bonded to one of the Avengers children, while Blake’s daughter is bonded to two of the Avengers.”

“Sharon’s bonded? Then call me Monty,” Monty said shocked.

“Yes bonded as of a week or so ago, your grandmother was moved around the same time for her safety when the Avengers activated their own security protocols. The tablet you have in your hand
has access to all the secure files you need to familiarize yourself with, I’d suggest reading the files on those in our group so you know who you can trust. Right now there are only two other people here at the HUB that you can trust other than myself and Blake, those are Isabelle Hartley and Kara Palamas. Blake and I are trying to add to that list but it takes time but at the moment the Avengers are in the process of investigating an extensive rot problem within SHIELD” Tori said watching the grimace on Monty’s face darken at that news.

“If there is an update to the trusted list I’ll send you a text on this to let you know. We are hoping to add three more agents to the list after our meeting with you that can help with protecting your patients. Let us know if you need anything and don’t hesitate to act if something doesn’t feel right, at the moment we are on our own” Tori said handing over a Stark Phone to Monty then handed a second to him as well. “Get that to your wife when you can.”

“And on top of caring for your patients we are also going to need you to perform an autopsy as well. File is on the tablet as well but it’s on a traitor we found within SHIELD, we need to know everything you can about him” Tori began.

“The John Doe in my cooler?” Monty asked with a dark look on his face.

“I’m guessing Fury told you about him,” she paused and waited for his nod. “Yes, your John Doe we are pretty sure now that he had a soulmate because somehow our enemy already knew he was dead.”

Sharon sighed as she hung up the phone after talking to Tasha about her Aunts and Uncle and what her and Clint might be walking in on when they arrived there. A pair of large arms circled around her waist over her shirt and she leant back into Steve’s embrace as her mind ran around in circles with everything she needed to still do for her family and everything her and Steve still needed to discuss. She felt the itch just underneath her skin and she knew Steve had to be feeling it as well but her mate never pushed her for the contact that would ease it. Nope Steve was too much of a boy scout to push her so it was up to her to make the move.

Pulling up on her shirt to give them the skin to skin contact of his arms around her stomach and instantly the itch became a dull sensation. They knew it was going to soon become that even with the skin to skin contact they wouldn’t get much relief unless they completed the bond, especially since it was a touch bond. Sharon heard and felt the audible sigh from behind her as tension left her mate and though she wanted to roll her eyes at Steve for his stubbornness it was the fact that he let her decide the pace made his actions so damn endearing to her but she wanted him to feel comfortable enough to initiate the contact with her as well.

“Steve if you need the contact, don’t hesitate to initiate it” she said softly as she used him for support, she was so damn tired. Of course she also couldn’t be mad at him for not pushing boundaries that he
had set up in his mind with her. It wasn’t like she was pushing back just yet but she wanted to get
Steve comfortable with her enough to tell her of his past. As the family historian she knew the past of
the Carter line but she also knew the past of the Stark line and grew up on stories from Grandmother
Peggy and Grandpa Monty in regards to their fallen friends Steve and Bucky. She had been avoiding
this discussion as long as she could but it was clear Steve hadn’t told anyone the truth of the war, let
alone told Tony why his father had been so damn obsessed.

It wouldn’t surprise her that when Steve woke up and realized he was 70 years in the future that he
had suffered in silence for the loss of his mates and felt guilty of surviving. She doubted he had
property grieved because it took only a few hours of being in the same room as Steve and Tony to
see the occasional look of loss in his eyes. Everyone assumed it was because they thought Steve and
Howard had been friends but in reality they had been a whole lot more than that during the war.

“You need to get some rest Sharon. You’ve been at this almost 24 hours now, we can pick this up in
the morning with clear heads” Steve said gently from behind her the vibration of his voice through
his chest soothing to her and pulling her from her thoughts.

“I know, there is just so much I still need to do and we still need to have a few discussions and don’t
try to change the subject” Sharon said tiredly to the chuckle that was a deep rumble from Steve’s
chest.

“Yes Ma’am” he sassed back at her and Sharon snorted. It would be her luck that Steve was a closet
bottom but with what she knew of his past mates it wouldn’t surprise her.

“Come on, let’s go to our room, we need to have a discussion” Sharon said pulling herself from
Steve with a pang of loss that she pushed away for now. Instead she reached back and grabbed his
hand as she pulled him away from what had become her ‘command center’ and towards the
elevators. “JARVIS, alert us if anything comes in on the files I have you monitoring please.”

“Of course Ms. Sharon” JARVIS answered as they entered the elevator and were quickly dropped
down onto what was now their floor of the tower. Doors opening she pulled Steve out of the elevator
behind her and pushed him down onto the couch in the living room then sat on the coffee table
across from him.

“This isn’t good. I’ve been forced to watch enough modern movies to know the positioning of us
isn’t a good sign” Steve said with a sigh as he leaned back into the couch a scared, sad look in his
eyes before he broke eye contact with her and looked at the ceiling. Sharon cursed herself internally
at the look in Steve’s eyes because she didn’t mean to scare or hurt him but she knew they couldn’t
avoid this discussion. ‘Leave it to you Sharon to find a mate that is just emotionally damaged and
unsure of himself as you are’ she thought as she rubbed her face with her hands.
The frustration and tension between the two of them was almost to her breaking point where she usually lashed out physically either by starting a physical fight or when she usually found some faceless one night stand to itch that scratch, till she felt almost human again. There was a reason she was fine with being a blank all these years, until one day she no longer was a blank but had two soulmarks...she didn’t do emotions, not hers and certainly not anyone else’s emotions.

Emotions had never been an easy thing for her, growing up she had been so angry that her parents were gone that for a long time all she knew was the anger. Looking back now she knew she had hurt her grandparents with her actions and words as they not only struggled with the loss of their own child but had to raise not one but two young angry children.

She knew her grandparents had loved both of them and tried desperately to reach through the anger to help their grandchildren but they had not made it easy as Kevin and her fought more than they got along because it was easier to lash out at each other than let themselves be there for each other. Their efforts though eventually worked with Kevin mostly since, as Sharon saw it, he was able to function and interact with people normally. It was with an effort that sometimes almost felt as much physical as mental that she kept her anger under control but even her best efforts didn’t stop her from earning a reputation as a lone wolf and Bitch with a capital ‘B’ within SHIELD very quickly.

‘Damn it this isn’t going to be easy, for him or me but we are now stuck with each other’ Sharon thought as she signed one last time. “Steve look at me, we need to have a talk because you should know somethings that I know.”

“More secrets” Steve said hurt as he finally looked at Sharon and she had to bite back the first thing she wanted to say in response to his tone.

“Technically yes, but this one is yours that I’ve known before we met. As far as I’m aware I’m the only one that figured it out and only had it confirmed by Peggy before the dementia kicked in” Sharon said watching his reaction as he gave her a searching look. Silenced filled the room and Sharon cursed again in her head because Steve wasn’t going to admit it even years later and in a society that was now mainly accepting of triads even of the same sex variety.

“You are going to make me say it aren’t you? Fine, I know the truth about the war. I know the truth behind Bucky, Howard and yourself. Why Howard was really obsessed with finding you after the plane went down. They were your mates and you lost them both all over again when you woke up from the ice” Sharon said the last bit softly as she saw the tears in Steve’s eyes and she hated herself for making him cry but if he didn’t talk about it, or deal with it their bond was going to suffer for it. ‘Pot meet kettle’ she thought when she realized she might soon have to deal with her own emotional baggage.
“How did you figure it out? We had to keep it hidden only the inner core of the Commando’s knew the truth” Steve said fighting the tears in his eyes and Sharon sighed as she reached out and wiped away a lone tear that had fallen. The look of pain and fear in Steve’s eyes eased with just the touch of her hand, she hated when people cried because she felt like she had no idea what to do to make it stop. Standing up she gently sat in his lap and kept the skin to skin contact of her hand on his cheek.

“I’m the family historian, when pulling documents on my family it pulled documents and photos from the war that showed you, Bucky and Howard. I know back then everyone just assumed you three were just best friends and those two fooled around enough with women to make it believable but I’m a Carter, reading body language and between the lines is in my blood. I was also around sometimes when Howard would come talk to Peggy and Monty about you and when I was older I put two and two together and realized just what was lost. Howard never stopped looking for you or Bucky, even though with Bucky the fall alone would have killed him, he never stopped looking” Sharon said brushing away more tears as they silently fell from Steve’s eyes.

“I wish he had. That is never what Bucky and I wanted for him if something were to happen to us. Yes he eventually remarried and had Tony but his obsession with us hurt Tony incredibly and part of me wishes he was alive so I could just smack him for being so stupid” Steve admitted softly as he looked up at the ceiling again. “I loved both of them and when I awoke I saw that their marks had faded..I knew somehow that I had outlived them both. Then I had the knowledge I almost outlived everyone I had known and came to care about...Your mark and that of our third didn’t show up till right before the Battle of New York and it was a shock when I realized I was getting a second chance.”

“I was a blank until just before the Battle of New York...Actually there could have been a chance of us meeting then because at the time I was stationed here. I was actually about to go run out and join you all but I was ordered to stay put and maintain the base’s perimeter” Sharon said thinking back at how close they had been to meeting then. They would have met then if she had disobeyed orders like she usually did but for some reason that she had followed them.

“Part of me is glad you weren’t there, it was a disaster and honestly I didn’t think we were going to survive it. If you had been there and I’d known who you were going to be to me...I wouldn’t have been able to function not with the loss of Bucky...so recent in my mind” Steve said softly looking back down into her eyes and his hands were now on her hips gripping her tightly as if he was afraid she would disappear as well.

Sharon stared into Steve’s crystal blue eyes and knew that her being in danger was going to be a point of contention between the two of them in the future. At first she wanted to be angry at his not believing that she could take care of herself but then she remembered Steve had already lost a mate to enemy action. It wasn’t that Steve didn’t trust her to take care of herself it was just that Steve didn’t want her in those situations because a part of him was afraid of losing her the same way he had lost Bucky.
Leaning forward she gently kissed his lips in what she only meant to be a chaste kiss but it quickly became something more when she felt his hands tighten on her hips. Nipping his lower lip he gasped and she used this to her advantage as she used it to deepened the kiss with her tongue. The hand on his face traveled to the back of his neck and held him firmly in place as they kissed but she realized Steve for once wasn’t pulling back as his hands on her hip slipped under her shirt and touched the tight skin over her abdominal muscles. Sharon shuddered at the touch and she heard Steve groan as her reaction to his touch made her move in his lap and she felt is rather large reaction to that little bit of movement.

Breaking off the kiss she saw uncertainty in Steve’s eyes but she quickly moved to straddle his lap before moving back and kissing him. She felt his erection through his jeans rubbing against the seam of her jeans as she started to roll her hips against him and she couldn’t remember when she had been this turned on by simple kissing and dry humping. They continued like that for a few minutes but soon Sharon knew she needed more and she knew it was going to have to be here to push and see if her theory on Steve was correct.

With one last nip to Steve’s lower lip she broke off the kiss again, slowly kissing along Steve’s jaw over to his ear and she nipped at his ear lobe causing his hips to twitch. Smirking she did it again and his hips twitched again up into her and she moaned into Steve’s ear to only have him shudder beneath her. “Fuck you are so responsive to my touches,” she said making her point as she nipped his ear again to the same reaction and moaned again. “Even my noises, my voice is having an effect on your isn’t it?” she purred into his ear pressing her body against his.

Steve’s response to her was to grip her hips even more tighter as a whimpered groan slipped past his lips into her ear “Yes.” With that one answer she answered part of her theory and now to test the rest of it as one hand moved between them as she grabbed Steve through his pants causing him to hiss and whimper.

“Oh love, it wasn’t just your 1940’s morals that was holding you back was it? You were waiting for me to make the move, to give you permission to touch me. Waiting for me to claim you as mine, waiting for me to give you an order” she husked into his ear then pulled back as she rubbed him through his pants as she looked into his pupil blown eyes. His reactions were everything she needed here in this moment were all the confirmation she needed to know that at least when it came to sex she was going to be the more dominant partner with Steve, their third was a mystery for a later time to wonder about. “Answer me soldier” she ordered Steve and gripped him firmly.

“Oh fuck! Yes,” Steve whimpered.

“Yes what?” Sharon said causing him to whimper again.

“Yes to all of it, Ma’am” Steve groaned out as she started rubbing him as she rolled her hips.
“Good soldier. Now take my shirt off, then yours” she said nipping his ear again making him twitch in her hand one last time for now as she felt Steve’s hands move to comply with the order given. It wasn’t an easy thing for either of them to lose their shirts since both of them had double shoulder holsters on even here at Avenger Tower but she watched him take a deep breath to steady himself before he pulled her Glock 19’s checking the safeties before reaching over the end of the couch and putting them on the end table. His fingers shook slightly as he worked at her harness’ buckles that rested just below her breasts and Sharon let her hand run her fingers through his hair in a soothing motion, noting down that Steve seemed to be very tactile.

Gently he worked her arms out of the straps leaving them hanging from her waist because they were attached to her pants and she hadn’t given him permission to touch there just yet. Watching him work methodically let her know just how she was going to have to word things for him to follow her orders and gave her an insight into his mind that she didn’t have before. Her form fitting t-shirt was then pulled up over her head and Sharon smirked when his eyes took in the vision of her in a bra but his eyes dropped down to her stomach where her first soulmark, his words were across her skin. Steve’s hand reached out to touch but stopped before looking up at her, his eyes asking for permission.

“Where is my mark on you and our thirds?” she asked because it was something they hadn’t discussed but since this was happening she needed to know so they could at last form their part of the bond.

“Your’s is almost in the same spot, our thirds is on my shoulders” Steve whispered blushing slightly because he probably had thought about what positioned the three of them would need to be to complete the bond when they found their third. Sharon didn’t blame him for the blush it was actually kinda cute because whoever there third was going to be behind her since hers was on her lower back...well that would be something she had never tried yet because their third was going to be another male by his messy scrawl.

“Let me see your mark soldier” she husked because just the thought of their bonding with their third had shot her arousal to a whole new level. At first Steve didn’t react so lost in staring at the mark on her stomach that she almost had to remind him of what she had told him to do but Steve shook his head before he reached for his own weapons and worked through the steps just as he did with her. Soon he was shirtless in front of her all hard muscles without an ounce of fat on him. Reaching forward she placed her hand over the mark on his stomach and traced it while she took one of his hands and placed it on the mark on her stomach. Sharon watched him reverently trace the two little words on her stomach as she did the same on his stomach before letting her fingers go lower resting at the snap of his jeans. Steve’s fingers stopped moving as she unsnapped his jeans and he looked up at her with eyes that were more black than the crystal blue she associated with him. Leaning forward she kissed him again as her fingers started unzipping his pants and she felt him with her fingers after she pushed down the top of his underwear.
Steve moaned into her mouth as she kissed him as her fingers started working him, listening for his tells seeing how far she could push him. He was rock hard and just that thought made her want him even more because fuck if it hadn’t been a while. In fact it had just been since her mark’s appeared….no wonder she was so on edge she hadn’t realized she was denying herself because of the marks but that had to be something subconsciously she had done. It didn’t matter much anymore then since she had Steve now so ready and willing in her hands.

Breaking off the kiss she nipped his ear smirking at the hiss of breath and the twitch of his hips. The positioning of their soulmarks gave them a few options on how they could do this and with a roll of her hips she got Steve to grip her thigh with one of her hands and she knew how she wanted this. Their marks either had to be touching or their left hands, closest to their hearts had to be touching each others marks she was going to go with with the marks touching option. That and she wanted to see this famed super-soldier strength first hand and just that thought made her panties flood with wetness.

“I’m going to put to use this famed super-soldier strength I’ve read about” Sharon said with a nip to Steve’s ear as she rubbed him and knew he was fighting not to cum without her permission by his ragged breathing. Normally she would have given per partner permission sooner than this but she wanted the first time with Steve with him inside of her, so she let go of him as she rolled off of him and then the couch. It took him a moment for him to realize she wasn’t there any longer and the look he was giving her as he watched her strip out of her jeans and panties before removing her bra.

She stood naked before him, his eyes hungrily drinking her in and she watched as his hands twitched in the need to touch her. The itch just below her skin was now damn near a burn and he had to be feeling it just as well. Slowly she backed up and beckoned him with a crook of her finger as she watched him stand and follow her as he pulled off his jeans the rest of the way. Sharon felt the wall behind her and the coolness of it against her heated skin was enough to make her shudder as Steve came to stand in front of her.

“Take me” she ordered and was pleasantly surprised when he growled before bending down slightly to capture his lips with her own. His hands were on her hips pushing her more firmly into the wall and her own hands gripped his biceps as he with little effort lifted her up in the air. He stepped into her as her legs wrapped around his waist pulling him to her it took a moment before they found the angle but soon he was inside her and she hissed at the stretch which caused him to pause his movements.

“Don’t you dare stop soldier” she growled into his ear before gripping the back of his hair and pulled his head back before kissing him hungrily. He kissed her back and with a roll of her hips he started moving again as she worked his way inside of her. The need of air made her break off the kiss but Steve started kissing down her jaw to her neck and began to suck at her pulse points. “Yes, god you feel good my soldier, keep going touch me” she ordered as she felt her orgasm start to build.
One of Steve’s hands worked its way up her thighs, over her hip and ribs to palm at her breast and she felt him circle her nipple with a finger before pinching it. She pulled his hair again bringing his lips to hers as she kissed him deeply and just as the first wave of an orgasm started she broke it off whispered into his ear “Cum for me soldier, I want to feel you.” She heard a whimpering groan as she felt him start to cum inside her throwing her into another orgasm but it didn’t stop there as they rode out another two orgasms as their soulmarks heated up against each other.

Sharon brought her hand to cup Steve’s face as he slowed and then stopped as they both panted trying to catch their breaths and she captured his lips with her own in a gentle kiss filled with emotions she didn’t understand but hoped he understood what she was trying to convey to him. After the kiss they rested their heads against each other as they continued to catch their breaths but soon Steve’s hand tightened on her hips and thighs again as he pulled away from the wall and started walking towards their room.
“Ready for this?” Clint asked as they pulled into the driveway of the Harper’s. They had pulled up to the large house that in some places would be called a small mansion but he now knew this house had housed the largest of the surviving legacies. Michael, Jackie and Jenny had eleven children total all of them SHIELD except the younger set of triplets that had gone into the military instead to be different from their siblings. The house was just as unassuming as theirs and he wondered what secrets it held because even though the triad were retired and in hiding SHIELD agents he doubted they had just been letting themselves get old and complacent.

“Nope but we don’t have a choice, they left the life to raise their kids in safety and peace even though their kids apparently all joined SHIELD or the military” Tasha said as she took a deep breath and Clint knew she was assessing everything they now knew. They had decided to come here unarmed so not to spook the probably already on edge triad and he knew if he was feeling naked, Tasha definitely was feeling very naked because she was always armed except when in bed and even then she had weapons stashed near their bed.

“True but with what we are uncovering I don’t think this shit storm is going to pass them by” Clint said softly to her. “We are being watched, garage upper window.”

“I know but don’t blame them, let’s get this over with so we can give them some semblance of peace in this nightmare” Tasha said as she took a deep breath and exited the truck. Clint took a deep breath as well and followed his mate as they made their way to the porch and knocked on the door.

Moments passed as Clint had to fight the urge to look at the garage’s upper window because he felt like he was in crosshairs and he would be surprised if he wasn’t to be honest. Soon though Jenny Harper answered the door and the look he always thought of as Jenny’s ‘mom’ look had new meaning now that he knew who the woman before them was. The ‘mom’ look had always made him want to stand up straighter and almost come to attention but it also always left him feeling like she knew of all the trouble he had been in since the last time she had seen him.

“Natalie and Clinton, we didn’t know you were coming back so soon. Laura made it sound like you two were going to be gone for a while when we ran into her at the store the other day” Jenny said and he knew that both Tasha and himself were forcing themselves to keep their muscles loose when they both realized that Jenny’s right hand was resting on her hip and he’d bet their farm that Jenny had a gun hidden in the small of her back.

“Red Devil’s” Tasha said softly and Clint watched as the woman’s eyes narrowed for a moment before she relaxed and her hand moved away from her hip.
“Knew you weren’t just some famous dancer and her husband. Michael and Jackie owe me one” Jenny said chuckling before pressing her hand to her ear activating a comm unit. “Chuckles stand down ‘Red Devils’. Come back inside and give your Nana and Pop the all clear.”

“So you looked into us? Never mind don’t answer that, I’m just glad our backstories held up to a Carter looking into it. Though from what I’ve been able to put together from Sharon your mothers might have manipulated us into this area, so they probably made sure it would stand up to your scrutiny” Tasha deadpanned as they followed Jenny into the living room.

“That wouldn’t surprise me, my mothers and father weren’t happy with us being so remote but we really didn’t have many choices after the death of my brother and his wife. So I’m guessing that your real names aren’t Natalie and Clinton and that you were sent here to tell me what the hell is going on?” Jenny asked as she sat down on a couch and indicated the couch across from her.

“I’m sorry, where are my manners” Tasha said with a shake of her head as she held out her hand and Clint followed her lead happy to let her do the talking as he kept his senses on alert. They might be unarmed but they had backup weapons stashed in the truck and even though Jenny was in a relaxed pose on the couch in front of them he knew that she was still fully on alert as well. “I’m Natasha Romanoff call sign Black Widow, this knucklehead next to me is Clint Barton call sign Hawkeye.”

“Shit Avengers,” Jenny said with a smirk at the look Tasha gave her as they shaked hands. “The kids talk shop sometimes when they’re home and it’s just the adults and the older grandchildren who have been told exactly who we really are. By the talk of the kids though you should be 6ft tall and able to breath fire from your mouth.”

“I see our reputations precede us then,” Clint said chuckling because that wasn’t the first time they had surprised someone with their appearance or heard that description of themselves.

“Yes they do, now what the hell is going on and is my mother safe?” Jenny asked getting back on topic just as her mates and one of the older grandsons walked into the room. “You two owe me dinner. This is Natasha aka the Black Widow and she said ‘Red Devils’ and Clint aka Hawkeye. They were just about to tell me what the hell is going on.”

“Shit Avengers” the grandson said earning him a glare from his grandparents and Clint chuckle because the grandson totally just had the same reaction as one of his grandmothers.

“Charlie, language” Jackie gently admonished.
“Sorry, but they’re Avengers and SHIELD legends I’ve grown up the last few years hearing nothing but stories of them and others like them.”

Tasha paused and looked towards Charlie who straightened up under her gaze and to his credit didn’t even fidget under the famous Black Widow’s scrutiny. Clint also gave the young boy...no young man an assessing look, he was sure that Charlie was no older than sixteen maybe seventeen at the offset with not even a hint of peach fuzz on his face but it was a well muscled sixteen or seventeen and he had the confidence to stand there and meet their gazes. He then remembered the codename Jenny had used when giving the all clear, ‘Chuckles’ was a nickname commonly used for people named Charlie, he didn’t understand it but then it snapped all together with the realization that this young man was the one that had them moments ago in the crosshairs of a sniper rifle. Clint snorted “What type of rifle kid?”

“M40A3” Charlie answered with a small smile.

“Not bad, I prefer the M40A5 but still rather have my Bow to any rifle” Clint said and gave the young man a nod. Charlie was still young but he had been ready to defend his family and though he wished no child would have to make that type of decision, especially now that he found himself a parent to two small children with another on the way..he understood it and respected the young man for it.

“It’s alright to speak in front of Charlie, he knows of the family legacy and once the Code 99 was dropped was drafted in helping us with security” Jenny said reassuring them and Clint watched as Tasha nodded to the young man before she turned back towards the triad in front of them.

“First Peggy is safe, she had already been moved to Avenger tower when our own Kaleidoscope protocols got activated when an Avenger’s mate was captured while she was on a mission for SHIELD. Our protocols are clear all non-combatant mates and close family members are to be moved either to Avenger tower, the nearest Avenger safehouse or Avenger base” Tasha began.

“But great-grandma isn’t related or attached to any of the Avengers” Charlie said from his position leaning against the wall that looked down the hall they had come from.

“She is now. Your Aunt Sharon was helping us secure Pepper Potts, one of Tony’s mates when her and Steve met for the first time. Turns out they are soulmates, once they got Pepper somewhere safe they quickly moved to get Peggy to safety as well. This was only a week or so before your Code 99 was activated by Sharon” Tasha answered.

“Wait Sharon activated the Code 99 and not Nick?” Jenny asked sitting forward resting her arms on
“Yes, the Avengers have taken over a completely dark investigation that Fury had started after the Battle of New York, using only him and the Deputy Director as the only investigators. As far as we can tell at the moment either there is a serious rot problem within SHIELD or it’s been infiltrated, we aren’t sure yet.”

“Shit” Jenny said with a groan and earning her a disapproving look from Jackie for her language while Charlie tried valiantly to hide his snicker.

“As I said the Avengers have taken over the investigation because at the moment even though we have members of SHIELD in our ranks now they are Avengers first. Something that Sharon uncovered the other night though spooked her enough to activate your families safety protocols and told Nick where he could shove it. As of my last update from Sharon before we came over here to let you all know you aren’t alone she has gotten our group in contact with two of your children Angie and Monty.”

“Dad is ok? What about my mom?” Charlie asked from the wall and for a moment he wasn’t the young man ready to defend his family but a scared boy wanting to make sure his parents were okay.

“Sorry that’s all we know, Sharon said she will fill you in once we get you set up with the secure network we are using to communicate with each other” Tasha told Charlie and his grandparents.

“Thank the light for that. What’s the next step?” Michael asked them both and Clint looked to his mate and partner who nodded to him.

“First we want to offer our assistance with your security, if you need anything let us know, since now you’re family through Sharon’s ties to the Avengers. Honestly we’d help if that wasn’t the case but we take care of our own and we are stronger together than apart. If you need any supplies let us know, we will be doing a supply run most likely tomorrow since we now have a large group over at our farm at the moment laying low while one of our own tries to take the time needed to recover” Clint said as he looked at the three adults he had considered friends before and now were family.

“Your captured mate of an Avenger I assume? How bad is their condition? And do you need any medical help?” Michael asked with concern in both his and Jackie’s eyes.

“We will accept any help you can give us when it comes to caring for Skye. Before we came over,
we’d heard her recount of everything that happened, she was experimented on then tortured and beaten within an inch of her life. Skye is stable but still considered critical condition by our Dr. Banner that we had to leave in New York. We wouldn’t have moved her here so soon after her rescue but when we got word that she now has a very large price on her head…” Clint shrugged as he rubbed his hands up and down on his face.

“Right now we need the help of someone to monitor Skye’s condition and be able to relay the reports back to Dr. Banner” Tasha said as she pulled out her Stark Pad from her inner jacket pocket before pulling up the files on Skye’s condition and handing it over to Michael.

“There is more than just her being recently captured so you will want to read her case history that Dr. Banner summarized before reading her most current set of injuries. Dr. Banner has been treating her since her bonding to Maria and she has not had an easy life. We were actually going to ask for your assistance and let you know who we were before Sharon figured out where we were and who we were going to ask” Clint said as he felt everything start to weigh down on his shoulders. Taking a deep breath he forced himself to relax his muscles that he didn’t realize he had tensed up while speaking. He felt a warm hand on his arm and he looked over to Tasha and gave her a gentle thankful smile as her touch calmed him further.

“Of course, let us just grab some basic gear and the kids and we can head over there now” Jackie said as she stood up to get the gear while Michael continued to read the files Tasha had given him. Michael was probably only reading the summary right now but even the basic summary was enough to make Clint want to cry and punch something all at the same time and it looked like Clint wasn’t the only one with that feeling as Michael’s face kept getting stonier and stonier.

Jackie and Jenny both stopped in the doorway to the hall as Tasha’s phone dinged with an incoming text message. He watched as his mate quickly pulled it out and looked at the message and Clint watched as her eyebrows rose while a look of amusement lit up across her face. ‘I don’t know whether to be worried or happy by the look on her face’ Clint thought to himself.

“Laura said if your grandchildren have them to bring bathing suits and any water toys they want to play with. Apparently a water war has broken out in our yard” Tasha said her eyes shining with mirth and her amusement very apparent in her voice. Clint was about to ask what was happening but decided against it, they would see it once they got back home.

Natasha shook her head as she got out of the truck back in front of her house, the two vans of the Harper’s pulled up next to them filled with grandchildren that were in bathing suits with their own water guns and a pretty large supply of water balloons. But it was the scene before her that was comical and heartwarming all at the same time as the Deputy Director of a multi-national spy agency knelt on the ground completely soaked in her jeans and t-shirt as she worked to reload water guns that Natasha had no idea where they had come from. Both Cooper and Lila were standing next to her with barely suppressed energy but it was soon channeled towards the cars as they had parked and they had noticed their friends starting to unload from the vans.
“I’ve brought some fresh recruits for you Deputy Director and they come with their own equipment” Natasha snarked as she pointed back behind her smirking as she saw Maria blush when she realized just who had arrived. Maria tried drying off her hands in order to greet the adults but grimaced when she realized just how soaked her clothes were. Shaking her head Natasha decided to take pity on her as she reached into the cab of the truck and pulled out some napkins from the center console handing them over to Maria.

“Thanks тетушка” Maria said with a small smile as she quickly dried her hands before reaching out to shake hands with Jackie, Jenny and Michael.

“Jackie, Jenny and Michael let me introduce Deputy Director Maria Hill, call sign Athena. Maria these three are Jackie, Jenny and Michael Harper aka the Carters” Natasha said as she made introductions. “Michael and Jackie have agreed to help monitor Skye’s condition. Is she still on the back porch?” Natasha asked.

“Thank you, I appreciate you checking on my mate and myself as well since I know Bruce wants to run tests on me since our bond has strengthened again” Maria said.

“Again?” Natasha asked surprised because Maria and Skye had an already strong bond with them able to sense each other's pain from far distances.

“I guess with the evacuations Bruce didn’t get to update you all. Skye and I have an emotional bond now as well” Maria said with a touch of wonder in her voice when talking about the bond and her mate. The news was slightly shocking for Natasha to take in but she could see it now in how Maria seemed to know just what to do to keep Skye calm since she had awoken from the coma.

“That is very rare and Dr. Banner didn’t put that in his notes that I saw but I could have missed it. I only started reading them about twenty minutes ago” Michael said but stopped when Cooper and Lila came running over grabbing Maria’s hand and trying to pull her towards the kids that were now locked and loaded with water guns and were already creating quite the stockpile of water balloons with the help of Charlie.

“Come on Maria we still need to defeat the evil menace that is FitzSimmons,” Lila said with such conviction that it caused all the adults to chuckle.

"Go on, I'll be right there” Maria said to the two children and smiled softly as Cooper and Lila cheered and ran back to their friends. It was moments like these that made Natasha wish she could
wrap the children in bubble wrap and keep them away from the evils of the world. She knew it wasn’t a feasible dream but she hoped that the kids stayed this innocent as long as they could.

“Do I even want to know how this started?” Natasha asked Maria as the woman who usually had junior agents crying or wetting themselves with just a look but instead in that moment was smiling softly at the children's retreating backs. Once again Natasha got the feeling that if life permitted it that Maria and Skye would be talking about having a family of their own soon.

“Probably not, but let me lead them in one last raid against the evil menace of FitzSimmons and I’ll be right back” Maria said smiling as her eyes shined with a mischievous glint to them before she turned around to join the kids but she stopped and turned back. “You all might want to go through the house so not to get caught in the crossfire, we’ve made the back porch a no water zone so Skye’s bandages and casts don’t get wet.”

“Michael and Jackie if you don’t mind afterwards I’d like to get Skye’s bandages changed. It’s past due and she is also due for her afternoon meds but she has been having so much fun watching our insanity, that I just didn’t want to move her yet” Maria said softly and you could hear the wish in her voice of wanting to keep Skye happy and away from the horrible reality of her injuries as long as she could.

“Of course Maria, now go have fun and we will meet you on the back porch after your raid” Jackie said with a soft smile and a chuckle as they all watched Maria finally jog away. Once she joined the group of kids she shook hands with Charlie as he stood there with a large water gun that had it’s own bi-pod as it hung by a strap off his shoulder. They stood there for a moment as it looked like Maria was introduced to all the grandchildren as her and Charlie organized them.

"Come on, something tells me we are not going to want to miss this" Natasha said as they made their way to the front porch and into the house. Once in the kitchen they came across Laura and Mel making more drinks as well as putting together trays of snacks. Natasha sneaked behind her mate and wrapped her arms around her waist kissing her neck. "Hello красивый" Natasha purred making Laura squirm a bit while Mel just smiled and shook her head at Natasha's antics.

"Good to see the reports on your death were exaggerated Jenny" Mel said with a smile when she saw the other adults and went to hug the older woman.

"I'm guessing introductions aren't needed here" Natasha quipped still holding onto Laura around the waist as she wondered when the other two women had met.

"Nope Jenny was one of mine and Phil's instructors at the academy who loved to run us ragged in
our second form. But when we graduated we were surprised to have her as our first S.O.” Mel said as she let go of the other woman. “Jenny is where we first started learning the rules and Peggy was the one to finish it.”

"I'm sorry to have heard about Phil, I knew you two were bonded" Jenny said sadly and Natasha watched as Mel shot her a questioning look.

"I only gave them the very basics and they have agreed to help monitor Skye's condition for us. Thought we'd get her looked at then give them the full monty" Natasha said shrugging and watched as Clint disappeared to the back porch, only to appear moments later pulling Phil inside the kitchen behind him.

"Phil!" Jenny exclaimed covering her mouth with a hand shocked before she seemed to snap out of it and hugged him as well.

"Good to see you too Jenny, I'm glad your death was exaggerated" Phil said as he hugged her back and gave the woman a kiss on the cheek.

"I can say the same about you, you big doofus" Jenny said as she pulled back and punched Phil in the chest. “We heard you died during the Battle of New York.”

“Yeah about that…” Phil started as he rubbed the back of his head and actually looked sheepish as he looked down at the floor surprising Natasha by his behavior. She watched as Mel came over to wrap an arm around Phil’s waist in silent support as he finally looked up to the woman who was their first S.O. “Those reports weren’t exactly exaggerated.”

“So you crashed for a few minutes, doesn’t mean Nick had to tell everyone you were dead. Especially me, bastard never told me otherwise when I talked to him about you a few months back” Jenny said and Natasha could tell she was angry at Fury for not telling her the truth as she saw it.

“Not a few minutes Jenny, I was legally dead for a day as far as we can tell....” Phil started.

“That’s impossible Phil, you would be a vegetable” Jenny said angry and Natasha understood her anger, light knew she had felt it herself when she had thought she was still being lied to.

“Not if I was exposed to an alien artifact, as far as we can tell that is what healed me even though it
was same alien artifact that had killed me in the first place. And it’s the same artifact as far as I can
tell that our daughter was just exposed to when she was captured” Phil said taking a deep breath and
letting it out as he looked to Mel who shared his grimace at the acceptance of that most likely fact. It
was another thing Natasha would have to get visual confirmation from Skye on about the time she
was captured and tortured.

“Daughter? I thought you only had Rayne. Yes I know about Rayne. Mom told me after she retired
from being Director and my parents came to stay with us for a while. I’m sorry I couldn’t be there for
you two when you needed me” Jenny softly said the last part as her mates both moved closer to her
at the visible sign of pain.

“We understand, but what you know about Rayne isn’t the full story. We didn’t even know the full
story until recently but Skye the injured agent you agreed to help, is our daughter” Mel said with a
small sad smile and Natasha knew that her friend and sister in all but blood was still in pain about the
past. She watched as Phil whispered something into Mel’s ear and just that little act gave Natasha
hope for the two because it seemed like something had changed between them for the better as Mel
accepted the comfort he was giving her without the usual reservation and hesitation she showed.

“How?” Jenny asked.

“That is part of the files we will give you access to, it’s a lot of reading but honestly it’s all connected
and all of us are having a bad feeling we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg at the moment”
Natasha said as she pressed her hands more firmly against Laura’s stomach in reassurance not just for
herself but her mate. The movement of her hands wasn’t missed by anyone especially Jackie and
Jenny as their eyes lit up as they looked towards them and Natasha remembered what Laura had told
them last night about the two seeing the pregnancy test.

“Yes, it came back positive. Thank you for taking care of Laura and the kids for us while we were
away” Natasha told Jackie and Jenny as they both squealed and pulled both Laura and herself into a
tight hug. Out of the corner of her eye she saw a goofy grin on Clint’s face as he received a manly
back pat from Michael as they exchanged a few words. ‘Family is everything and it just keeps
growing bigger and better. This family all possible all because Skye was trying to find her birth
family’ Natasha thought amazed by the turn of events.

A loud roar from the kids outside had all the adults bolting for the back door and Natasha was the
first to be out the door as she came upon a scene of utter chaos...well the chaos only children could
cause. Quickly moving to the side all the other adults followed her as they watched as Maria led one
group of children and Charlie led the other in a pincer movement on a cleverly crafted fort of the kids
yard toys that housed FitzSimmons and Bobbi. She chuckled as the clearly overwhelmed defenders
hunkered down as they were pummeled by waves of water balloons. Natasha stole a quick glance
towards Skye who was still on the back porch in the wheelchair but now had her legs propped up on
a chair. Her niece's face was lit up with happiness as she watched her mate lead the children in a
charge just as the water balloons ran out.
Natasha shook her head as she saw Maria start doing what might be construed as a victory dance as the children kept shooting the now totally soaked forms of FitzSimmons and Bobbi. “Way to go baby!” Skye yelled out with laughter in her voice which got Maria to stop doing her victory dance long enough for her to decide to charge up the ramp towards her mate. She watched with a warm feeling in her chest as Maria bent down and captured Skye’s lips in a gentle kiss before breaking it off and whispering something in her mate’s ear before sharing another gentle kiss.

Natasha cleared her throat causing the two women to blush because they most likely forgot anyone else was there. She knew how intense a physical or touch bond could be but Maria and Skye also had an emotional bond that was also new so they were still learning their balance. Natasha watched the chaos that was now a free for all water battle between the younger children in the yard as Charlie followed behind the now soaked forms of the twins and Bobbi with a huge grin on his face as they made their way up the ramp.

“Jackie, Jenny, Michael and Charlie you’ve already met Maria Hill out front” Natasha said and was amused by the shocked look that passed over Charlie’s face just as he realized just who had led him and his cousins into ‘battle’. “Yes Charlie she is that Maria Hill,” Natasha teased the young man as he straightened where he stood when Maria gave him an assessing look before nodding at the young man with a smile.

“Alright Charlie you grandparents know them already but this is Melinda and Phil May Coulson but I’d like to introduce all of you to Skye Rayne May Coulson call sign Skyefall their daughter and Maria’s mate. Also the three looking like drowned rats are the twins Jemma Stark Simmons and Leopold Stark Simmons, Tony’s kids with the combined call sign of FitzSimmons. Behind them is one of Jemma’s mates Bobbi Morse call sign Mockingbird” Natasha said as she pointed at the different members of her family.

“Everyone this is Jackie, Jenny and Michael as well as their grandson Charlie who are now family because of their ties to Sharon and Steve. They have also agreed to help us out, Michael will be our on site doctor and Jackie is a nurse. While Jenny is a legend all on her own since she was Agent 13 version 2.0” Natasha said earning her a glare from the older woman.

Maria stood next to her mate on the back porch and knew that she had put off what she and Skye needed to do for as long as they could. Her mate gave her hand a squeeze as a silent thank you for the time before she gave a nod to Maria as if to say she was now ready to face it. “Alright if we can get the kids to do a cease fire I need to get Skye changed” Maria said as she started gently moving Skye’s broken legs from the chair they were propped up on knowing she didn’t need to elaborate to anyone what needed changed.

“I think I can manage that,” Charlie said as he went back down the ramp but stopped mid way. “I got them Nan’s and Pop” he said as he walked into the chaos.
“He’s growing up way too soon” Jackie said softly with a sadness in her voice that Maria understood. Kids were meant to be kids, not to have to be soldiers but even though the young man wasn’t fully trained she saw the makings of a fine soldier or whatever he decided he wanted to be in his life. It was why they all did this job, in the hope their children never had to do it as well.

Children she thought with a warm feeling in her chest as she shared a small smile with Skye and knew they were thinking of the same things. It wasn’t something they had really discussed at length but with seeing the way Skye interacted with Lila and Cooper today and the absolute joy she had felt from her mate while she watched the little water battle, Maria realized they would need to discuss it soon. There were factors to consider from not only both hers and Skye’s past when considering having children of their own but also their present and future.

“We have a medical facility similar to the set up in Italy here that you all can use. Jackie, Jenny and Michael if you want to follow me I’ll take you all there” Natasha said and Maria watched as Clint nodded to his mate as he leaned against one of the back porches pylons pulling Laura into his embrace as they watched the children and started discussing dinner which sounded like BBQ. Maria knew that with more children to keep an eye on that they would make sure there was plenty of guards near them at all times.

“Alright back to the Barn” Natasha said as she started down the ramp just as Charlie yelled out a cease fire of the mini water battle. All the children stopped and then imitated Charlie as he put his water gun on his shoulder and stood at attention as if he was a soldier waiting for inspection. The scene was cute and bittersweet all at the same time as Maria felt her emotions echoed by Skye as she pushed the smaller woman in the wheelchair through the group of children. Maria gently squeezed Skye’s shoulder as they walked in a silent showing of support and understanding of both of their emotions.

Natasha led the group followed by Jackie, Jenny and Michael the last of them bracketed by his mates who made sure he didn’t trip or fall as he read a tablet that most likely had Skye’s medical records on it. Maria followed behind them pushing Skye as Mel and Phil followed behind them talking about something in low tones. Soon they were in the Barn again and they all piled into the elevator that would take them underground. Not for the first time Maria wondered how Natasha and Clint do this all on their own without letting anyone know that they were building a secret underground base underneath the farm.

Maria shook her head at her musings, she might ask eventually but her attention was captured again as the elevator stopped depositing them just outside the conference room they were in earlier today. She knew just down the hall was the control room that they had all worked like crazy in last night when they had gotten the call about Hunter and had needed to connect the networks together for secure communications between the groups. Natasha took them in the opposite direction of the control room, and Maria found herself finally asking “Just how big of a facility do you have down here?”
“Big enough. Took us years to complete between missions but we actually finished it just before New York. The main hallway though is this one with the central control room, main armory, the main conference room and the emergency medical bay” Natasha finished just as they arrived at what had to be the emergency medical bay and went inside as the lights kicked on.

"Just what were you building all this for Tasha?” Phil asked perplexed.

"Apparently for this" Natasha said with a sigh “but honestly we did it to have something to do on our down time as well as to calm down our paranoia. I guess it’s a good thing Clint and I have such a healthy or unhealthy, depends on how you want to view it, sense of paranoia at times.”

“Well I’m grateful for the paranoia” Maria said as she pushed Skye over to one of many examination tables before locking the wheels and looking towards Michael and Jackie. “How do you want to start?”

“I have some questions first to ask, why don’t we start there then we can proceed to the examination. Natasha do we have a way on conferencing Dr. Banner from here if it’s needed?” Michael asked as he pulled a chair closer to where Skye sat in the wheelchair.

“Of course, I’ll text him to let him know we might need him” Natasha said as she pulled out her phone and shot out a quick text to Bruce as everyone pulled chairs to sit down on or sat on near by beds. Maria gave a nod of thanks to Mel as she pulled a chair over for Maria to sit in while she joined Phil on one of the near by beds.

“Alright, I understand that after you were born you were kidnapped and experimented on and that Dr. Banner with the help of a friend are studying your genetic markers trying to find out what was done. From what I understand from the notes, either you can’t feel pain or you have an insanely high pain tolerance which I believe because you should be on a pain drip still with your injuries. Am I correct and at the moment which one is it, if you can tell?” Michael asked as Maria watched him open a notepad like feature on the tablet he had been reading off earlier to make notes.

Maria felt Skye’s hesitance on revealing what they had figured out just that morning when they had realized the same thing. It had led to a very honest conversation about their bond and the levels it was now reaching that Maria knew was rare if never documented before in other mates. Reaching over she placed her hand in Skye’s hand that rested on her mates lap and gave it a squeeze in reassurance and acceptance of everything that was happening between them now. They weren’t sure if it was just their bond, or what Hyde had done to her while she had been captured recently but they were going to face this together.
“A little bit of both and it’s affecting our bond as well now. Maria and I noticed it this morning when it was time for my morning meds and I really didn’t need the pain meds Bruce had sent with us. While I was captured I could feel Maria through the bond which honestly I think kept me sane but as everything kept...escalating I realized that she was feeling what I was going through. The...beating I took near the end before the rescue I felt her the strongest in that moment and it was a decision to feel Maria and expose her to the pain I was being subjected to or block our bond and take the pain for myself and feel it all” Skye said the last bit softly and looked towards Maria with a small sad smile as Maria ran her thumb over Skye’s knuckles.

It had almost been a fight, their first real fight this morning when Maria had told Skye that she shouldn’t have blocked her like that. That she would have taken the pain from Skye in a heartbeat if it meant being there for Skye when she needed Maria the most. The only thing that had saved them from yelling at each other in frustration was the fact that now they could literally feel each other emotions about the subject which honestly was similar to each other’s feelings. Both of them had wanted to protect each other from the pain that they had been going through and once they realized that all frustration had left them as they realized they were guilty of the same thing in a way.

“When we realized that and started discussing this morning what had happened during my capture we realized that my ability was somewhat transferred to Maria. Both of us have insanely high pain tolerances our upbringings demanded it. We think my ability before now was being able to turn off the pain when needed though I’d usually pay the price for it later in some way, this part is just a theory” Skye said looking towards Michael who nodded at both of them to continue.

“What we know isn’t a theory anymore because we are proving it right now is we are able to share each other’s pain even at long distances, we don’t need to be touching like other touch bond’s. Right now Maria is taking half the load of my pain and it seems we have been doing it since I woke up from the coma. We proved that this morning when I...for lack of better word masked our bond in my mind and the pain flooded my system...that wasn’t a pleasant sensation and Maria had me unmask the bond so I could function” Skye said giving Maria a grimace because she knew Skye was remembering Maria practically begging her to let her help.

“So not only can you feel each other’s pain and sense each other over distances, you can also help each other by sharing the pain load on your bodies?” Michael asked trying to get clarification and Maria didn’t blame him because it was unheard of and undocumented level of strength for a bond.

“Yes” Maria answered as the small group all sat there trying to absorb what Maria and Skye was telling them. She caught Mel’s eyes and received a small nod from the woman she had thought of as her mother for years and that was now for all intents and purposes was her mother, well mother in law but the word mother was still in the title. Maria looked towards Phil and saw him giving both her and his daughter a small happy smile and she realized that he was just happy they all found each other. She knew about Phil’s family life before he had joined SHIELD and knew that his desire for a family was something that both he and her had shared.
“Alright and now you also share an emotional bond when it was originally only a touch bond?” Michael asked them diving back into the questions he needed answered to not only treat Skye but also treat herself.

“Yes, we realized that once I had woken from the induced coma first and could I could feel Skye’s fear of waking up” Maria said as she kept her thumb brushing over Skye’s knuckles. Their touch bond was the oldest part of their bond and should be the more stable part of it but the emotional part was making the touch bond be more demanding. It wasn’t like the constant itch under their skin like it was when they had first met it was more like a buzz that they felt more if they close enough to touch and not touching.

“I wouldn’t have woken up as easily as I did if it weren’t for Maria reassuring me I was safe and keeping me calm till I realized it for myself. Since I’ve woken up Maria’s been helping me navigate my emotions and making sure I don’t have to visible of a break down” Skye said shooting her a grateful smile as she squeezed Maria’s hand.

“Okay, I want to check all your wounds and get them cleaned and dressed as well as draw some blood work and get a new set of x-rays on your legs and ribs. I might have more questions after I see everything and discuss my findings with Dr. Banner” Michael said as he and Jackie stood up and started pulling out supplies from drawers.

Maria watched them for a moment before she stood up as well. “Ready sweetheart?” she asked Skye.

“Yes,” Skye said with a smile and grimace as she lifted up her arms, her emotions conflicted at wanting to be in Maria’s arms but hating that she needed Maria’s help to get out of the wheelchair. Maria smiled softly before gently lifting Skye into her arms and placed a kiss to her temple.

“I know you hate being like this, but it won’t last forever love” Maria said as she put Skye on the bed and with the help of Mel and Tasha started to get Skye out of her clothes so they could get to the bandages. It took a few moments and she kept sending Skye gentle reassurances as she felt more and more exposed in front of the newcomers to the group. Maria sat behind Skye on the bed and held her as she whispered in her mates ear “Would it help your feelings of exposure if I told you that Jenny was your parents first S.O. and was the beginning of their introduction to the rules they’ve taught both of us?”

“Really?” Skye asked turning to look at Maria as Jackie and Michael came over with a tray of supplies and began taking x-rays of her mate’s legs.
“Yes, and then Peggy Carter, Jenny’s mom finished teaching them the rules when she took over being their S.O. despite being at the time the Director of SHIELD” Maria said trying to distract Skye as much as she could as Jackie and Michael started from her legs and worked their way up.
Agent Victoria Hand, Director of HUB Operations stood with Agent Felix Blake her newly minted Deputy of HUB Operations next to their parked SUV on the tarmac waiting with a look of cold impatience on both of their faces. They were waiting for the Quinjet carrying the injured agents to land and though that usually didn’t warrant the presence of both the Director and Deputy Director of Operations for a large field office, they had creatively made it that both Hunter and Idaho had been deep cover operatives that had been compromised and injured and they were both playing the ‘I want to know what happened and want to know it yesterday’ cards for all it was worth.

Inside though Tori was worried and her main source of worry was currently flying the Quinjet that was on its final approach. It wasn’t like she didn’t have a mountain of other things to worry about but her main worry and concern would always be Izzy and Fitz and their well beings. She had received a text from Tony after their meeting had broken up that something was wrong with Izzy. Tori had a feeling what the issue was but she had hoped they had exorcised those particular set of Izzy’s demons years ago, though she didn’t blame Izzy for having these ones triggered by what they had seen at the hospital and as they listened to Skye’s account of what had happened to her.

No, Tori would have to make sure she could get Izzy up to their rooms soon and behind closed doors so her mate felt safe enough to let it go. Tori hated having to keep up appearances but she had an image to maintain and there was plenty of junior agents around and none of them she trusted. The Quinjet landed with all of Izzy’s usual efficiency but did nothing to lessen her worry over her mate’s state of mind. She’d seen Izzy land the damn thing with a bullet to the shoulder in choppy weather on the Helicarrier as she kept pressure on Tori’s stomach after a particular nasty stab wound. That mission in Beijing had been a disaster and they had barely made it out of the ambush they had walked into and they both knew they only made it out because of their bond.

“Mr. Stark, I’m Agent Hand. Thank you for the assist” Tori said as she watched Tony come down the ramp of the jet and held out her hand for the man to shake, there was appearances to keep up.

“Anytime Agent Hand I was in the area and happy to help when I heard the radio traffic” Tony said back to her using the cover story that they were using for him being there and if anyone looked they would find radio traffic supporting the story as well as Tori using her computer to track the at the time missing Agent Hunter’s GPS location since he was a deep cover agent. It was all cloak and daggers but it was needed even though just trying to remember all the cover stories was starting to give her a damn headache. “Agent Hartley said you needed to debrief me and that I might be able to bunk out here for a few hours before heading home” Tony said as he indicated Izzy as she stepped off the plane behind him.

“Of course Mr. Stark” Tori said but her eyes were already looking behind Tony towards her mate. Izzy stood there at the end of the Quinjet’s ramp to everyone else she looked normal but to Tori she could see the mask of Agent Hartley barely holding on. “Agent Hartley, Palamas and Harper come
with me I want answers” Tori said in her Agent Hand voice and watched for a moment as Izzy glanced between the ambulances that Hunter and Idaho were now being loaded into under the watchful gazes of Jacobson, Chaimson and Baylin. She knew Izzy was about to argue but she watched as Izzy took a deep breath before she nodded her assent and guided the rest of her team towards Tori.

They all loaded into the waiting SUV as Tony took the front with Blake driving as Palamas and Harper hoped into the cargo area with the gear they had taken off the plane with them. Izzy and herself took the back seat and once the doors were closed she pulled her mate into her arms without a sign of protest coming from Izzy as she relaxed into Tori’s embrace and took a deep breath of her scent. It was another sign that Izzy wasn’t doing good, her mate was very affectionate with her but it was usually Izzy holding her not the other way around. Tori could count the instances where Izzy let her hold her like this with two hands and still have fingers left over.

“Tori you do know if you keep doing that I’m going to pass out right here in the car” Izzy grumbled against her chest which caused Tori to laugh lightly as she played with the hair at the nape of her mate’s neck, not even realizing she was doing it.

“Well we can’t have that love,” Tori whispered softly into Izzy’s ear before pressing a gentle kiss to Izzy’s temple. She watched sadly as Izzy pulled away from her and her mate’s mask slipped back in place as they parked in front of the HUB’s main lobby area in one of her now assigned parking spaces since she was the Director of Operations.

Their group silently made its way through the eerily quiet main lobby area and down a corridor that led to the HUB’s residents tower and she wondered if it was because what they knew or just the outright exhaustion she knew the group was feeling as a whole. There wasn’t much she could do except run through their mock debrief quickly for SHIELD’s official records while she got food into the group before turning them loose to their quarters or guest quarters in Tony and Angie’s case. She would need to assign permanent quarters to Angie in the morning because she had every intention of keeping the young battlefield medic near by for when it all hit the fan.

Tori quickly opened the door to their quarters as she moved aside to let Izzy in first since her mate was barely staying upright at this point. Shutting the door she was thankful for all the strength training Izzy forced her to do in the gym because it probably was the only reason she was able to keep Izzy from doing a face plant right there. “Easy there baby” she said as she caught the older woman around her waist and threw one arm around her shoulders before she slowly made their way down the hallway to their room. Once they had a moment she would seriously need to talk to Izzy about taking better care of herself, she knew they were all in danger but she couldn’t keep pushing herself this way especially since there was no end in sight.

“Sorry” Izzy mumbled against her shoulder as they finally made it into the bedroom and Tori lowered her mate onto the side of the bed.
"You should be Izzy, you can’t keep pushing yourself like this” Tori sighed as she started unlacing her mates combat boots to get them off. Moments passed as she slowly pulled equipment from Izzy’s overly exhausted body. Knives and guns made an always impressive pile on one of the side tables that they had brought into the room just for this purpose. She pulled down the zipper of the tactical suit that would need to go to the laundry facilities in the morning before she gently pulled up and over her mates head the under shirt and sports bra tossing them also to the floor. With two hands she lowered Izzy back onto the bed before bending down to pull the rest of the tactical suit and her mates underwear off.

Tori took a moment to enjoy the view of her very naked mate and if it was any other time she’d be right now kneeling in front of Izzy losing herself in the taste of her mate but that wasn’t going to happen now...maybe later. “Enjoying the view?” Izzy husked at her one eye open as she caught Tori staring at her.

“You know I do but that is not in the cards for right now, maybe later. Now you need to sleep baby” she said holding out her hand and pulling Izzy onto her feet wrapping an arm around her mates naked waist while her other hand reached down and pulled back the covers on their bed. Warm lips started making a trail up her neck and she sighed as she knew both of them wanted this and possibly both of them needed it as well, but Izzy needed to get a few hours of sleep as well as to let go of the demons just behind her eyes.

This side of Izzy was a rare thing for her to see, Izzy was always the strong one in private letting Tori to drop her masks but it was her mate that needed her tonight to be the strong one. It was with that realization that she recognized the demons that Izzy was trying so hard to hide from her because the last time Izzy had been like this was after a botched mission in Argentina that Tori hadn’t been on. It had been STRIKE Team: Delta that had gone in and pulled her very bloody and badly beaten mate from a drug lords compound only three years ago….Shit. What they had seen when they recovered Skye and then hearing her recount everything had probably pushed Izzy past the breaking point and her mate had said nothing to either her or Fitz.

She thought they were passed this not telling each other when they needed the other but she knew Izzy had more inner demons than she did. Tori at least had parents that provided everything for her and pushed her to succeed saying that money and success was everything...she at least her parents there for her physically if not emotionally. Izzy had no one from day one as an orphan after she had seen her father kill her mother in a drunken rage at the age of five, she had grown up in the system.

“Come on baby, bedtime” she sighed lowering Izzy back down onto the bed and stopped at the whimpered cry that came from Izzy when she tried to step away.

“Stay” Izzy whispered and the tone of voice made Tori’s heart constrict.
“I’m not going anywhere love, I just need to get undressed” Tori said gently as she wiped away the lone tear on Izzy’s cheek. She waited till Izzy nodded to her before she pulled off her blazer and threw it against a chair in the corner of their room. She removed her 9mm Firestar that was hidden in the small of her back before she removed her dress pants and added them to the pile of clothes already on the floor. Lifting a leg onto the bed she unstrapped the knives on one leg, then switching legs the other and put them onto the table as well.

It wasn’t much but before this all started she never had felt the need to be armed to the teeth like Izzy usually was when just around the office. Which reminded her she would need to start stashing gear in her office and near other places she was frequently at so if anything did drop she had something more than the Firestar and knives she might not even get the chance to pull out. The rest of her clothes joined the pile on the floor as she walked over and turned off the lights in their room as she made her way back to the bed.

Tori crawled into her side of the bed and watched as Izzy rolled onto her side to face her with a face that was fighting to hold back the demons she now knew had triggered in her mate’s mind. Opening her arms she closed her eyes once Izzy was in her arms with her head resting on Tori’s chest. Placing a gentle kiss to her mate’s head she felt the first hot tear hit her skin and not for the first time she wished that sometimes they had a different life, one where both of them weren’t so haunted by everything they had seen, done and been done to them. More hot tears fell onto her skin but Izzy made no sound or even moved with her crying, the tears just silently fell against her skin.

Calloused hands gently caressed up and down her thighs as she felt warm lips start pressing lightly against her already warm skin. “Izzy” Tori husked as she reached down between her legs to reach out for her mate but her wrists are grasped and pressed firmly down onto the bed, the command understood as she instead gripped the bed sheets beneath her. Awareness quickly flooded her system as she felt one hand return to between her legs as it opened her up before she felt Izzy’s tongue slide into her before it licked upwards to flick her clit.

“Fuck Izzy” she moans earning her a growl from between her legs as her hands grip the bedsheets trying not to move. The simple path of Izzy’s tongue is repeated a few more times slowly before she moans again begging, “Please Izzy.” Her begging earns her a few extra flicks of a tongue to her clit before Izzy sucks it between her lips and teeth making Tori want to lift her ass off the bed but years of this keeps her ass on the bed.

Tori feels her muscles constrict as two fingers are shoved roughly side her and she orgasms for the first time since Izzy had started but it doesn’t end there. She feels like she is on fire as Izzy keeps up with her tongue and lips on her clit as she is roughly fucked with two fingers then a third that brings on another orgasm as she bites her lips so not to scream, at least not yet. A whimper escapes her lips though still and that spurs Izzy to move faster and it’s not long before she has a third orgasm that rolls into a fourth. “Izzy” she screams as her body goes rigid and her vision darkens as a fifth rolls over her before she collapses back onto the bed panting.
She can feel it as Izzy slowly crawls up placing kisses and bites along her body. Every press of lips or teeth send a jolt between her legs that makes her moan before teeth nip at her own lips and she opens her eyes looking into her mate’s pupil blown eyes. It’s not just lust in her eyes though and Tori knows that this isn’t over by a long shot because this Izzy that is looking down into her eyes is the one that needs to be dominant, needs to be in control but she also knows that Izzy won’t move any farther till she gives her consent. Slowly telegraphing her movements she pressed a hand to the side of Izzy’s face before letting her hand move towards her mate’s neck pulling their lips to meet in a hungry kiss.

A growl starts in Izzy’s chest and enters her body through the kiss as she feels her mate’s body settle between her legs and she isn’t surprised to feel the strap-on’s harness around Izzy’s hips. The toy is cold against her heated flesh and she gasps at the contact breaking the hungry kiss they had been sharing but that doesn’t stop Izzy as she starts biting and sucking at Tori’s neck. “I need you to say it” Izzy husks into her ear and she shudders just from the voice alone as she becomes even wetter if that is even possible.

“Take me” Tori answers huskily back as she feels a not so gentle bite to the juncture of her neck and collarbone that makes her hiss. One hand covers one of her breasts as fingers pinch at her nipple making her whimper and hips jerk upwards against Izzy’s hips. The fingers pinch and pull at the nipple causing her to move each time before the fingers are replaced by an insistent mouth and teeth. Tori moans as the hand she had on Izzy’s neck grips her mate’s shoulder tightly nails digging into flesh as she feel a particularly sharp bite to her nipple.

The hand moves with the rest of Izzy’s body as she shifts position but keeps her mouth firmly on one of Tori’s breasts. Fingernails scrape harshly down one thigh before gripping her hip roughly and pulling her upwards as Izzy’s other hand guides the dildo to her entrance. The toy though is at an awkward angle barely inside her but that is before one last hard bite to her nipple has both of her hands gripping Izzy’s shoulders and her mate uses that to lift her back up off the bed. An arm quickly wraps around her lower back as Izzy lifts and sits back on her heels forcing the dildo deep inside Tori as she is now straddling her mate’s lap.

“Fuck” Tori hisses as her head drops against Izzy’s shoulder earning her a chuckled growl.

“Such a dirty mouth. I love how vocal you can be, don’t hold back. Let me hear you scream, let me hear what I am doing to you” Izzy husks into her ear before she starts moving her hips pressing up into Tori.

“So full, sweet Jesus” Tori whimpers because at that angle she realizes that the tip of the dildo is hitting her cervix with just the slightest movement of Izzy’s hips. Her whimpered observation earns her a hard thrust of Izzy’s hips that makes her sees stars but it doesn’t stop with that as Izzy starts
rolling her hips underneath her. It starts out slow but soon Izzy’s hips are constantly moving as she finds herself riding up and down the length of the dildo. Her movements are guided by Izzy’s hands on her hips gripping her tightly, there will be bruises there when this is over but she doesn’t care as another wave of orgasms rolls over her.

“Fuck, Izzy. Don’t stop oh god, please...don’t stop” she screams as Izzy shifts their positions again using her upper body strength to lift her then put her in a control fall backwards onto the bed. Not so gentle hands push up on her thighs and pull on both of her legs as they are lifted onto Izzy’s shoulders. The change of position has Izzy’s weight pressing against her body as she moves her hips up to meet each thrust of Izzy’s hips.

“Holy shit, that’s it fuck me Izzy…” she screams as another set of orgasms roll over her. One of her legs are pushed down and she wraps it around Izzy’s waist as her mate grips her shoulder with one hand and her mouth wraps around one of her nipples. Soon bites and kisses are moving up towards her neck as the hand that was gripping her shoulder moves up her throat and pushes her head back giving Izzy access to her neck. By her mates breathing Tori knows Izzy is close to coming so as both of her hands grips Izzy’s back with fingernails digging in she huskily whispers, “Cum with me my Xena, I’m yours.”

Tori pulls Izzy deeper and harder with her leg wrapped around her waist and the growl she hears rip from Izzy as her body goes rigid throws her body into another set of orgasms as Izzy pumps into her harder as she rides out her own orgasms. “Fuck, fuck fucking hell…” Tori screams but it’s swallowed by Izzy kissing her as their movements start to slow finally before they stop.

Izzy breaks off the kiss and collapses on top of her and they are both struggling for breath as Tori slowly unclenches her fingers from Izzy’s back earning her a hiss of breath against her neck. “Shit that stings”

“I would be surprised if I didn’t break skin this time,” Tori says as she brings one hand to eye level and there is blood just under her fingertips. “Yup going to need to clean those once we can move” she says as she moves the hand to the nape of Izzy’s neck playing with the hair there.

“Don’t think I can move just yet, especially if you keep doing that” Izzy admits with a chuckle as she nuzzles and gently kisses her neck.

“Hmm…” Tori hums as she closes her eyes as the adrenaline and endorphins leave her system. After a few minutes like this she feels the even breathing of Izzy asleep against her neck and presses a gentle kiss to the top her mate’s head. Glancing over she saw it was only 0600 and she stretched out for her phone and quickly sent a text to the group that they would all meet at 0900. Setting an alarm for 0745 she tossed the phone back onto the bedside table and just laid there holding Izzy.
Izzy woke with a groan and buried her face deeper into Tori’s neck at the sound of the alarm on Tori’s phone as it started playing Norah Jones’ “Sunrise”. It wasn’t a bad song but soft jazzy songs were not her choice to wake up to, nope give her something she could dance to and she was happy camper. Blindly reaching over she finally grabbed Tori’s phone and turned off the song with another groan that earned her a chuckle from Tori and a poke to the ribs. “I was listening to that.”

“Oh-huh, sure you were” Izzy teased as she nipped at Tori’s neck rewarding her with a moan. She rolled her hips and realized that she was still inside Tori as the toy’s base pressed up against her own clit. “Shit” she groaned and shuddered as Tori’s shifted giving her better access.

“Fucking hell I wish we had time but we need to clean your back, shower, get ready for the day and start breakfast before everyone arrives” Tori husked into her ear.

“Fine, but I reserve the right to ambush you later” Izzy said as she pushed up with arms as if she was doing a push up. Lowering herself she captured Tori’s lips just as she moaned again with her movements.

“Fuck it, you have twenty minutes but no funny business in the shower afterwards” Tori said and Izzy didn’t argue the order.

A pair of arms circled her waist as she stood at the stove trying not to burn the large pan of scrambled eggs and hissed as Tori’s body pressed up against her back that was just slightly sore from the mornings earlier activities. Not only had Tori broke skin during their first round of sex, the minx had ripped them open again during the second round. In no way was she complaining because she liked things just this side of painful at times and it was rare for her to indulge in that need but it was even better because she had caused Tori to lose control enough to break skin.

“Hmm..Breakfast smells good, but you smell even better” Tori said behind her as her fingers pulled up on the seam of her jeans. A pair of lips nipped and sucked at her neck and she fought to concentrate on what she was doing at the stove. The torture only stopped as a knock sounded on their front door causing her mate to chuckle and move her hands away. “Saved by the door” she said as Izzy watched her walk away with a sway to her hips. ‘The minute we are alone...’ she thought while listening as Tori opened the door. Izzy relaxed and the tension left her muscles when she heard Tony’s greeting.

“Come on inside and grab a seat, breakfast is almost done” Tori said and she watched as everyone grabbed seats at the table. Blake sat at the far end of the table with their new doctor to his right, while Tony sat on the other side of the doctor next to Tori’s place. While Kara and Angie sat quite close to each other, almost touching on the other side of the table.
“Tori you little devil” Tony teased as he sat down giving her a mischievous smirk. ‘That won’t be good’ she thought as she turned off the burner and dished the eggs into a serving bowl.

“And why Tony am I a little devil?” Tori asked joining her in the kitchen as they started bringing out the serving bowls of eggs and bacon and the plate of toast.

“Because of that” Tony says grabbing a piece of bacon and using it to point at Izzy’s neck.

“Going to need to put some concealer on that before we leave” Tori says smirking like the chesire cat when she glances at her neck. Izzy rolls her eyes at the two as she puts the bowls down and goes to grab the drinks from the kitchen.

“I’m not the only one that needs to use concealer this morning” Izzy says as she puts the juice and coffee in the center of the table and flicks the hickey at the juncture of Kara’s neck and collarbone earning herself a glare from the agent. Izzy just sits down and raises an eyebrow as she takes a sip of her coffee. “Well?”

“We didn’t realize it till we got in last night and we were alone” Angie said blushing earning her a chuckle from her brother across the table. “Don’t you start Monty” Angie says tossing a piece of toast at her brother.

“No food fights” Tori said in her Agent Hand voice that has Angie blushing redder if that was possible and instantly sitting up in her chair. “Better. Now Monty don’t tease your sister since you get to do their bonding physicals. Blood work will have to go through Avenger’s tower and Bruce but congratulations you two” Tori says letting her voice back to it’s natural tone.

“Thank you Ma’am” both Kara and Angie say at the same time and everyone chuckles as they start to dig into their food.

“So Doc, how are our boys?” Izzy asks after she swallows a bite of her food.

“Better than expected. Idaho started to show signs of waking last night but I’ve upped his dosage of pain meds hoping to keep him asleep a little bit longer to give his body time to heal. Hunter is fine kept trying to get up and out of bed this morning. I want to keep him another 24 hours but after that he will be free to leave medical” Monty said before taking a drink of his coffee.
“24 hours. I know he needs time to heal and he wants to see his mates but we need to keep him here till we can get a better handle on our own security” Izzy said looking towards Tori.

“Agreed, but we will have to clear it with Maria, Skye and Tasha since they seem to be the central command for all of this” Tori said after a moment of thinking.

“Tony are you heading back to Avenger Tower after breakfast?” Izzy asked.

“That is the plan since Sharon and Steve need to get to D.C. to make contact with Kevin. I should be getting there just in time for Second Breakfast” Tony said as he finished his food and pushed the plate away.

“Tony did you really just make a Lord of the Ring’s reference?” Izzy asked chuckling.

“Yes I did, love those Hobbits” Tony said with a grin that caused everyone to laugh at him. Leave it up to Tony to keep up the comic relief even throughout breakfast.

“Kara and Angie I’m going to assign you rooms on this floor so be ready to move your things when your guard shift ends tonight” Tori said.

“Yes Ma’am” they both said and Izzy couldn’t help but chuckle at the eye roll from her mate.

“It’s Tori and Izzy when we are in private, we’re family now. And as your new S.O. you two get dish duty” Izzy said with a smirk as she drank her coffee as the two women groaned.

“JARVIS is anyone awake?” Tony asked as he cut the thrusters to his suit as he landed on top of Avenger Tower a few hours later. He started walking as the automated system started removing his armor as he walked towards the towers entrance.

“Yes sir, Steve is in the main kitchen. Everyone else is asleep at the moment but he asked for you to meet with him” JARVIS answered and Tony turned towards the kitchen to go see what Capsicle needed before he went to go wake his two mates up in a totally not PG rated way. It had been a while since all three of them had a moment alone together with everything going on and he needed them.
“Capsicle! Why are you in here when I know you have a beautiful woman probably naked in your bed?” Tony teased and smirked at the blush that shot across Steve’s face. Sometimes it was just too easy to get the man to blush but then he wouldn’t be Captain Apple Pie if he didn’t blush.

“Sit, we need to talk Tony” Steve said his voice serious as he looked down at his coffee avoiding Tony’s gaze.

‘This isn’t going to be good’ Tony thought as he sat down across from Steve in front of a coffee that was made exactly how he liked it. “What’s wrong Steve? Already knocked up Sharon? Can’t get it up in your old age?” Tony teased falling back into his humor and sarcasm, he knew it was a defensive mechanism but he’d never seen Steve like this before.

“How much did your father tell you about the war?” Steve finally asked as he finally looked away from his coffee and looked at Tony. This wasn’t something he was expecting Steve to ask him, Steve avoided talking about the war with everyone but now something had changed and the look he was giving Tony was haunted and full of regret. A part of him wanted to fall back on his usual humor and sarcasm but something told him not to for this, for this he would have to be just Tony the friend of Steve.

“Not much. To be honest most I know about the war I either read or was told by Peggy, Angie or occasionally Monty when I saw them. Monty and dad didn’t get along after the war, never knew why but I thought it was because you and Peggy had been an item and then Monty stepped in but I never asked. I know that dad worked on the project that made you go from runt of the litter to super-soldier and that he continued to work with Peggy and by extension your unit till you...well disappeared. Afterwards I know dad was damn near obsessed in trying to find you up until his death, determined to find you and I guess to give you a proper burial” Tony said sitting back in his chair and taking a sip of coffee.

“Damn you Howard” Steve finally whispered to the air looking up towards the ceiling as if he could still talk to Tony’s dad. “Fuck Sharon was right” Steve said rubbing at his face with a hands.

“What was Sharon right about?” Tony asked confused as fuck especially since he just had Captain-No-Foul-Language curse right in front of him but he didn’t tease because he felt like he was about to be told something he needed to hear.

“I never said anything because I thought your father or someone from that time would have told you and I figured you didn’t want to discuss it. When we first met, I couldn’t blame you for your hostility towards me and a part of me welcomed it since it was because of me your father was a neglectful asshole to you. After I woke up SHIELD gave me
the files on all those from my past and a large part of me wished Howard was alive so I could strangle him for what he did to you” Steve said surprising Tony by the anger and contempt in his voice when speaking about his father in that moment when always before it had been tinged with a sense of loss when talking about Howard.

“I’m not quite following here” Tony said still utterly confused there was something he was missing about this conversation.

“Fuck, I’m botching his up” Steve said with a sigh before he took a deep breath. “Let me start at the beginning I met Bucky when we were kids, when we met we realized we were soulmates but back then it wasn’t socially acceptable for two same sex soulmates to be anything but a platonic bond. We were kids but understood that much so kept it hidden for fear of what could happen. When the war broke out we both tried to enlist, Bucky got accepted while I got rejected and to be honest Bucky was relieved because we had never found our third. You know the story about Project Rebirth but what you don’t know and was a closely guarded secret for all of our safeties was that your father, Howard was mine and Bucky’s third.”

‘Well shit,’ Tony thought as he looked towards Steve and realized that the man in front of him in a different world could have been one of his father's….“Wait dad was a blank, it’s in his file” Tony said grasping at straws trying to understand.

“And SHIELD’s files are completely factual” Steve said with a dry look at Tony. “Look all of us cooked up the fake relationship between Peggy and myself for the cameras, also so that I’d quit having random women throwing themselves at me all the damn time. While your father and Bucky played the part of good ol’ boys and slept with a good portion of them to keep up appearances. We were in the middle of a war, Bucky and I were on the front lines and we made Howard promise us that if anything happened to us he would move on and live his life. When Bucky died...we both were a wreck but when I disappeared a few months later…I’m sorry Tony” Steve said with a wide range emotions in his voice and his eyes as if he was about to start drowning in them.

Tony stared at the man before him and understood why Steve had never said anything because Tony was his father’s son and avoidance of uncomfortable topics was a Stark thing to do. Now that he knew though he understood now his father’s single minded obsession with finding both Steve and Bucky to give them a proper burial. His father had needed the visual confirmation that they were gone other than faded soulmarks to tell him, he needed the closure of burying them and he never got that.

“So in another world where you didn’t go down with the plane you could have been my dad as well?” Tony asked trying to crack a joke but it fell flat at the look of loss in Steve’s eyes. He realized then that he was almost the spitting image of his father and how much it had to have killed Steve to see him and not have Howard there.
“Yes Tony in another world I could have been your dad” Steve said pausing and Tony waited because he could see Steve debating on saying something. “I’m not your dad Tony but you’re still family to me always have been from the moment I knew you existed because I loved your father and Bucky with everything I had.”

“What about Sharon?” Tony asked blinking back the tears he was trying not to let fall.

“She already knew the truth and accepts it. Actually cracked a joke about a rednecker family tree or something this morning as I got up to wait for you” Steve said with a shrug and small smile.

“It’s a redneck family tree and she is right. I’ll have to explain the term to you another day because I think I need to go see my mates for a bit” Tony said before finishing his coffee and placing the cup in the sink. He paused and looked back towards Steve meeting the man’s eyes.

“For the record I don’t blame you for my father’s actions and now I don’t blame him so much anymore…Thank you for telling me, he might not have gotten closure with you and Bucky but you gave me the best gift you could have just now...the closure I needed with my father. You would have been a great dad Steve” Tony said softly before turning away and making his way to his mates. His earlier thoughts of something not PG-13 forgotten as he needed them for the simple comfort of their presence around him.

“Skye Rayne May Coulson, put down that hanger” her mother said as she caught Skye trying to itch her legs using a metal hanger she had found in her mother’s old room on the Bus. She had woken up to an empty bed knowing that Maria had woken even earlier to go on the supply run with Clint, Tasha and Jenny while everyone else stayed to keep an eye out on both properties. At first she had been okay with being awake but soon she had the overwhelming feeling as if her skin was crawling just under her casts, that had led her to lift herself despite the twinge of pain and reach the closet where the hanger had been. In triumph she had bent the hanger and had started jamming it down one then the other cast on her lower legs trying to ease the sensation.

“How did you know I was awake?” Skye asked as she pulled out the hanger from the cast and put it in her mother’s out stretched hand.

“Maria felt a shot of pain and sent me a text to come check on you” her mother said putting the hanger back in the closet before sitting on the bed next to her and propping herself up against one of the walls. “Do I even want to know how you got the hanger out of the closet?” she asked dryly.

“Nope” Skye answered popping the ‘P’ as she leaned back into her mother’s embrace. Eyes closed
she enjoyed the sensation of her mother’s fingers running through her long hair and knew that this feeling was what she had been chasing all of her life. “Mom?”

“Yes baby girl?” her mother said softly before pressing a kiss to the top of her head.

“I’m sorry about what I said when you and Dad first caught me lying. I know now you and Dad really did want me with you…” Skye apologized her voice breaking because she had told them she didn’t care who her parents were.

“Oh sweetheart there is nothing to forgive, you didn’t know. We didn’t know and you had every right to be as angry and hurt as you were” her mother said pressing more kisses to the top of her head as her arms tightened around Skye. It was moments like this that she had missed for the first 23 years of her life and she cried again as if she were a small child into her mother’s chest. One hand rubbed circles on her back trying to comfort her as she felt herself breaking again.

It was a minutes later she heard the door open and felt a dip in the bed behind her and she smelt her father’s aftershave as he moved to comfort her and her mother who was now crying hot tears into her hair. Skye felt Maria’s worry through the bond and realized her mate even this far away was feeling her emotions and she tried to send Maria reassurance that she was as okay as she could be. Seconds later she heard her father’s phone ring as he maneuvered it out of a pocket to answer it.

“Hey Maria, she’s okay. Just an emotional moment” her father said trying to reassure her mate for her as she continued to breakdown into her mother’s chest. “Alright we will see you then” he said before hanging up the phone. Skye felt her father’s arms slide back around her as he held her and her mother to him.

It was a long time till the tears slowed and stopped but she laid against her mother’s chest utterly spent both emotionally and physically. One of her hands gripped her mother’s shirt tightly and she whimpered as her father tried to move her. “Shhh it’s alright baby girl, I’m just going to help you two to lay down on the bed,” came her father’s voice through the fog of her mind as he slowly lowered her and her mother to the bed. Her head was on her mother’s chest as it rose with the steady breathing of sleep and she closed her eyes revelling in the feeling of safety she felt in the moment. A gentle kiss from her father was placed on her forehead as he covered them with sheet from the bed. Skye heard the click of the phone’s camera function but couldn’t care as she lost herself to sleep.

Maria sighed in relief from the passenger seat of the minivan, as the farmhouse came into view after they rounded the last bend in the road. a chuckle was heard from the older woman next to her and Maria couldn’t hide the blush she felt creeping up her neck. “It’s alright Maria. I remember when my touch bond first formed, I can only imagine it’s worse for you and Skye with both bonds and so strong even over such long distances” Jenny said as they pulled up into the driveway to be greeted by a group of children and adult’s waiting to help unload the packed to the gills vehicles. “Go ahead and check on her, we got it here.”
“Thanks Jenny” Maria said as she unbuckled and made her way through the crowd and around the house. As soon as she was out of sight of everyone in the front she ran quickly towards the Bus and up it’s ramp. Taking the stairs two at a time she found Phil in the Bus’ living room reading something on his Stark Pad.

“They fell asleep about twenty minutes ago” Phil said patting the couch next to him in such a dad move. It was like the father in all the cliche teen movies that she would deny ever watching...but it was like the father of her date telling her to sit with him while she waited for her date to come down the stairs and it just so happened that while they waited that said dad would grill her about her intentions for the night. She chuckled as she dropped next to him and he shot her a questioning look. “Do I even want to know?”

“Probably not, but ever see the movies where it’s prom and the boy arrives at the girl’s house only to have to wait for his date to finish getting ready? Your patting the couch for me to sit next to you reminded me of that for some reason” Maria said smirking at Phil who snorted and shook his head in amusement.

“If this was that type of movie I’d be asking what your intentions were with my daughter for the night...but we both know that this is going to be much longer than just a night” Phil said first jokingly but ending in a serious tone as he gave a look to Maria. She knew that look it was his ‘time for a serious discussion’ look and knew it had been coming since Phil and Mel and found out the young woman that was her mate was also the daughter they thought dead for 23 years.

“Yes we do Mr. May Coulson, Sir” she answered cheekily and earned herself a chuckle from the man next to her. “But in all seriousness Phil, I love your daughter more than anything and I know she feels the same way. This bond is insane but I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“More than SHIELD, your career?” Phil asked her and she didn’t take offense at the question because before meeting Skye she was married to her job.

“Yes more than SHIELD and my career. Skye will always come first to me and if I thought we could live with ourselves I’d leave it all behind, without a second of regret if it meant protecting her and our….future” Maria said softly trying to hide the fact she almost said ‘our children’. They had only discussed the possibility for the first time last night in bed as Maria held Skye as she felt the younger woman’s fear to sleep as her own.

“You almost said children there Maria. Oh don’t be surprised we saw the looks you two were shooting each other when interacting with Cooper, Lila and the Carter grandchildren last night as they cooked s’mores” Phil teased her lightly while giving her small smile.
“Ugh Bobbi is going to tease me relentlessly if we were that obvious last night” Maria said closing her eyes.

“Nah doubt it as her and Jemma were too busy shooting each other similar looks last night as well. While Fitz also had a small smile on his face probably thinking along the same lines with himself, Tori and Izzy. Nope it was only us old fogies that saw all the meaningful looks between you youngins” Phil said.

“Well at least there is that, Tasha might tease me but..” Maria shrugged. “Actually couldn’t really care about the teasing if it means Skye says yes to the idea fully but we’d seriously need to talk to Michael, Bruce and Bruce’s friend the geneticist about it since it would have to be her to carry our children.”

“Why not you? You aren’t that old Maria” Phil asked her with a confused look on his face.

“What do you know about the convoy attack that eventually got me discharged from the Marines?” Maria asked dropping her head back against the couch and looking up at the ceiling.

“Only that you had saved a Senator’s life, was injured and was on a fast track of being the poster girl for them and the war until it somehow came out you were gay. They quietly discharged you honorably but word of it got to Nick I suspect from the Senator whose life you saved and he had us go recruit you” Phil said and she could feel his eyes locked on her face.

“It probably was Senator Burke that pointed Nick in my direction, it wouldn’t surprise me. Burke wanted to make the Marines to treat me fairly just because I was gay was no reason in his eyes to cashier me out of the service, especially with a war going on. But the Marines didn’t want me anymore and that left a very bitter in my mouth after everything that had happened so I told them I’d leave quietly on a few conditions and they took it. The agreement was that the Marines cited it as an honorable discharge due to lasting permanent injuries…” Maria said fighting back the tears that burned just behind her closed eyes.

“The being discharged due to lasting injuries wasn’t a lie just not what everyone was led to believe. I healed well enough from the burns and broken bones but the pieces of shrapnel that supposedly damaged my spine never went near my spine. Instead it tore apart any chance I had of having children of my own. That is the real reason why you and Mel found me three bottles of scotch into a binge when you came to recruit me, I was mourning my chances of being a mother” Maria said as she felt Phil’s hand grip her own as the tears fell finally from her eyes again.
“I told Skye all this last night when we talked about the possibility...Your daughter is an amazing woman because despite being injured and dealing with her own shit she held me while I broke down after admitting that out loud for the first time in years” Maria said finally looking towards Phil and squeezing his hand. The cool metal of a wedding band pressed against her fingers and she looked down before smiling at what that simple band represented.

Maybe Maria wasn’t the prom date being interrogated by the father of her date as she waited anxiously for her date to finish getting ready….Maybe this talk was something more than that, maybe it was another more important talk that she never thought she’d be having with a father about his daughter. Wiping her eyes with one of her hands she turned towards Phil and though a part of her wanted to crack a joke she didn’t. “Mr. May Coulson, I’d like to ask for your permission to ask your daughter Skye to marry me.”
Chapter 36

“Mr. May Coulson, I’d like to ask for your permission to ask your daughter Skye to marry me” Maria asked him with a look on her face that told him she was being very serious and not just messing with him. Phil sat back for a moment shocked at what Maria had just asked him but then again he shouldn’t be. It was one thing he and Maria had in common, they were both traditionalists when it came to certain things. In today’s society it was different than years ago when it was expected to marry your mate. Today that wasn’t expected and in some social circles considered to be an out of date practice. He knew that even though they had the ceremony some countries would not recognize the union and that rubbed him the wrong way for a moment but all that mattered was that Maria wanted to go through with an actual ceremony.

Phil caught Maria fidget with her hands, his lack of an answer must have her nervous as hell, while his face remained blank and for a moment he gleefully let her squirm as was his right as the father. The father...that thought hit him hard because he never thought he’d be having this conversation ever but now his daughter was alive and the woman that loved her was asking for his permission to marry his daughter. Mel should be here but in all honesty his mate would roll her eyes at the two all the while smiling and grumbling about traditional fools.

When he had asked Mel to marry him it had been after a very frightening conversation with her mother to ask her permission since Mel’s father had died when she was still a child. That reminded him that they would need to get ahold of Lian May and tell her that the granddaughter that they had buried all those years ago was alive and by the looks about it, about to be engaged. Phil suppressed a shudder at the thought of that conversation, it could go well or horribly depending on the mood of his mate and her mother.

Phil knew the engagement and ceremony was just a formality because he knew in his and Mel’s minds they had already considered Maria and Skye as one unit. The bond that those two shared was so strong that it was unheard of but he thought back to the Skye and Maria before they met and realized it was the best thing that could have happened because it was healing all the parts of the two women that Phil and Mel would never be able to help them with fully. Letting a gentle smile finally come onto his face he reached out and held Maria’s hands in his own. “You have my blessing Maria but know that Mel and I already consider you our daughter as well. We have for many years, so go ahead and ask Skye and when she says yes let us know what you need and we will make this happen” he said gently as he watched the tears form in Maria’s eyes but this time not from painful memories but in happiness.

Phil watched as Maria struggled to gain control of her emotions before she squeezed his hands back. “Thanks dad” she said with a light happy chuckle.

“Anytime but you do know this isn’t going to be some small thing right? Our family has grown considerably in the last few months” he said chuckling when he heard Maria groan and drop her
head to the side onto the back of the couch.

“You would have to remind me of that. The logistics and the security alone will be a nightmare, maybe I can sic Pepper on planning it…” Maria said but abruptly stood up and ran towards where Mel and Skye were currently sleeping and he wasn’t far behind as he felt Mel’s terror flood their bond. Her terror almost bringing him to his knees as he pulled out his phone and dialed Tasha because she would know where everyone was on the property. He didn’t know what was wrong but the look of terror on Maria’s face and the terror flooding his bond from Mel let him know whatever it was, wasn’t going to be good.

Phil ran into the doorway seeing Maria and Mel trying to prevent Skye from hurting herself while she had a seizure on the bed. Terror from Mel and himself gripped his heart and made him unable to speak as Maria looked back at him but she must have heard Tasha’s voice over the phone that he didn’t hear at first in his terror.

“Tasha I need the med team to the BUS, pilot’s quarters, Skye’s having a seizure. Mel under the bed is Skye’s medicine grab the red capped bottle” Maria ordered as she quickly got up on the bed with Skye.

“We are on the way” Tasha said through the phone and Phil could hear her issue the orders from wherever they were at and could hear the sound of footsteps before the line cut dead. He still held the phone as he watched Mel grab the bottle and open it as she pulled out a tiny pill.

“I’ll open her mouth and try to keep her from biting down. I need you to put the pill under her tongue and hold it there till it dissolves” Maria said as she pried open Skye’s mouth and he watched as Mel put the pill in their daughter’s mouth. Terror was still flooding through the bond but his mate was viciously pushing it away also as determination to help no matter what came across the bond.

“Come on sweetheart, fight through it. Follow my voice home,” he heard Maria say over and over again after Mel got the pill under Skye’s tongue. His mate backed up into his arms and he held her as they looked on hopeless and feeling useless as Maria continued to hold their daughter’s tiny form through her seizure. Phil pulled Mel back into the hallway and out of the way as running footsteps announced the presence of Michael and Jackie just as they ran into the room.

He could hear the hurried questions and orders from Michael as he worked to stabilize Skye for transport back underground to the Medbay. Tasha came up to them and led them down the stairs, where Bobbi and Jemma ran passed them with a backboard that they had pulled off one of the golf carts they had been using around the property. Phil felt Mel’s terror and useless feeling double back into him as their bond echoed their feelings and amplified them, he desperately tried to reassure Mel as they reached outside of the BUS. Tears flooded his eyes as he heard Mel’s scream from the emotional pain and he pulled her into his arms as she broke again inside and he broke with her as
they fell back into the dirt.

It was weird being back in D.C., she felt like it should look different with what she now knew but it was still the same old D.C.. Sharon wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or not but she pushed away those thoughts and focused on driving to the dive bar she knew her brother would most likely be at. Her passenger was another thing she could focus on because Sam Wilson was the man that had helped her and Steve get both Pepper Potts and her grandmother to the safety of Avenger Tower just a little bit over a week ago. Hunter had recommended him as someone he knew that could help them and that he trusted with his life but she didn’t understand how the men knew each other since Sam didn’t seem the mercenary type.

Of course the man next to her was another weird feeling because it should’ve been Steve in the car with her but they wanted to keep the knowledge that they knew each other to very few in this town. So instead of driving with Steve to the dive bar to talk to her brother she had Sam Wilson in the car with her. Sam was to go inside and talk to her brother saying his codeword and telling him to go out to the car waiting for him where she would drive Kevin to somewhere more secure to have a conversation with him and Steve. While Sam caught a cab home but it brought up the question she asked herself earlier and she decided to just ask it and see if she got an answer. “How do you know Hunter?”

“ Took you long enough Blondie, thought you would have asked me last time I saw you if not earlier in this car ride” Sam said chuckling as he looked over to her before his face sobered up and he looked back out the window. “Hunter’s younger brother, Riley was my wingman when we were deployed in Afghanistan a few years back.”

Was and Hunter had told them he had no living blood relatives left which meant that Riley had most likely been shot down during a mission and didn’t survive. She then remembered that Hunter had called Sam ‘the closest thing I have to a brother left’ which meant that there was probably more than just a wingman relationship between Sam and Riley. “I’m sorry” Sharon said and even the words sounded hollow to her.

“Not your fault but Hunter and I have kept in touch after Riley died usually sharing a drink in Riley’s name on his birthday” Sam said as they pulled up in the parking lot of the dive bar that had become Kevin’s hidey hole after his ‘retirement’ from SHIELD. “So go in there, find your brother and tell him ‘I’d kill for a pop-tart’ to let him know I’m friendly then tell him to meet you out here?”

“Pretty much” Sharon said shrugging. “Thank you for doing this Sam. We really do appreciate it.”

“No problem, Hunter said to consider you all family so just let me know if you need anything else” Sam said getting out of the car.
“Hey Sam,” Sharon said stopping him with a hand on his arm.

“First take this,” Sharon said handing him the phone she was going to give to Kevin but she would give him a different one when they got back to Tony’s D.C. house. “That is a secure line, if you need anything give us a call using it. Second call Hunter.”

“Got it, more cloak and daggers stuff” Sam said with a lopsided smile before he put the phone in his pocket. Seconds later he had disappeared into the bar.

Sharon kept the car running and was scanning the parking lot as she waited for her brother to come out of the bar. Her hands itched to touch the handle of the two glocks in her shoulder holster that she was hiding with a jacket but she kept her hands low on the steering wheel as the AC pumped into the silence of the car. It felt like forever but soon she spotted Kevin as he walked out of the bar carefully looked around the parking lot before spotting her and the car.

Kevin’s bulky frame moved slowly towards her but she knew the way her brother moved was all for show because he moved with a deadly grace whenever he didn't have to hide who and what he was. His dark hair was longer than the last time they had seen each other and he was lucky Aunt Jackie didn’t see it because she would have tutted and sat him down in a kitchen chair for a proper haircut that would have gotten unruly curly locks out of his eyes. The door opened and he sat down with a grumbled “Mind telling me what the hell is going on and where our grandmother is?”

“Why, hello to you to brother” Sharon said as she pulled back into traffic before pulling out one of the cubes from the center console and tossing it to him. She knew that he knew how those worked as he raised an eyebrow at her before pressing the buttons and activating it. “As to what is going on...it’s a shit sandwich and you are about to be read into it. Glove compartment, press 741918 and take out the tablet. Swipe and use the same code and follow the instructions on the screen to tie the tablet to you personally. Then start reading, we have about an hour maybe a little more driving time for you to begin reading.”

“This isn’t SHIELD tech,” Kevin said from beside her as he stared at the car and the tablet in his hand.

“Nope it’s Avenger tech. JARVIS inform Steve we’re on the way back.”

“Of course Ms. Carter” JARVIS said and Sharon smirked when Kevin jumped slightly when the car spoke back to her.
“JARVIS this is Kevin Carter my brother so you may can drop the Ms. Carter part with him” Sharon said and chuckled at the incredulous look on her brother’s face.

“Of course Sharon. Steve says he’s got you on tracking and will have dinner ready for when you get home” JARVIS said and Sharon knew she scared her brother more by the soft smile she didn’t hide than the roll of her eyes. The roll of the eyes was for the tracking part but the soft smile was for both the tracking and dinner.

“So Avengers?” Kevin asked and she knew he wouldn’t start reading the files on the tablet till she answered some of his questions.

“Yes, Avengers and yes the Steve that JARVIS was talking about is Captain America” Sharon said.

“And he is making dinner for when you get home?” Kevin asked and she knew there was no way to tell her brother that Steve was her mate without him going all over protective on her ass. Older overprotective brother mode for Kevin was just short of Fury in full paranoia mode on a good day.

‘Guess I’ll have to bite this in the butt now, joy this is going to be fun’ she thought sarcastically before she took a deep breath. ‘Yes he is making dinner for us when we get home because Steve is the romantic type and as one of my mates he is trying to make a good impression on you since you are my older brother and you will play nice.”

“Your mate is Captain America? Where is Grandma in all of this and why did Fury activate the code 99?” Kevin asked.

“Yes he is my mate and no we don’t know who our third is before you ask. As for Grandma she is at Avenger Tower as of a little over a week ago and will stay there for the foreseeable future. Steve and I met just as the Avenger’s emergency protocols were activated and I was moved in position to protect Tony’s mate Pepper who was in town. Once we realized we were mates we made the decision to move Grandma as a precaution. I’m glad I did after I got read into what the Avengers are now investigating, I activated the Code 99 and told Uncle Nick where he could shove it. Now no more questions, read the files, you will understand my reasoning not even half way through the damn things” Sharon said as she turned her attention back to the road and was secretly relieved when Kevin dropped it and started reading.

Michael sighed as he leaned back and rubbed his eyes as he stared at the newest set of x-rays that he had ordered for Skye after they brought her into the Medbay after her seizure. He had ordered them on a hunch and now he had impossible theory that he been thinking on all morning now confirmed, well at least proof he might not be just losing his damn mind with old age. Jackie came into the small office he had claimed to work in carrying two cups of coffee, handing one of them as she stood next
to his chair. “Is that what I think it is?” she asked taking a drink from her own coffee.

“It is and here is the blood work after the seizure” he said handing her the sheets of paper. Jackie put down her coffee before taking the papers and only made a hmm sound as she looked over the results. That is what he loved about his Jackie, always thinking outside the box with him and completely unflappable in the face of what should be impossible. “I want to call Bruce and see if he can get me in touch with the geneticist friend he has looking into Skye because honestly it’s one thing to have a wild ass theory it’s another to have it possibly proven” Michael said as took a drink of the coffee.

“Possibly? Michael you and I are looking at the proof right now” Jackie said giving him a look that told him to quit being a fool. “You just solved the mystery of that young girl’s condition, this time she might not have to suffer so much.”

“Actually that might not be the case but honestly I’m not sure” Michael said with a sigh as he pulled out his phone. He waited a moment as the new phone that he had been issued by Skye yesterday connected to Bruce, the mild mannered scientist that was also the giant green rage monster that was the Hulk.

“Hello Michael, how’s Skye?” Bruce asked.

“Still resting after this morning’s seizure but I called because I need a consult and I think I need to speak directly with the geneticist you said you had helping you with Skye’s blood work. Would both of you be available for a video conference?” Michael asked before taking another drink of his coffee.

“Of course, I’ll get a hold of Helen and I’ll call you right back once I have her on the line” Bruce said before disconnecting the call. Michael grabbed his tablet and with Jackie in tow they both headed to one of the smaller conference rooms but not before walking by the Medbay. Glancing inside he saw the small family sitting around Skye’s bed except Maria who was in the bed with her mate holding her. The sight broke his heart because he would be soon coming in there to give them news he wished he wasn’t going to have to.

Bruce’s timing was perfect as his tablet beeped with the incoming video call as they walked into one of the rooms. “Hold on Bruce” Michael said as he connected the cord that Natasha had shown him last night to his tablet to put it up on the large plasma screen in the room. “There you are” Michael said as he started loading up test results from the thumbdrive onto his tablet and queued them up.

“Hello Michael and Jackie, I’d like you to meet Dr. Helen Cho she works for Stark Industries and is a very good friend of myself and my mates. Helen I’d like you to meet Dr. Michael Harper and one of his mates Jackie who is an RN” Bruce said making introductions for them to the asian doctor who
looked incredibly young, or he was just feeling his age.

“It is nice to meet you two” Dr. Cho said as she yawned behind her hand and it was for that reason he realized that it was dark behind Helen and that she was clearly in a robe.

“It’s nice to meet you as well and I’m sorry for waking you but I have a theory and I think I found the proof.” he said shrugging and Michael knew he wasn’t hiding the uncertainty from his face.

“But you are uncertain if what you think is even possible or is so very left field you are questioning your sanity. It’s alright Dr. Harper left field is my specialty since working with Tony for a few years and now Bruce as well. Also don’t worry about waking me up, I’m a lab rat” she said waving off his concern about waking her.

“Please call us Michael and Jackie, I have a funny feeling we’ll be talking quite often now” Michael said dryly and watched Bruce smirk at him.

“Then call me Helen, please. Now what is your theory?” Helen asked.

“Since it seems to be middle of the night for you I am guessing you are unaware that Skye ended up having a seizure early this morning our time, right now she is stable though still unconscious. I had a chance to exam Skye last night for the first time and ordered a battery of tests to see if there was any damage done while she was being transported here from Bruce’s care. Last night’s results though gave me the beginning of my theory and the results after her seizure makes me think I’ve found the proof” Michael said as he sent the results in order onto the joint conference server.

“First set of results is from right before Skye woke up and had to be transported here. In them you see that Skye had elevated white blood cell count that was believe to be from an infection from her injuries. Also there are her x-rays from her shoulder, ribs, hips and legs” he said waiting for Helen to start going through the test results and saw her nod.

“The second set of results is from last night when I started to treat her. The white blood cell count is still high now starting to show signs of abnormalities but look at the second set of x-rays” Michael said and watched as both Bruce and Helen’s eyes widened.

“Now the third set of results from this morning after Skye’s seizure...The white blood count is high with definite signs of abnormal white blood cells that mean only a resurgence of her leukemia but look at her third set of x-rays…” Michael said but stopped as he heard Bruce.
“Holy shit, the breaks are all healed, even the old damage to her right hip” Bruce said as he gave voice to the one thing that was impossible because all of Skye’s breaks should have taken months to heal, especially her legs but what was more insane was that the visible damage to Skye’s right hip that had plagued her from day one since Bruce started treating her was all gone.

“Exactly. Now my theory is this, Skye has always had some latent fast healing ability but whenever it goes active for lack of better word it also shows up as leukemia in her blood work. Age 14 she is almost beaten to death and then they find the first instance of leukemia, her second occurrence was after she had been in a car accident and now once again being beaten half to death it all of sudden is making an appearance just as her body has healed itself months before it should be able to” Michael said.

“But if that’s the case then why hasn’t her body healed the damage to her hip or her scaring on her back before now?” Bruce asked playing devil’s advocate.

“Actually I think that is because of whatever Hyde gave her when she was captured” Helen said as she stood and walked off screen for a moment as the sounds of her searching a desk for something came over her end of the video call before she walked back on screen and plugged a flash drive into her tablet. “I’ve been trying to break down the compound that Maria had captured from the raid she did on the bug soldiers compound. I think that is what Hyde injected into Skye because it is a more potent form of Extremis that Pepper was exposed to months ago but this has been rendered “safe” now as well as a mix of other chemicals that I am only just beginning to understand what they do” Helen said as she dropped her latest research into the call and he pulled it up.

“So Skye was exposed to Extremis and other chemicals to do what? Make her a super solider? And what about Loki’s staff? We can’t forget the Joker in the deck in all of this” Tony Stark said as he made his presence known as he walked further into the room. “Sorry Bruce I had come to see you about dinner for tonight and overheard.”

“That’s fine Tony not like you wouldn’t have seen this on the server later” Bruce said waving it off. “Tony meet Dr. Michael Harper and one of his mates Jackie they’re currently treating Skye. Michael and Jackie meet Tony Stark one of my mates the other Pepper is probably downstairs getting ready for dinner” Bruce said before shaking his head. “Tony is right though we are forgetting about the Joker in the deck, that is most likely how Phil somehow survived his encounter with Loki” Bruce said as he took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes.

“What if Loki’s staff unlocked something that was genetic? This Phil is the father of Skye right? What if the healing ability is something genetic?” Helen asked.
“But that doesn’t explain the resurgence of Skye’s leukemia symptoms” Michael said and watched as Tony’s face went ashen and he realized that the man hadn’t been in the room during that part of the conversation.

“Could be something genetic that was woken up first when Skye was kidnapped as a child but whatever she was given then was primitive and only unlocked part of its ability or strength just like her pain response mutation. But now Skye was given a new cocktail of god knows what and exposed to this scepter and it unlocked everything fully or super charged it but it takes time for her body to do the healing. With Phil the scepter might have woken whatever he passed on to Skye but since he wasn’t exposed to what Skye was it affects him differently” Jackie said next to him and as he listened it made the most sense.

“I agree that is most likely the case. Could you get me a sample of both parents blood so I can compare it to Skye and see if I can find our needle in the haystack?” Helen asked as she tapped a few notes into her tablet.

“We can do that. Now what do I do about the possible leukemia? Do we treat it or see if it goes away? Skye’s past doctors treating it might have actually made it last longer because chemo would be seen as a foreign invader and it could have activated to ‘destroy’ the chemo and only was able to ‘destroy’ it after numerous treatments of the same cocktail that her body could have learned to get rid of it” Michael said before taking a drink of his now cold coffee and grimacing at the taste.

“Or the leukemia is the cost of her body healing itself from such traumas” Bruce said and he grimaced.

“Sounds like either way could be wrong and deadly. Bruce your records say the mom is a match for bone marrow, why don’t you just do the transplant and see what happens” Helen asked.

“Because we would still need to do either chemo or radiation before it while putting her on immunosuppressants at the same time” Michael said answering for Bruce.

“Michael is right on that. Michael I think the only thing you can do is tell them what we found, the theories and then give them the options and let them decide” Bruce said sighing his shoulders slumping and Michael saw as Tony reached out and placed a comforting hand on his mate’s shoulder.

“Sounds as good as a plan as any. I’ll talk to them once she wakes up” Michael said.
Sharon sighed as she pulled into the neighborhood that Tony’s D.C. house was in and watched as the car that had been following them for the last mile and half followed behind her. Kevin looked up from his reading and she could tell that his temper was just simmering under the surface from what he had read so far and she didn’t want to be there when he read the report she now had in their with her suspicions that was confirmed by Fury the night she activated the Code 99 protocols.

“JARVIS inform Steve, I got a 26” Sharon said and she watched out of the corner of her eye as Kevin unbuckled leaning forward and pulling out a Firestar out of the small of his back.

“Sharon I got you on tracking and I see it as well, thermal shows it’s just one person. Want to let them in and we can question them?” Steve said as his voice came over the comm system in the car.

“I guess, Kevin and I got up close. Can you cover high?” Sharon asked as she continued driving and making the final turn onto the street that led to Tony’s driveway.

“Yeah I got one of the rifles from the armory I’ll be in our window, lead them in” Steve said as she turned onto the driveway.

“Got it,” Sharon said as tossed a set of ear comms from her pocket at Kevin before pulling up to the house’s circular driveway and spun the car 180 degrees to face the oncoming car. Instantly both her and Kevin were out of their doors and using them for cover as the car pulled up behind them. The windows were tinted and she couldn’t see the driver but they cut off the engine. “Driver hands on the wheel and stay where you are!” she yelled out as both her and Kevin moved towards the vehicle. Kevin nodded as he got a clear shot at the driver side window and she opened the door to the passenger side finger on the trigger.

“Stand down! Damn it Uncle Nick are you trying to get shot” she growled as she took her finger off the trigger and flipped on the safety. Sharon watched as Kevin holstered his own weapon before pulling open the driver side door and pulling Nick out before deckin him. Rolling her eyes she turned as Steve opened the front door wearing an apron and carrying an old fashioned bolt action sniper rifle that if she was seeing correctly it was a M1903. Tony really did stock the armories if he put the sniper rifle Steve was more comfortable with in it.

“Good thing I made extra” Steve said as she walked up to him and gave him a quick peck on the lips.

“Kevin if you are done being pissed off at him, bring Uncle Nick inside so we can eat then get to work” Sharon called back turning Steve around after taking his rifle and was right that it was a M1903 but Tony had updated the scope. “Tony really did stock the armory with the Avengers in
mind” Sharon said as she followed Steve into the kitchen and propped the rifle against the wall as she rolled her eyes at the arguing coming from the front entryway.

“That sounds fun” Steve said smirking as he started dishing up plates of spaghetti.

“Oh totally” Sharon snarked rolling her eyes at her mate as she leaned on the counter next to him and watched as he just smirked wider at her. “You are impossible.”

“Of course I am. Now go drag those two to a bathroom and wash up” Steve said quickly pecking her on the lips before shooing her out of his kitchen. ‘At least he can cook, I can only burn water’ Sharon said as she walked into the entryway and grabbed both Nick and Kevin by the ears, much to their vocal protests and pulled them towards the downstairs bathroom.

Dinner had been a tense and quiet affair as Kevin shot dirty looks at Nick every so often as he continued to read the files she had given him access to. The only difference had been the occasional glare her brother shot at Steve that her mate only answered with one of his ‘good ol’ american boy’ smiles that did funny things to her libido. Nick sat quietly eating and though they had to work after dinner, she had been raised that dinner was family time and not to be mixed with work talk.

“Follow me” Steve said as he stood and cleared the plates before disappearing down a hallway. Getting up she followed Steve and heard the soft footfalls behind her that told her both Nick and Kevin were at least following them. Steve stopped in front what looked like a linen closet but she watched as he moved some towels out of the way and put his hand inside before a click was heard and the shelves of towels slid to the side and he walked inside the closet. “JARVIS take us downstairs please.”

“Of course Steve” JARVIS answered after they had all walked into the cleverly hidden elevator that then started dropping.

“Tony wasn’t joking when he said there was more to the house” Sharon snarked and Steve gave her a tight smile.

“No he wasn’t. The underground complex as far as I can tell spans the whole property. Tasha’s paranoia is rubbing off on him” Steve said as the door opened and he walked out and led the way down a corridor.

“Welcome to Avenger base D.C. aka ‘Camelot’ my lords and my lady” JARVIS said and Sharon raised an eyebrow at Steve.
“Apparently Tony one night drunkenly named the bases, D.C. is ‘Camelot’ while the Italian base is ‘Pinocchio’. I didn’t look past that since I was more interested in exploring and seeing just what Tony had down here” Steve said as he led them into a large conference type room that had a full wall video screen, communication equipment and plenty of computers to use if needed.

“Well he didn’t spare an expense if all of them are like this. Alright first thing first Nick I want to get in touch with the other legacies and you will give me access to them” Sharon said sitting down in one of the chairs. “And before you argue we have Carter, Falsworth, Koenig, Stark, Rogers and Phillips on board to my plan.”

“How do you have Phillips? Even I don’t know who the Phillips heir is” Fury said and she would have enjoyed his cluelessness if it wasn’t something so important.

“Haven’t read or watched our latest conference calls have you?” Sharon asked but shook her head and continued “Felix Blake is the Phillips heir we only found it out when Tori and Izzy investigated him using Skye’s program. We also have his daughter, who he thought missing who is Tasha and Clint’s third and their two children. It’s been quite the family reunion this last week. Now I want to know who the other heirs are and if they are SHIELD because we want to get them looked at and cleared so we can bring them in. We need bodies and we need them yesterday because even with the Carters and the Avengers we are spread pretty damn thin at the moment. Now, I know you have a sure fire and secure way of getting a hold of Jones so we can start with calling him.”

“You don’t demand much do you?” Nick said glaring at her with his one eye but she met his stare and didn’t flinch.

“Knock it off Nick, you screwed the pooch by being too damn paranoid. Now call Tripp” Kevin said from next to Nick.

“Apparently not paranoid enough not to see this sooner” Nick said as he opened up his jacket and pulled out a flash drive and tossing it at Sharon as he also pulled out a phone and started typing into it. “That is all the information I have on all the legacies. Since the Phillips legacy is intact the only unknown is Barnes but it was Peggy’s belief that it died when he fell from the train. At least she wasn’t able to track down any children born from the women he slept with.”

“It did” Steve said his voice distant and when Sharon looked over to her mate she saw that his eyes were seeing something that wasn’t really there. Glaring at Nick she reached over and squeezed Steve’s hand for a moment in support as he blinked slowly before taking a deep breath, bringing himself back to the present. She let go of his hand and plugged in the flashdrive that Nick had just tossed at her and was surprised as a video call rang in from an unknown source.
“You might want to answer that since it’s your cousin,” Nick smirked at her as she quickly went to connect the call to the screens and smiled when the face of Antoine Gabriel Nicholas Jones Triplet Fury aka Tripp came up on the screen.

“Hello Sharon, my old man said you wanted to see me?” he asked as he sat in a dark room other than the glow from his computer screen and the tell-tell blue light of one of the cubes.

“I’ll give you old man” she heard Nick grumble and could see the confusion on Steve’s face as he tried to piece it together.

“Yes I did, first let me introduce you to Steve Rogers aka Captain America one of my mates. Steve meet Antoine Gabriel Nicholas Jones Triplet Fury aka Tripp to friends and family and grandson of Gabe Jones” Sharon said and watched as it clicked for Steve that Tripp was also Fury’s son.

“It’s an honor to meet you, your grandfather was a good man” Steve said giving Tripp one of his patented good ol’ boy smiles.

“The honor is mine, Captain. Now what’s up because I doubt you made dad give you a way to talk to me over a secure line to just tell me you are now bonded” Tripp said sitting back in his chair.

“You’re right and I’m guessing you don’t know what is going on since you are asking me about it” Sharon said and watched as Kevin glared at Nick and if looks could kill their uncle would be 6ft under and pushing daisies right now.

A buzzing sound from the screen got her attention back from glaring at her Uncle as she heard Tripp curse before answering his phone. “Tripp,” he said before pausing listening to the caller. “Alright be right there,” he said before hanging up. “Gotta go, we got a sighting on our target.”

“Alright but Tripp this is a rule of six type of situation so be careful” Sharon said stopping him before he could hang up the call.

“When is it not a rule of six type of situation with our family but I’ll be careful” Tripp said cutting the connection.
“So that was the Jones heir, who are the others?” Steve asked from beside her trying to distract her from her thoughts that were starting to turn dark. Shaking her head she pulled up the files and loaded them up on the server as she started reading.

“Are you fucking with me?” Sharon asked as she read just who the heirs were and received a blank look from Nick. “Damn it Nick the Dugan heir has been missing for over the last week. JARVIS, call Tasha and tell her I need to speak to her, Maria and Skye.”

“What do you mean she’s missing she should have been picked up when the Avenger’s Kaleidoscope protocols got activated” Nick said his face now showing a hint of worry.

“Jane is the Dugan heir?” Steve asked sceptical because well it was Dum Dum Dugan.

“No Darcy her assistant that is practically the only family Jane has is the Dugan heir. As for the others only Dernier and Morita for sure are aware they are legacies the others the files say that it’s unclear if they know just who they are” Sharon said but was interrupted as Natasha called her tablet and she quickly answered putting it up on the video screen.

“That look isn’t good, what is it now?” Maria said as the call connected.

“Latest information on the other legacies that Nick just gave me is now on the server. But we have an issue all the heirs are as safe as they can be except Dugan and you will see why when you see who it is. Have you two been able to track Jane and Darcy down?” Sharon asked and watched as both Natasha and Maria both started cursing as they read the information.

“No we haven’t been able to make contact with Darcy or Jane. We hoped that when they didn’t respond to the activation it was because they were neck deep in science and that they’d eventually come up for air. They travel to much in the field and their usual labs are empty. Latest update I had from Darcy on Jane’s whereabouts was that they were heading to England to look into some anomalies but that was the last I heard from them” Maria said as she pinched the bridge of her nose.

“SHIELD 626?” Tasha asked as she looked at something on her own tablet in her hands.

“They are the closest and if anyone can find those two when they go off the grid it would be Izzy” Maria said with a shrug as she went back to reading the files, Sharon watched as her eyes widened and five bucks said she got to the Juniper file. “Nick are you sure on Juniper?”
“Oh I’m sure, Peggy tracked it down years ago after she met Phil. Resemblance between a young Phil with hair and Junior is damn near uncanny” Nick said smirking.

“Ok let me get this straight Darcy Lewis is the Dugan heir and Phil is the Juniper heir? Do they even have a damn clue?” Maria asked pissed and the smirk vanished from Nick’s face because a pissed off Maria was scary and in Sharon’s opinion only topped by a pissed off Grandma Peggy or pissed off Grandma Angie.

“From my understanding no those two are unaware. Dugan’s son died on a mission in Russia while his wife was pregnant with Darcy. From what I understood from Dugan before he died was that it was agreed that he wouldn’t mention SHIELD or anything related to it to Darcy in exchange for her mother letting him see her.”

“As for Juniper, Peggy thought that line died in the war as well but when she met a young Phil Coulson she dug down into his family tree and found the connection. Peggy was sure that Phil had no clue but it was decided not to tell him years ago by Peggy after your parents murder. She didn’t want him knowing paint an even larger target on him so instead she took over his and Mel’s training personally.”

“Fine I guess I’ll get to tell Phil” Maria said.

“Make sure Mel is there, he is liable to go into shock” Tasha quipped next to Maria.

“What about the other legacies?” Maria asked ignoring Natasha other than a slight roll of her eyes.

“Morita and Dernier know who they are and the heirs are mates. Morita works for Stark Industries in South Korea and Dernier is the Director of Operations for the Treehouse. The Pinkerton heir is your Mr. Hunter and I doubt he knows since Pinky told Dugan that his wife thought he was just a regular soldier for Her Majesty and though when his dementia made him have loose lips no one believed him. Sawyer was hard to track but his heir definitely doesn’t know because Happy became quite the drunk after the war and ended up driving a car into a tree before his daughter was born” Nick said and she knew that he purposely left off Jones and by the look of it Maria had caught on as well.

“And Jones?” she asked.

“Gabe had one daughter who is my wife and our son Tripp knows who he is since he grew up with the Carters. Hence why these two hooligans call me Uncle Nick” Nick said before pointing at her
and Kevin who just smirked back at Nick with his shit eating grin.

“Does he know to at least watch his six or did you leave your own damn son clueless?” Maria bit back and Sharon sat back quietly because she hadn’t seen Maria this much on edge in a long time. Sharon looked towards Natasha and raised an eyebrow in question as Nick and Maria continued to argue over the legacy heirs and playing with fire. She felt her phone vibrate as she reached into her pocket and checked it under cover of the table.

<Skye’s in the Medbay unconscious, had a seizure this morning> came from Tasha and she bit back a curse because that explained it. <Give it another moment then I’ll put an end to it but this blow up was a long time coming between these two...And Fury deserves it to be honest.>

<No shit sherlock> she texted back to Tasha and watched as the assassins lips twitched for a moment.

“Alright you two enough. We need a plan to let these other legacies know who they are and start getting them checked out so we can add them to the roster of allies. We will check them but we need someone to go make contact with them” Tasha said ending the bickering between Nick and Maria and bringing the meeting back to order.

“Kevin how would you like to come out of retirement?” Maria asked.

“Thank you for asking but I already figured I was going to be dragged kicking and screaming out of it anyways, so sure why the hell not” Kevin snarked.

“Good I’ll get you reactivated and cut you orders. Officially you are going to be traveling making contact with some of your sources to touch base now that you are active again. Sharon if there is anywhere you need Kevin to go let me know and I’ll add them to the orders” Maria said. “Tasha can you get Tori and Izzy on the line, we need 626 to go track down Jane and Darcy as well as tell Hunter just who he is.”

“Who am I?” Hunter asked with a smirk as some of the HUB group came up onto the screen next to Maria and Tasha. “Damn it that face is never good news for me” he grumbled as dropped onto a couch that seemed to be in an office as he must have registered the look on Maria’s face.

“Lance Percival Hunter, you dropped the Percival when you enlisted in the SAS but you are the heir to the Pinkerton legacy through your mother” Maria deadpanned and they all watch the shock cover
Hunter’s face.

“Oh fuck me, you mean granddad’s stories of being a commando and spy were real? We all thought it was the dementia” Hunter exclaimed as he scrubbed at his face.

“They were real enough. Information is on the server now but we called because we need to activate 626 to England to track down Jane Foster, Thor’s mate on earth and her assistant Darcy Lewis who just happens to be the Dugan heir and has not a bloody clue who she is” Maria said before taking a deep breath. “Jane is a scientist and though Darcy isn’t a scientist she has her hands full keeping Jane out of trouble. Think FitzSimmons level of intelligence but none of the social skills and even more absent minded.”

“Oh joy” Izzy said dryly as she looked at her tablet before pulling out her phone. “Wheels up in twenty grab your gear” she said before disappearing herself off the screen. A moment later she returned with a large black bag on her back.

“Izzy there is an Avenger base just a few minutes south of Biggin Hill airport, call Tony when you are up in the air but I’m sure we can use it since we need to do this as far under the radar as we can” Maria said after checking if there was any facilities near by for the 626 team to use.

“Got it, call the old man to see if I can have a party at the house while he is away” Izzy quipped before kissing Tori quite thoroughly and shooting a cheeky grin at the screen as she left.

“We got news of our own, Blake’s looking into it now with Monty but Ward’s body is missing from our cold storage. Our theory is that his soulmate mark would have given away who his mate was” Tori said after shaking her head as if she was trying to clear it.

“Damn it” Nick said as he smacked his fist on the table. “Should have ordered Monty to do the damn autopsy then and there but I had to get back to damn D.C. because of an issue with another project.”

“Please tell me Insight hit a damn snag and you were finally able to put it on pause till we could investigate it” Maria said.

“Not a big enough snag to get it paused and the council is damn near adamant it launches on time. It’s the only thing they all agree on anymore” Nick said leaning back in his chair as he closed his eye, a look of worry flashing across his features and Sharon got a very bad feeling about what Insight was.
“I know and that’s what scares me the most” Maria said softly into the silence of the call as everyone took in that information and wondered what the hell ‘Insight’ was to have both Nick and Maria spooked.

Angie sighed and let her shoulders relax as she walked into their joint quarters after another long day of playing guard to both Hunter and Idaho as they recovered in medical. It wasn’t a bad assignment being that she got to spend the day pretty much with Kara even though they couldn’t show any outright signs of affection but Hunter and Idaho weren’t that bad so they spent most of the day joking around with the two or playing cards killing time. She even got to spend sometime with Monty even though they had to pretend not to know each other so all in all the assignment wasn’t that bad at all.

She heard the click of the door before a pair of strong arms circled her waist as warm lips kissed and nipped at her neck from behind. Angie leaned back her body and felt her weight being taken on by her soft but well muscled mate who had already proven their first night together that she could easily lift her without breaking a sweat. Hmm she hummed as her eyes closed and as she felt lips continue to ghost over the skin of her neck. Angie let herself loose herself in the sensation of their still forming touch bond as she felt herself being guided further into their quarters.

“I’ve wanted to do that all damn day among other things...” Kara whispered softly into her ear before another nip to her ear had her knees go weak much to the amusement of her mate as Kara chuckled. Angie felt the hands on her hip turn her around just as the edge of the bed hit the back of her knees and she opened her eyes to lose herself in a pair of dark brown almost black eyes that were filled with a now very familiar heat as they stared into her own hazel eyes.

“I’ve wanted you to do that all damn day as well” she quipped back softly as she placed a hand on Kara’s cheek pulling her closer for a kiss that started out soft but quickly started turning into more. They quickly started pulling on each others clothes as they fell back onto the bed, her dress shirt was pulled from her jeans and Kara’s hands ghosted up her abs before moving over to her hips again gripping them just where her two soulmarks were.

“It will be fine love, I promise we will keep her safe” Kara whispered placing a soft kiss on her hip where their third’s mark was on Angie. It was something that they were both worried about because their third’s marks on them could mean only one thing, she would be hurt and in trouble when they would meet her. ‘My chest feels like it’s on fire and there are two of you now, which isn’t a totally bad thing but other than that I’m just peachy now that you are here’ was wrapped around her right hip while ‘Don’t come closer I’m armed!’ was wrapped around Kara’s right hip as well.

Two soulmarks, they had a third they were yet to find and she hopped it would be easier to recognize their third then it was for Angie and Kara to recognize each other. ‘Lift on three...one, two, three’ was her first words to Kara and since they were focused on moving Hunter out of the truck she didn’t really pay much attention when Kara had said ‘Damn it he’s heavy’ back to her. The whole day she had been on edge and neither of them had put two and two together to realize who the other
was to them. Angie had written off her nerves as her worry and paranoia from the Code 99 she had received hours earlier. It had taken them till that evening when Kara had volunteered to show her to a guest room for them to figure it out when their hands had brushed for only a split second and they had both gasped at the contact.

“I know we will, I’m just worried with everything that is going on…” Angie sighed as she started running her fingers through Kara’s hair but they were interrupted when her phone started ringing with the tone she set for Izzy. “That’s not going to be good” Angie said as she pulled her phone out of her back pocket and hit the speaker.

“What’s up boss?” she asked and had to bite back a chuckle when Kara dropped her head onto her stomach with a muffled groan.

“Wheels up in twenty grab your gear” Izzy said before hanging up the call.
“Still hasn’t woken up?” Laura asked as she came in the room carrying a tray of sandwiches followed by Tasha carrying a tray holding a carafe that was probably filled with coffee which meant the two jars on top were the sugar and milk for the coffee.

“No, she stirred a little bit in her sleep but hasn’t woken up yet. Michael tells us though that is normal and it’s best to let her wake on her own when her body is ready” Maria said before looking back to the sleeping form of her tiny mate. Skye looked so small in the hospital bed and though she knew it was a trick of the lighting looked paler than normal in it as well.

“Come and eat Maria” Laura said as she touched Maria’s shoulder gently and gave it a squeeze. “You need to keep your strength up for Skye, you two are linked now and you need to take care of yourself as well now.”

“I know, I just…” Maria started but felt the lump in her throat as she fought down her emotions as she looked at her tiny mate and remembered it had only been hours before that she had been asking Phil for permission to ask Skye to marry her. It was a silly notion because in this country they couldn’t legally marry but she had always been a traditionalist, even before her years in the Marine Corps. “It was just this morning before this all happened that I had asked Phil for permission to ask Skye to marry me” Maria said softly fighting back the tears in her eyes.

“What?!” both Mel and Tasha asked surprised and Maria chuckled despite herself at their shocked faces.

“You two need hearing aids?” Maria quipped and smirked at the death glares she received from the two older women. She knew she was playing with fire but couldn’t stop herself because for a moment or so the worry and fear that had been gripping her heart wasn’t there.

“Phil didn’t tell me about that” Mel finally said rolling her eyes but smiling softly towards Maria finally. “But Maria know that we consider you our daughter already so if you two don’t want to go through the circus a wedding will be you don’t have to.”

“I know but you know me, I’m a traditionalist just like Phil. Always have been and I’d like to at least ask Skye to marry me and then we can decide together if a wedding is what we want to go through with” Maria said before slowly standing up and feeling her body protesting getting up from the chair as she walked over to the little table in the corner of the room that Tasha was setting up the meal at.
“Where is Phil anyways?” Tasha asked as she handed Maria a cup of coffee just the way she liked it.

“Currently yelling at Fury by the feelings from our bond and fanboying over the fact he’s related to a Howling Commando” Mel said dryly before taking a bite of a sandwich.

“So you told him or just let him read the insane file?” Tasha asked Maria.

“Let him read the file, broke him for a few minutes till Mel slapped that back of his head then exclaimed he was going to chew Fury a new one before storming out of here” Maria said chuckling and heard Mel chuckle as well from the memory.

“Well not like Fury doesn’t have it coming, after this mess is all over and cleaned up we really need to consider restructuring SHIELD. There is only so much that one man can watch and with someone like Fury in charge he doesn’t share well with others…” Tasha said grimacing.

“Agreed when this mess is over, I think the legacies need to decide what to do with SHIELD” Maria said with a sigh because if Fury fought the changes she knew that he would lose the support of the legacies and the Avengers. Her last thought for a moment shocked her as she realized that in her mind it was that he would lose the support and not they meaning them as the heads of SHIELD. When was it that she started thinking of herself more an Avenger than an agent of SHIELD?

“Maria are you okay?” Mel asked her searching her eyes in the way she use to when she had first became the other woman’s rookie.

“I’m okay promise. Just lost in my own thoughts” Maria said as she finished her sandwich and took another drink of the coffee letting the warmth wash away her jumbled thoughts.

“Trying to think of something for the proposal?” Laura asked her and she knew the woman was giving her an out in not having to talk about what was going on her mind.

“Among other things, but yes mainly about the proposal. I already have the ring. Just need to figure out how and where to do it but it’s not like we can go anywhere. As it was our first ‘date night’ was at the tower and though I wouldn’t do anything about that night differently but I want to give Skye much more than that” Maria said and trying to hide the blush she felt at the thoughts of that night behind her coffee cup as she took another drink.
“Oh I bet you wouldn’t do anything differently about that night” Tasha teased her and she knew that she failed hiding her blush when Mel snorted.

“Maria it’s fine, I might be Skye’s mother but it doesn’t mean I don’t know what you two do when you are alone. Remember Bobbi blew that out of the water with her comments at the Fridge” Mel said her tone dry and yet lightly teasing her at the same time.

“What did Bobbi say at the Fridge?” Tasha asked in one of her over the top ‘I’m a gossipy airhead’ type of voices that made Maria groan just by the tone alone. Add in the fact she knew what Mel was about to say and she groaned again because she was never going to live this down with these two and Bobbi around.

“Oh something about being very vocal and forgetting to engage soundproofing protocols on their room the night before” Mel said as her eyes swam with barely suppressed mirth and Maria dropped her head on the edge of the table as everyone laughed.

“I’m never going to live that down am I?” Maria asked the floor as the laughter finally subsided.

“Oops” Mel and Tasha said at the same time and she groaned again.

“Alright back to this proposal. Are you wanting to go the traditional route of romantic dinner and the ring? Or are you thinking something else?” Laura asked and Maria shot her a thankful look since she changed the subject for her and received a small nod in response.

“I’m not sure. I already did the romantic dinner and dancing for our first date night and she enjoyed it, but as I said we were stuck at the tower. We are once again stuck here unless something changes, no offence” Maria said as she sat back up and looked towards Laura and Tasha.

“None taken. We got stars and romantic sunsets but not much else” Tasha said with a thoughtful look. “Well there is the main room in guest house two. It has a large whirlpool tub, king size bed and best part of all….soundproofing” Tasha said smirking.

“Going to kill Bobbi” Maria grumbled causing the women to laugh and she laughed with them. “Alright so romantic bath and ask her? That won’t be possible for a while with those casts.”

“Maybe not something you can do right away but maybe wait till she gets those casts off?” Laura
asks her and Maria thinks for a moment about trying to do any of the things she wants to do with and to Skye with her hurt the way she was right now. Maybe it would be better if she waited for Skye to heal a little more before asking her to marry her.

“I guess it can wait till she gets better, it certainly would be easier to plan if she was healed and not limited to the wheelchair which I know for a fact she hates with a passion. When the time comes will you all help me plan it if we are still here?” Maria asks and is both happy and relieved when the three women nod their assent.

A warm hand held her own and the skin to skin contact brought her closer to the surface of consciousness as she floated on just the edge. She could tip either way, back into the oblivion of sleep or towards the warm worried presence that was holding her hand gently. Skye didn’t understand why someone would be worried for her at first but then the last few months slowly came back to her. Realizing that the worried feeling could only be coming from Maria, her mate she pushed past the fogginess of her mind and with a firm grip sent her mate the love she felt for her. A gasp could be heard and she can feel Maria move closer to her as another hand is placed gently on her cheek.

“Please tell me you at least got the license plate of that bus?” Skye moaned as she opened her eyes to overly bright lights.

“Phil the lights and call Michael and Jackie” she heard her mother say before the lights dimmed for her and she could hear the steady low sound of her father talking to someone on the phone. Turning her head to her right she looked into Maria’s blue eyes that were holding back tears, another squeeze of Maria’s hand and more love being sent through the bond had the tension Maria had in her shoulders disappear.

“Nope sorry, totally missed it” Maria said softly teasing but her lips were curling up in a ghost of a smile. This was their thing, just like her parents called each other idiots, Maria and Skye joked about getting hit by busses after waking up from an injury. It had been her that had been injured all the times but she could feel Maria take an almost resigned sense of comfort in the words.

“You would be a smart ass” she teases back her hand tightening on Maria’s again letting her know she was okay. They would be okay, they were both too stubborn for it to be any other way for them. Skye pulled on Maria’s hand pulling her closer and her mate must have felt her intentions because the hand on her cheek combed back into her hair just above her ear as their lips met briefly. Skye wanted more and Maria chuckled above her as their lips parted but she watched as Maria’s blue eyes flicked to her left reminding her that the parentals were in the room.

“Takes one to know one sweetheart” was whispered against her lips before her mate gave her another gentle peck just as the doors opened and they all looked up to see Michael and Jackie come walking into the room.
“There is my favorite patient. How are you feeling Skye?” Michael asked her but the way he walked, the way his voice was and the attempt of humor on his face made Skye realize he wasn’t going to have good news. The way she grew up you learned to read body language, facial expressions and tones of voice as if it were second nature because it sometimes was the only way you survived certain foster homes...not to mention the situations she had gotten herself into before being picked up by SHIELD. She knew Maria picked up her surging emotions of fear and worry when her mate’s hand tightened on her own before feelings of love increased over the bond.

“It’s back isn’t it?” Skye asked not mincing words on this topic, she had always been blunt and faced this head on and she wasn’t going to change that now. Fear shot through the bond from Maria, followed by an overwhelming sense of determination and love. Skye sent reassurance back to Maria, she wasn’t going anywhere if she had her way about it because she finally had a family and a home. She had even more of a reason to fight back that she ever had before because the woman to her right was her everything, and she wanted the future they had started talking about just the night before? How long had she been out this time from her seizure?

Skye looked towards her left to her parents and she gave them a gentle smile because she could clearly see the fear in their eyes. They cared about her, she knew that as much as she watched them looking at her. It was then that she saw that her parent’s bond had strengthened once again or more likely continued to repair itself from whatever had destroyed it. Their bond recovering was one of the things she had hoped would happen once she realized she had been right with her instincts and that they were bonded. She didn’t know two people who didn’t deserve it more, to have a second chance to let their love take hold.

“It is and it isn’t” Michael said finally, knocking her out of her thoughts on her parents as she raised her eyebrow at him. “We have a theory about it, everyone grab a seat. Jackie can you queue up everything on the screen?” Michael asked and everyone went to grab seats. Her father sat down on a chair and pulled her mother into his lap wrapping his arms around her in support and comfort and the sight made her happy. Skye scooted over on the bed and pulled Maria down next to her, she might be facing this head on but it didn’t mean she didn’t need Maria’s presence to keep her anchored or that she didn’t need to anchor her mate in return.

“Alright by the dimmed lights, I’m guessing you’re just a little bit light sensitive at the moment?” Michael asked her and she nodded her head.

“It’s normal after a seizure for me, it won’t be so bad in an hour or so. How long was I out this time?” she asked feeling it as Maria’s thumb started running itself over her knuckles.

“Just a few hours, dinner should be ready soon. I talked with Bruce and the geneticist Dr. Helen Cho that he has been helping him look at your blood work” Michael said but Skye felt Maria’s
“Maria?” Skye asked looking towards her mate.

“Dr. Helen Cho is the heir to the Morita legacy. Just found out this afternoon when Sharon made Fury give up the rest of the information since we needed to see who we had as an ally in all of this. But she is also the leader in her field, if anyone can figure out anything about your blood it be her. She currently works for Stark Industries but does side jobs occasionally for SHIELD” Maria said before turning to Michael. “The theory?”

“The theory is that Skye's cancer isn't cancer in the traditional sense. Every instance of the cancer was found after a severe traumatic injury that Skye suffered. First instance after almost being beaten to death but records indicate they didn’t see the cancer till almost a week later and after she suffered a major seizure. Second instance after the car crash...”

Skye snorted then wanted to kick herself in the ass as she felt Maria’s questioning eyebrow before she even looked over to meet her mates blue eyes. This was something she didn’t talk about, the time between the end of her first round of cancer and the ending up in the hospital for the second round of the cancer. “Not quite a car crash but continue” Skye finally said as she looked back towards Michael.

“Skye I need to know how you were hurt it might be important” Michael said and she felt Maria’s worry next to her.

“I was already hurt before the crash, just let the nice officers and doctors think my injuries came from the crash that left my car wrapped around the tree” Skye said closing her eyes as she remembered that night. It had been raining as she fled from her drunk boyfriend after he had come home early from being laid-off again and had decided to take out his frustration on her. She felt the fear of that night as if she was there all over again because Randy had a gun and a temper. He also had a brother on the police force that covered up for him so knew to keep her mouth shut, even before the visit she had received from his brother.

Maria slipped one arm behind her shoulders and Skye didn’t hesitate to move into Maria’s embrace as Skye fought mentally to push away the memory. “Shh sweetheart, I got you” Maria whispered to her and sent her love and strength over the bond. Taking a deep breath she was surprised when her ribs didn’t burn with the strain but figured it was her freaky pain control.

“I’m going to take a guess and all you need to do is nod Skye but the reason you ended up in the hospital both times were from similar situations” Michael asked her gently from where he sat at the
foot of the bed. Taking another deep breath she nodded against Maria’s chest as her mate’s arms tightened around her again, holding her close and the love she felt through the bond was beating back her inner demons. “Alright do you need a moment?”

Did she need a moment? Skye asked herself that question and was surprised to realize that no she didn’t need it. With Maria holding her and the unconditional love and support she was feeling for her slightly older mate through the bond she was surprised that she didn’t need the moment. Yes the memory was horrible and yes eventually she might actually have to talk about it, along with everything else in her past but the pain from the memory all of a sudden was that of a distant memory not something that could hurt her again because Maria was there and nothing could hurt her when her mate was there. “No, please continue” Skye said sending her thanks back to her mate over the bond earning her a kiss to the top of her head.

“Alright. Second instance almost followed the same pattern. You were severely injured and then a week or so later the cancer symptoms returned after another major seizure. Now this time, severely injured a week or so later you have a seizure and the blood work is returning back showing signs of the cancer” Michael said looking to her and Maria.

“So I get hurt badly, a week later have a seizure and all of sudden I have cancer again? But what about the time I met Maria and the injuries I took fighting an enhanced super soldier?” Skye asked trying to follow where Michael was going with this but she did see the pattern.

“Yes, but what you don’t know is that after every seizure the injuries you had healed faster for some reason but the doctors always wrote it off as you finally responding to treatments. As for the those two times we think it wasn’t severe enough of an injury to give you a seizure and bring the cancer like symptoms but you still healed extremely fast both times” Michael said.

“But you aren’t writing it off?” Maria asked as Jackie started putting up x-rays that Skye assumed was hers on the screen that she could see multiple clear breaks.

“No I’m not, I can’t with the proof we got to prove the theory in a sense. First set of x-rays on the screen are the ones Bruce ordered when you first woke up, we can clearly see the breaks in your legs and ribs as well as the damage done to your right hip and shoulders. At this time your white blood cell count was elevated but only enough to show a possible infection in your system” Michael said before Jackie put another set of x-rays on the screen.

“Now the second set of x-rays are from last night. We are starting to see some remodeling of the bones and the damage to your hip and shoulders isn’t as bad as the first set of x-rays. This is twentyfour hours later give or take a little bit, but the healing shown is at least a couple weeks worth of healing” Michael said as he pointed out the differences in the two sets of x-rays.
“So I do have some form of super healing?” Skye asked shocked.

"We think whatever was done to you this time when Hyde experimented on you has kick started it even more but yes it's a form of super healing" Michael told her as Jackie put up a new set of x-rays that showed no damage.

"These were taken right after your seizure this morning, I ordered them to see if my theory was right but also to make sure you didn't hurt yourself worse during the seizure. As you can see the breaks to your legs and ribs are healed as well as the damage to your shoulders. Your right hip though as far as I can tell is now completely healed, you don't even show the damage from the multiple dislocations. As far as we can tell you shouldn't have any issues with your hip ever again" Michael told her and she knew she was staring at him shocked, she could feel Maria's overwhelming sense of shock, then elation at the news, then worry just as everything hit home.

"So I'm completely healed but wouldn't that mean the cancer would be gone?" Skye asked trying to push through her shock and as she tilted her head she could see her father's mouth open wide and her mother's eyes were open wide as well. 'Always wondered what they looked like shocked guess that's it' she thought to herself shaking her head at the wayward thought. Maria's amusement echoed her own as her mate probably guessed where her thoughts had been going just moments before by following her line of sight.

"We think your white blood cells going abnormal and elevated is the evidence or by product of your super healing. You've always had this ability but just never to this degree before now. What we don't know is if your body will reset the abnormal white blood cells on its own or if the cancer is the price your body pays for the super healing."

"So it's cancer but might not be cancer and you are unsure if you should start the aggressive chemo regimens of the past or hold off and see what happens?" Skye asked finally following fully what Michael was telling her as she finally pushed past the shock.

"Yes it's your decision ultimately what we do but I'd like to hold off another week and see where your blood work is then and go from there" he said before standing up and stretching. "Talk it over we will bring dinner back down for you all and then we can start removing the casts and bandages.”

Michael left leaving them to stare at the still visible x-rays on the screen that showed her body without any of the trauma it had been dealt by years of physical abuse. This super healing though only healed the physical trauma of the abuse but she knew if she closed her eyes she could relive every last part of it, the mental scars still there just below her skin. Skye felt Maria’s arms tighten around her again and she lets herself bury her face in her mates chest as long fingers start running
“Quarter for your thoughts?” Maria finally asks her and she hears a snort from her father as he realizes that her mate was using one of his sayings. She feels it through the bond more than sees Maria’s smirk towards her father as she lays there thinking through everything she had just been told. It was insane what she had just been told but it shouldn’t surprise her as much as she finds herself being in that moment, it was almost part and parcel in the insanity that was her life.

‘Also you might not like what we find, you need to be ready for that’ her mother had told her that fateful day when she had unknowingly given her parents an all access pass into the hell that had been her life. Did she like everything that they had found out? No, but she would do it all over in a heartbeat because she now had Maria, her parents and the insanely complex family that were the people here with them and those now around the world. Crazy scientist torturing her and using her as a guinea pig and cancer that might not be cancer be damned, she’d do it all again if she got this in her life every time.

Taking a deep breath she looked up into the blue eyes of Maria and realizes that Maria in that moment was purposely not sending her anything over the bond, letting her work through her thoughts and emotions without influencing her with the bond. Sitting up and scooting up on the bed she kissed Maria gently on the lips letting her mate know in that moment how much she loves her. Maria had been the light in the storm for her since they met and she hoped one day she’d be able to help her mate back.

“Thank you my love” Skye says softly and she knows that Maria knows she means it about everything that was between them in that moment. Letting herself to lay back into Maria’s arms she looks to her parents that look at her with both love and fear in their eyes. The fear isn’t because of what she now was or was becoming but the fear a parent faces when there is a chance they may lose their child to something that can’t fight. Her parents had already lost her once twenty three years ago and she knew now that the loss had almost destroyed them but she wouldn’t give up without a fight not with their unconditional love to back her in this fight.

“It will be alright, I’ve fought this twice on my own…” she said and saw the pain of that admission cross her parents faces before she smiled at both of them softly “but now I have you my parents and my mate in my corner to fight with me this time if it comes to it.”

Maria watched as the last cast was removed from her mate’s legs and with that she realized that she would be able to move forward tonight with her wish to propose to Skye. She tries to hide that excitement and nervousness that she feels from her mate but is unsuccessful when Skye turns around in her arms and arches her eyebrow up in an almost perfect imitation of her mother. It’s a fight for a moment but she finally lets her amusement at that simple act flood the bond and she feels Skye’s confusion at her emotions.
‘Good let her be confused so I can surprise her’ she thinks as she catches Mel’s eyes across the room and while Skye is distracted as Michael and Jackie start removing the bandages on Skye’s upper legs showing unblemished skin that further proves the doctors theories, Maria drops her right hand to the side of the bed and starts signing to Mel rapidly. <Remember our conversation from this afternoon?>

<Of course, oh!> Mel signs back with a slight widening of her eyes and then a smirk. <Want me to get Tasha and Laura to arrange it for now? Do you have the ring with you?>

<Yes, please. My mother’s ring is in my bag, top right pocket.> Maria signs.

<How long have you been carrying it around with you?> Mel asks her and Maria has to hide the blush as she softly kisses the side of Skye’s neck as she signs back.

<Since the day after we arrived at the tower. I almost proposed the night of our first date but held off because I wanted to give her more before I asked but now I don’t want to wait another day.> Maria signed before having to finally move off the bed so Michael and Jackie could start working on the bandages on Skye’s torso.

Mel didn’t ask her anymore questions just pulled out her phone and started texting Tasha and Laura as Phil caught her eyes and she realized he caught the whole exchange as she smiled softly to her and nodded.

<Your chariot awaits on top. Room is all set up for you two. Candles, strawberries with chocolate sauce, and we decided to move all your things from the BUS to the room, it’s yours for the stay to use. Your mother’s ring is in the bedside table on the right. Also tablet on the bed is connected to the sound system for the room, if you want to play music follow the instructions...Also might want to follow the instructions on how to do the soundproofing...> Maria bit back a groan at the last comment from Tasha but was overall excited about what she had read. It was an hour later and they were finally allowed to leave the Medbay after another round of bloodwork for Skye but also for Phil and Mel so the medical team could use it as a base to make comparisons against.

“G’night you two. Your father and I have the first watch for tonight” Mel said as she quickly kissed their cheeks before she subtly pulled Phil with her towards the main control room that was just passed the elevator.

“Watch?” Skye asked her as they entered the elevator.

“Yes, right now the HUB field team; Izzy, Angie and Kara are in England right now trying to track
down Jane Foster and her intern Darcy Lewis, since they never responded when the Avengers Kaleidoscope protocols were activated. We are starting to call that team SHIELD 626 while the BUS will remain SHIELD 616. We also now have both of the properties here tied into one security center and at least two people will stay awake on site here or there to keep an eye out” Maria said leaning against the wall and pulling Skye by the elastic of the pair of pajama bottoms she had arrived in the Medbay in, towards her.

“And your chaotic emotions earlier?” Skye finally asked her as they were inches apart looking into each others eyes. Maria knew this was coming and she let her amusement into her eyes as she smiled softly to her mate before leaning down almost touching Skye’s lips with her own.

“I’d tell you but I’d have to kill you” she teased pecking Skye’s lips as the doors to the elevator opened to the ground level of the Barn.

“Did you really just go all spy games, James Bond on me?” Skye groaned as she dropped her head to Maria’s chest. Maria couldn’t help but laugh and let her mischievous side out for a moment as she turned Skye around and moved them out of the elevator and out of the Barn towards the golf cart that was waiting for them. “Love I can walk to the BUS it’s just a short walk, we don’t need the cart” Skye said as Maria got behind the wheel.

“Not going to the BUS, get in” Maria said and she watched as Skye gave her a look. Her tiny mate trying to figure out what she was up to and Maria fought not to give away anything over the bond or by her face as she waited out Skye’s scrutiny before she rolled her eyes and got into the golf cart. Maria leaned over and kissed her mate on the cheek before releasing the breaks and heading towards the back side of the property where she had been told the guest house was.

It was a short drive but a minute hadn’t passed before Skye scooted closer to her on the seat and leaned into Maria’s body. She sensed Skye was a little bit tired but she hoped she could wake up her mate up, just a bit with what she had planned in her head. They pulled up to the guest house and Maria parked the golf cart before she quickly jumped out and ran to the other side and took Skye’s hand in her own and pulling her mate up the porch stairs.

A sudden case of the nerves hit Maria when they reached the front door, in a perfect world where there was no constant struggle between good and evil, this could have been their home that Maria was taking her mate to for the first time. The urge to pretend even for just one night that there wasn’t anything life or death going on filled her and without hesitation Maria scooped Skye up into her arms bridal style, earning herself a squeak and giggled “Maria put me down.”

“Nope, not happening” Maria said as she opened the door and entered the house with Skye in her arms as she kicked the door shut behind them before she walked up the stairs and down the hall to the only open doorway at the end of the hallway. A small gasp escaped her throat but it was small
compared to the one Skye let out when she saw the room in all its candle lighted glory. There weren’t hundreds of candles like you would see in some overly done romcom but there were just enough strategically placed around the room just right to give light and still casts shadows.

“Maria when did you…” Skye started but stopped as she continued to stare around the room and Maria felt her mates wonder, nervousness, and her love through the bond.

“I had a little bit of help,” Maria said blushing remembering the teasing comments she had to endure not only from Tasha and Laura but from Mel as well.

“Do I even want to know with a blush like that?” Skye asks smirking from her arms and Maria tightens her arms around the tiny frame of her mate for a moment, before slowly lowering her feet to the ground.

“Probably not, but it’s worth it” Maria said letting her hand push aside a lock of hair behind Skye’s ear. “How about you start a bath so you can clean up from the casts, and I’ll be there in a moment to join you” Maria said her voice dropping low because it had been too long since she and Skye shared a moment like this with each other. Leaning down she captured soft lips with her own before pulling back and looking into chocolate brown orbs and seeing that pupils were already a little wide with desire.

“Better come in there after me” Skye said her voice raspy and Maria felt her mates desire for this and so much more as if it was her own. For all she knew it could be both of their emotions amplifying each others in that moment and it was taking a considerable amount of control not to pick Skye up and ravish her against the door, or a wall or even the bed right then and there.

“I’ll be there in a moment promise” Maria said and used her last bit of control to use her hands that were somehow on Skye’s hips to turn her mate towards the door that had to lead to the bathroom by the candle light that was flickering through the doorway. Skye disappeared through the doorway but not before walking away with a sway to her hips that had Maria practically vibrate with her need.

‘Get a grip on yourself Maria, do this right, she deserves this and so much more’ she chastises herself mentally before walking over to the tablet on the bed and engaging the soundproofing to the room. ‘Don’t want to forget that this time, they really wouldn’t let me live it down if I did this time’ Maria chuckles to herself as she walks over to her bags and finds her mp3 player and finding a certain playlist that she may have created in her more lonely hours missing Skye. Tieing it into the rooms speaker system she started the music on low as SIXX:A.M.- Stars started playing, first the song they first danced to.
Walking into the bathroom she already finds Skye in the tub surrounded by candlelight and covered in large bubbles that hide her mate's naked form from her. “Going to keep standing there and staring or are you going to get in here and join me?” Skye teases as she lifts a foot out of the water in a tantalizing show of bare wet skin before it sinks back into the water.

“Tease” Maria moans as she starts stripping out of her clothes.

“Not a tease if it’s a promise” Skye tells her as Maria steps into the large tub and moves closer to her mate. A handful of heartbeats pass between them as blue eyes meet brown before they move almost as one as their lips meet in a slow kiss that soon becomes more as Maria pins Skye against the edge of the tub. Hands move through the water before they find hips and pull the lower half of their bodies into each other as a moan escapes between kisses. A hiss of breath escapes Maria’s mouth as Skye starts playing with her always over sensitive nipples as her own mouth now starts to attack Skye’s neck kissing and nipping at other parts.

“Maria please” Skye says her voice breathy and needy as the touch part of their bond flares along with the emotional part that sends both of them into a frenzy of hungry kisses and touches. Maria’s right hand moved from her mate’s hip down between legs and as her fingers started to tease their way down past Skye’s clit to her entrance. Three fingers entered her mate without resistance as her thumb pressed against her mate’s clit with every movement of her wrist. “Fuck baby, please don’t stop” Skye moans before their lips meet in another heated kiss.

Her left hand slides along now smooth flesh of her mate’s hip and comes to rest over the soulmark that sits just above her hip now perfect, flawless and she feels a chaotic sense of emotions from her mate when she touches it. Gently her thumb strokes the mark as her fingers continue to move inside Skye and she has the urge to watch her mate ride her fingers to completion and the image in her head is almost her own undoing.

Carefully she begins to move their positions trying not to break contact and soon she is the one underneath Skye as her own bottom rests on a built in seat in the tub. Her mate must have figured out what she wanted because soon her legs are straddling Maria’s lap while fingers continue to work inside tightening muscles as she drives her mate to the edge. Skye has her right hand gripping Maria’s shoulder while her left scrapes across her breasts and comes to rest on her soulmark on Maria that is just above her heart.

Her hand tightens on Skye’s hip as she senses her mate is close and Maria is close as well, the feedback from the bond driving her almost insane with her own need to cum so she pushes harder and faster into Skye. “Maria, please. Oh light I’m cumming…” Skye gasps as her back arches and Maria swears it’s the most beautiful thing she has ever seen as her mate lets go and with that image in her head she starts to cum as well with her mate. Maria swears she sees stars as the orgasm rips through both of them, crests then recedes only to crest another three more times before she has to stop the movement of her hand because she can feel it as they are both about to pass out there in the
“Fuck me” Skye groans dropping her head in the crook of Maria’s neck and she can feel her mate's hot breath against her skin as she fights to catch her breath.

“I think that is what I just did” Maria quips softly as her head drops back onto the edge of the tub.

“Smart ass” Skye groans nipping her neck causing Maria to twitch her fingers that were still buried inside Skye causing her to moan and hiss at the same time. “Holy shit so sensitive” she says then hisses as Maria slowly moves her fingers out of Skye.

“I know, I can *feel* it but we should get out of this tub before we start turning into prunes. Can you move just yet?” Maria asks gently as her hand that had been inside her mate moments before starts rubbing along Skye’s spine.

“I think so if you quit doing that otherwise I’ll be asleep on top of you in this tub in minutes” Skye said as slowly sat up in Maria’s lap and moved to stand up. Maria let her hands slide to Skye’s waist holding her hips till she was sure the smaller woman could stand on her own before they both moved to get out of the tub. Pulling large fluffy towels off the rack she wrapped one around her mate then started drying off herself with the other.

As they entered the room she heard the opening notes of Xenia-Light Years playing and knew in that moment that this was it, as she pulled Skye into her arms after tossing their towels in a corner of the room. Maria started moving them slowly around the room, she was nervous but instead she tapped into the bond and felt the love that her and Skye had for each other to anchor her as she moved them to where the ring was hidden. She let the lyrics of the song be her proposal because light knew she’d probably choke it up with the emotions she was feeling in that moment from herself and Skye.

You know, just how to take me there

And I know, I would go anywhere

but when times become hard

and we're left with the scars

and we're all bent up

It's so good to let go and run into your arms

yeah it's just enough
So I'm counting on the stars to take me near or far

travel any day, light years to find you

anywhere you go, only to be close

believe me I will roam for light years to find you

light years to find you

You got every little bit of me

And I got this feeling it's meant to be

Not a word not a phrase

not a night not a day

could keep me away

I don't know where we'll go

what this ticket will hold

but that's okay

so I'm counting on the stars to take me near or far

travel any day, light years to find you

anywhere you go, only to be close

believe me I will roam for light years to find you

light years to find you

light years to find you

Just before the last verse and chorus could be sung they reached the bedside table and she spun Skye away from her and let go of her hand as she quickly opened the drawer finding the small square box. As Skye spun back to join her though Maria was already on one knee with the box in her hand. She felt Skye’s shock wash over her through the bond as Maria started singing the last part of the song.

“I have one condition alone in my head
Just one decision, I have no regrets
I've made my prediction to end up with you
runnin and runnin and runnin and runnin

Counting on the stars
to take me near, near or far,
so I'm counting on the stars to take me near or far
travel any day, light years to find you
anywhere you go, only to be close
believe me I will roam for light years to find you
light years to find you
light years to find you

The song ended and Maria felt Skye’s shock as it turned into wonderment and happiness as the realization of the moment fully hit her mate.

“Yes.”
They had arrived in London, England almost twelve hours ago and had hit a deadend in their investigation into the missing scientist Jane Foster and her intern Darcy Lewis it was like they had disappeared off the face of the Earth. Izzy said that actually was one possible theory since Jane Foster was a soulmate to Thor, God of Thunder and Prince of Asgard but that most likely the scientist and intern were off the grid either due to the Kaleidoscope protocols or more likely because they were so distracted by the science that they weren’t paying attention to the world around them. Apparently that was a common thing for SHIELD scientists and this wasn’t the first time Izzy was sent to go track down a wayward scientist.

The other option no one had said out loud but it was in everyone’s minds was that they could have been captured or dead but since they didn’t have a pissed off God of Thunder raining down hell on Earth they were hopeful that wasn’t the case. It wasn’t just Jane Foster they were looking for though, they were also looking for Darcy Lewis because she was the Dugan heir that had no damn clue who her family was and how much danger she potentially was in. Of course working for Jane Foster hadn’t been quite safe either from what she had read so light only knew what the two had gotten into now.

Angie watch the screens as JARVIS the AI for all Stark properties/Avenger bases searched traffic cameras, video surveillance cameras and news feeds with facial recognition software looking for the two missing women. At the moment it was all they had other than the original email that Darcy had sent Maria a few weeks ago that said they were going to London looking at anomalies but that was over a week ago and no one had heard a peep from them since. At this point they don’t even know if the women were still in London and she could hear Izzy and Kara debating behind her about widening the search to all of England.

She took a sip of the gourmet coffee that Tony had stocked in the Avenger base whose nickname apparently was “Neverland”. That had been something when they had arrived at the warehouse turned underground base to be greeted by JARVIS quoting one of her favorite childhood stories, Peter Pan by saying ‘Second star to the right and straight on till morning’ when they entered the main area of the base.

Angie had instantly responded back with her favorite line from the book to JARVIS ‘The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease for ever to be able to do it’, the quote had earned her a round of applause and a welcome to Neverland from the AI. Both Kara and Izzy had looked at her with raised eyebrows that caused her to blush before telling them “The quote was from the story of Peter Pan, I just quoted another line back to him.”

“Ms. Angie I might have found something” JARVIS said causing the two women behind her to stop debating instantly and pulling her out of her own thoughts.
“Pull it up JARVIS” she said watching the screen and was confused why JARVIS had flagged a news report about a man streaking Stonehenge of all places this morning. ‘Probably just a man having a midlife crisis and deciding to relive his frat boy days’ Angie thought to herself before she saw the mug shot of the man and she heard Izzy curse. ‘Or maybe not...’

“Son of a bitch,” Izzy said and Angie turned in the chair to look at her boss with a raised eyebrow as she pulled out her phone. “Tori why is Dr. Selvig in England when he should still be in the psyche ward we dropped him off at in Stockholm?”

“What do you mean he’s in England?” Tori asked over the phone as they heard typing over the line.

“Meaning the good doctor just streaked Stonehenge of all places this morning and is probably on his way to the local funny farm” Izzy said dryly.

“Oh for fuck’s sake Martinez was incompetent, senile or dirty as fuck, he sent two junior agents fresh out of the academy to investigate the doctor’s escape from the hospital three weeks ago” Tori said cursing and even Angie knew that wasn’t a good thing. “I’ll inform the others. Go pick him up, he is too dangerous to be left loose. Maybe he’s the reason Jane and Darcy went to England. He might be able to tell us something.”

“I hope so because we haven’t found jack shit, I’m good but we don’t even know where they were staying for me to even begin to trace their steps!” the frustration evident in Izzy’s voice as she threw up her hands. “Angie find out where they took him while Kara and I change into our damn monkey suits, so we can go play scary government agents.”

“On it Boss” she said as she started searching the news report. “JARVIS can you see if you find anything about where they took him?”

“Of course Ms. Angie.”

“Izzy quit whining about the suit and watch your six” Tori said ending the call earning a bark of laughter from Izzy as her and Kara walked out the door towards the rooms they had taken when arriving.

Skye felt the press of warm lips and hummed in appreciation as Maria kissed on her neck slowly waking her up. “I think this is my favorite way of waking up” she said softly running a hand through Maria’s hair realizing it was starting to get quite long.
“What is it? I can feel your inquisitiveness” Maria said against her neck as she nipped at a pulse point.

“I was just realizing your hair was getting long from when we first met and I’ve never seen with you with long hair so was wondering how you’d look with it” Skye said her voice going breathy as Maria kept kissing and sucking at her neck and her hands started to play with her breasts.

“Hmm..I can show you a picture but I usually keep it short, unless undercover, like it was during my time in the Marines. More practical and easy to maintain when I’m usually running around constantly” Maria said finally kissing up her neck then to her lips and capturing her lips in a deep kiss.

“Love not that I’m complaining….Oh god,” Skye said as Maria started nipping more insistently at her neck, moving lower as hands started to pinch at her already hardening nipples. Their love making over the last few hours had almost been non stop since they had entered the room last night and had reached an almost fevered pitch after Maria had proposed.

She knew she had been shocked speechless for a few moments when she had spun back from being twirled by Maria to find her hopelessly romantic mate down on one knee holding a ring box in her hands. They had talked about their future together but never really about weddings or marriage but she should have known her traditionalist of a mate would go this route. Skye had never really thought about getting married or have a wedding in the past, she honestly had avoided the thoughts because she was an orphan without a family but now that wasn’t true.

Now she had a family and friends that had become so much to her over the last few months that the depth of her feelings for everyone sometimes scared the shit out of the little orphan girl she once was. Her mind took in the words that Maria had started singing as the last lines of the song finished and they stared at each other. Maria’s blue eyes were so open filled with love and she could feel Maria’s love through their bond but also her mates nervousness. Skye had said the only thing she could have said in that moment because she realized it wasn’t just what Maria wanted, she wanted it as well.

A hiss of breath leaves between her teeth as Maria wrapped lips around an already aching nipple taking it into her mouth with just the hint of teeth that drove her wild. Skye felt her back arching trying to push more of her breast into Maria’s mouth as a hand continued down lower on her body. It had been like this all night, bringing each other to completion to only collapse and pass out for a bit before starting all over again. Fingers were just beginning to tease her clit as Maria’s phone started ringing with a priority call.

“Fucking radar, I swear to all that’s good and holy” Maria grumbled, causing Skye to laugh as her
mate dropped her face between her breasts. Reaching over she grabbed the phone from the bedside table and handed it down to Maria who glared at it before she answered switching it to speaker phone. “Fucking radar тетушка.”

“Sorry Maria, I wouldn’t call if I didn’t have to but apparently 626 just came across evidence that Selvig is in England” Tasha said and Skye could almost see the shrug that she was sure her тетушка would have given them. Skye felt Maria stiffen underneath her for a moment before her mate rolled off of her and sat up on the bed.

She could feel frustration, anger and shock through their bond at the news, but also as if her mate was warring with herself internally on what to do. Skye knew what her mate was feeling conflicted about, they were in the middle of spending time with each other after being apart, finding out she might be sick again yesterday and the proposal last night. Maria had told her from day one of their bond that she would always come first before her work and Skye felt the same way back about Maria but what they did was as much a part of them as each other. Her mate wouldn’t be the woman she was now without her job and Skye felt that the same could be said about her now as well.

‘Back to work’ she thought as she sent her love and understanding through the bond as she started to move around the room finding them clothes for the day. Maria shot her a small smile as her love came back through the bond, but soon the frustration was back as she ran her hands through her hair not to comb it but to pull it slightly.

“What do you mean in England? I had Tori and Izzy personally drop him in a psyche ward in STOCKHOLM after New York happened, man had a full breakdown from Loki’s mind control.”

“Tori is looking into it but apparently he escaped three weeks ago from the hospital and the schmuck in charge of the HUB before her sent two very junior agents to look into his escape. 626 is moving in to pick him up and see if they can learn anything from him” Tasha answered while Skye handed Maria a pair of clothes to put on and gave her a small smile. Her mate smiled back giving her left hand a gentle kiss before she started to dress herself.

“Alright Tasha we will be there in twenty minutes” Maria said ending the call. Skye felt a pull on her pants from behind as she was pulled backwards into the very warm and naked body of her mate. “I’m sorry.”

“None of that love” Skye said as she turned around in Maria’s arms and put her arms around her mate’s neck. “I knew what I was getting into the minute I decided to be an agent and this is such a large part of who you are as it is now a part of me and I would never make you choose.”
“You do know I would choose you if you did right?” Maria asked her and love and a bit of uncertainty came across the bond.

“I know and that is why I don’t ask. We will make this work love” Skye said before pulling her mate down for a kiss just as Maria’s phone started ringing a shrill ring that had her mate breaking off the kiss and diving for the phone on their bed.

“Hill.”

Darcy groaned as she slowly came to, taking stock of her pounding head. ‘Fuck I have really got to stop with the drinking games with the English frat boys, even though it’s fun watching them getting ‘pissed’’ she thought before her body started hurting as well. ‘What the hell did I do last night that I have a pounding headache and my body feeling like I let Thor toss me around?’ she thought as she opened her eyes and realized she wasn’t in her room but on the floor of the abandoned warehouse they had tracked the latest anomaly to.

‘Jane!!!’ she thought as pushed herself past the pain trying to sit up against one of the support pillars for the building as she looked to the spot where her sister in all but blood had just been a moment before talking to her. The last few moments finally flashed back into her mind as she remembered the anomaly that they had been tracking had spiked just as there was a bright flash and then no more Jane. Looking around she saw that there was no sign of her ‘intern’ Ian either but he had been farther away from Jane than she had been so she doubted he disappeared as well as Jane. ‘Nope probably ran off scared, told him shit got weird around us’ Darcy thought as she tried to think what to do.

‘Ugh I’m going to have to call the scary lady and hope she doesn’t kill me for losing Jane’ she thought as she pushed herself up farther and had to bite back a scream as her ribs began to protest the movement as she tried to get up to her feet and failed. Sitting down harder on her ass she was forced to take a more than a few moments for the pain in her ribs to at least lessen enough for her to attempt to make the call she needed to make. Pulling out a cell phone and her wallet from her jean pockets she bit back another groan as she pulled out a business card hidden behind her ID.

The business card she took out looked like any regular old business card but it had the Stark Industries logo on it and a woman’s name on it that definitely wasn’t any damn IT nerd like the card said she was. Nope the Maria Hill on the card that said she was the Head of Stark Industries Cyber Security Division, was really Maria Hill Deputy Director of SHIELD and the Avenger’s liaison to everything very James Bond and weird as shit.

Darcy wasn’t an Avenger but she was an Avenger’s mate “keeper” as Hill had put it to her as she watched over and protected Jane from the world and even sometimes from herself. Which meant that Maria Hill put the fear of god in her and drilled her in so many emergency protocols and spy shit that she wanted to yell back at the woman that she wasn’t an agent but it had been all for Jane. The absent minded, sweet, innocent, genius of a scientist had become a sister to her in everything but
blood and she was determined to protect her so she had bit her tongue and did what Hill told her to do.

Darcy almost wished for the days before she had become Jane’s intern and she got mixed up with aliens, Avengers and SHIELD but she was sure it was the weird shit that was going to lead her to her two mates so she took the chance and ran with it. ‘Damn sex better be mind blowing’ she thought thinking about her two unknown mates as she dialed the number and prayed the woman answered because it wasn’t her usual phone number she was calling from but a burner phone she had just been able to buy this morning after Jane had cannibalized their phones to fix or improve something on their equipment a few weeks ago.

“Hill” said a commanding voice on the other end and if Darcy hadn’t been slightly scared of the damn woman in question she’d be a puddle of goo on the floor just from the tone alone.

“It's Darcy, I think I’m going to need your help” Darcy said as she felt some of the tension in her muscles relax because whatever or whoever the woman was she had said to call no matter what if something happened and this was definitely something. Maria Hill was also one bad ass chick and knew she could handle this shit better than she could at the moment.

“Darcy, where are you and what happened? I activated Kaleidoscope over a week ago” Hill asked and though it was the no nonsense tone she came to know over the last year or so it also had something else in it that almost sounded like worry and relief all at the same time. ‘Wait did Hill just say she activated Kaleidoscope a week ago? Oh shit sticks she is going to kill me when she gets her hands on me.’

“Sorry Jane cannibalized our phones to fix some equipment when I was sleeping last week. Didn’t have time to get a replacement burner phone till this morning, which in hindsight should have gotten sooner but happy as hell I did get it this morning” Darcy groaned as she started scooting over to the cases on the floor a few feet away that held their equipment but also had her tazer.

“Darcy where are you and Jane? And are you to okay?” Hill asked and Darcy definitely heard the worry and concern in the woman’s voice this time.

“Abandoned warehouse in London off of Canal and Silvester, we were tracking anomalies that had similar readings to what happened in New Mexico. We got here, got our equipment out and were monitoring when it spiked suddenly. There was a bright light where Jane was and I woke up on the floor sore as hell a few minutes ago and Jane is gone” Darcy said as she took a deep breath and hissed through her teeth as she finally reached the equipment boxes and started shifting them trying to find her case for the tazer. She could hear Hill speaking to someone named Skye telling her to get a hold something called 626 and relay her location.
“Help is on the way, I had a team already in London looking for you two. How bad are you hurt?”

“I think I might have a few broken ribs and possibly a concussion since the room has decided it be a fine time to start spinning” Darcy finally said as she found the case with McTazy in it and turned it on hearing the comforting crackle as she tested it in the air.

“Alright stay there, help is on the way. Do you remember the codeword we set up for you?” Hill asked and there was definitely worry in her voice as she heard Hill relay on her end that something called 626 needed to get there fast since she was hurt and that they needed to activate something called 616 and that she was sorry but they didn’t really have a choice.

“Yeah I remember. Can you make them do it with the accent?” she quipped and then groaned as pain shot through her chest after she laughed at her own joke.

“Good, they are about twenty minutes from your location just sit tight and they will take care of you” Hill said and kept talking to her the worry never leaving her voice.

Izzy paused in buttoning up her dress shirt as her phone rang and she quickly answered it “Hey Skye find something for me?”

“Yeah we got a location on Darcy, abandoned warehouse off of Canal and Silvester she just made contact with Maria. Jane is missing and Darcy is injured” Skye told her as she started stripping the monkey suit off of her.

“JARVIS inform Kara and Angie I need them in full tactical gear, they have ten minutes” Izzy said as she started pulling on her tactical suit. “Any known hostiles?”

“Not that we are aware of but don’t take any risks” Skye answered.

“Wasn’t planning on it, tell Maria our eta is about twenty minutes” Izzy said as she finished strapping her weapons to her body and ran for the stairs. Taking the stairs two at a time she came out in a small room on the ground floor of the warehouse turned Avenger base. Kara and Angie were already there loading up one of the armoured SUVs that Tony had stored in the warehouse.

“What’s up boss?” Angie asked as she threw the medkit into the back along with what looked like
some goodies from the Avenger armoury.

“Get in, Darcy made contact. Skye still with me?” she asked the woman on her phone as she activated the GPS and pulled out of the warehouse as both Kara and Angie held onto the roof handles at the first sharp turn the GPS told her to take.

“Yeah still here, Maria is activating 616 so you will have more back up soon as well as FitzSimmons to do the science. I’ll try to keep you updated as I get information” Skye said over the phone as she paused and Izzy could hear the muffled talking of Maria in the background. “Maria says you need to get there fast, Darcy seems to have a concussion and is trying to keep her talking. Codeword is ‘Geronimo’, Maria says make sure you say that or you are liable to get tasered by Darcy and if you do the codeword with the british accent you will probably make Darcy’s day.”

“Skye any other injuries?” Angie asked from the backseat.

“Possible broken ribs but it could be more, according to Darcy she was thrown pretty far by whatever happened” Skye said as they took another right turn but Izzy was now on Canal and racing for the corner she needed.

“Alright Skye we are on Canal almost there going to drop into the Avenger Tactical net” Izzy said activating the new app they had just downloaded onto the phones this morning. It turned the phones into tactical radios off the group’s comm system that made it to where anyone in full tactical mode was live mic’d while anyone in the group anywhere could listen in.

“Radio check” Izzy called out as they got out of the SUV.

“Velma check,” Angie answered.

“33 check” Kara answered as they moved towards the door.

“Wedge formation since we don’t know what we are heading into. Keep your eyes open” Izzy ordered as she nodded to Angie to open the door as she clicked off the safety of her M4.

Angie blinked her eyes slowly as they entered the warehouse from outside, the interior is dark and it takes a moment for her eyes to adjust to the sudden change in lighting. She feels her mate to her right as they back up Izzy who takes point and she watches as Izzy starts sweeping the area for threats as Kara turns slightly watching their rear. Looking to the sides she sees abandoned machinery covered
in dust that looks was from years of sitting unused. The warehouse is massive and Darcy couldn’t tell Maria and Skye exactly where she was in the building and they didn’t want to call out to announce their presence incase there were hostiles in the building so it meant a slow methodical search unless they would find something that pointed them in the right direction.

Angie looks down and the floor is covered with dust and dirt and she could see the faint outline of three sets of shoes heading away from their position and only one large pair heading back out this way which raises questions but at least for now they know which way to head. Tapping Izzy on the shoulder she points down to the ground and watches as her boss takes in the footprints in the dirt as she grimaces and nods as she hand motions for Angie to show Kara. A moment later they are all moving, Angie keeping an eye on their flanks but also watching the footprints in the dirt leading them hopefully to where their injured charge was.

They move slowly as Kara and Izzy clear rooms to the left and right of the small hallway they are now walking down, making sure no one is hiding inside them ready to hit them from behind. Angie stays in the hallway as she glances up and down the hallway each time her boss and mate disappear into a room. A part of her wants to believe they are being overly paranoid but Uncle Nick always said it wasn’t paranoia if someone was really after you and the way the times were she couldn’t fault her boss and mate’s paranoia as they cleared every nook and cranny that was big enough for a small child to hide in.

It’s taking them forever to get to Darcy and a part of her wants to move forward without the two other women to get to her patient but knows she can’t, she has to trust that Maria could keep the intern alert and talking long enough for them to reach her. Soon they reach the end of the hallway and intersects with another hallway going in the opposite direction the footprints go one way but Angie can feel Izzy’s indecision if they should continue towards their charge or clear the rest of the building. Low mumbling that sounded like talking from the hallway that leads towards where Darcy should be seems to make her decision as she turns down the hallway towards the sounds.

Finally they came into another large room and the talking stopped as the young woman leaning against some equipment cases saw them. Darcy’s eyes swept over them before she brought up her arm holding what looked like a tazer. “Don’t come closer I’m armed!” Darcy said to Kara as Angie’s mate had moved closer into the room probably to clear the doorway behind the woman on the ground. That one sentence though was enough to make Kara freeze for a moment and shoot a shocked look back towards Angie but it was something so generic in their line of work that this might not be her, might not be their third.

“Geronimo” Izzy said from besides her in a British accent that had Darcy chuckling herself into a coughing fit.

“Son of a Bitch that hurts, they’re here thanks Hill I owe you one” Darcy said before hanging up the phone.
“33 go check out that back door,” Izzy said her voice returning to normal before she turned around and went back to hold position at the door they had come through. Angie dropped her bag next to Darcy as Kara continued further into the room following her orders and she could see determination cross Kara’s features because mate or not they had a job to do.

“I’m Velma, how are you feeling?” Angie said using her call sign since they were all live mic’d on the tactical net, but it must have been the right thing to say because Darcy’s mouth opened for a minute in shock then closed as she gave Angie a quick glance that made her feel like she had been stripped naked right then and there.

“My chest feels like it’s on fire and there are two of you now, which isn’t a totally bad thing but other than that I’m just peachy now that you are here” Darcy said giving her a saucy wink, that had Angie chuckling and she heard an exclamation from Kara over the radios as she started pulling out gear from the bag and started assessing her new mate’s condition.

“33 what’s wrong?” Izzy asked over the radio.

“Nothing boss but uh…I find it funny we are rescuing a damsels in distress” Kara said with emphasis over the radio’s on the last three words and Angie knew her mate was dropping the hint of what just occurred to their boss.

There was a long pause on the radio before she heard their boss groan. “Well it’s what we are good at apparently. Why don’t you help Velma with patching up our patient but stay on alert” Izzy ordered from her doorway and it wasn’t long before Kara was approaching them.

Angie attached an Oximeter to one of Darcy’s fingers as she pulled out her stethoscope to get a listen to Darcy’s chest…very ample chest…'Mind out of the gutter Angie, take care of her first then ogle once she’s stable’ she scolded herself.

“So I’m guessing this isn’t your first weird shit rodeo?” Kara asked their mate as she knelt down in the dirt and Angie groaned at her mate’s choice of words.

“Really that’s the first thing you say?” Angie asked throwing a glare at Kara but it didn’t hold for long as Darcy started chuckling at them, bringing their attention back to her as she started coughing. Kara started pulling out equipment from the medkit to rig up oxygen for their mate as her oxygen levels registered on the machine as dangerously low.
“Nope that’s good for her to ask, since it’s the reason I never went running and screaming from this weird shit rodeo as you put it” Darcy said dryly as Kara put an oxygen mask on their mate earning her a glare.

“So how long have you two known each other?” Darcy asked pulling down her mask after a minute only to have Kara put it back over her mouth.

“Mask on, we need to get you stabilized for transport. And to answer your question less than a week” Kara answered as she continued to scan the room with her right hand returning to her M4.

“Velma to Xena” Angie radioed after she finished checking over Darcy, they needed to get her back to their base so she could treat her broken ribs and concussion.

“Xena go ahead.”

“We need to get Taser back to base once I get her stable for transport, broken ribs and concussion confirmed” Angie said using the codename that Maria had given her newest mate as she pulled out the foldable backboard from her medkit as a worried look entered Kara’s eyes.

“Copy that, get her stabilized we need to take their equipment with us when we leave. 33 keep an eye on them while I go look for a way to move the SUV closer for loading. Athena do you copy?” Izzy said over their phones turned radios.

“Athena copies, Skyefall says that there is a loading dock on the north side of the building from what she can see from aerial photos of the area. 616 is prepping for departure, eta is about five hours once we take off” Maria said responding to them.

“Xena copies, do we have any overwatch?” Izzy asked after she had disappeared from the room and Angie shook her head and started working on getting a very not happy Darcy strapped to the backboard as she continued to listen to the radio in her ear.

Mel heard the cockpit door open up behind her and knew it was Maria before the woman had dropped down in the co-pilot seat next to her. She glanced over at her rookie turned daughter-in-law who was looking out into the darkening sky lost in thought as she absently touched the ring that was hanging from her dog tags. The ring was a new addition and she imagined it was from her daughter as the two women had disappeared to grab Maria’s gear back at the guest house. Mel decided to wait for Maria to work through her thoughts while she thought of everything they had learned, since it
seemed they might be going into another possible clusterfuck of a situation.

Lately it seemed like it was one thing after another and she wasn’t sure if it was because it was all stacking up against them or if she was just getting too old for this shit. It had been a very gut wrenching talk she had with Phil the night before that they realized that they might just need to start thinking about retirement or more of a support role now that they knew that their daughter was alive and might need them if she was really sick. Skye had Maria of course but if Skye needed a bone marrow transplant Mel or possibly her mother was her only hope and they as parents couldn’t risk something happening to doom their daughter. After this storm that was brewing in SHIELD blew over, both her and Phil would be talking to Maria about moving into support positions.

‘Shit I’ll have to call mom soon and tell her about Skye…that will be a fun conversation. “Hello mom I know I haven’t called in a while but you see Phil is alive despite what you heard through your contacts and apparently the daughter, your granddaughter we thought dead for the last 24 years is actually alive and might be sick and is in need of a bone marrow transplant. She also is now engaged and apparently has superpowers that we are just starting to understand.” Yeah that will go over well with my mother’ thought Mel as she sighed and tried to shake off the thoughts.

They had been in the air for just a little over five hours and it was now almost evening in England as they made their approach. She had been stuck in the cockpit for the full flight time since it had been decided before they even took off that the couldn’t risk the autopilot function that was maintained from SHIELD HQ. As it was they had already cloaked the BUS before they even left the Farm and headed for Avenger base-Neverland that was on the outskirts of London.

But even stuck in the cockpit for the flight she had been able to follow the discussions in the back of the plane and even contribute to them thanks to her tablet that let her video conference in. Mel knew exactly what they were walking into, Darcy the Dugan heir was injured but in high spirits since she had met her mates Angie and Kara when they went to go rescue her. That news had made Maria groan and grumble about there not being enough tylenol in the world for the headache that pairing was liable to make.

Jane was missing and it was something linked to Thor’s first visit to earth but FitzSimmons couldn’t remote access the woman’s equipment because apparently Jane had a healthy dose of paranoia when it comes to her work and made it impossible. Right now the science twins were in a conference call with their father while in their lab tinkering with their equipment being watched over by Bobbi. Maria had to send Bobbi in there since she was the only one liable to follow the conversation and able to make sure the three overenthusiastic scientist didn’t harm themselves or the plane while they sciened, especially after the after the small explosion that had almost blown a damn hole in her plane.

After Darcy had been stabilized Izzy and Kara had gone out and collected Dr. Selvig thankfully without too much of a hassle but the man was clearly a few fries short of a happy meal at the
moment. The twins had listened to his ramblings that were being recorded by JARVIS and relayed to
them in real time but even they were stumped saying that they might understand once they saw the
readings from Jane’s equipment.

“Did I do the right thing by making her stay?” Maria finally asked her as the woman seemed to snap
out of her thoughts as she turned to look at Mel.

“You did the right thing, Maria. She needs to rest and the medical team needed her there so they can
run the tests needed to figure out the answers we need for her condition. And before you ask, yes
you did the right thing coming as well since she was the one that told you to go. I know you will
always put her first before the job and she knows it as well but she also knows that if something
linked to Asgard is happening that you need to be in England. We need you here to call the shots and
be able to mobilize Avenger or SHIELD support if it’s needed” Mel said reaching over squeezing
Maria’s shoulder.

“You know me to well” Maria said dryly shooting her a thankful look all the same. “How far are we
out?”

“About to make our final approach” Mel said as she reached up and pressed the intercom system,
“lock it or lose it people.” Mel checked her instruments again and watched out of the corner of her
eyes as Maria strapped in to assist with the landing that hopefully would be easy, since according to
Tony and Izzy there was plenty of space behind the warehouse to land the BUS. The two had been
smirking when they said it and it had worried her but she had decided against questioning it and just
accepted it their word for it.

“There it is,” Maria said pointing to the right as Mel turned her head to look as well as she corrected
the flight profile once she saw the large neon pink square behind the warehouse. They were suppose
to land on the large pink square and wait for someone to come out of the warehouse to tow them
inside but looking at the warehouse there was no way the BUS was going to fit inside there,
especially since she knew Izzy’s Quinjet was inside as well. The BUS alone though would never be
able to fit lengthwise inside and would be hanging out of the warehouse by several feet.

“Um Maria,” Mel said but she could see that Maria had seen the problem as well. Maria pulled out
her phone and activate the speaker on it as Mel brought them around for another pass.

“Izzy have you and Tony forgotten how big this damn thing is?” Maria asked as the call connected
and before Izzy could even say anything.

“Nope just land the damn thing, just make sure you are on that damn square” Izzy said before she
ended the call.

“Well fuck, guess we land and deal with it once we are on the ground since we are low on fuel” Maria said rubbing her face.

“I’m smacking Izzy when we land right beside the head” Mel grumbled as she lined up the plane for the approach. “Drop the landing gear.”

“Landing gear is down” Maria said as she flipped the switch and watched the indicator light change.

“Activate hover on my mark. Three, two, one, mark” Mel said and felt the jolt as the BUS went from forward flight to hovering hundreds of feet in the air. It was the riskiest part of the landing because if the hover didn’t engage correctly they could drop like a lead weight from the air faster than she most likely could recover the plane.

“Hover engaged. 500 feet. 250 feet. 100 feet. 50 feet” Maria called out as they slowly lowered the BUS onto the pink square. Mel felt the plane bounce as she cut the engines and looked over to Maria who was smirking at her and she remembered it had been a very long time since her and Maria had done anything like this together.

“Not bad rookie, you’re a little rusty but I’ll let you blame it on the desk job you have” Mel teased as she got up from her seat only to fall back into it as the plane shook. “What the hell is that?” she asked but soon the view outside of her cockpit window answered it for her as she realized the BUS was being lowered underground. “I’m smacking Izzy” Mel said as she stood up again.

“Not going to stop you” Maria said holding up her hands in a sign of surrender.

“I’ve got this completely under control” Sif growled at her husband as he came up behind her throwing his hammer at a foe that was behind her as she pulled her sword out of the one in front of her.

“Is that why everything’s on fire wife?” Thor asked smirking at her before jumping in the air and landing a blow to the ground that knocked some of the Marauders around them temporarily on their asses.

“I told you, you don’t get to call me that till I meet our third, which you forgot to introduce me to properly back when we were both on Midgard” Sif said as she pulled out a dagger from her waist
and threw it behind Thor’s head taking out another Marauder that was about to hit him from behind.

“I’ve apologized for that a hundred times!!!” Thor whined next to her and she had to fight the urge to roll her eyes at him as she twisted her sword behind her and stabbed an attacker before twisting it again to stab another in front of her.

“I’m still mad at you, it was bad enough the Bifrost was destroyed and we couldn’t go back to her, but you went to Midgard AGAIN and didn’t think to bring her back with you when you brought back Loki!” Sif said decked an attacker with her shield. A part of her knew it wasn’t totally Thor’s fault but it was hard not to blame him when she had been denied the chance of meeting their third now twice.

At first she hadn’t know about Thor’s finding Jane to be their third, soulmarks in each of the nine realms were different. Here it was with the first touch of soulmates that a burning mark would appear in an intricate design, with different parts of the design for each of the partners in gray till they completed the bond and black once it was completed. The fact that their design was missing a section to be completed let them know they had a third all those years ago and Thor didn’t realize that when Jane had touched him after arriving on Midgard that his missing section had filled in and turned gray.

On Midgard though apparently the soulmark was the first words your mate said to you that were written in their hand on your body, which explained the strange words that had shown up on their bodies years ago that were written in a feminine and yet very untidy scrawl. At the time they didn’t know about the customs of Midgard’s soulmates because it had been thousand of years since anyone from Asgard had gone there. Now though they knew and Sif often found herself tracing the words on her right forearm as well as the words on Thor’s stomach wishing for the bond to complete.

Sif always wondered if Jane was marked in a similar fashion to Asgard’s soulmarks as well as the Midgard fashion just like they were. If Jane was marked in both ways she hoped that Odin would stop trying to stop them from bonding with their third. She knew if he kept pushing for them to forget Jane that it would push both her and Thor to leave Asgard for Midgard, possibly not to return, duty or no duty, throne or no throne.

That was something neither of them wanted to do but Odin was pushing their hand and though she felt some pain for not knowing their third, the pain Thor felt from the separation was more than enough for both of them. It was putting more of a strain on their already sometimes strained marriage, though her and Thor shared an emotional bond that let them deal with the many miscommunications of their marriage without their third to be a buffer between them and because of who they were it was harder for them to maintain the balance now. It was one thing that Odin just didn’t understand they needed Jane as much as they needed each other, human or not.

It seemed though that Thor and Jane shared a touch bond, so in theory all three of them would
should share both type of bonds once they all met and it was completed. That was both her and
Thor’s hope for their bond with Jane because it meant they were truly blessed by fate to share both
type of bonds. It would mean that no matter what, they would know what Jane was feeling both
emotionally and physically making it easier to protect her since she was the most vulnerable of the
three of them.

“And now your father is refusing us permission to leave to seek her out because one she is human
and two because we have to clean up this mess your brother left us in” Sif said the last part spinning
and kicking another attacker in the gut as she sliced his neck with her sword.

“He’s my father now when you are angry at him, but our king when I’m angry at him” Thor grunted
as he threw his hammer knocking down a group of attackers before calling it back to his hand.

“He is your father when he is still trying to counsel the both of us to forget about our third” Sif said
as she violently slammed her shield into one attackers face while she stabbed another in the groin
hearing him howl as he dropped to the ground in pain. It had not been a pleasing conversation
between them and Odin but at least Frigga was on their side of the matter. Frigga telling Odin just
because he didn’t like the fact that their third was a human wasn’t going to change that fact that she
was still their third.

“We will see her soon once we clear up this rabble, this should be the last of the lot” Thor said as the
Marauders all started cheering as booming footsteps could be heard coming towards the center of the
fight. They both stopped to look at each other as a large rock creature came stomping onto the
battlefield.

“All yours” Sif said smirking at her husband as she took a step back allowing him access to the foul
smelling creature but to be honest all the Marauders were foul smelling so there wasn’t much of
change in the scent around her.

“Have you come to surrender?” Thor asked the creature before it roared in his face. Sif watched as
her husband shrugged his large shoulders before he started spinning Mjølnir before hitting the
creature where she guessed it’s jaw would be and breaking it apart in one blow. “Anyone else?” he
asked as he looked around before sending her one of his cocky smirks.

‘Show off’ she thought rolling her eyes and hiding her smirk as the remaining Marauders all started to
surrender but that was when she felt a change from Thor in the bond. His face wasn’t showing
anything but she could feel his sudden distress through their bond that usually meant he was injured.
Glancing towards him she didn’t see any injury on him that would have caused him so much pain
but then she realized it wasn’t fully coming from him or her.
Sif’s mind flashed back onto the last time they were on Asgard only a few nights ago when they had gone to see her brother Heimdall. Ever since their first trip to Midgard it had been a nightly ritual to go ask her brother to check on Jane for them before they retired to their chambers. Heimdall told them of what Jane was doing and didn’t hold anything back from them, so they were able to experience everything including her pain and depression since they hadn’t returned for her. But Sif’s mind flashed back and she remembered that the convergence was happening, the alignment of the nine realms which made the barriers between the worlds so much weaker and she realized that Thor wasn’t feeling his pain or her pain, they were feeling Jane’s pain, together.

With one shared look she realized they had come to the same conclusion that Jane was in pain and it had to be excruciating if they were both feeling it despite none of them completing the three way bond. Sif could feel her mate’s indecision on what he should do, they were needing to secure the prisoners and get them back to Asgard for processing and trials but that was their royal responsibilities not their responsibility to each other and their human mate. Sif could feel the weight of the throne on both of their shoulders more in that moment than ever before and she knew this was why they were mates she understood and could help him bear that burden.

Walking over to her husband as the soldiers from Asgard’s army started rounding up the prisoners she gave him a small smile before pulling him down to her lips and kissed him, only saying “Go bring home our mate.”

“So are you still mad at me?” Izzy asked Mel as they leaned against the wall watching FitzSimmons as they tinkered with equipment and ran back and forth between screens talking a mile a minute. Watching the two warmed her heart because she could tell that Fitz was excited and happy in this moment despite everything else that was going on and anything that made him happy was good in her and Tori’s books. She wished their third was able to join them but it was impossible because she needed to stay running the investigation back into the personnel at the HUB. The latest list of confirmed dirty or suspected dirty agents made her skin want to crawl because it also explained how some missions they had been on had gone tits up.

“No but do that again and what I gave to you will seem like a love tap” Mel said from beside her dragging Izzy out of her thoughts.

“Duly noted. I am sorry Mel, it had just been too long since I pulled a prank on you and Phil...and I couldn’t resist. Especially since Tony gave me the damn idea when he did it to me” Izzy said shrugging her shoulders.

“Yeah just remember payback is a bitch Hartley” Mel said her lips slightly twitching before she went back to scanning the room. Izzy watched as something excited FitzSimmons and both her and Mel ran towards the two as all the equipment gave off a piercing wail. A piercing wail was never a good sign when it came to scientific equipment but they never made it to the twins before there was a
bright light and they were both thrown backwards into the wall they had been leaning against moments before.

She felt the air leave her lungs as she struggled to keep consciousness after hitting her head on the wall. Pushing past the pain and the overwhelming feeling of wanting to fall to sleep she pushed herself into a kneeling position as she brought her M4 up scanning the room. Mel next to her sat against the wall dazed but she also had her M4 up as they both seemed to spot Jane Foster standing where the bright light had originated from. The female scientist had her head back in a silent scream and she seemed to be surrounded by a red glow. Izzy shook her head trying to clear her vision as it went blurry from what was going to be an awesome concussion.

“Anyone report!” she heard Maria suddenly over the radio in her ear and realized that her hearing must have returned as she also now heard the scientist screaming in pain. It was a gut wrenching sound and Izzy heard herself as she grunted as she tried to move forward towards her but before she could move a few steps there was a loud crash as Thor came through the roof of the warehouse like it was so much tissue paper.

The God of Thunder looked towards his mate and scooped her up in his arms before there was another bright light that threw her back onto the ground. This time Izzy landed on her back and felt the air leave her lungs again, her hearing once again gone as she stared up at the tattered remains of what once was an intact roof. 'Fucking hell I'm getting too old for this shit' she thought just as darkness claimed her.
Chapter 39

Thor stood against the wall watching as his mother and the healers frantically worked on Jane and silently wished he understood half of what they were saying to each other but he knew though he was smart, his skills and strengths were in other areas. Sif would understand more than him but she was still off on Vanheim tending to the prisoners, once he had realized that he had sent a runner to go fetch her, she should be here more than him in this moment because it had been denied to her for so long. It was long past time for his wife to meet their very tiny human mate that would be the one to complete their souls and their bonding.

In the moment he felt Jane’s pain he had never felt the weight of the throne of Asgard and his duty to the nine realms more than any other time before on his shoulders and on his very soul. Thor knew that it wasn’t just him that felt that weight because not only were Sif and he linked emotionally and mentally, his wife had been the one to share the burden with him for over seven centuries. Hurried footsteps from the hallway preceded his wife as she came running into the doorway of the infirmary still dirty and sweaty from the battlefield.

A brief look of worry crossed her beautiful face but the feeling was almost overwhelming coming from across their bond. He locked eyes with her and knew that no matter what his father said that they would be completing the bond if it is what Jane wished because they were done denying their happiness. Pushing off the wall he moved along the wall keeping out of the way as he reached Sif and pulled her into his arms. ‘Protocols and appearances be damned’ he thought as he felt his wife momentarily stiffen in his arms before she relaxed and leaned into his strength.

A pair of familiar footsteps and low bickering voices in the hallway was heard just as Fandral and Volstagg came into the infirmary but as soon as they stepped into the room an alarm sounded followed by an explosion from the prison section of the palace. “Stay here with Mother and Jane” Thor said quickly to Sif as he quickly tightened his hold on her only to release it quickly before turning to Fandral and Volstagg “Let’s go see what our guests are doing.”

Loki sighed as he watched his brother almost get overwhelmed by the number of escaping prisoners and knew he was going to have to rescue Thor, again. He had stayed in the cell accepting his punishment for his role in what happened on Midgard, though he wasn’t fully in control of his actions at the time, Thanos and the scepter had made sure of that. At first the control was subtle and by the time he realized something was wrong it was far too late, he had already arrived on Midgard as a puppet.

Yes, he had been angry with Odin and his mother about being lied to his whole life about his parentage but he would never have attacked Midgard if he had been in full control of himself. Attacked Asgard or one of the other realms in his anger.. yes, but never Midgard. ‘Thor and Sif aren’t the only ones with a human mate’ he thought tracing the words on his left forearm that he kept hidden under an illusion. ‘No one understands. My anger and hate almost cost me everything I had in my life...And now I’m not even sure if I know what’s right or wrong anymore’ he read the words
on his arm and his heart hurt because his mate thought they were alone in their feelings and oh how he understood those feelings more than he wished he did.

Sighing Loki waved his hands over his simple clothing to replace it with his armor as he stepped through the barrier that was suppose to keep him in his cell. ‘Like that could really hold me’ Loki thought wryly as an ashandarei appeared in his hands and he started to clear the massive amount of attackers away from his brother and his companions. ‘Save Thor and two of the three witless wonders and then I’ll go back to my cell and stay there till Odin comes down to have another chat with me’ he thought as he spun the ashandarei around him as he cut, sliced and smashed opponents left and right.

He watched the shock on Thor’s face when he saw him outside of his cell and saw as his brother take a deep breath to steel himself before turning towards Loki to face him. Loki watched as one of the prisoners came up behind his brother and without thought he lifted his hand and magicked a throwing knife into his hand and threw it protecting his brother’s exposed back. They might not be brothers in the sense of blood but his time fighting the mind control and his time in the cell made him realize blood or not, Thor was his brother in every way that mattered to him.

Seeing the gobsmacked look on Thor’s face was almost worth the hit he missed to his ribs as it knocked the air out of his lungs as he used the ashandarei to catch his balance. Magicking another throwing knife he used it to stab his attacker in the throat before pulling it out and throwing it over Frandal’s shoulder at another escaped prisoner that was about to bash the man’s head in.

“Loki what are you doing?” Thor yelled at him over the noise of the battle as his brother made his way over to him.

“Saving your hide brother, like usual” he said smirking catching his breath as Thor covered him.

“How the hell did you get out of your cell?” Thor asked eyeing him before smashing some poor unfortunate idiots head in with Mjølnir.

“Like that cell could actually hold me you oaf” Loki snarked back ducking under a sword that had been taken away from one of the many dead guards as he knocked the attackers feet out from under him before using the blade of the ashandarei to stab the man in the chest.

“Then why haven’t you escaped before?” Thor asked confusion plainly written on his face as he pulled him back into the main corridor as a new company of the dungeon guards came running past them into the fray to suppress the rest of the escaping prisoners.
Loki looked to his brother and met his eyes as he thought of what he should say, they were brothers but it was so hard for him to trust anyone. Though from what he had heard through his mother’s visits Thor and Sif were at their wits end with Odin and his telling them to leave their third on Midgard. Maybe with Thor and Sif fighting with Odin over their human mate he can find a common ground and common ally in his hope to finally meet his own mate. Sighing he looked away as he magicked away his armor and weapons as he removed the illusion on his left forearm. He heard an intake of breath and looked up into his brother’s eyes as he realized what it meant.

“I stayed because even though I wasn’t fully myself on Midgard, I still put my own mate in danger and that is something I couldn’t let happen again, let alone ever forgive myself for” Loki said softly before he magicked the illusion of flawless skin back on his arm covering his Midgardian soulmark and bringing back his armor and ashandarei as creatures he had only read about in history books came around the corner and spotted them.

Dark Elves, legends..extinct legends were now running towards them down the hallway and he knew deep down that the nine realms were in more danger than ever before but most important of all the soulmate he hadn’t met yet was in danger and he couldn’t let that stand. Dark Elves meant Aether or also known as Dark Matter was once again a factor in the universe because there was no other reason for them to have come back from the brink of extinction unless their super weapon had been found or they had something even worse now. “Care to dance brother?” he asked smirking and felt a moment of happiness when Thor smirked back at him as he hefted up Mjolnir ready for the fight.

“Let’s dance brother” Thor said as he threw Mjolnir down the hallway and called it back, “but we need to make our way back to the infirmary I left Sif guarding Mother and Lady Jane when the alarms sounded.”

Kevin Buchanan ‘Nightstick’ Carter cut off the engines of the Quinjet yawning as he felt the end of the airstrip he had just parked on start to descend into the darkness of the underground SHIELD secret base. This was only stop one in a very long multi hop around the world as he made contact with not only the Carter legacies but also the other legacies that surprisingly were hidden knowingly and unknowingly inside SHIELD he was to update them on what was going on and bring them into contact with the FARM. Rubbing his face he tried to clear away the sleepiness he felt as he knew he had to be on his game while at this facility because this was a facility where something could happen to you and it could look like an accident and totally not be the case.

He was here at SHIELD’s premier science facility to speak with the two designers of his tactical gear and weapons. That the designers so happened to be one of his cousins and her husband was just an added bonus to him as he needed to pass on the information he had on the family situation and the cluster fuck that they all now also found themselves in. Kevin knew it was going to be a ‘surprise’ that one of his ex-field partners and another cousin was going to be here at the same time while he got his gear checked out. Grabbing his go bag and his tactical gear bag he hit the button to drop the back hatch of the Quinjet to the sight of two ground crew waiting for him.
“I need her fueled back up and ready to go ASAP,” he said not worrying about what they might do to his plane because Skye had already checked out the ground crew and made sure he was assigned a crew that they knew were clean. The young hacker had been a godsend in the last few hours as she paved the way for him at all the SHIELD facilities that he was going to, making sure there were ground crew they could trust with his plane as he dealt with the briefings.

“Got it, should be ready to go in twenty minutes if you need to leave that fast” said one of them in passing as he moved to get to where he needed to be. He had made this as his first stop only because though he still maintained his gear while being semi retired he still wanted it checked out and possibly replaced if needed. If the shit was about to hit the fan he was going to have his gear working at its best. All specialist that had specialty weapons at one time or another were assigned a team from the Sandbox to not only design them but build them, maintain them and upgrade them when advances were made. Kevin wouldn’t lie and say he didn’t hope they had something new for him to play with, because he was a boy and as the saying went boys did like their toys.

Coming up to the familiar door to his cousin and her husband’s lab he knocked and opened the door once he heard it beep that it was unlocked. Anyone other than himself would see the two scientist buried deep in their work and hardly acknowledging that anyone had just walked in but that wasn’t the case. Margaret ‘Marge’ Carter Harper aka Olivia Kirk Davide to the rest of the world had her eyes on her microscope but he knew that her missing right hand was probably under her lab table near a hidden gun that knowing his cousin would not only pack a hell of a punch but also had enough ammo on hand to take care of a small army. While Israel Davide her husband thick physique was coiled ready to strike at a moments notice of anything foul, Kevin would bet a week’s paycheck that there was a sawed off shotgun somewhere near the big man since it was his weapon of choice.

That was only two of the rooms occupants as the other was his specialist cousin James Carter Harper aka James ‘Jim’ Kirk callsign ‘Sarge’ was sitting on a stool near one of the tables that had his gear laid across the table in front of him within easy reach. “Howdy ex-partner” Jim called out and he smiled at the slightly larger man as he came in and let the door close behind him and waited for the audible click of the door locking.

“Howdy yourself” he said as he put his bags on the table while pulling out the cube and activating it as he also pulled out the flashdrive he was given to plug into at least the main one of the main computers to update all the security protocols for each of the legacies that would be hidden within SHIELD’s own networks. Tossing the flashdrive to Marge he said “Plug that into your main computer in the lab in the security port for me.”

“This can’t be good if you are doing techie stuff” Israel teased from the corner as Marge tossed him the flashdrive as he moved towards one of the computers on the far wall.
“Not me,” Kevin said as Israel plugged in the device and the lights dimmed for a moment causing the other three in the room to tense up for a moment as they all instinctively checked the entry and exit points of the room. “JARVIS are we up and running?”

“Yes Agent Carter we are now secure in the lab and I am now just working on the living quarters of both Agents Davide and Agent Kirk” JARVIS said as he started pulling out the Starkpads and Starkphones for them. “Marge, Israel and Jim meet JARVIS, he is Stark’s AI and now installed into the mainframe here only accessible to you and anyone we deem safe to know about him. He will be your electronic backup here incase anything goes pear shaped.”

“And here I was hoping the Code 99 was a drill,” Jim said dryly as he ran a hand through his short cropped hair.

“Sorry Cuz, no such luck on it being a drill. Sharon activated the Code 99 when she was brought into the investigation Nick and Maria Hill have been running silently since New York happened. She was brought into the investigation only when the Avengers activated their own security protocols when Maria’s mate was kidnapped while on mission for SHIELD. It’s all on the hidden server within the Avenger tower that you will all now have access to but Sharon met one of her mates and it just so happens to be Captain America himself. While they were securing Pepper Potts one of Tony’s mates they also moved Grandma Peggy to Avenger tower just incase and good thing too because SHIELD has a serious rot problem.”

“What do you mean rot problem? And what about the children?” Marge asked as she took the phone and pad that he was handing to her.

“Meaning that SHIELD is compromised. On top of running your normal lab duties you three are now in charge of investigating the personnel here at the Sandbox, Jim you will find that you won’t be getting assigned any active missions for the foreseeable future till we get a more idea of how secure you three are here. Trust no one until you have ran them through the program on the server and cleared it with our central hub of communication known as the FARM. You will see your parents probably there when you conference in with them since it seems Grandma Angie and Grandma Peggy somehow maneuvered the Black Widow and Hawkeye to buy a farm right down the road from them some years back. Right now the kids are being protected not just by your parents and Charlie but also the whole strength of the Avengers and the very now large and complicated family tree of theirs.”

“Understand this is no longer a SHIELD investigation because honestly I understand Nick’s paranoia but he kept too much to himself and forced Maria to do it as well and it almost got Maria’s mate killed so this is now an Avenger investigation and we are using all of their resources to complete it. Read all that you can on the main current investigation and the side investigations going on because of it, see who are our allies in other locations as well as any safe houses ready for us incase it all hits the fan.”
“Holy shit, you’re serious” Israel said shock evident on his face.

“As serious as a heart attack. I’m not only seeing the Carter legacy I’m warning the other legacies as well and in some cases telling them that they are legacies because they don’t have clue. Nick and Grandma Peggy thought it best to keep those that didn’t know they were legacies in the dark so they hopefully wouldn’t draw attention to themselves but almost all of them are SHIELD or somehow associated with SHIELD” Kevin finished the last bit of his brief while unpacking his weapons from his tactical bag.

“So I am guessing you are here for all new toys?” Marge said trying to break the tension in the room.

“Aww Cuz you know me so well. Yes I need kitted out as much as you can on such short notice since right now I’m a lone wolf till we can get more that we trust into the investigation. Don’t worry about the body armor already got that from Stark but any upgrades to my nightsticks, guns and knives I’ll take as well as anything fun you might have for me to play with” he said slightly chuckling and watched as Marge and her husband Israel totally geeked out on their newest upgrades that they had designed sharing and small nod with Jim. Kevin knew that Jim would move heaven and earth to protect his sister and her husband if it hit the fan and knowing their luck it most likely was going to.

"Maria what the hell happened there?” Tori asked and she tried to hide the overwhelming worry she was feeling because she felt the injuries to her mates almost as if they were happening to her even though they were miles away. She had a theory why their bond was all of a sudden so much stronger but she needed Monty to run the test for her to be sure but if it was positive they would need to evaluate their personal risks again.

"We aren’t sure but the equipment was going stupid when Bobbi and I got back into the room and everyone was knocked out cold with a giant hole in the roof I can only assume is from Thor but have no way of confirming until someone wakes up to tell me either ‘yay’ or ‘nay’. At the moment it looks like Izzy and Mel took the worst damage with a pair of concussions, Jemma and Fitz both have bumps bruises and cuts while Jemma has a sprained wrist."

"Bloody hell, is that all?” Hunter unfairly snapped at Maria but she understood his frustration both of them had their mates out in the field while they were stuck running the back end of the missions with Skye and the rest of the group at the Farm. The running of the backend part was not something new for her but it was something new for Hunter and Tori knew he wasn't liking it one bit. Though Bobbi hadn't been injured in the apparent energy explosion Jemma their most vulnerable mate had been and he was beside himself with worry.

"I'm sorry Tori and Hunter that is all we know at the moment. Right now I have Bobbi sleeping next
to Jemma helping her heal while Izzy and Fitz do the same on another bed in the same room. I'll message you as soon as they wake up” Maria said cutting off the video feed and Tori shared a look with Hunter before she had to make a mad dash for the bathroom.

Dropping to her knees she started to empty her stomach as she felt Hunter grab her hair and hold it out of the way. "Easy there Tori," Hunter said as he rubbed her back in soothing motions "have you had Monty run the test?” When she shot him a look he snorted while grabbing a towel with one hand and turning on the sink. “I might be a guy but I’m not that dense.”

“No you aren’t and he took the blood just a few minutes after Fitz and Izzy were injured but before we could confirm it. He and Blake were in the room with me giving me an update on their investigation into who stole Ward’s body when I felt their injuries. They left with my blood just after I called you up here to let you know what was going on” she said taking the towel from him as she sat back on her ass and leant against the tub. She wiped her face down before reversing the fold of the wash cloth and used it on the back of her neck. The coolness of the cloth helping with her nausea as she fought to keep down whatever was left in her stomach at the time because if the test was positive she had to do it for the child growing inside of her. A child Izzy and herself never thought they’d be able to have with their ages but here she was puking her guts out and she was pretty damn sure it wasn’t the flu.

Moments later she heard it as Monty and Blake came into her office as they reengaged the security protocols before coming to the doorway of the bathroom. With one look to Monty’s face she knew the results as she looked down and gently placed a hand on her stomach with the overwhelming feeling of happiness for their little gift and the almost knee weakening sense of fear of now having to not only keep herself safe but their child. She didn’t realize she had started crying till she felt Hunter’s arms around her pulling her into his lap as the shock of it all finally hit her. Victoria Hand, was pregnant and the family she never thought she would ever get the chance at having was suddenly a very big reality.

“What is Loki doing out of his cell? And I see that my wishes have been ignored” his father said coming into the room followed by two of his personal guard and Thor didn’t care about the disrespectful look he was sending him in this moment as his brother tended to one of his wounds.

“Your wishes mean nothing when our third’s pain was so great that both Thor and I could feel it all the way from Vanaheim even without us ever being able to complete the bond with her” he heard Sif say from behind him as they sat back to back on the table letting their Asgardian marks touch as she was also being tended to by his mother after sustaining a few more cuts and burns from defending the infirmary door.

“As for Loki he could have escaped at any time but didn’t because he accepted his punishment and he saved my life down in the cells when the prisoners almost overwhelmed Fandral, Volstagg and I
when we went to investigate the explosion. All the original guards are dead as well as most of the prisoners, what aren’t dead or dying are being tended to and then thrown back into the cells while I ordered that the guard be doubled” Thor said hissing at the last as Loki stayed silent tending to the nasty burn on his arm.

“Sorry” Loki told him with a slight smirk.

“No you aren’t” Thor said seriously before grinning back towards his brother. He was still angry with Loki but he would always love his brother and forgive him almost anything...Anyways it was good to have his brother back, especially when he chuckled shrugging his shoulders but went back to tending the wounds on Thor’s bare torso.

“Just because you wish it husband doesn’t make it so. These three share a soulbond that transcends the worlds, they can no longer ignore it just because you wish it weren’t so” his mother told his father shooting him a glare that even Thor knew to be the one she gave when she was ready for a fight with his father. Frigga was one of only a few people in all of the nine realms that could argue with Odin and win the argument and apparently this was going to be one of those arguments.

Thor saw that his father was about to start arguing but Jane started to moan from the exam table and both he and Sif rushed to her side so that when she awoke she would see at least one familiar face. Jane wouldn’t know Sif to be their third but she might recognize her from the brief encounter during the Destroyer incident. Gently he took Jane’s small hand into his own as Jane’s eyes opened wide. “Easy there love, you’re safe now.”

“Thor?” Jane asked blinking confused as he could see her trying to concentrate on his face. “What happened?”

“I don’t know, we felt your pain all the way from Vanaheim and I went to Midgard to bring you back. Do you remember anything?” Thor asked her as he gently brushed hair out of her face.

“We were in England studying anomalies similar to when you arrived in New Mexico, the equipment spiked and I found myself in a cave. There was this rock, with red liquid and then there was just so much pain…and darkness” Jane’s voice broke at the last bit and he watched as Sif leaned in to comfort their mate.

“Shh sweetheart, it’s okay we got you” Sif said and they both felt Jane’s shock and recognition as her face finally turned towards Sif. His wife smiled gently down at the younger woman and it was a smile he knew few got to see. Thor watched as Sif’s hand shook slightly as she brushed fingertips down Jane’s cheek and with the first touch of his two mates he felt it as the bond strengthened
“You’re beautiful” Jane said then blushed almost instantly and Thor tried not to laugh because he agreed with their much smaller mate that Sif was quite beautiful, both of them were very beautiful and he was a very damn lucky to have them both.

“Nay, you are the beautiful one sweetheart” Sif said softly and Thor reached out to touch his wife’s shoulder as he watched her reverently brush a strand of hair off of Jane’s face.

“I guess there is no stopping this foolishness now” Odin said disgruntled behind them and both Thor and his mother shot his father a look. He felt it as both Jane and Sif got upset from what his father was saying about their bond.

“No father there is not and if you can not accept it, then all of us will be leaving for Midgard to stay once mother can tell us what is wrong with Jane and it’s safe for her to travel” Thor said making the decision that he knew Sif and he had been avoiding for a while because of their duty to the realms but they would no longer deny themselves or their mate any longer.

“I can answer that part brother since we were just attacked by Dark Elves, a race that was suppose to be extinct by the hand of your grandfather and by the description your Jane just provided I would bet that she was somehow exposed to Aether or Dark Matter” Loki said as Thor watched him reading the readouts from Jane.

“Impossible” Odin said but the look he was shooting towards Loki gave Thor a sinking feeling that his brother was correct.

“You might wish it to be impossible but I don’t doubt that all of the nine realms are at risk if the Elves get ahold of their weapon of mass destruction that sounds like it might be hidden on Midgard of all places” Loki said turning around and giving him a look that he knew all too well, it was time to go back to Midgard, with Odin’s blessing or not.

"Agent Carter, it’s an honor to meet you” Kevin cursed fate again as he walked down the ramp of the Quinjet he had just parked on the roof of the SHIELD facility know as the Treehouse. Once again hearing the words he was forever doomed to hear not only because of his abilities as an agent but because he was part of a powerful family legacy, if he had a penny for every time he had heard those words over the course of his career in SHIELD he would be a very rich man. Though that wasn’t why he was cursing fate, nope Kevin was cursing fate because those were one set of the words that showed up on him right after his last official mission with SHIELD.
Kevin had been forced to tell Fury as part of the Carter protocols what his words were and had tried to retire at the same time but Fury had refused his resignation. Instead the bastard just had a gleam in his eyes as he told Kevin that he would be listed as a consultant for SHIELD till he got his head around the fact that he now not only had one mate but two mates that were waiting to meet him. He had been a blank for years and he had been more than fine with that because he was in such a dangerous profession but it seemed that one of his mates might be in the same chaotic world as he was.

His other set of words though ‘Well you’re definitely a sight for sore eyes’ could mean a host of things and not all of the scenarios he thought of were good. No he had seen enough and done enough in his lifetime with SHIELD to know that the scenarios that he thought of while not getting drunk in the dingy bar his sister had found him in were all too possible and with his luck all too probable.

Chastising himself for his mental tangent he brought himself back to the present as he shook the hand of the young agent sent here to collect him and he was thankful there was a snowball’s chance in hell chance that the very young, tall, dark and burly agent was his soulmate because the writing on his body was definitely feminine. It was one of the reasons he hated those words, hearing his soulmate’s first words from everyone and their cousin was enough to set him on edge. “Not at all Agent…” Kevin said trying to find out the name of his escort.

“Agent Jackson, sir. I’ve been instructed to show you to the Director’s office then be your go to person for anything you might need while you’re staying here at the Treehouse” Jackson said and Kevin got the impression that the young agent was fighting the urge to salute him everytime he spoke. Kevin kept his face impassive as he thought mentally ‘Sweet Jesus was I ever that young? Nope, never that young not with my family being who they are.’

“Very well Agent Jackson, lead the way” Kevin said and followed the young agent towards the elevators. Mentally he was trying to prepare for the meeting he was about to have because not only was he going to reveal the Carter Legacy in its full detail he was also about to let the woman know that he knew not only who she really was but also her mates real identity. Then to add insult to the shock he got to tell her about the secret investigation into every SHIELD agent in the organization. Though preparing for that meeting was hard when the young agent next to him could barely suppress his fangirling and curiosity from the other end of the elevator. Nope he was mentally betting himself that the Agent would ask a question in five, four, three, two and one.

“Is it true Agent Carter that you came back because of the Centipede investigation?” Agent Jackson asked and Kevin was glad that the cover story that wasn’t really a cover story was intact. Technically it was because of Centipede that he was back to warn the other legacies and bring them into the larger investigation of everything dirty and smelly in SHIELD, they were just letting everyone assume that he was actively hunting down the organization...which he was but it wasn’t his priority at this moment.
“Agent Jackson who would be better than a Carter to handle with wanna be super soldiers?” he asked the question just as they arrived on the floor of the Director’s office and the door opened. Kevin had to fight the urge to smirk as the hook was implanted into the young agent’s brain. His mission was two fold from Sharon and Maria. First he was to warn the legacies but second he was also to try to draw attention off of SHIELD 616 and 626 by putting his neck out on the line showing that a Carter was now involved and hopefully make the bad guys sweat enough that they were now bringing in the ‘big guns’.

Following Agent Jackson out of the elevator they came to a door with “Noelle Walters - Director of Treehouse Operations” written on a simple nameplate that was just a piece of brass with black lettering not too big or not too small for the size of the door. It was a small thing but it told him a lot about the woman he was about to meet for the first time because a lot of the Directors of Operations for SHIELD bases were a bunch of pretentious idiots with ego’s that barely fit through their office doors. It would be nice to meet a competent person in the seat of a Director of Operations but of course the woman behind the door was a legacy that knew who she really was and what she had to live up to.

Agent Jackson knocked on the door once before they both heard “Enter” coming from the other side of the closed door. He watched as the young agent opened the door and almost came to attention before moving out of the doorway and letting Kevin to enter the room finally to get his first look at the agent known as Agent Noelle Samantha Walters to the world and only known as Noelle Antoinette Dernier to a select few. By reputation alone he knew she was competent in everything she did but her file folder didn’t do her any justice because she was also gorgeous. He knew that she had been able to rise quickly through the ranks to level 8 within SHIELD not because she had her family name to brandish about but on her merits alone as both a skilled specialist and field agent. A large part of him envied her freedom to move around without having people constantly flocking to her because of her family name. He almost envied her lesser need for paranoia and personal security but he doubted that was the case, no anyone that knew about their lineage would be just as paranoid as he was.

“Agent Carter, it's an honor to meet you” Noelle said as she stood up from behind her desk to greet him. “Agent Jackson that will be all for now, I’ll call you once we are done here” she said quickly dismissing the agent from their meeting.

“Yes Ma’am” Agent Jackson said as he snapped his legs coming to full attention before turning and leaving the room. Kevin caught the slight roll of the eyes from the woman before him so knew it would be safe to joke around with her on his impression of the agent that had just left.

“Is he that young or is it just me?” Kevin asked as he shook Noelle’s hand and felt her grip tighten and her eyes widen by what he had just said before she slightly smiled at him making him confused by her body language.
“I’m guessing you have heard ‘Agent Carter, it’s an honor to meet you’ a lot of times in your career with SHIELD but this is the first time anyone has said ‘Is he that young or is it just me?’ especially since the words are barely a year old” she said throwing him for a loop as he quickly thought back on the ramifications of what she had just said. Looking down he realized they were still holding the hand shake that was their first greeting to each other and he used it to slowly pull her to him.

“Well darling this just got a whole lot easier or a whole lot more complicated depending on how we look at this” he said using his southern accent he had picked up for an undercover assignment years ago.

“Tell me about it” Noelle quipped as she rested her head on his shoulder. They were around the same height though he was maybe an inch taller if that.

Bending his head so he could whisper in her ear he said the words that Fury had set up with her to let her know he was sent by Fury and knew who she really was “Commando Jaubert.” Noelle briefly stiffened in his arms before she once again seemed to relax into his embrace.

“Guess that means that you already know who our third is then?” she whispered back to him and he hummed his acknowledgement as he slowly reached into his go bag that he had dropped moments before on the chair in front of her desk and pulled out the cube activating it while his tactical bag stayed just at his feet where he had dropped it moments before. The blue light was a comfort to him but he knew they weren’t totally safe by a long shot because he knew everything that was going on and the woman in his arms had not a clue...well at least not yet. “That is never a good sign.”

“No it isn’t darling” he said pulling out a flashdrive from his pants pocket and handing it to her. “Plug that into your main security port.”

“Now I definitely know this isn’t going to be good” Noelle said with a sigh as she pulled away from him and walked back around her desk. He felt the itch start almost immediately under his skin and knew that they were going to have a touch bond. The lights dimmed temporarily in the room and he watched as Noelle’s hand went to the small of her back where he would guess she had a small hand gun. Pulling out his Starkpad from his bag he keyed in the code to the flashdrive to start activating all the different programs and security measures as JARVIS also started to come online in the office.

“JARVIS are we secure?” he asked earning a raised eyebrow from the woman across from him.

“We are secure Agent Carter, all security protocols have been upgraded in Agent Walter’s office and living quarters” JARVIS answered causing the woman to slightly flinch at the voice that seemed to be coming from everywhere in the room at the same time.
“Sorry about that darling, we are beefing up all the security for the legacies as I brief each one of you” Kevin began as he reached down and pulled out a Starkpad and Starkphone that was becoming the new standard issue for the legacies and for those now in the know of everything that was going on in Fury and Hill’s silent investigation into corruption at SHIELD. “These are yours to use from now on. On the Starkpad you will have access now to a hidden server within Avenger Tower that is for your eyes only until you clear additional personnel here at the Treehouse using the program on the server and with our central location the FARM.”

“What the hell is going on?” Noelle asked as he watched her start to access files using the Starkpad.

“SHIELD has been compromised. Fury and Hill have been running a silent investigation into corruption since New York. Until recently it was only them till Hill met her soulmate and whole new level of shit hit the fan. Read what’s on the server but at this point the Carter legacy is on total lockdown and my sister Sharon forced Fury to give up the locations and names of the remaining legacies to bring them into the investigation and make sure everyone was as secure as we could get them” Kevin said grimly as a dark look crossed over Noelle’s features as she took in the information he just told her.

“And our mate?” Noelle asked the worry evident in her voice and Kevin couldn’t blame her for it because he was feeling it as well. He knew Noelle and himself could take care of themselves if it came down to it but Helen as far as he could tell from the information from Fury was a pure science techie type that never really did more than the basics of what Fury instructed her to learn to protect herself.

“Our mate should be being briefed by Tony Stark starting any moment now. I had no reason to go there to meet her so Tony had to be the one to do it under the guise of him checking out her latest breakthroughs. But now that has totally changed because we all need to meet to complete the bond if that is what you two ladies want” Kevin finished as he sighed and dropped into the chair next to him after moving his bag off of it.

“Oh trust me we want to complete the bond,” Noelle said as she walked back around her desk and dropped into his lap putting her hand gently on his face. With that gentle touch he felt the itch under his skin subside and sighed. “Touch bond, I’m sorry Kevin this is going to be uncomfortable for you until we complete the bond.”

“So the sooner we arrange for a cover story to meet with Helen the better, gotcha. JARVIS can you video conference with the FARM I need a plausible cover story cooked up” Kevin called out to the friendly AI that was a total godsend since they had been introduced. He could get around modern technology but anything advance and usually he somehow broke the damn things, having the AI that though was advance it was smart enough to correct his mistakes.
“Of course Agent Carter, and congratulations” JARVIS answered as the screen on the side of Noelle’s office turned on and showed the Avenger logo as they waited for an answer from the FARM. Kevin could see the questioning in Noelle’s eyes but he didn’t have anytime to answer them as the video call connected to a young woman he now knew as Skye by her file picture on the server.

“Hello Agent Carter, JARVIS said it was a priority call and I can see why, congratulations you two...which means we now need to come up with some reason for you two to go visit Dr. Cho” Skye said.

“That would be much appreciated, where is Maria?” Kevin asked as he watched Skye start typing on her Starkpad.

“Maria is with SHIELD 616 and SHIELD 626 in England at the moment trying to look into the disappearance of Dr. Foster and the anomalies that are popping up all over the place that has everyone else in SHIELD scrambling to keep a lid on the weird shit that keeps happening. Right now she has most of SHIELD 616 and 626 down for the count with injuries from one of the anomalies. At this point I’m correlating all the information trying to find a pattern” Skye said as the door opened to the room and a young man that Kevin hardly recognized walked in carrying two plates and cups on a tray.

“Good to see you being useful Charlie” Kevin teased his nephew.

“Shut it Uncle Kevin” the young man said as he placed the tray down.

“Is that anyway to greet your long time no see uncle?” Kevin asked enjoying teasing the young man but stopped when he felt a jab in his ribs and had the decency to blush. “I’m sorry Noelle. Noelle meet Skye SHIELD 616’s resident hacker, Maria’s mate and the daughter of Melinda May and Phil Coulson. The young pup that I’m teasing is one of my many cousins many offspring, Charlie. You two meet Noelle Walters aka Noelle Dernier one of my soulmates.”

“I’m sorry about your father Skye he was a good man and a good friend” Noelle said to the young woman on the screen and he cursed Fury on keeping so many of the legacies in the dark.

“Don’t be sorry, he isn’t dead. You may kick the pirate in the shins or wherever you like next time you see him. Dad’s apparently been threatening worse to him for the last ohhh 24 hours give or take since he found out he was a legacy as well” Skye said smirking as she went back to typing away on
her Starkpad. “Alright conferencing in Tony and Natasha is on her way down here as well” she said as the screen blanked for a moment before the now split screen showed Tony Stark and Dr. Helen Cho on it.

“Yes munchkin you called?” Tony asked as Kevin got the first real good look at Dr. Helen Cho and he watched as her eyes got wide as she realized what was going on.

“Remember Uncle Tony I can still hack your suit to make it only play polka and make you dance disco” Skye said sweetly as Kevin chuckled.

“Duly noted, now what do we have...oh way to go Kevin!” Tony said smirking as she finally realized they were also in the conference and then looked back to Helen...his other mate. “Ooh, so I am guessing we now need to come up for a reason for Kevin and Noelle to come here so they can complete the bond.”

“Well you’re definitely a sight for sore eyes” Helen said as she shyly smiled at him.

“ダーリン, you aren’t so bad yourself” Kevin said using the word for darling in Japanese to his other mate and saw a pleased smile cross her face.

“Jesus another bond, kid you sure know how to set off a chain reaction” Clint ‘Hawkeye’ Barton said as he held open the door for Natasha ‘Black Widow’ Romanoff as they entered into the conference room behind Skye and Charlie.

“What can I say I’m just that good” Skye said with a smirk and a shrug that got them all laughing.

“Fuck I’m getting too old for this shit” Maria heard as Izzy groaned loudly at first but it became softer as the older woman woke up fully and realized that one of her mates was snoring in the hospital bed with her.

“Welcome back. He’s only sleeping off a few bruises and cuts. How’s your head?” Maria asked as she shot a quick text to Angie letting her know that she had a patient awake and another to Tori letting her know that at least Izzy was finally awake. She would have sent a text to Bobbi as well but the woman was right now snoring slightly from the bed next to Izzy and Fitz, curled around her own mate Jemma. It had been decided to keep the twins in the same room with their mates while Mel and Phil were in a smaller room next door resting. Maria wanted to go and check on them but Phil had told her that Mel waking from an injury after Bahrain was liable to be dangerous so she stayed away
to give the woman she thought of as a mother some space and privacy.

“Not as bad as I thought it was going to be when I woke up. How long have we been out?” Izzy asked her and Maria watched as the older woman brought a hand to run her fingers through Fitz’s hair.

“About twelve hours, care to tell me what the hell happened?” Maria asked as she poured a small cup of water and put a straw in it before helping Izzy take a drink of it.

“Short version. The equipment went nuts, we all got blasted back. All of sudden Foster was there suspended in the air glowing red and screaming. Thor came crashing through the roof, scoops her up, yells something that I couldn’t make out over Foster’s screaming and we all got blasted again. Last thing I remember is looking up at the Asgardian sized hole in the roof” Izzy said after her drink and kept her hand moving in Fitz’s hair. “How is everyone else?”

“Mel’s got a concussion just like you but Phil is watching over her. Jemma has a sprained wrist and everyone has an assortment of bumps, bruises and cuts. All in all we were lucky if that’s all you four got when Darcy had a couple of broken ribs and a concussion” Maria said reaching for her cup of coffee just as Angie came into the room yawning. Standing up Maria stretched before she walked out of the room leaving Angie to exam Izzy.

Sighing she walked into the main control room and watched as JARVIS ran Skye’s program on the name of the ‘intern’ Ian Boothby that had been helping out Jane and Darcy at the warehouse. She had to track him down and make sure he didn’t talk about anything he might have seen and also make sure he wasn’t someone dangerous. Though part of her wanted to believe that Darcy was right and that the young man had ran away when the shit got weird but she couldn’t take the chance of that fully not being the case.

Yawning she scrubbed at her face as she tried to think through the latest cluster fuck they were in. At the Neverland base she had eleven people and out of those eleven, five were injured while four of them were mates to the injured and one was suffering a complete mental break. The only one not injured, mated to someone injured and not completely bat shit crazy at the moment was her. Everyone not injured or crazy was currently in full tactical gear with weapons within arms reach because at the moment her paranoia meter was pinging like crazy and she was totally not ignoring it. ‘Especially now that I have confirmation that this has something to do with Asgard’ she thought as the scientific equipment that they had dragged back from the warehouse started going off. ‘Aww fuck me, not again.’

“JARVIS bring up exterior cameras and trigger the lockdown” Maria ordered as she checked her weapons without taking her eyes of the screen as the cameras came up and the alert for the lockdown started ringing. Well that’s interesting...
Jennifer Martinelli Carter Harper known as Jenny to her friends and family had done some things in her life that she didn’t quite like, especially as a young specialist working in SHIELD under her parents command. Fast tracking the training of her not even legal grandson in how to fight was one of those things that were a necessary evil, just as it was with his father and her other children. It was the curse of being a Carter and something she knew even her parents had found distasteful but this was the way of life they were all born to lead as a Carter it didn’t mean she had to like it though. She tried to keep her face impassive as her grandson Charlie trained against Clint Barton callsign ‘Hawkeye’ as the Avenger was trying to teach the young man her grandson was becoming how to defend himself in certain scenarios. Jenny had to give it to Clint he was an excellent trainer for Charlie because he was just the right level of seriousness, playfulness and patience to work with him.

It was the hope of her generation that the younger generation wouldn’t need the knowledge that she watched being imparted to the two youngsters in the gym training under both Clint and Natasha watchful eyes but with they way things were looking she knew it was unlikely to happen. As it was she had already talked to both Clint and Natasha increasing the self defense classes for all her grandchildren now under their care, the next oldest child was nine years old but again with the information she now had access to and that they were still uncovering she wanted all of her family able to respond to what may be thrown at them. She knew that all the other adults found it heartbreaking that they would need to do it but it seemed that even Laura, Clint and Natasha’s two children will be added to the classes.

A loud grunt pulled her attention away from her grandson and Clint as she looked over to the other sparing area in the underground gym as she took in the almost blurred forms of Skye and Natasha as they actively spared in protective gear though either woman really needed it. Both Skye and Natasha were able to heal at an extraordinary rate since they were experimented on as children and given some form of what she would bet was the super soldier serum. Right now they were working on just striking and blocking but Jenny knew earlier they had been working on takedowns and submissions.

The whole impromptu training session was being used to distract Skye at the moment from the fact that her mother had been injured and to get her away from the computers and the files for just a little bit. The young woman before she had been purposely captured by SHIELD had no one in her life to care about that cared for her back in the same way and to see them injured had devastated the young woman. From her files she knew that Skye was never taught any type of proper coping skills and though she was now twenty four years old she was just now learning them from those now around her.

Jenny was monitoring the communication channels and security feed from a bench on the side of the training gym while Jackie, Michael and Laura kept an eye on the children up top in the yard as they played in the multiple small pools, hoses and sprinklers that they had set up for the children the day before. All the adults were working together not only to keep the children safe but to keep them entertained with games, crafts and now most likely lessons in self defense and other types of gymnastics.
Sighing she was about to call a halt to the lessons going on in front of her since it was almost time for them to go relieve Jackie and Laura so they could start making dinner but an alert popped up stating that Neverland had gone down into lockdown. The barely audible alert made all activity in the gym cease as Skye froze mid punch as Natasha put a foot down that had been moments before about to kick the legs out from under the younger woman. Clint raised a hand up to Charlie signaling him to stop and for silence but all this was seen peripherally by Jenny as she started checking trying to gain access to the security feed for Neverland.

“Neverland just went into lockdown,” Jenny said as they all started moving for the door. She handed over the Starkpad to Skye as they met at the door giving the young woman a brief nod before she signaled for Charlie to follow her as the others ran for the main control room.

Loki looked around trying not to roll his eyes at the three behind him as they landed and automatically started checking each other over to make sure nothing was missing. ‘So little faith in my abilities’ he thought wryly as he watched them trying to ignore the longing he felt for that type of companionship. He watched as both Thor and Sif had kept a steadying hand on Jane’s shoulders trying to keep her upright as he thought back briefly upon meeting Jane for the first time, the woman had punched him in the jaw for his actions in New York and New Mexico he couldn’t help but chuckle. Thor’s newest mate Jane was just as spunky as Sif and between those two they would keep his brother on his toes as well as keep him in line. They were the balance Thor would need in the years to come to rule Asgard and safeguard the nine realms if only Odin would remove his head from his own ass and see the good this bond was for Thor.

“Are you sure this is where Dr. Selvig and Lady Darcy is?” Thor asked him giving him a hard stare that he did roll his eyes at.

“Yes, this is where the locator spell brought us” Loki huffs as he ignores the glares he is now receiving from Thor’s two mates.

“Thor you better have a damn good reason why he is back on Earth” a voice called out pulling them from their bickering. Loki was surprised to find that his first instinct on hearing that voice was to conjure his ashandarei and put himself between the voice and Jane. He watched cautiously as the tall brunette woman came closer to them and he could see that her hand rested on one of the weapons he learned last time was called a gun.

“Lady Maria he has come to help and to make amends” Thor said coming up beside him and placing a large hand on his shoulder giving it a supposedly gentle squeeze. He looked to his brother and at his nod magicked away his ashandarei and his armor since it seemed this woman was an ally. He felt totally exposed in that moment and despite his brother’s reassurances he really wouldn’t be surprised if someone did shoot him first and ask questions later. Honestly if that happened he wouldn’t even blame them with his history on Midgard.
“Is that so?” the woman that his brother called Lady Maria said as she eyed him with cold blue calculating eyes. Loki fought back the urge to smirk at her or goad her because though tempting to fall back to his normal response to being unsure, it wouldn’t help in this situation. Thor was right if he ever wanted a chance with his mate then he would need the help and support of the Avengers to stay on Midgard. Of course they were now on Midgard in direct violation of Odin’s command so it’s not like they could go back to Asgard anytime soon without Thor and Sif being arrested and him most likely being executed since he *technically* escaped prison.

“Loki was a puppet as well the last time he was here on Midgard, brother show her” Thor said and Loki looked to his brother and raised an eyebrow at him. “Loki you have to show her so she will understand why you would never attack Midgard willingly, I promise you the time of our hiding is done. Sif and I are not going to leave Jane’s side willingly and you belong here with us, you are family and all of us will stick together.”

“Very well brother” Loki said before taking a deep breath before waving his hand over his left forearm first removing his sleeve then again to remove the illusion of perfect skin before showing his Midgardian soulmark. “As you can see the last thing I would want to do is risk the safety of my soulmate.”

“Have you met your mark?” Lady Maria asked moving closer to see the mark and read the writing. One hand stayed on her gun but the other hand reached out touching the mark and he tried and failed not to flinch at the gentle touch.

“No, I haven’t. Otherwise they would be here where I could see them and protect them, even though I don’t deserve them” Loki said softly and as he looked into cold blue eyes that stared back into his green eyes so unflinchingly he knew that this was someone he needed to be on his side. Someone who just might understand what he was going through to live with the regret of so many wrong decisions.

“I have one more question and I need you to answer it honestly. Did you mean to kill Agent Coulson?” Lady Maria asked him piercing him with another look that had him feeling about an inch tall and that he had been caught sneaking cookies out of the kitchens but of course this situation was so much worse. From Agent Barton’s mind he knew just who Agent Phil Coulson was and what he meant not only to Agent Barton but also to the woman standing in front of him.

“No I did not mean to kill him, he was an admirable warrior and his death is one of the many that haunt me from that time” he answered softly not daring to look away.

“Good, you will all be pleased to know he somehow survived your stabbing him in the heart.
Though he was legally dead for a day, before we realized the wound was healed and he was breathing once again” Lady Maria said smirking slightly before giving him a nod “I now think that you had some semblance of control because it was the staff’s energy we traced on him after his recovery somehow even though you killed him you still brought him back to life. For that, I will give you one chance, so don’t fuck it up.”

“That is more than I have a right to ask for Lady Maria” Loki answered but he stopped his hand movement when he was about to cover the soulmark again. Looking at it he shook his head before removing his other sleeve on his shirt. He would keep his arms bare from now on when near his allies and will cover only again during battle. Thor was right the time of hiding was over and done with, especially now that they were most likely going to be banished to Midgard for their “treason” to the throne. Looking towards his brother and his mates he realized maybe it wasn’t a bad thing to be stuck on Midgard with them.

“Thank you m’lady. Now I would like to introduce you to my mates. Lady Maria of SHIELD I’d like you to meet my wife the Lady Sif of Asgard and our mate Dr. Jane Foster. Though Jane has told me she has already met you since you have been watching over her and the Lady Darcy, which you have mine and my wife’s thanks for” Thor said and Loki watched as the Lady Maria shook hands with Sif and then Jane.

“No thanks needed. It’s my job to keep tabs on all the Avengers and their mates and make sure they’re safe. It’s good to see you Jane, you had us quite worried when you disappeared in front of Darcy after the explosion” Lady Maria said.

“How are Darcy and Erik?” Jane asked as he watched his brother and Sif bracket the smaller woman between them and he wondered if they did it consciously or subconsciously to protect her and provide the emotional support it sounded like she needed from the worry evident in her voice.

“Darcy is inside healing, she was injured from your initial disappearance. Erik on the other hand never recovered fully from what Loki’s mind control did to him and is inside a bit unstable” Loki heard the Lady Maria answer shooting him a look that almost looked sorry she was bringing up his actions already after saying she would give him a chance. He gave her a nod and shrug of the shoulders and he hoped she understood he wasn’t going to be hurt if someone brought it up, it was something he would have to deal with for a long time to come and he was accepting of that knowledge.

“Oh God what did he do now?” Jane asked and he could tell that she was fearing the answer to the question.

“He streaked Stonehenge the other day” Lady Maria answered fighting back a smirk “We have it down that he was trying to relive his old college days after one too many drinks. Better that then let it
be known the world’s most famous astrophysicist after you is mentally unstable.”

“I can help with Dr. Selvig’s mind. We need his help because Midgard and the nine realms are at risk at the moment” Loki said and started following the Lady Maria as she turned around and lead them towards the large building they were standing outside of.

“Good, got any other tricks that can heal our other injured? I got a few down agents and scientists from when Jane reappeared only to be whisked away by your brother. If Midgard or Earth as we call it is at risk I need my best and inside are some of the best I have.”

“I can do that, I am at your disposal Lady Maria. All I want is a chance to meet my soulmate and protect them and my only chance of that is staying here on Midgard” Loki said following a step behind the commanding woman.

“Rule number one: It’s Maria, drop the Lady part. I hope you are easier to train on that part than your brother, still haven’t trained that part out of him just yet” Maria said smirking at him and he couldn’t help but to start laughing when he realized this woman had a sense of humor similar to his own. ‘Maybe banishment on Midgard won’t be so bad afterall.’

“So you are telling me some major astrological event is about to peak and that is why SHIELD is running around like crazy responding to events that defy logical explanation all over earth?” Maria asked pinching the bridge of her nose wishing she had Skye here with her. She was happy her mate wasn’t anywhere near the danger but she needed the calm presence that her mate gave off to keep herself from throttling all the scientists in the room.

It had been thirty minutes of watching all the scientists running around the command center turned lab as they checked scientific equipment and talked faster than she could follow, as Tony and Bruce also contributed over the conference call and having all of them finish each other’s sentences before she got a clear understanding of what the fuck was going on. Maria was no slouch when it came to her education and understanding insane concepts, she was the Deputy Director of SHIELD for a reason but she had been lost in the first five minutes of them all talking to each other. Their only saving grace was that Darcy had realized that the scientists had lost everyone and had decided to corral all the geek speak into plain english for everyone else in the room and on the conference call.

“Pretty much. Also according to Jane and the Asgardians we have some Dark Elf dude that’s suppose to be long dead about to come to Earth to use some red goo as a weapon that will destroy the universe if he succeeds getting his hand on it but needs Midgard or Earth to do it from” Darcy said making explosion sounds before shrugging as she grabbed her cup of coffee and taking a sip of it.

‘I need a fucking vacation’ Maria thought briefly before shaking her head. “Do we know where on Earth he’s going to show up or is this going to be some totally random location?”
“Greenwich” Dr. Selvig said and she turned her head to realize he was playing with one of the StarkPad’s before he flicked the image on his screen and she watched as it appeared on one of the screens. It was a map of England with several lines intersecting at Greenwich. The image of the map got all the scientists speaking a mile a minute again and she felt the headache start to build again. A warm tingly sensation washed over her body as she felt a hand on her shoulder and she looked over to Loki.

“And I thought watching Thor, Sif and the Warriors Three was tiring” he quipped beside her as he removed his hand and her headache was gone.

“Thanks” she said indicating her head and watched as Loki shrugged and gave her a small half smile. “Tiring is one word for it. Darcy can you explain to the rest of the class?” she called out interrupting the scientist again.

“Basically last time this happened we got stonehenge and other large structures, but all these major build sites all intersect with Greenwich” Darcy said shrugging again.

“It’s also where most of England’s occurrences have been happening and has the highest amount of reports” Skye said from her end of the conference call at the Farm and Maria turned to her mate who gave her a smile before throwing the data up on the screen for her to see. She studied the data and the map and realized they were right, it would most likely be Greenwich which meant they were in position to do something about it.

“Alright, Greenwich it is. How much time do we have?” Maria asked looking around and realizing that they were possibly about to have another New York type battle but this time in England of all places.

“A couple hours at most, we are working on trying to nail it down. We are also working on something that might help during the fight but we will have to be there to work the equipment” Fitz said before turning back around to the group of scientist that were now huddled around one of the tables in the room.

Maria gave Darcy a look and watched amused as the young intern saluted her before joining the scientists. ‘Great another smart ass. I’ll have to figure out where to keep her after this, since I have a feeling Thor, Sif and Jane might be disappearing to one of the floors of the tower for a few weeks or more after this. Not that I blame them on that and I’ll have to keep Darcy busy because that young woman is trouble with a capital ‘T’ when bored’ Maria thought before shaking her head again.

“Thor I’m assuming you will need to take care of this Dark Elf Lord while we fight his minions and try to keep the general populace out of the line of fire?”
“You are correct, my brother and I will have to deal with him” Thor said leaning against a wall next to Sif, both of them watching the scientist with a confused look.

“And where will I be husband?” Sif asked in a tone that even Maria knew meant trouble as she heard Loki snicker softly from beside her.

“You will be guarding our much smaller mate of course” Thor said after a moment once the tone of his wife’s voice registered in his brain.

“Good save husband” Sif said shooting him with a look as she pushed off away from the wall and walked over to the table of scientists and standing behind Jane. Maria watched as Jane leaned back into the female warrior’s body and seemed to instantly lose some of the tension she didn’t realize the woman was carrying. The simple act between the two women confirmed her suspicion that the three were another touch bond that was forming.

“Alright this is what we are going to do. Tony can you get to our location? I’m going to need someone up high being my eyes and you are closest since you are still in Korea.” Maria started saying as she started laying out her plan of battle for the rest of the group.

Kevin yawned as he parked the Quinjet on the side of the lone platform that serviced SHIELD’s prison facility known as the Fridge. He was on his third planned stop for his latest mission but actually was now on his fourth stop. As a specialist for SHIELD he was use to hopping timezones like a crazy man and though his progression through time zones were at least a little bit linear he was still exhausted. Of course it wasn’t just the time zone hopping that was making him exhausted at the moment, right now he was also recovering from completing his bond with his two mates Noelle and Helen just hours ago.

He would have loved to been able to spend more time with the two women but he needed to get on with warning all the other legacies with things going the way they were. It was only a few hours ago that Tony had JARVIS tell them to get geared up as Noelle was being ordered back to the Treehouse as all SHIELD facilities were being put on full alert by Maria since there was a possible New York type situation brewing in England and possibly elsewhere. Kevin would have liked to stay with Helen and make sure she was safe but he was ordered to continue to the Fridge while she was suppose to stay at the Stark Tower South Korea under full lockdown.

It was a few hours later and he knew that currently SHIELD 616, 626 with a little bit of Avenger help were handling a possible alien invasion end of the world scenario over in England and he could feel the tension around him as everyone was wondering if they were going to have another New York situation on their hands where they were. Right now he was kitted out in full tactical gear just
incase something popped off here as well as England but from the information he had access to that was unlikely.

The hatch of the Quinjet dropped and he saw the tall silent form of Cameron ‘Darkwing’ Carson in full tactical gear as he was one of the many specialist assigned to permanent duty at the Fridge. He was one of the leaders of the STRIKE teams assigned to respond to any type of prisoner uprisings as well as any of the many reported hostage situations that brewed up in the South Pacific from terrorist or pirates. While he was the tall and silent type, Kevin knew that was only an exception from when he was angry and then you wished you were on the other side of the damn planet because he had temper that was not pretty when provoked. Not many knew though that Cameron ‘Darkwing’ Carson had the famous Carter temper because he had been born Stephen Carter Harper.

Kevin quickly braced arms with his cousin but it was known in SHIELD that they were also friends and former partners. It had been almost over a year since they last saw each other and that was only because it was Stephen and his STRIKE team that had come in as a hot extraction to pull his bacon out of the fire on his last official mission for SHIELD when the rookie he was training blew their cover and had gotten them captured. He had made it out, his rookie Benjamin ‘Benjie’ Hardwick had not, he had died while being interrogated by the local drug lord they had been sent down to infiltrate and get information on.

Shaking his head he tried to clear his head from the thoughts that always welled up inside him because of that mission and others like it, Benjie hadn’t been his only agent lost to enemy action under his command but it was still one of his more prominent demons. It was after that last mission when he was being treated when they realised he was no longer a blank but now had two soulmarks. Stephen gave him a slightly concerned look but he shook his head slightly before saying “Hello DW I’m here to help out where I can but I am also here to see one of your local celebrities and to get some of your husband’s amazing cooking.”

“Ahh I was wondering what would have you coming out of your semi-retirement, alright what local celebrity are you here to see?” he asked as he led the way into the facility that was now on a total lockdown.

“I’m here to see the one connected to the Centipede investigation that was brought in by Hill, Hand and Morse” he said as they passed the operation command center for the Fridge that had full tactical geared guards outside it while inside it looked like pandemonium inside as communication and intelligence officers were trying to find out what was happening right now in England. Keeping up appearances he asked “Any idea how it’s going?”

They were now in the elevator heading to a lower level that he knew that would lead to his cousin and his mates quarters inside the Fridge. Stephen and Thomas Johnson had met a few years ago when Thomas had been assigned to the Fridge as legal counsel for the defendants. Most being held at the Fridge had already been given a fair if secret trial but there were still a few that were being held
here before their trials. It had been an interesting meeting because Thomas had flayed the clearly pissed off Stephen three ways to next sunday when he and his team had dragged one of his clients into the room bound and bleeding but hearing his words instantly cooled Stephens temper as he stood back and took the verbal flaying from his mate till the man had stopped yelling. Then of course his cousin being the amazing gentleman he was said “Glad you finally stopped squawking so I can say something, and it’s good to know you have a temper to match my own.”

“None and Director Lipton isn’t happy that we’ve been ordered to stay in full lockdown and not to engage in anything unless we are directly attacked. The only one we were allowed to let into the facility was you and that was ordered by Fury himself. We can’t access the battle chatter since it’s being locked down to level 10 and above and no one here has clearance” Stephen said as they arrived on their floor and moved out of the elevator just talking shit now for show as they made their way to Stephen and Thomas’ quarters.

Stephen opened the door and indicated for Kevin to go in before him as his cousin instantly started to secure the door as his mate peeked around the corner that he knew led to the kitchen. The subtle sound of a safety engaging let him know that Thomas at least was taking the Code 99 seriously as Kevin kept up the inane small talk as he walked towards the kitchen table and opened his go bag and pulled out the blue cube and activated it. He saw Thomas eyes glance at the cube and give a look of worry as Kevin tossed the flashdrive to Stephen and with hand signals indicated for him to put it in the main security portal in their quarters. Thomas’ hand moved closer to a thigh holster he was wearing when the lights dimmed but Kevin gave him the hand signal to stand down.

“JARVIS are we secure?” Kevin asked as he pulled out two more Starkpads and Starkphones for the two men.

“We are secure Agent Carter in Agent Carson and Johnson’s quarters and I’m currently working on Agent Johnson’s office. I’m not able to do Agent Carson’s office though at the moment since there is a large group of men there in tactical gear” JARVIS answered.

“No worries JARVIS. He will just have to do it remotely when there is a moment there is no one in the teams ready room” Kevin said as he handed the devices to his cousin and his mate. “These are your new toys they are to be used to communicate with the family and the rest of the group that you are now a part of. There is a lot of interesting reading on the hidden server within the Avengers Tower that you will now have access to, but what will be more interesting is that we will be able to listen to the battle chatter going on in England.”

“How? That is all locked down to level 10 and only Fury and a few other agents have that type of access?” Stephen asked stopping what Kevin knew was Thomas telling them that listening to something out of their level without written authorization was illegal and grounds for court martial.
“It would be illegal for us with our SHIELD clearances but the Carter legacy is no longer just fully SHIELD, the reason for the Code 99 was that Fury and Hill have been running a secret investigation into corruption in SHIELD and the Avengers with Hill at the helm have now taken over the investigation from Fury. At the moment we are now also part of the Avenger Initiative and have level 10 clearances though that won't reflect in any SHIELD database. As I said the files you now have access to is a lot of good reading and most of it will make you two blow your gaskets so fair warning” Kevin said as he finally was able to access the Avengers battle chatter channel that everything was going through for the battle and being routed into SHIELD as level 10 clearances and above.

“Ok who ordered a giant lizard puppy?” Tony Stark aka Ironman’s voice rang out from his speakers and he had a funny feeling shit wasn’t going to plan.
Chapter 40

Chapter Notes

I apologize for the delay but my health wasn't good for a few months and I had a wedding to help plan since my soulmate proposed last June. Got married in December, so now I am back. Make sure you read this chapter since things have been changed and added.

“You've got some real stones coming here Hunter,” Colonel Lewis “Nix” Nixon said from above him. Hunter had just walked down the ramp of the Quinjet only to be decked by his once best friend, he knew his reception to the base would not be an overly warm one at first but damn did that hurt. Rubbing his jaw for a moment he spit out the blood that was pooling in his mouth from the split lip he was going to be sporting along with a fantastic bruise in the morning, well if he lived to see the morning, that last part was still debatable with the cluster fuck that was most likely about to happen in the next few hours.

It was two years later and Nix still hit as hard as he remembered from his interrupted meeting with Maria at the small hole in the wall bar in Dublin. When he had chosen the location he had no idea that a then Major Nixon and two other officer friends would walk into the bar, let alone start a bar brawl right there and then with him over his going “rogue”. Of course Nix had been pissed drunk by the time he had spotted him and had confronted Hunter with all the subtlety of bull in a china shop. Hunter had felt bad about fighting Nix that night and doubly felt like an ass when he had found out later that night that had been Nix’s stag party and that his once best friend was getting married the next morning.

With Maria’s help he had been able to get a very good makeup artist to the wedding to hide the bruises and cuts as best at they could, it had been his wedding present to the soon to be newly married couple. He didn’t ask how but Maria somehow got him a copy of the wedding photos and in it you could only tell that Nix had a large bruise to his left jaw and a black right eye if you knew what you were looking for. He wished he didn’t have to put the smack down on Nix while Maria took care of the other two officers but it was that or end up in the ER or worst the ICU himself that night and he couldn’t risk it.

That meeting in Dublin had been a progress report on an investigation that involved some stolen SHIELD tech that he was trying to track from the buyer to the seller so Maria could plug the source on her end. Of course it was also so Maria could chew him a new one once again for hurting the woman she considered her sister in all but blood. At the time he had over an year to tell Bobbi who he really was and who he was really working for but he hadn’t done it and Maria was getting tired of seeing Bobbi hurt. Truth was so was he but he couldn’t risk her knowing, risk her trying to help him in anyway because if Bobbi had known the truth you’d be damn sure she’d try to help him.
Hurting Bobbi was one of the many downsides of being undercover, the other was not being allowed to tell anyone family or friend that he was really a good guy. His own brother had died thinking he was a traitor to Queen and Country though Riley never quite disowned him like everyone else in the family had done. Then there was Nix who had felt personally betrayed by it all and had made it his personal mission to make Hunter pay for all of his crimes. Nix’s personal vendetta against him though had played into the cover story that was thought up by his MI-9 handlers and the bastards had used it to their full advantage to get him deeper and deeper in everything dark and seedy. For years the whole thing had left a bitter taste in his mouth and he was glad he was finally done with it.

When MI-9 had approached him about going undercover for them he had thought back to sitting next to his grandfather and listening to his crazy ass spy stories. Stories that he and his whole family thought were just that stories, stories made up by an old man that was slowly losing touch with reality and control of his faculties. Now though he knew that those stories were 100% real or at least his grandfather being some super secret spy was real the facts behind the stories he wondered if he could ever track down. But when the opportunity had arisen for him to join MI-9 he had jumped at it without really looking to see if there was water in the pool so to speak. He now knew it wasn’t coincidence MI-9 had come and recruited him just when he came home from his first round of deployments with the SAS.

"Guess I deserved that Nix, especially with how I’ve left things over the years" Hunter said finally rubbing his jaw one last time before reaching into his jacket and only stopping when he heard the safeties click off from the two junior officers now pointing their 9mm at him. ‘Well isn’t this lovely’ he thought making sure to slowly pull his hand back out of his jacket and keep them steady and visible.

"Stand down!” came the bellowed order from behind him and Hunter watched as the two junior officers scrambled to not only lower and holster their weapons but also come to attention and salute. Looking over to Nix he saw that his friend was also at attention and he tried to hide the snicker but it still earned a head slap from General Richard “Shadow” Richmond. “Hunter I see that you are getting reacquainted with old friends.”

“Yes sir, acquainted with Nix’s right hook that I remember quite fondly, sir” Hunter snarked back before spitting some more blood in front of the General’s shoe which seemed to piss off Nix even more because the man moved as if to grab him and start pummeling him again.

“Damn it! I said stand down Nix!” Richmond said and waited till Nix backed off. “Now, I guess I deserved that, since Hunter did warn me that Wentworth wasn’t going to tell you we were coming. Hunter I owe you a bottle of scotch since it seems you were right about Wentworth,” Richmond said while walking in front of Hunter and holding out a hand for Hunter to take.

“General we were told that you and an aide were coming to brief myself and my men but this man is
a criminal and with him on this base I have enough to finally arrest him like he should have been years ago” Nix said as he was pulled to his feet and Hunter just smirked at his old friend the General because he just won both of his bets with the man, earning a groan from the General.

Once a upon a time General Richard “Shadow” Richmond had been a young Captain Richard “Shadow” Richmond in charge of two very pain in the ass newly minted SAS Lieutenants known as Lewis “Nix” Nixon and Lance “Jackal” Hunter. They had been through hell and back again, on their first deployment as a unit. It was only a week later when Hunter had been approached by MI-9 to go undercover for them and that was when he had to lie to his best friend and his then commanding officer to sell the cover story his handler Wentworth had thought up.

“Damn it, make that a bottle of scotch and whiskey. Nix please do shut up before you cost me another damn bottle and Hunter remind me never to bet against you again” Richmond said as he turned towards the hanger, Hunter turned and saw the preparations going on inside and he could tell by Richmond’s face he wasn’t liking what he was seeing, and Hunter agreed with him.

“But General…” Nix started again only to stop when Richmond leveled another glare at him, silencing his protests.

“Hunter deal with this misunderstanding ,” Richmond said motioning between the two former friends before moving towards the hanger and motioning for the two other officers to follow him. “You two with me, I see Wentworth was vague as shit with his orders and you all are packing everything and the kitchen sink. Go inform all the officers weapons, ammo and only a days rations...”

“Is it me or do they get younger and younger?” Hunter said watching the two lieutenants following the General like two overeager puppies. Two overeager puppies but he couldn’t blame them they had just met a living legend in the small SAS community.

“No we are just getting old as shit” Nix said automatically then grimaced when he realized he had answered the question without argument. “I don’t know what he thinks there is to misunderstand about what you did Hunter. How the hell you aren’t rotting in prison or facing a firing squad I don’t know.”

“Trust me, or don’t trust me but what you think you know happened isn’t what happened” Hunter said to his old friend reaching into his jacket slowly as Nix watched his every move before pulling out the case that held his credentials. The very same credentials that he hadn’t let out of his sight since taking them out of his safe to meet up with not only Bobbi but their newly discovered third Jemma. It was funny how something so small could mean the world to someone but to him it was a new lease on life.
The credentials in his hands didn’t mean he didn’t have nightmares about some of the things he’d done and seen in his years as being undercover but it meant that he wasn’t a worthless piece of shit like those he worked to put away all these years. It also didn’t mean that all was forgiven and that he wouldn’t have to live the rest of his life, however long that might be looking over his shoulder either, he still had a price over his head and plenty of enemies on both sides of the system. But maybe just maybe he would have one less enemy today once Nix saw what was inside.

“Catch” Hunter said tossing the credentials over to Nix before he reached down and grabbed his go bag from where he had dropped it earlier. Hunter kept one eye on Nix and witnessed the moment when Nix’s mind caught up with what his eyes were seeing in Hunter’s wallet. "Bloody hell! These are real aren't they?"

"Very. I've been deep cover since before the scandal broke, it was all part of my cover for years. I'm sorry mate I would’ve told you but I was ordered not to tell ANYONE when I was first recruited. Hell Riley never even knew the truth before he died, though I believe he began to suspect it” Hunter said with a shrug of his shoulders as he watched Nix take in that information before he tossed the wallet back to Hunter.

“So what is this all about Hunter?” Nix asked beside him as they quickly made their way through the hanger and towards a briefing room at the far end.

“I know you saw the MI-9 credentials but did you see the second set that was there as well?” Hunter asked and there was a moment of silence before there was an audible groan beside him before they entered into the briefing room. Walking over to the far wall that was largely dominated by a wall of big screen tv’s he knew were similar in design and function from what he had seen of the Avengers base in Italy. Of course they should be similar since it was Tony that had personally come to install all the hardware and software that was being used by any of the special forces of her Majesty's armed forces.

Dropping his gear bag he pulled out his StarkPad and the adapter cord he’d have to use on his StarkPhone also in a moment “Call Skyefall, Avenger Alpha Protocol” he said while connecting the cord from his phone to the usb port in the walls central control hub.

“Avenger?” Nix questioned beside him and Hunter just quickly smirked at his friend before the call was connected.

“Hello Jackal, I see that you are making friends wherever you go” Natasha Romanoff said from the screen of the phone before it blinked and went up to the wall.
“Widow you know me, Mr. Friendly. Now where is my newest buddy, I need her skills to lock this down” Hunter said as Richmond came into the briefing room before shutting the door behind him. Right now it was just Nix, Richmond and himself and he’d like it to be that way till they locked down the connection. There shouldn’t be a way of anyone tracing this call to the FARM without being hard wired into the port like he was but he’d rather be safe than sorry with all the children that were now under protection there.

“I’m here, hold your horses” Skye said as she came into view of the pickup as she was typing on a laptop that seemed to be floating next to her. “Hello General Richmond, nice to see you again.”

“Hello Agent Skye, you will have to tell me how you hacked your way into Central Home Defense Command, my technicians are all stumped” said Richmond and Hunter tried not to laugh outright while Nix beside him looked a little green at the thought of anyone being able to hack into Central Home Defense Command.

“I’m not surprised I stumped them. I’ve been hacking into your systems for years now for fun and never was caught. You can tell your techies they just got bested by the hacker known as Skye, former member of The Rising Tide. Of course that was before SHIELD black bagged and recruited my ass” Skye answered Richmond with a cheeky grin and a shrug of her shoulders.

“Major Hunter?” Richmond asked with a worried look towards him.

“More or less true sir, but don’t worry Skye is one of us now and I know Deputy Director Hill will personally make her put everything back together better than she found it” Hunter said before clearing his throat giving Skye a pointed look.

“Oh don’t worry she already did” Natasha said with an amused grin and barely concealed glee from beside Skye and Hunter wondered what would give Natasha that much amusement.

“I was going to do it anyways, no need to get my mom and dad on the phone…” grumbled Skye but he saw the happy look in her eyes and he couldn’t help but feel happy for the young woman, and thankful to her all at the same time.

“Let them play the parent card kid, they missed your teens years” Hunter teased before sighing. “Alright joking aside, General Richmond you’ve met Agent Skye our resident hacker and codename Skyefall. Beside her is Agent Romanoff, codenamed Black Widow of the Avenger initiative. Ladies please meet General Richard Richmond and Colonel Lewis “Nix” Nixon of her Majesty’s SAS.
Now that’s out of the way what’s the update from the teams on the ground?”

“SHIELD teams 616 and 626 with limited Avenger back up are on the ground in Greenwich our hope that they would be lead outside of the major populated areas has pretty much been squashed. Right now they are in this section of the city tracking down the anomaly” Skye said bringing up a map onto the screen of zoomed in section of the city near a river.

“What exactly are we talking about here?” Nixon said from beside him as he took a step closer to look at the map up on the screen.

“Colonel we are talking about a New York type event but this time in England. A major astrological event is happening that apparently is an alignment of all the Nine Realms making the barriers between our world, aka Midgard, aka Earth and the others very weak. According to Thor, Loki and Sif the Asgardians that came to warn us there is a race called Dark Elves that are heading this way to deploy a weapon since we are in the middle that could destroy all of the Nine Realms in one go.”

“Bloody hell” Nix said in shock forgetting his manners in front of a lady.

“My thoughts exactly Nix, that’s why I activated everything out there” Richmond said nodding back towards the closed door that led back to the troopers gearing up for a fight. “We are lucky compared to New York we know it’s coming and we have an idea how bad it could be from what they went through. We just don’t know where exactly and if what we prepare is going to be enough to stop the death and damage toll that New York paid.”

“Alright Agent Skye, I spoke with Deputy Director Hill earlier and agreed that this will be a SHIELD led operation with lots of help from Her Majesty’s military since there isn’t a large SHIELD presence here in England and this is your wheelhouse and not ours. Now what else do you need? And how can we help?”

“We will need containment force, a reactionary force and medics…” Skye started to say and they got to the nuts bolts of the operation.

"Taser to Athena, the squints are requesting a stop to deploy their equipment again," Darcy radioed over the tactical net from the large armored cargo van that Maria had stuffed all the scientist but Tony into. The van had come as a surprise not just because it was armored but also because it came with all the bells and whistles that the scientist would need for a mobile lab. It was enough to turn the four highly educated and respected scientists in multiple fields into giddy school children with a new shiny toy. They had swarmed the van with happy abandon modifying all the equipment inside to the
specific needs of their current mission.

The only downside to the giddiness of the scientists was that it took an insane amount of time to get them into their gear for the mission because they were too busy playing. It had taken both Bobbi and Izzy throwing their mates over their shoulders and carrying them off to even get the twins into their tactical gear that Tony had provided for them before they had even left the Italy Avenger base. Where Tony found the time to create the new gear she would never know because before everyone had even left every new family member had new tactical gear that had increased flexibility and durability in a fight.

The surprise of course had been when Darcy had come up to the warehouse they had been using as a staging area already in tactical gear that was similar to the newest issues carrying a bag with her. It was then with Thor and Sif’s help that she had then pulled Jane and Selvig from their newest toy to get them also dressed in gear. Jane also had a tactical suit similar in design to Darcy’s but Maria could tell it had been modified instead from carrying weapons to carrying science equipment strapped to her person.

The only bad part was that Selvig didn’t have a personal tactical suit like everyone else but it seemed that “Neverland’s” armory had provided well enough for him this one time and Tony said he’d get a suit for Selvig made for next time. ‘God I hope there isn’t a next time..who am I kidding there will be a hundred next times’ she thought before shaking her head to clear it of the dark thoughts.

"Copy Taser. Loki are you up for providing an illusion again?" Maria asked not taking her eyes off the scenery passing them by as Bobbi slowly drove them through what looked to be a large university campus. She hadn’t realized it at first but the large scale illusion she was asking of Loki took something out of him each and every time he did it. The first time after they had gotten back into the vehicle he seemed fine but after the second and third time it seemed like he was getting progressively weaker every time he did it.

No there was no way to avoid the need for the illusion it was either Loki made it look like they were all in plain clothes and not armed to the teeth or she’d have mass panic every time they had to stop to deploy equipment to get a better read on where they needed to go next. It had been a decision that they had made before even leaving “Neverland” because whatever was coming was going to come fast and hard. If there was one thing she had learned from New York it was that she wasn’t about to be caught with their pants down around their ankles if she could avoid it.

It was also why she had broken SHIELD protocol in having Hunter make contact with his MI-9 handler to make sure the British government and military knew just what was about to happen in their country and to ask for assistance. It was why their little caravan was now being monitored and shadowed from a distance by a couple companies of Royal Marines that once shit hit the fan was to maintain a perimeter of the area.
"Just tell me when" the god of mischief and mayhem said from behind her, his voice serious as she knew that he was keeping watch for any signs of trouble as well. It was odd seeing and hearing the Asgardian so serious but she knew that he was trying to do everything in his power to make himself useful so that they would keep him here on Earth or Midgard giving him the only chance he had to meet his soulmate. A soulmate by the words Maria had read on his skin was a very confused and angry woman who needed someone to understand what she was going through and that someone would definitely be Loki.

"Ironman to Athena there is a large enough area to stage the vehicles coming up. Take a right at the next intersection and then straight down to the library building. There is a large parking area just in front of the building with a grassy area we can use to deploy the equipment" Tony said from above them flying as he provided overwatch for the two armored suburban and armored cargo van that was their little caravan.

“Copy Ironman. Yang and 33 do you copy?” Maria said as they continued to slowly drive through the busy campus.

“Copy” she heard from both Phil and Kara just as she took the right turn indicated. Moments later she saw what Tony was talking about and though it was more open than she’d like to have the scientist in, it would have to do. Parking the first suburban she waited for the van to take the spot next to hers while the other suburban took a flanking position on the van.

“Alright same assignments as last time, stay tight together” Maria ordered as she opened her door and felt the shiver she associated with Loki’s illusion settling on her person. “Athena to Skyefall.”

“Go for Skyefall,” she heard the steady voice of her mate and she took comfort in it as her Kara, Phil and Mel started to form a perimeter around the area the scientist would be using to take their readings.

“We’ve stopped again for readings. We are at the University of Greenwich near the library building” she said unnecessarily because she knew Skye was following them not only with the optics from Tony’s suit but also from a Stark satellite that so happened to be near the area they needed it to be. It seemed Tony’s paranoia was even deeper than she thought because the billionaire apparently had multiple satellites now in orbit around earth to be used by the Avengers for planetary surveillance and communications but also looking out towards the stars monitoring everything and anything that even “twitched funny” as Tony had put it to her hours ago.

“Copy that. Units standing by have been updated” Skye said but Maria barely heard her because the hair on her neck stood up as she saw the scientist getting agitated by something they were reading on
their instruments. She tore her eyes away from the scientist trusting that the others watching them would be able to protect them as her eyes started scanning the area for threats.

“Geronimo. I repeat Geronimo,” Darcy radioed over the tactical net the keyword to let them know they had found the spot that the breach was going to take place at...but the keyword was unneeded as all hell broke loose around them as an alien ship suddenly plowed into the edge of the campus from the river throwing students, faculty, scientist and agents to the ground. There was a moment of shocked silence as everyone tried to get back to their feet but it was only a moment before a door opened up on the alien ship and the first wave of Elvish troops started to unload from the massive ship. Civilians started to panic and run from the advancing troops and the Dark Elves started to fire into the fleeing mayhem that their arrival had caused.

“Ironman covering fire. Asgardians you’re up. Taser, Hummingbird and Lion get Foster and Selvig into the library behind us and get your devices up and running. Velma, Yin and Yang get the vehicles as close to the library as you can and unload the gear with their help. Everyone else covering fire and try to get as many civilians as you can into surrounding buildings” Maria ordered and heard the confirmation from her team as she fired into the advancing Elvish troops.

“Athena to Skyefall, our base is going to be the library building get those Marines to set up the perimeter about 200 yards north and east of the library building using the river as a natural barrier. Also we are going to need any extra help that can be sent our way because I estimate at least 100 enemy troops and they are still unloading and that’s a really big ship” Maria radioed as she ejected a clip from her M4 and reloaded it as she pushed civilians out of her line of fire and back towards the library building.

“Ok who ordered a giant lizard puppy?” Tony quipped over the comms as he flew overhead watching as the giant creature appeared with the Asgardians and the white pasty elf out of thin air. He could see that Thor, Sif and Loki were all injured in some way but they were still fighting trying to kill the elf that wanted to destroy the universe. But it was the lizard creature that had his attention as some of the elf’s minions started attacking the beast only to be charged by the creature and eaten by it. ‘Lizard creature 1, evil minions 0’ he thought.

“That would be a Jotunheim beast from Loki’s birthworld” Sif said over the comms slightly clueing him in on the origins of the beast.

“Oh it is dear sister and I’d very much like not to be eaten by the damn thing today. Ironman can you get it out of our way? Try leading it towards more of Malekith’s troops maybe it can take out more of these damn elves” Loki said as he watched the two brothers and Sif not only fight Malekith but the beast that was now trying to eat everyone in sight.
“Got it” Tony said as he did a fly by of the beast shooting it with a low grade laser to get it’s
attention but not seriously hurt it. The beast roared as it stomped its feet like a damn bull before it
tried to charge after him. “Toro, toro” he said as he launched himself into the air and twisted as he
flew between two buildings. “Alright who wants to play with the puppy?”

“Ironman try getting him to the northeast, there is a large squad about to break the perimeter”
Skyefall called out from the Farm as the young woman was monitoring the battle with satellites and
CCTV camera’s coordinating the British Marines that were surrounding the battle trying to keep it
contained to just this area.

“Copy that Skyefall, one large lizard puppy heading that way” Tony said goading the creature to
keep chasing after him.

“Ironman I’m connecting you directly to the unit that is holding that side of the perimeter. Captain
Gibson, Ironman. Ironman, Captain Gibson, now you boys play nice” Skyefall said causing Tony to
start chuckling.

“Well Captain Gibson let me know where you want this beasty” Tony said making sure that the
giant lizard puppy kept following him.

“Ok who ordered a giant lizard puppy?” that sentence alone caused Hunter to wince as he listened
into the tactical net hoping to hear the voices of his mates to know that they were okay. Whatever his
snarky future father in law called a ‘giant lizard puppy’ he totally didn’t want to know, let alone have
it anywhere near his two mates because he knew the description was probably going to be right on
point.

Hunter checked his weapons for what felt like the hundredth time as he stood at the doorway to the
cockpit of the perfectly good plane he was minutes away from jumping out of, into what seemed to
be a very hot situation. They had been in the air for only fifteen minutes but it seemed like forever
when all he wanted to do was drop and get eyes on his mates and see with his own eyes that they
were okay.

Even though Hunter was only a Major in the British Army he was also now a SHIELD agent...only
for a few weeks but he sure in hell wasn’t going to tell anyone that. This was a SHIELD operation
and Richmond and Skye had agreed that since he was both British Army and SHIELD he was given
overall command of the forces that were going into the containment area of the battle to assist. What
they were about to try to pull off was going to end up in the history books one day but what those
books would say mattered on if they were able to pull it off without Murphy sticking his nose too
badly into it.

His plan was simple if a bit complex at the same time because there was only four buildings large
enough for his men to land on either by jumping or being brought in by Seaking helicopters. Each building would get one full squadron from the 22nd SAS Regiment a total of 65 men, with another 25 men attached to each SAS squadron from the 144th Parachute Medical Squadron to assist with the wounded and go out with the units that would be clearing the smaller buildings that were guaranteed to have civilians both wounded and unwounded hiding inside them. The risk of landing just in the helicopters though were too great without a force already securing the landing zones on the roofs.

So before the helicopters were even brought in he would need to land the airborne component or the Angels of each Squadron onto those roofs. The only thing was only two men could land on the buildings at a time, there just wasn’t anymore room than that to safely do it. So he had eight planes loaded with two men for each building loaded onto them while he and Nix were loaded on the ninth plane in the lead. Sixteen men for buildings Alpha, Bravo and Charlie, while Delta the library got eighteen men.

Delta building was going to be central command for Nix and himself and he did not miss the questioning look Nix had given him when he had insisted on that being the case but thankfully at the time Nix didn't say anything. Hunter sensed more than saw when Nix joined him looking into the cockpit but still his friend didn't ask the question Hunter knew he wanted to ask. Instead of thinking on his friends unusual continued silence he continued to think of the plan looking at it from multiple angles trying to find where it could go wrong, the only thing was at any part of it, it could go all horribly wrong.

Only once the roofs were secure, the Seakings were suppose to start landing in three waves; of men, much needed medical supplies and small arsenal of weapons and ammo. The helicopters were then supposed to retreat out of the range of enemy fire before being called in to be loaded with any critically wounded civilians or soldiers. Anyone not wounded would be held in whatever secure location they could scrounge up till they could make sure no alien tech escaped the area.

"So Hunter you going to tell me what's got you so nervous or are we going to continue staring at the back of the pilot making him nervous?" Hunter didn't answer right away taking a moment to decide what exactly to tell his friend at the moment, because there sure in hell wasn't a way of telling him everything before the got the green light to jump.

He was debating on the cliff notes version or just a hint when he saw the pilot flick the switch that turned on the red ready light all airborne units knew meant they were just moments away from the jump. Smirking he keyed on his microphone to live as he made his way to the now opening back door of the plane "Jackal to Skyefall, ninety seconds to jump."

"Skyefall copies. To all Angels, godspeed boys" he heard Skye reply before he switched his microphone off of live for the jump.
“You aren’t going to tell me are you?” Nix yelled to him as they stood on the ramp waiting for the light to turn green.

‘Ah what the hell, he knows me too well, he’ll see it the instant I interact with Bobbi or Jemma’ he thought just as the light turned green. “Well come on Nix, time for you meet my two future wives,” Hunter said cheekily before taking a running leap out the back of a perfectly working plane towards an alien war zone that his mates were smack dab in the middle of. A moment later Nix was next to him free falling, punching him in the shoulder hard before they continued to fall.

“Velma to FARM” Angie radioed as she changed the dressing on one of the many injured students that had been caught in the crossfire between them and the elven troops. She had a nasty burn on her right arm from a hit she had taken while covering students as they had fled into the building but she barely felt it. Either from the adrenaline rushing through her system from the battle or actual nerve damage from the burn she wasn’t sure but with the way it looked she wasn’t looking a gift horse in the mouth, she’d take the not being able to feel it.

“Go for Themis” she heard the voice of one of her mother’s and despite being an adult it instantly brought a sense of relief she didn’t know she needed in that moment. Themis was the new code name for her birth mother Jenny and it fit her pretty well since it was the titan goddess of law and order. Angie didn’t have any idea that her mother would be listening in or helping out but now that she thought about it, it all made sense because though it was Skye ultimately making the decisions she would need help answering all the radio traffic and monitoring everything going on.

“Themis any eta on that medevac? I have three CatAlpha, another dozen Cat Beta's to CatCharlie’s that need to get out of here. I’m also running low on supplies.”

“Stand by Velma” she heard as she moved to another patient and started running another line for oxygen trying to stabilize the students breathing that was getting worse.

“Velma, help is dropping now.”

Skye watched the live satellite feed from thousands miles away as her mate, her parents and her now extended family fought to hold the library building against a constant wave of alien troops. She knew help was on the way now with the much needed bodies and supplies needed to turn this battle but she knew that despite their best efforts there were people dead or dying down there and there was nothing more that she could do other than what she was already doing.

The SAS were doing a HALO jump and from what she had quickly read on it what they were doing by landing on the roofs of the buildings in the campus was a thing of precision and talent. She knew
anyone not landing on the roof of a building like planned was liable to be dead before they hit the ground and she prayed that everyone made it. For a moment it seemed like time slowed and all com traffic stopped as all of her team on this side of the operation waited with bated breath waiting for confirmation the airborne landings had gone off without a hitch.

“Jackal to Skyefall, all Angels have landed” Hunter said over the radio loud and clear and Skye felt herself let go of the breath she had been holding since the jumps started. When Maria had ordered Hunter to warn the British what was about to happen in their backyard she knew Maria didn’t expect him to fly to England and join the fight. At the time Skye wasn’t about to try to stop him and from the looks of it on the video feed neither was Hand. Hell she was pretty sure Hand was the one that had ordered the Quinjet Hunter had flown to England readied for his arrival on the airfield.

Taking a deep breath she let it out and watched and waited and hoped it was all going to be enough. There was a flash on the screen and once the image went back to normal there was a tall female dressed in all black armor in the middle of what looked to be a squadron of the Dark Elves fighting her way towards Loki who had been working to keep the Dark Elves busy while Sif and Thor fought with their leader. "Who the hell is that?"

“Valkyrie! Are you here to help or take me back to Odin ” Loki asked as he spun around slicing open a few Dark Elves with a wide arch of his Ashandarei before bring it back and stabbing backwards into one attempting to get the drop on him from behind. He had been separated from Thor and Sif in the last wave of troops from the ship and had been fighting his way slowly back towards them as they fought with Malekith. Even if Odin had sent her to take him back to Asgard he knew Valkyrie would not walk away from a fight like this, no she would help any way she could and he would be internally grateful for it because for supposedly extinct race they sure had some numbers.

“Helping. Your mother sent me, said something about keeping your fool head intact for her to give you a talking to about never telling her about a soulmate you’ve kept hidden from her” Valkyrie answered as she pulled out her sword Dragonfang from the chest of a Dark Elf kicking him to the ground and backing up towards Loki.

“Of course that would be the one thing Mother would want to talk to me about” Loki said rolling his eyes. "Did you tell her you've known about my mark since day one?"

"I might be the one to choose noble warriors for our halls of Valhalla but I don't have a personal death wish” she answered back causing him to chuckle as they finally were now back to back fighting in a sea of Dark Elves.

“I've always known you were a smart woman. Now, I’m guessing since the witless three aren’t with you that the bridge is still down from the attack on Asgard?” Loki asked as he conjured up the
illusion there were multiples of him confusing the Dark Elves for the moment.

“Yes and I left them pouting once again because I get to go have fun while they have to stay home and tend the hearth” Valkyrie said from behind him and he could hear her amusement in her voice. Brunnhilde aka Valkyrie, leader of the Valkyrior was one of his oldest friends and at one time his lover. It had been over twenty earth years since they had been lovers but they had stayed friends once the words had shown up one morning on his arm and for the longest time she was the only one that had known he had gotten his mark.

“Well I am glad to have you here. Here put this in your ear and this near your throat” Loki said handing Valkyrie an extra set of coms that he had kept just in case one of theirs broke during the fight.

“Well, shall we show these Elves how Asgardians do it?” Loki asked as he danced around to face her giving a cheeky grin and a waggle of the eyebrows. His antics causing her to laugh and answer with her own cheeky grin before they started to dance an all too familiar dance of death and destruction around them.

“Taser to Skyefall whoever she is, she seems to be helping but by the armor and the sword I’m guessing she’s Asgardian” Darcy said as she lowered a pair of binoculars that had been moments ago in her tactical bag. She had been glancing out the window at the battle below when the flash of light had occurred, it was similar to the times she had seen Thor travel so hoped it was Odin finally pulling his head out of his ass and sending help. From the looks of it that wasn’t the case since it seemed to be only one warrior, one was better than none and the Asgardians sure knew how to kick ass but they would need a whole lot more than that if something didn’t change soon.

“Copy Taser, how’s the brain trust doing?” Skye asked and Darcy looked away from the window for a moment looking back to the flurry of activity behind her as Jane, Selvig and FitzSimmons worked to get the devices that should contain the Aether or Dark Matter in a single area. What they were to do with it afterwards was another matter and so totally not her headache to deal with.

No her headache was making sure the scientist didn’t harm themselves, were safe and didn’t burn down the building around them while in the middle of an alien invasion. Darcy glanced down at the extinguisher that she already had to use twice since the battle started and it was all because the scientist had set something on fire or had blown something up on accident.

“Still working on it, seems like they are getting somewhere but don’t quote me on that” Darcy said as she went back to glancing out the window wishing she could do more, but Maria had ordered her to just watch and observe since she didn’t want Darcy drawing attention to the scientist she was now in charge of protecting. FitzSimmons were armed as well but they seemed just as unsure as she felt
about the thought of having to kill someone even if it was an elf set on destroying the universe. Inside she was a wreck of nerves but on the outside she was cool and collected, almost bored. It was one of Grandpa Dum Dum’s lessons in leadership: *Even if you are scared and unsure don’t let those depending on you see it.*

She knew it was all in her head that the M4 felt like it weighed more than it really did as it hung from its strap at her right side while there was a 9mm on her left hip. The body armor she knew was designed to be durable, flexible and moderate body temperature felt tight and confining as she stood there doing nothing but keeping watch over the scientist. It was one of the harder things she had ever done because even though internally she was scared shitless, she wasn’t deaf to the radio traffic going on between the agents fighting downstairs trying to keep the building secure from the Elves. Or even the radio traffic between one of her mates Angie asking where the medevac was for the wounded because just below her, was students just like her dead and dying because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Looking back she realized now that this was always going to be her life and that old Grandpa DumDum had been preparing her for it subtly from day one. No one who ever met Dum Dum Dugan would ever call her him subtle but thinking back she realized there was even more to the old man than he let anyone see and she wished he was alive so she could pick his brain. Well pick his brain and kick him in the shins for never telling her the truth, fuck the agreement he had supposedly made with her mother. She had a right to know who her father really was, a right to decide who she wanted to be and not forced into some perfect image of who she should be by her mother.

Darcy and her mother had hardly ever gotten along and that was the understatement of the century. Her teen years were spent at two different extremes constant fighting or icy silences, there was no middle ground with her and her mother and she knew now there probably never would be. Growing up she had heard about two different versions of her father one from her mother and the other from her grandfather. One version was stiff and formal and exactly how her mother always was even with her. The other was a fun loving, sarcastic ass that had a sense of duty that was unwavering and that was exactly how she would describe Grandpa DumDum. It was that version of her father and her grandfather that she wished to imitate in her daily life and realized she had been a Dugan all along.

Some people believed that it took heroes to run towards the sound of danger and a part of her agreed with that belief but a part of her also believed that it was the terminally curious that did as well. A small explosion rocked the building and Darcy fought to keep her footing as she reached for the M4 on the side of body. Glancing over she saw FitzSimmons also reacting already to the explosion as they brought up their weapons as well from the tabletops next to them.

Leaning against the wall she looked down out the window and saw debris on the side of the building closest to the emergency stairwell next to them on this side of the building. Acting on instinct and trying not to overthink it she moved towards a frozen Jane and Selvig and pushed them further into the room towards the inner stairs that led the way to the floors below them. “Behind the librarian’s desk now! Hummingbird take the right, Lion take the left” she ordered as surprisingly steady hands held her M4 as she took position in the center of a low wall that separated one section of the upper
library from the other. ‘Curiosity killed the cat’ was the old saying and she hoped that wasn’t the case. “Don’t shoot till I say.”

“Velma to the front!” she heard over the radio and knew that wasn’t a good thing.

A small explosion from below rocked the building they were standing on top of and Hunter wasn’t the only one that had to fight to keep his feet under him. Originally he was suppose to wait till the first Seaking unloaded the first batch of troopers but he knew that whatever was happening below wasn’t good and they’d need help now instead of later. Quickly looking over the edge of the roof he saw where there was now a good pile of debris from where part of a wall had been taken out. Enemy troops were starting to try push their way in and if they got in it would be bad since they were right next to the emergency stairwell for this side of the library building that led the way to all the floors.

“2nd and 3rd squads suppressing fire right here, 4th squad cover the other areas. 1st squad with the Colonel and I. Jackal to Skyefall, Delta is making entry now” Hunter said as he made his way to the door that led the floors below and towards the enemy troops.

“Skyefall copies, comms patched over for you Delta Leader” he heard Skye acknowledge but something was off in her voice but had to shake it off as he began to hear the comm traffic from those below him. Nix gave him a questioning look when Skye said his callname for the mission instead of acknowledging Hunter himself, but he just grinned back at Nix who just sighed and shook his head. Hunter knew that his two mates were probably too distracted with everything going on that the didn’t realize how close he really was to them in that moment, which meant Maria still didn’t have a clue that he was here.

Tactically it was a major no no but he and Nix had always been the type to lead from the front and it seemed the only things that changed in the years since he was on this side of the gun with Nix was that they got older and maybe just a bit wiser. Taking a deep breath he nodded his head to the young man that was this squads breacher, in the space of him letting out his breath the door was kicked in and he was through the door leading the way. In a moment like this instinct and training takes over as he quickly scanned the stairway for enemies and finding none started making his way down.

“Delta2 to Delta Leader we have arrived where do you want us?” came over the radio just as he came to the first landing and a closed doorway.

“Keep two squads on top with you, send your other two down with your medics” Nix ordered from behind him as Hunter had stopped looking at the doorway. Closing his eyes he felt down the line that was his bond with Bobbi and Jemma and could tell that one of them was just on the other side of this doorway. He couldn’t tell who just yet but given time and practice he was sure he would be able to tell the two apart eventually.
“Alright Delta1 take everyone including two medics down all the way to the ground and secure the perimeter, whatever the SHIELD agents down there says, goes. Rest of the medics stay here with the Colonel and myself” Lance ordered still with his eyes closed trying to figure out which mate it was on the other side of the door. In quick order he could tell that the men were filing slowly past him making their way down to the fight that was continuing below.

Waiting till they passed Hunter opened up his eyes and clicked the safety on his weapon as he pushed it to his back because he now knew what mate was on the other side of the door. “Alright here is to hoping the scientist don’t have itchy trigger fingers because you can bet your ass Athena armed them” Hunter said as he quickly opened the door and stepped inside the room before Nix could stop him.

“Bloody hell Hunter are you trying to get shot!” Jemma yelled at him as he came into a large room with his arms held out showing that he didn’t have a weapon in his hands. Smiling he shrugged and watched as his smallest mate put down her weapon and ran towards him falling into his now outstretched arms.

“No worries love, if you shot me you’d only have done what Bobbi has been threatening for years to do to me. She’d be jealous” he said causing Jemma to laugh into his chest as he quickly took a deep breath of her scent.

“Hello Hunter” Fitz said and he watched as the scientist clicked on the safety first on his weapon before walking over and doing the same to his sisters now forgotten weapon.

“Hey little brother” Hunter said as he finally moved himself and Jemma out of the doorway so Nix and the medics could get out of the stairway. “Alright I see you all here, where is everyone else?”

“Below on the other two floors. Velma has the wounded below us while Athena and the rest are trying to keep hold of the first floor” Darcy Lewis codename Taser said as she moved around the low wall and towards the windows. Grabbing a fire extinguisher she brought it back with her and shot a burst towards Dr. Foster’s and Selvig as something they were working on started to spark up at them.

“Delta3 to Delta Leader, we have arrived” came over his radio and Nix started issuing the needed orders.

“Copy Delta3. Come down to the third floor with all the supplies you can, I want a containment area set up for any non injured civilians and a watch posted. All Medics to floor two where there are injured civilians” Nix ordered.
Squeezing Jemma and kissing the top of her head he took another deep breath of her scent as he listened into the com traffic as Delta1 made contact with The SHIELD team downstairs. A cleared throat to the side of him brought him away from the radio traffic and brought him face to face with an arched eyebrow clearly stating that Hunter better introduce him or he’d get another punch in the shoulder soon. “Jemma love, meet Colonel Lewis Nixon or Nix one of my oldest friends. Nix this lovely lady here is Dr. Jemma Simmons SHIELD scientist, agent and one of my mates.”

“Nice to meet you Dr. Simmons” Nix said shaking her hand.

“Jemma please and Hunter you better get downstairs, I have work to do and I bet Bobbi can use your help down there” his mate said before quickly hugging him. She went to walk away but Hunter grabbed her hand and pulled her to him bringing his lips to hers for a quick kiss before letting her go.

“Please be careful” Jemma said softly to him.

“Always. Come on Nix, she’s right, let’s go say hi to the other future wife before she realizes I’m here and comes looking for me” Hunter said as he pulled his M4 around and started heading for the stairs only stopping as Delta3 came in the doorway carrying supplies. Hunter turned around and headed for the interior stairway, taking the stairs two at a time.

Hunter stepped off the last step as Angie and Bobbi came up the other flight of stairs with Maria between them arguing that she was fine, even though she looked anything but fine. Multiple small cuts littered her face and neck while the front of her suit caught the brunt of the earlier blast but he’d bet a paycheck that tomorrow Maria would be sporting a nice array of bruises. “Hill you look like shit, let them patch you up” Hunter said getting her attention so he could distract her while Bobbi and Angie quickly cleaned her up.

“Jackal what the hell are you doing here? I don’t remember ordering you here, let alone clearing you for active duty just yet” Maria said as she was forcibly sat down on a chair by Bobbi.

“Wait she’s the broad that cleared the deck with two of my officers in that bar fight in Dublin!” Nix said beside him and Hunter had to bite back a groan because he and Maria were purposely vague whenever Dublin was mentioned.

“Nix meet SHIELD Deputy Director Maria Hill codename Athena, and no before you ask she is not the other future wife, that would be the tall blonde that is patching her up. SHIELD Agent Barbara “Bobbi” Morse codename Mockingbird, meet Colonel Lewis “Nix” Nixon my oldest mate in the SAS. Anyways Maria you didn’t order me to stay either. So I thought I’d stop by for a cuppa on this lovely afternoon,” Hunter said smirking before shrugging.
“Jackal!” Maria growled and looked to be about to chew him a new one but he held up his finger at a burst of incoming radio traffic.

“Delta4 to Delta Leader we are arriving.”

“Copy Delta4, down to floor one, hold the perimeter for now” Nix ordered before more radio traffic came in as Alpha, Bravo and Charlie Leaders radioed in that their buildings were secure and waiting for the order for their sweeps to the other buildings.

“Jackal copies, hold for now” Hunter ordered before dropping his microphone into the main channel again. “Jackal to Skyefall all units arrived and buildings have been secured.”

“Jackal to Skyefall all units arrived and buildings have been secured” came over the radio at the FARM but hardly anyone noticed while they were too busy fussing over her.

“I’m fine. Maria just took a hit and I wasn’t ready for it” Skye said sighing before she pushed the button to make her microphone go live. Of course they hadn’t expected for either of them to feel the others pain on the whole other side of the planet, but there it was, more evidence that their bond was strong as hell and abnormal as all fuck. Currently she had not only Natasha and Clint hovering over her but they had called Michael and Jackie when the pain Maria had experienced had almost brought her to her knees.

“Skyefall copies,” she said as a ping caught her attention because it was a search that Maria had started at Neverland before they had even known what was going on and it had just located the person. Pulling up the footage she realized it was from just outside their perimeter so she quickly did a visual confirmation that Ian the intern was standing right outside the perimeter in Greenwich talking to another man in a suit that looked like….

“JARVIS run facial recognition of the man next to subject one with that of Ian Quinn and pull up the live feed of that camera” Skye asked as she heard Maria trying to get her attention over the radio and realized she was still live mic’d but didn’t care as she rapidly pulled up maps of the area and figured out exactly where on the perimeter those men were talking. Results pinged with confirmation that Ian the intern was talking to Ian Quinn and she wouldn’t even bet a rats ass that it was a coincidence.

“Skyefall to Ironman, I got a job for you” Skye said to him as he watched as live video feed came up on his heads up display of two men talking on a rooftop surrounded by what had to be bodyguards but that wasn’t why Skye had linked the video to him in the middle of a battle. Nope one of the men he had no problems in recognizing and the other he vaguely recalled was the missing intern that Maria had been looking for before this all popped off.
‘And if it’s a coincidence they are talking just beyond our perimeter I’ll be a monkey’s uncle’ Tony thought as he led the large puppy like creature into a large group of Dark Elves before shooting upwards before twisting mid air and turning towards the perimeter. “Skyefall got it. Captain Gibson coming into your area, no puppy this time but I need to do some cleaning of scum behind your line.”

“Sir?” Gibson asked him in a slightly worried tone.

“Internationally wanted bad guy that was responsible for the torture of one of our own a while back and his lackey are behind your line watching the show from a rooftop near the river, probably hoping to get their hands on alien tech. I’m about to pay them a visit they aren’t going to forget anytime soon” Tony said as his suit scanned for weapons and saw that the bodyguards were carrying a small arsenal but nothing he couldn’t handle. Seeing the river bordering the building they were on he came up with a plan.

“Need an assist sir?” Captain Gibson asked and he knew he liked the Captain for a reason even if they hadn’t met face to face yet.

“Nah I got it, Captain” Tony answered as he flew and speared three of the five bodyguards hard and fast dumping them into the river in one solid move. Twisting he turned around and shot at the other two bodyguards knocking them on their asses before flying and grabbing the backs of the shirts of the two men he had come to take into custody.

“Ironman to Jackal I’m inbound with two pieces of shit” Tony said as he ignored the screaming of the two men that were dangling below him.

“Jackal copies, Delta is clear for landing and we will be happy to take care of the garbage” Hunter answered and Tony could tell the man was sprinting probably up to the roof just so he could take custody of the men personally. He almost felt sorry for the two men because for every member of their group it was personal but then all Tony had to do was see Skye’s broken body lying in the medical bay for him to get over that feeling. Arriving at Delta Tony didn’t slow down as he let go of the two men midair ten feet above the roof, causing the men to drop and roll till they stopped just short of the feet of an evilly smiling Hunter and some of his men that had guns at the ready.

“Skyefall to Ironman, thank you.”

“Anything for you kiddo” Tony said softly before zooming off away from Delta, he had a puppy to go play with.
Nicholas Fury Jr. bit back a sigh and the urge to pull at his collar as he sat in the queue to get onto the Marine base at Pendleton. This wasn’t his first time waiting in the queue to get onto the base to check in on his family but it was the first time waiting while the emergency protocols had been activated. He wanted nothing more than to just get inside but he had to wait just like everyone else so he wouldn’t attract more attention than necessary to those that lived inside the base.

It felt like forever but soon the queue moved enough that he was pulling up to the gate and handing his credentials out of the driver window. The young MP seeing the marks of his rank came to attention and saluted before taking his credentials to check them “Good morning Colonel.”

“Morning Corporal, more of you out here than usual” he said making conversation but he already knew the reason for the extra security was because of what was happening in England this very moment.

“Just an extra precaution Colonel, word is there is something like what happened in New York happening in London at the moment” the young Corporal said before handing him back his credentials with another salute.

“Thank you for the information Corporal Dobson,” Fury said as he returned the salute. As he drove through the checkpoint he rolled back up his window and switched back on the radio that was tuned into the battle chatter between the units in London and the location he knew as the Farm. At first he didn’t know where the Farm was, he didn’t want to know where the Widow and Hawkeye disappeared off to, but after realizing it was next to the Carter’s Farm he knew exactly where it was. He didn’t think it was coincidence that Peggy and Angie had gotten a young Natasha and Clint introduced to the area. Nick knew he could always ask Peggy but he knew he might never get a straight answer from the woman, dementia or not.

Pulling into the driveway he hit the button to open the garage before slowly pulling in, giving whoever was home enough time to get into position before he even thought about getting out of the car. Though everyone in the family was trained at a young age to handle these type of situations the mates were not and if he had to hazard a guess as to who was inside it would be his wife with all the Carter mates that lived on base. Even though they were either military or law enforcement he still was going to take it slow since this was their first lockdown and he really didn’t care to get shot by any of the women inside. Henrietta would be able to patch him up quickly enough since his mate was a doctor but he knew his two sons would never let him live it down if he got shot going into his own home.

Getting out of the car he left the bag with all the new phones and tablets in the front seat before making his way towards the inner door. Taking a deep breath he let it out before slowly opening the door. “Coming in, I’m unarmed” he said earning him a snort from whoever was behind the door he
had just opened.

“Words?” said another voice from the end of the hallway in front of him but he couldn’t see the speaker.

“I’m a little tea pot” Nick said with a sigh, earning him another snort from whoever was on his right behind the door before they engaged the safety on their weapon.

“Good to see you, Uncle Nick” said the speaker from the end of the hallway as they turned the corner holstering a 9mm and revealed the form of Elizabeth Jenson Harper which meant the one not able to hold back her amusement had to be Rizzoli Smith Harper. “Now you can tell us what the fuck is going on and if our kids are okay.”

“Kids are safe. Let me get my bag from the car and I’ll come explain everything as I get everything set up again for secure communications” Nick said turning back into the garage. He quickly retrieved the bag and followed both of the ladies further into the house. Coming into the living room he saw his wife in the kitchen as she readied a tray of coffee with Francine Mackenzie O’Connell Harper, one of the other mates on the base.

Nick shared a brief look with his wife and he dropped the walls that he had to build to protect her from the realities of his job. He watched as Henrietta’s shoulders slightly relaxed when she realized that he was uninjured through their bond. Their bond was an emotional bond but even through his emotions Henrietta was always able to tell when he was injured.

“About time you showed up” Allison Maxine Stone Harper said from her position on one of the couches, her eyes never leaving the two tv screens. One TV was tuned to the live coverage, which was more like speculation on what was happening in England while the other which had been at one point hidden was a live feed of multiple cameras stationed around the five houses that everyone lived in. It had taken some hacking but they had arranged to get all five houses at the end of the cul-de-sac on one the more less used parts of the base.

“I would have been here sooner but I had to make sure I wasn’t followed and had a reason to leave the Triskellion” Nick said turning off the footage from England earning him a glare from Allison.

“Where do they think you are right now?” Henrietta asked him as she set the coffee tray on the table and came to fold herself in his arms. Nick took a deep breath of his mates scent and kissed the top of her head.
“The Asgardians gave me a reason to be out in the field, right now my life model decoy is on the Hellicarrier on it’s way towards London to attempt to provide support to Hill and her group on the ground” he said after regretfully letting go of his wife. Pulling out his tablet from his bag and taking the thumb drive from around his dog tags he walked over to a panel next to the security feed and plugged in the thumb drive. “JARVIS, are you there?”

“I’m here Director, security feed and alarm systems on all five houses being routed to the secure server. Network communications are now secure as well. Director you have an incoming call from Agent Carter shall I connect the video call?” JARVIS asked him and Nick knew if he said no Sharon was going to override his ass anyways.

“Connect the call JARVIS, thank you” Nick said taking out the thumb drive and putting it back on around his neck in enough time to have the tv that had been watching the news coverage moments ago blink to life again. “Hello Sharon anything new?”

“Tony just captured Ian Quinn and “Ian the intern” outside of the containment zone. Hunter’s boys are keeping them company till they can get the area secure enough to arrange transport” Sharon said surprising him.

“I want them at the Fridge yesterday. Tell your brother to bring Darkwing and Counsel with him to London to be the escort. I understandably can’t trust any of the 616 or 626 crews to do it without their being a mishap with the prisoners, though lord knows Quinn deserves it. Cut the orders Sharon, use the access I gave you to make it look like it came directly from me” Nick answered as he sat down next to his wife on the couch and pulled his bag back towards him. Pulling out the new phones and tablets he started handing out sets to each of the women.

“Orders being issued now. Hello Aunt Henrietta, Francine, Allison, Rizzoli and Elizabeth. Where’s Nick Jr?” Sharon asked as she typed away on a tablet.

“He’s on alert, been that way since just before London started. I’m guessing that is your Asgardian distraction?” Henrietta asked him as she started following the prompts on the screen of her phone and tablet to link it to her biometrics.

“Ha! What Uncle Nick calls an Asgardian distraction is really a Class 1 situation with not only SHIELD assets on the ground, but A venger and some of her Majesties Special Forces thrown in for good measure” Sharon said with a snort as Steve walked into frame carrying two large mugs with Nick was guessing would be coffee.

“Um isn’t that..” Elizabeth asked from one of the seats around the coffee table.
“Ladies meet Captain Steve Rogers aka Captain America and one of Sharon’s mates. Now Sharon called the Code 99 and though I hate to admit it she was right to do so” Nick said earning him a shocked look from Sharon. “Contrary to popular belief, I can admit when I might have played too many things too close to the vest and was wrong.”

“There is hope for you yet Uncle Nick” Sharon said only to have Steve place a hand on her shoulder, they shared a look and he watched his niece sigh before saying “I’m sorry Uncle Nick that was mean.”

“Nothing I didn’t deserve. Now ladies all the children are secure and being watched by Jackie, Jenny and Michael but also two of the Avengers you’ve no doubt have heard of known as Black Widow and Hawkeye. Apparently they’re neighbors” Nick said trying not to laugh at the incredulous looks from the four younger women in the room, his wife on the other hand was taking it in her stride.

“More like Grandma Peggy and Angie manipulated them into place but they have lived there and are known by Jackie, Jenny and Michael quite well. There is even talk of them running an underground tunnel to connect the two farms but we will see when we have the time. At the moment everyone is pretty much holed up at the Avenger Farm” Sharon said as she looked over at Steve’s tablet for a moment and Nick realized that Steve was still watching the battle in London.

“How bad is it Cap?” he asked.

“Bad enough. They have it contained but just barely. Not to mention all the civilians and tech lying around. Hand is already standing by to provide after support once the battle is over to help with cleanup and processing of the civilians. I’d rather be there than sitting here watching from hundreds of miles away” Steve said glancing up briefly before going back to listening and watching the feed.

“Sharon cut orders to Hand on the regular lines to deploy the needed assets to assist Hill with the aftermath. On our secure end tell her I want as many that we know we can trust on the team.”

“Orders being issued. Steve and I have been trying to help them out as much as we can. The Farm has the current situation monitored on their end but they are dealing with the now, so Steve and I are trying to get assets with the help of General Richmond in place to help with containment for the aftermath” Sharon finished just as Steve stiffened next to her and she looked at him with a look of concern.

‘This isn’t going to be good’ Nick thought tiredly as he started bringing up the battle chatter because
he would need to hear it himself if it had gone wrong.

“Got it!” Fitz yelled as the devices they had been working on finally powered up to the estimated needed voltage to contain the Aether.

“Are you sure?” Darcy asked next to him as she held onto the fire extinguisher at the ready while her M4 hung at her side within easy reach. Despite there being two SAS troopers now assigned to watch the two new prisoners that were “Ian the Intern” and Ian Quinn he had seen Darcy keep her weapon more close since they were brought down here from the roof.

“As sure as we can be without trying them” Fitz answered honestly as Jemma got the last of the devices powered up. Four devices stood on poles that ended in sharp points, points that would need be driven into the earth before they could be switched on to full power to contain the Aether in that designated area.

“Let’s hope you’re right” Darcy said beside him before activating her com. “Taser to Athena, Jackal and Skyefall we have the devices ready they just need to be deployed.”

“Taser deployed how?” Maria asked and Darcy looked to him to explain it.

“They need to be driven into the ground and once they are around the subject they need to switched on by us and the Aether should be contained and rendered harmless” Fitz answered.

“Should be? Lion can you give us anymore than should be?” Hunter asked him and he wished he could but he had no Aether to test it on.

“Jackal that’s as sure as we can be on anything without actually live testing it with some Aether. If you have any in all the gear you brought I’d be happy to test it to give you more than a should be” Fitz snapped.

“Must have left it with the kitchen sink I didn’t think to bring” Hunter snarked back.

“Boys not now” Fitz heard both Bobbi and his own mate Izzy say at the same time.

“Loki to team, get them to us and we’ll deploy them” Loki radioed with the sounds of battle coming
“Lion get them to the roof. I’ll drop them to the Asgardians” Tony answered.

“Right on it” Fitz answered as he and Jemma grabbed two devices each before turning to head for the roof. Hunter and Nix came up running up the stairs and joined them as they moved towards the stairs that led to the roof.

“We’ll watch these two” Hunter said over towards Darcy who nodded before they disappeared up the stairs. Taking the steps as carefully they could with the equipment they got up there just as his father landed onto the roof and took the first two devices from him.

“Be right back” his father said to them before taking off again. “Hey Reindeer Games and new Lady catch!”

“The name is Valkyrie flying metal man, you will do well to remember it. Humans are more flamboyant than I remember them” she said as Fitz saw her catch the devices standing next to Loki as he kept the Dark Elven troops back with his ashandarei. While Thor and Sif continued to battle with the leader of the Elves that was now glowing red from being exposed to the Aether and having it now in his body.

“Flight of the Valkyries, got it” his father said as he landed once again and took the last two devices now from Jemma as Fitz brought up the devices onto his StarkPad.

“Swinging his ashandarei one last time he sheathed it on his back as he grabbed the devices from Valkyrie as she moved to cover the fallen Sif. Running Loki put a burst of magic into his muscles making himself move faster as he knocked enemy troops out of the way with brute force before using a low lying wall to catapult over Thor and Malekith landing with arms wide and spearing the earth with the two devices.
Pulling his ashandarei again from his back he swung it around and started attacking Malekith from behind as Ironman came streaking towards them at high speed. While Thor and himself kept Malekith busy he heard it as Stark brought the first of his devices into the ground then the second making sure it was deep with an added boost from his suit.

“Now Lion” Ironman said to one of the young scientist but nothing happened as Loki heard cursing and mumbling that there wasn’t enough power to the devices that the Aether was just too powerful. Taking a deep breath he fought to keep their backs clear. Loki was exhausted but they were almost passed the peak of the alignment but alignment or not they still had to contain Malekith for Midgard’s sake because the damned elf was determined to destroy anything and everything if he could.

“Is it a matter of energy?” his father asked as Fitz ran a diagnostic on the devices and shared a look of desperation with his sister because their calculations though only guesswork from the limited data they had already collected was off, way off. Fitz ran through calculations in his head based on the readings he was getting from the pylons but it wasn’t a number he could come up with on the fly without more equipment then he had access to or the time that he had. Fitz shared a panic look with Jemma as they both realized that they had failed when it finally came down to it.

“Yes, the devices power source is the strongest we have access to and it’s still not strong enough, the amount of power coming from the Aether is insane” Fitz said and he couldn’t hide the desperation in his voice as he put the diagnostic and his calculations for his father to see on his suits readouts.

“Well not the strongest power source you have access to...Thor buddy mind hitting these devices with some lightning?” their father asked and both Fitz and Jemma’s eyes went wide when they realized that a lightning strike from Thor just might have enough energy to power the devices enough to control the Aether.

Fitz watched as Thor summoned lighting and hit each device and shouted in joy as the readouts spiked each time on the devices to the needed levels. Looking away from the Starkpad he looked out to where each device started giving off blue lights but then warnings started popping up in the program as the Aether fought to break free of the containment area. The moment of elation was gone as he watched the systems pushed to their limits and as he glanced away from his Starkpad he shared a horrified look with his sister as they tried to figure a way to fix it, but there was no way to fix it, there was no time because something was about to go horribly wrong.

"Get clear!!! Everyone take cover!!!” Fitz heard his father scream over the radio just before he felt Hunter tackle both him and Jemma to the ground. Seconds later the world erupted around them in chaos.

“Well not the strongest power source you have access to...Thor buddy mind hitting these devices with some lightning?” Ironman said and Loki grunted as Malekith landed a bruising hit to his ribs but he fought past it as Thor summoned lightning hitting each device in turn. Loki took a few steps back
trying to get some distance from the now rapidly flashing red and blue lights coming the devices, instinct telling him that this probably wasn’t quite what was suppose to happen with the devices.

Loki watched frozen as Malekith howled in pain as he fought to break against the devices containment field and by the frantic chattering over the radio between the two scientists he didn’t think things were going to plan. ‘Oh of course they weren’t, when did anything ever go to plan…..’
Chapter 41

Chapter Notes

If you haven’t re-read chapter 40 I would recommend it since there is an added scene and it has been changed up a bit to fit with what I wrote for this chapter and other chapters in the work.

An unearthly howl filled the open comm lines from the Asgardians as Skye watched the hacked cameras of the once quiet university from thousands of miles away. Everyone for a moment froze on both sides as if everyone knew they were witnessing the end of the long battle. The once chaotic battle chatter of the many units on the ground ceased as the only sound now coming from the battle came from the Dark Elf Malekith as he started to glow a red that reminded of her of blood, of war and of death.

Red and blue fought each other for dominance as the Dark Elf fought to free himself of the pylons driven deep into the earth that glowed an even brighter blue the harder he tried. It felt like forever as they all stood there frozen watching but later on they would review the tapes and know it was only seconds before the panicked voices of Fitz and Jemma broke the silence as they started muttering to fast for most to catch even later on. “Get clear!!! Everyone take cover!!!” Tony ordered with a shout seeing something on the readouts on his suit.

Instantly Asgardians and humans alike responded to the order as they scrambled for cover or tried to put distance between them and the chaotically flashing lights of red and blue. It took a moment for the Dark Elves to clue into the situation but even they started to scramble to get as far as they could from their already dead leader but that momentary hesitation was their doom.

A bright flash of red light escaped the containment area in a fifteen foot radius everything within the touch of the red light vaporized, leaving only a mist of blood from its victims that seemed suspended in the air as if just for a moment time stood still. Deep rumbling from the earth announced the bright flash of blue light from the devices as they once again brought the red light back into its containment area as a shockwave of energy shot out further knocking out every hacked camera they had been using to monitor the battle.

“Oh shit! JARVIS…” was heard from Tony just as he pushed his suit to climb higher away from the blast but then the cameras on his suit went out as well as his comms.

Grunting Skye felt it half a world away when Maria took another hit and this time it was enough to make her legs give out from the sudden pain. Strong arms caught her around her middle stopping
herself from falling as she distantly heard Natasha call for Michael and Jackie again to the room. Pushing through the pain she keyed her microphone live to all channels, "Skyefall to everyone sound off." Even strained her voice was still too loud for the eerie silence that met her ears as Clint slowly eased her into a chair to sit. Her body hurt but she welcomed the pain because at least she knew her mate was alive, it was more than she knew about the rest of her family that had been in the blast area.

“Get clear!!! Everyone take cover!!!!” Loki heard over the radio from Ironman and cursed as he poured his magic into muscles one last time as he grabbed Thor with one hand and tried moving them as far back as he could before whatever was about to happen, happened. A bright flash of light overtook his vision as pain flashed across his skin and time seemed to slow just before they hit the wall that Sif had hit earlier only to actually go through the damn thing.

They laid like that for a few minutes breathing and taking stock of their bodies before Thor groaned out beside him “Let’s not do that again, brother.”

“First damn sensible thing you’ve said in a very long time brother” he chuckled before having to bite back a groan himself as his ribs protested the laughter.

“Oh shit! JARVIS emergency power to the thrusters” Tony said as he fought to gain some distance from himself and the blast but still ended up caught in it as the force threw him ass over tea kettle.

“Emergency power engaged sir,” JARVIS said as he felt his suit finally climb high enough to get out of the force of the blast as he fought to gain control back over his suits flight systems. Tony swallowed the vomit back down as he finally stopped flipping in the air and leveled out.

“Alright JARVIS power back to normal. What’s the damage?” Tony asked as he took a deep breath and turned his suit back towards the battle only to see the destruction before him and he fought back the urge to panic.

“Power levels back to normal. Suit power is at 50%, thrusters are at 20%, weapons are offline and primary comms and video are out. Switching to secondary comms and video now sir” JARVIS answered and he cursed internally because he would have to move slowly back towards Delta to check on his kids. Well unless he wanted to drop out of the sky like a lead weight and since he was over the river he didn’t think it would be a good thing. He needed a bath but he didn’t feel like taking it in that fashion, thank you very much.

“Alright buddy, nice and easy then. Also activate one of the backup armor from Neverland and send it here” he said as started moving back towards the battle.
“Armor inbound sir. It should be at Delta a little bit after you sir” JARVIS answered.

“Skyefall to everyone sound off” Tony heard over his comms and could hear the worry and strain in the young hackers voice. As he passed Alpha he glanced over and was glad to see that it looked mostly intact but the same couldn’t be said for Bravo. The building had an Asgardian size hole that it had not been sporting moments before. Thor and Loki seemed to be alive if not slightly bruised as they stood in the home they had made on the second story of the building both pointing towards where the main battle had been fought. Turning to see where they were pointing he saw that there was now a twenty five foot crater surrounded in all types of blood and gore.

“Ironman checking in. Skyefall are you getting the video?” he asked trying to fight back the urge to get sick at what he was seeing. Tony knew he now had a new image that would be showing up in his nightmares, well when he actually did sleep that was.

“We are getting the video from you, even if it’s a bit distorted. All other cameras seemed to be knocked out from the blast as well as comms since you are the only one in the immediate area that's responded. How bad is it?” he heard Skyefall ask but could hear muffled chatter from her end indicating that the others at the Farm were trying to raise the others.

“Bad enough kiddo. Alpha seems to be okay to land helicopters on but I wouldn’t chance it on Bravo, they have an Asgardian size hole in their front wall. Is the perimeter units responding?” Tony asked getting the first glimpse of Delta and Charlie as he carefully brought himself to land on the roof of Delta. While Delta was a brick building, Charlie had been a modern designed building of exposed steel and large glass windows and the blast had almost destroyed the building. Charlie building looked like a strong breeze would bring it the rest of the way down. Delta though it had been damaged in the blast it was still standing strong and for that Tony was eternally thankful.

"Skyefall to Ironman, Bravo’s choppers are being re-routed to Alpha once we re-establish contact with the buildings. Marine units are responding and I've already given the order for two companies to move forward to make contact and assist where needed. Easy company to Charlie and Delta, with Able company to Alpha and Bravo.”

“Have Easy concentrate most of their resources on Charlie for search and rescue. The building is almost collapsed and we need to get whoever we can out of there” Tony said as he finally landed on Delta next to Hunter and his children.

“Order has been given. Calling up Fox company to go fully to Charlie while Charlie’s choppers being rerouted where needed” Skye said with resignation and worry in her voice.

Hunter groaned as ribs protested the movement of him rolling over onto his hands and knees needing
to check on Jemma and Fitz. Vision blurry and ringing ears let him know he might have a concussion but he pushed through it as his vision finally landed on Jemma and Fitz just a few feet away. Slowly he crawled over and got the two scientist onto their backs as he started doing a visual inspection for injuries, other than a few cuts and bruises it didn’t look like the twins got hit too bad except that they seemed to be currently knocked out cold. Red and gold boots landed next to him and Hunter turned his head slowly towards Tony as he felt a popping sensation in his ears before he once again could hear normally again.

“Can you hear me now Jackal?” Tony asked as he crouched down next to him but his soon to be father-in-law’s eyes never left his two children.

“Yeah what was that?” Hunter asked as he began looking around the rooftop taking in the sight of his men checking each other and weapons over before trying to push themselves up off the ground. He gave Nix a nod as he heard the man begin to order the men to their feet and started radioing to the other units checking on their statuses.

“Invention of mine and Bruce’s, helps reset the ears after a blast. Never had a chance to test it till now, glad it worked” Tony said as another of his future father in laws suits landed next to them holding two large cases. Taking one of the cases from his other set of armor he opened it up and tossed Hunter another comm unit. Putting it in he watched as Tony’s damaged armor disassembled and went into the other box while the man stepped into the fresh suit. “Much better. Thank you JARVIS for sending the new set of comm units.”

“Skyefall to all those that can hear me sound off. Ironman are comms down?” Hunter heard over his new radio and let out a sigh of relief once the twins started groaning as they opened up their eyes. “Easy you two, how do you feel?”

“Like a bloody lorry ran me over,” Fitz said shielding his eyes with his hands.

“Ditto” Jemma groaned as she reached out a hand towards Hunter who gladly took it and placed a gentle kiss on it. A fresh wave of pain ripped through his body and it took a moment for Hunter to realize it wasn't from him, no this was coming from Jemma. Closing his eyes he focused on the bond and realized it had changed from an emotional bond to both emotional and physical. ‘Well that's going to take some getting use to’ he thought as he used his new connection to his mates to check on them. Though Jemma was in a bit of pain, nothing seemed to be life threatening and she was more dazed than anything, Bobbi on the other hand was a bit more than bruised and highly annoyed by it but once again he knew instinctively that both of them would be okay with a little rest.

“Not surprising kiddo’s you all took one hell of a beating from that blast just now,” Tony said from next to Fitz, picking a piece of debris from his son’s hair.
“Skyefall I think the blast fried whatever comm equipment we had. My backup suit brought more comm units so we will get them distributed and get everyone tied in again” Tony said as Nix and his men came over and started getting strapped up with the new comm units.

“Jackal, Nix, Lion and Hummingbird here and kicking. Skyefall is there any word from our other buildings?” Hunter asked before sighing and squeezing Jemma’s hand one last time. “You two take a few moments before even attempting to get up” he ordered the twins before he took the hand Tony was offering him. Hunter felt his age in that moment as muscles protested the sudden movement and wondered how long it would take him till he felt back to normal this time.

Hunter and Nix followed Tony over to what was left of the low wall that had once ringed around the roof of the building. Nix next to him let out a low whistle as they took in the devastation below them, he doubted they would be having any more issues from the Dark Elves. Below them was just a sea of dead and mangled Dark Elves that surrounded a pretty sizeable crater from where their leader had once stood.

“Skyefall to Jackal and Nix. I’ve moved up Able company from the perimeter to connect with Alpha and Bravo. Alpha seems to be intact for the most part and is already assisting with moving Bravo over to their building to consolidate. Bravo took some casualties but choppers are enroute to them now to start lifting them out of there. What’s left of Alpha and Bravo are gearing up for building sweeps on their end of the field to check for civilians and will sweep your way” Skyefall said before being interrupted by someone talking to her on her end probably relaying a report.

Hunter walked over towards their left flank and took in what was left of Charlie building and knew it was going to be bad. The part of the two floor building closest to them was collapsed on itself in a twisted pile of metal and glass. A sinking feeling hit Hunter as he felt Nix come up next to them with a grim expression on his face. “And Charlie?”

“Easy and Fox companies have moved up to make contact. Charlie has taken heavy casualties and the Marines are helping getting them moved over to Delta to be assessed and lifted out of there.”

“Jackal and Nix copies,” Hunter said as he felt horror and a sadness strong enough to make him want to drop to his knees over the bond. Looking over he saw the twins had gotten up and were now looking out over the destruction they had been a part of. Quickly moving towards them he pulled Jemma into his arms as Tony lowly talked to Fitz trying to get him to look away.

Total silence greeted her as she stared into the swirling dust cloud above her and she fought against the internal panic that she was once again back in Bahrain. Unconditional love came to her from her right and without thought to her current injuries she turned her head causing her vision to swim and a wave of nausea to hit her. Closing her eyes, she fought against the need to throw up knowing deep
down if she did it would not be a good thing at the moment since she could barely move. Choking to
death on her own vomit was not the way she wanted to go and refused to let it be that way.
Breathing was difficult with the panic but made so much harder as with every breath a stabbing pain
shot up the side of her ribs telling her she severely bruised if not broken a few of them.

A gentle hand touched the side of her face and she opened her eyes fighting against nausea and the
overwhelming need to sleep she felt to look into the worried eyes of her mate. She could see his lips
moving as he tried to talk to her but she could hear nothing of what he was saying to her but she got
some of its meaning through the bond. Realization dawned across Phil's face before he started
signing to her words of encouragement as she felt his hands as they occasionally left her field of
vision to check on her body for other injuries.

Phil said something to someone outside of her field of vision but soon a medic was there with a
backboard as they worked quickly to stabilize and get her ready for transport, her fight at least for
today was done but it didn’t mean she’d have to like it.

Grunting through the pain Maria rolled over onto her back as she coughed up dust from the latest
explosion. Her whole body ached as if it was one giant bruise and wouldn’t be surprised if in the
next few days she began sporting a wide variety of them. Blinking up at the dust motes she listened
to everything around her and was only greeted by the sounds of moaning from those around her.
Despite the moaning it was eerily quiet with the lack of weapon fire coming from either end of the
battle.

Maria bit back a scream as her left arm protested any movement as she had tried to use it to sit up.
Closing her eyes she forced her arm to move and could tell in that moment that she had dislocated
her shoulder at least and possibly fracture one or more of the bones. Opening her eyes she reached
for her M4 and used it with her right arm to lift her off the ground enough to get to her knees.
Shuffling to the window she popped the old clip from her M4 before gritting her teeth as her left
hand reached for a fresh clip.

With one look out what had been a window she knew it was over since she seriously doubted
anyone or anything was getting up from what she was seeing without some serious help. Silently she
hoped the Asgardians were okay but she knew she couldn’t do anything for them just yet till she
assessed those around her first. Those around her were starting to get up as medics began coming
down the main stairs to begin assessing the wounded and dying. Maria waved off a medic heading
towards her with her good arm as she leaned against the brick wall.

“Horseman” she said getting the attention of the Sergeant that was near her “Get the wounded
upstairs, I doubt we will be having any more trouble but I still want a watch posted and weapons at
the ready. Do you have comms?”

“No ma’am. Mine dead and my backup is smashed from the explosion” Sergeant Horseman
answered as he checked his weapon.

“I think our comms are down so send runners down the line and pass the order down” Maria said as she felt down the bond and tried to reassure her mate. Half a world away and it felt like Skye was right next to her, it wasn’t like that earlier but she knew in heightened moments of stress it could happen, their double bond was proof of that already.

“Yes ma’am” he replied as he began getting those still able to fight up and moving while medics moved amongst them.

“Bloody hell” came from Bobbi a few feet away from her as her friend sat up putting a hand to the back of her own head and let out a sigh of relief when there was no blood on her hand.

“You can say that again. I think this mess is over with, at least I highly doubt even the damn elves are getting up from that,” Maria said indicating out where there once was a window. She watched as shock and resignation crossed Bobbi’s face before she closed her eyes and Maria knew that she was checking through the bond for Jemma and Hunter. Bobbi’s shoulders that had tensed relaxed with a sigh and Maria knew at least those two were at least alive. Maria closed her eyes and said a silent prayer for those dead, dying and their families.

“Athena what’s wrong with your arm?” she heard Bobbi ask and she opened her eyes as Bobbi was moving closer to her.

“Dislocated the shoulder at best, fractured something at worse. Do you have a comm? Mine is silent and I should have heard something on it by now” Maria asked as she moved to get up but was pushed back down by Bobbi.

“Don’t be a stubborn ass” Bobbie sighed before pulling out an extra comm unit from one of her field suit pockets before helping Maria replace her broken one. Reaching into another pocket Bobbi pulled out a roll of gauze and gently lifted Maria’s right arm against her chest and used the gauze as a makeshift sling to stabilize her arm.

“Takes one to know one” Maria replied softly with the old joke between the two of them before looking around again one more time but left it to the medics that were now there to help out those around her. Pressing the comm unit she waited till it should have turned on but nothing happened. “Our comms are completely down and I can sense Skye’s dread and worry even from this far off.”
“Well good news is that your is just dislocated as far as I can tell. We will need to do an x-ray to confirm when we get back to Neverland” Bobbi said standing up before reaching down to grab her good arm and help her up to her feet.

“At least there is that” Maria said rolling her eyes as they moved towards the stairs only to come across Izzy helping a slightly bloody, dazed and confused Kara up towards medical. Bobbi moved towards them to help Izzy with Kara when both women stiffened.

“Jemma/Fitz” they both said sharing a look of worry between the two of them.

“Go get them” Maria ordered moving towards Kara and with her good arm took the younger agent from the two women. “Go!” Maria ordered again and watched as the two women ran up the stairs disappearing in seconds.

“Come on 33 let’s get you to Velma and Taser” Maria said gently as they began moving up the stairs. They were halfway up when Phil caught up with them with a pair of medics that were carrying Mel on a backboard between them. Phil signed something towards Mel letting her know that her old mentor had probably lost her hearing again before he moved to help her with Kara. “Eardrums?”

“Most likely...I think I can sense the damaged done” Phil said as they finally reached the top of the stairs and was greeted by Angie as she quickly assessed her mate then both Phil and herself before gesturing them over to a corner where the rest of their growing family was sitting against a wall. Maria could tell that Angie wanted nothing more than to stop and be with Kara while she was injured, but Angie was a Carter, a legacy, and Maria watched as the young medic began issuing orders to the next group of injured behind them. As they moved towards the corner Maria let Phil take Kara on towards the corner as she reached out with her good hand and squeezed Angie’s shoulder once before letting the medic get back to her job.

As Maria moved closer to the corner she could see that Darcy was holding a compress to Selvig’s head while Mel was on a backboard nearby quietly talking with a clearly upset Jane sitting next to her, surprisingly Jane was responding back with sign language even if it was a little choppy. Their approach didn’t go unnoticed though as Darcy looked up and shot a concerned look towards Kara as Phil moved the woman to sit next to her mate.

“She’ll be alright Taser, she just got her bell rung pretty good in the blast” Phil said as he took over for Darcy holding the compress to Selvig’s head and motioned her towards her mate. Darcy didn’t think twice before moving to get the skin to skin contact with Kara. Their bond was still new and unstable and Maria felt bad that they were now having to deal with this but it was the life they all led being who they were. Phil gave her a concerned look but she gave him a gentle smile as she handed him some gauze to help him wrap up Selvig’s head.
Moments later Bobbi and Izzy brought down their clearly in shock mates between them as Tony followed behind them carrying a box. The sight of all the injured seemed to upset the twins even more and Maria quickly looked around for somewhere quiet to put them. Getting up she moved towards a door next to them and found a small conference room and motioned for Bobbi and Izzy to use it for them and their mates. Slightly closing the door to give them some privacy she turned towards Tony in what had to be a second suit since this one didn’t have any damage to it.

“Run this to Velma then get a count of those downstairs and your medics and pass these around. Tell Velma, that Themis is coordinating the medevacs and needs an idea of counts and what is needed” Tony said stopping a medic and passing him a large bag from inside the box. Maria watched as the medic ran off before Tony to look towards her and then the rest of their family. She watched as Tony went to run his hand through his hair but just let out a loud huff of breath when he realized he had his helmet still on.

“Jane your mates are okay and on their way here,” Tony said moving towards Maria and pulling out a new comm unit from a new bag. “All of our original comm units were fried in the blast. I had these delivered from Neverland along with a new suit.”

“Thank you Tony” she said giving him a small smile as he moved to help her putting on the unit. Maria heard the clear tone of unit powering up and then heard the slightly squeaky voice of Charlie aka Chuckles telling her to stand by as he patched her new unit through to the main system. Tony moved off and began passing out or helping the rest of their family with their own comm units.

“Skyefall to Jackal and Nix, Easy companies Captain Gibson and 1st Lieutenant Bishop are on their way to Delta with what medics they could pull off of the perimeter and the first casualties from Charlie are about to arrive” her mate said over the radio and Maria tried to send reassurance over the bond. “Athena did you copy that?”

“Athena copies information on Easy company moving up. What is our status otherwise?” Maria asked trying to get herself caught up with the situation on hand.

“Velma to Themis” Angie radioed as she got the new comm unit that had been give to her by one of the medics up and running.

“Themis to Velma, good to hear from you” Angie heard her mother say and couldn’t agree more. Her mother’s steady voice was giving her a strength she needed in that moment as she fought past the sensations coming across the bond she had with Darcy and Kara. It was intense, more intense than it had been before and she wondered if this is what Skye and Maria felt all the time. “What’s your status?”
“We are getting a handle on our newly injured but I have new CatAlphas to get moved out of here, as well as CatBetas and even more CatCharlies to add to my list from before the blast” Angie answered as she began assessing her new patient with a tag of a CatAlpha. The young female SAS officer was passed out if from her injuries or just shock Angie wasn’t sure but she checked the tourniquet on the woman’s arm before setting up more plasma to keep her levels till she could get moved.

“Themis copies, Velma, first medevac eta 5 minutes” Angie heard over her radio in reply before grabbing the attention of one of Delta’s lead medics. “Be aware Charlie was highly damaged. Marines are doing search and rescue while their medics are moving to Delta to help with the injured as they bring them in.”

“Copy Themis medevac is 5 minutes away. How far apart are my ducks going to be?” Angie said trying to crack a joke because they needed some amusement with all the death and destruction around them.

“Velma, next six medevacs will be 5 minutes apart” Themis answered and Angie could tell her mother was trying not to laugh.

“Velma copies. Get three other Cat-Alpha’s and this one up to the roof now and keep them going we got six incoming with a 5 minute window to load. Also Charlie took heavy casualties Marine medics are helping them over here and will assist with the extra load of injured” Angie ordered as she quickly finished bandaging the young woman’s arm. She noticed as the Asgardians came up the stairs stumbling and quickly went to triage them as well.

“We are okay Velma, if not a bit bruised and exhausted” Loki said to her as he helped Thor get Sif sitting next to Jane against the wall. “How bad did we fare?”

“Bad enough” Angie answered honestly as she made her way over to her mates and checked over Kara again. “Taser keep her awake, she definitely has a concussion. Yang how is Yin?”

“Better, breathing is stable at least” Phil answered her as he signed the conversation to Melinda. As Angie began assessing Melinda again for a concussion much to the annoyance of the older woman that had an oxygen cannula in her nose.

“I’m fine. Can I get off this board?” she said but her speech was slightly slurred and her oxygen
levels were still low.

“No you will stay put Yin. We will have to run scans once we get back to Neverland but I’m pretty sure you have a concussion as well as a few broken ribs. Yang keep her alert” Angie told the man as new arrivals caught her attention that looked to be the Marine’s that had been holding their perimeter and with them came a new flood of injured with more medics to assist. Taking a deep breath she let it out before beginning to issue more orders to the medics that had been here and those just arriving.

“I’m Captain Gibson and this is 1st Lieutenant Bishop, are you Athena?” Maria heard the officer address her as she made her way over to him but as he introduced the other officer she knew that this was her mate’s way of giving Nix someone he could lean on as well with the news they were getting from Charlie and Bravo. Of course she didn’t need the introduction since she recognized the young woman from the wedding pictures that she had helped Hunter get a copy of years ago.

“That would be me, thank you for holding our perimeter and helping out with our wounded” she said as she Hunter and Nix come down the other set of stairs with the two prisoners between them who looked a little worse for wear but she couldn’t find the motivation to care. Honestly she had hoped the two had died in the explosion but it seemed that was going to be a fleeting dream.

“I demand to be released! You have no authority to hold me!” Ian Quinn yelled and as he spotted her.

“Mr Quinn, I assure you I do have the authority to stick you in a deep dark hole for the rest of your miserable life and I’m currently fighting back a deep desire just to put a bullet between your eyes and be done with it. So please do yourself a favor and shut the fuck up” Maria said as Hunter motioned for two of his men to come take custody of the prisoners.

“Find a closet and stuff them in it till we are ready to move their asses” Hunter growled as he pushed Ian Quinn towards the guards.

“Sir, yes sir” they replied and started to drag them away.

“Your garbage problem ma’am?” Gibson said pulling her attention away from the retreating form one of the men responsible for almost killing her mate. Maria forced herself to take a deep breath and ease her one good hand off the sidearm she didn’t even realize she had been gripping.

“One of them” she answered as Hunter did a double take before pushing Nix towards his wife.
“Nix I already know you are married to that beautiful woman so don’t stop on my account” Hunter said chuckling.

“How the hell do you know we’re married?” Nix asked.

“Who do you think arranged for the makeup artist to cover your bruises from the beat down I had to give you the night before?” Hunter asked which earned him a glare from Nix’s wife. “Um sorry about that ma’am but in my defense I didn’t want to fight his drunk ass.”

“Forgiven, I’m Kate but I’m guessing you already know that and I’m guessing you are the Lance Hunter then. Though why my hot headed husband isn’t trying to kick your ass right now and is instead all buddy buddy with you will have to wait till later I’m assuming” the young Lieutenant asked glancing at her.

“It will, but I promise you will get that story” Maria answered as she keyed her comm live. “Athena to Skyefall.”

“Go for Skyefall.”

“We’re going to need to arrange transport for two prisoners to the Fridge” Maria said pinching the bridge of her nose with her one good hand trying to stem off the headache that was coming on from being exhausted.

“Copy that. Orders already have been issued by Fury. Nightstick and Darkwing are on their way with Counsel to escort the two high value prisoners back to the Fridge. Eta three hours. Also a SHIELD field and science team is on the way from the HUB eta less than an hour” Skyefall said surprising her for a moment but decided to just go with it instead. It seemed that Nick was at least trying to help, which meant her boss slash friend might be finally getting his head out of his ass.

“Copy that, once we get the injured back to the base, I want the uninjured civilians processed and moved to holding areas so we can get their statements starting with Alpha. The SHIELD science team can set up in Alpha building once they arrive since it’s the most intact building left” Maria started to order as the cleanup for this mess started.

“Agent Hand we are five minutes out from the site,” Jacobson said from the cockpit of the Quinjet and Dr. Montgomery Warder held back a long suffering sigh from the stubbornness of the agent in question as she unhooked from her jump seat. Tori shot him a brief micro expression of amusement as she moved towards the cockpit of the Quinjet to survey the damage they were about to land in.
‘Good for her to be amused by this, but Izzy is going to chew me a new one, if not beat me bloody for letting her in the field’ he thought as he got up and followed behind his patient.

He continued with their conversation about the known injuries of the SHIELD team that had been on the ground when the battle occurred but in all honesty it was a ruse for anyone watching them since he really was only there to catch or stabilize Tori incase they hit even the slightest bit of turbulence. A low whistle escaped him when they got their first glimpse of the destruction from the battle that had been raging not too long ago. “Give me a 360” Tori said the strain evident in her voice, hell he didn’t blame her since the thought of one of his baby sister’s in that mess was enough to give even him cold chills.

Slowly the Quinjet spun while hovering over what had once been an university quad, now it was just the battered remains of what had been an epic battle between members of their family and beings from another world hell bent on total destruction of life as it existed. ‘So just another Tuesday’ he thought sardonically as they got glimpses of what had to be Charlie and Delta on the other side of the field. Monty sensed it as Tori tensed next to him as they took in their first looks at what had once been the building designated as Charlie. Seeing it for his own eyes even at distance he could believe it that the unit that had been there had almost been wiped out from the blast and the subsequent collapse of the building.

Carefully he leaned forward and while he was looking placed a brief hand on Tori’s lower back to show her some form of support and got a brief look of gratefulness before he saw her pull herself together. “Bring us in” Tori ordered as they completed their 360 hover and saw that the last British helicopter full civilians that had been found with their escorts left the building they were to use as a base of operations for the clean up. The rest of the able bodied SAS and Marines were now going to provide security for her scientist as they slowly went through the field section by section documenting everything found.

Tori turned around and he backed up a step and didn’t flinch when she whistled loud and clear to get the attention of the scientist and agents in the back of the Quinjet. “We are about to land, I want this Quinjet unloaded within 20 minutes so the other one can land before being sent back for more supplies. Looks like this is going to take a while people so I want living quarters on floor two set up before anyone and I mean anyone starts sifting through debris for alien tech. No testing is to be done here, only collection, is that understood?”

“Yes ma’am” was replied back just as the Quinjet slightly bounced as they landed finally on the roof of the building.

“Good. Now let’s move it people!” Tori ordered from behind him as he quickly made it back to their jump seats and grabbed their gear. Quickly he picked up Tori’s gear bag from the floor and stuck it on the seat so she wouldn’t have to bend down to get it. He’d carry it for her if it wouldn’t get tongues wagging or make the woman in question ready to skin him alive. Adjusting the straps on his med pack he checked the safety on his M4 before following Tori down the ramp towards Hunter and
another man wearing the insignia of a Colonel in the SAS.

Izzy stood there against the wall closely watching Fitz as he paced back and forth in the small room they had moved the two twins into after bringing them down from the roof. Seeing all the injured had caused the twins more distress and they had to move them away from everyone else trying to get them to calm down. Izzy looked up and shared a brief worried look with Bobbi as she held Jemma in her lap.

While Fitz was pacing and muttering under his breath, Jemma had been near catatonic in her mate's lap. She knew if Hunter wasn’t needed to go escort the HUB team here from Alpha he’d be sitting right next to both of his mates trying to get Jemma to snap out of it. Izzy had already tried to snap Fitz out of it by trying to hold him and talk to him but it didn’t seem to help, only make things worse than they had before.

“Any change?” Maria asked as she leaned up against the wall and watched the two scientist with worried eyes.

“None” Izzy answered before going back to watching Fitz trying to send her love and reassurance through the bond towards the young man. It didn’t seem to make any difference to her mate who seemed to be locked in his own emotional torment. So now she stood here against the wall and watched Fitz pace, feeling useless.

Delta stood tall but damaged before her and she was grateful that her mates had been in Delta when the blast occurred since Charlie was a wreck of twisted metal right next to it. Early reports made it seem like they lost half the unit that had been in the building and seeing it for herself, Tori could believe it. Angie met them at the bottom of the stairs as she handed off more supplies to a medic that was tending minor wounds of the silent sentries they had just made their way through.

Glancing towards Angie, she could see that the young medic looked like a strong breeze might knock her over, not that Tori couldn’t blame her their small family had been going non stop for weeks if not months for some of them but hopefully they’d get a break soon. “Monty if you can check Yin and 33 for me they are the two worst off for our group. Yin has possible broken ribs and concussion, while 33 just has a concussion as far as I can tell” Angie said before starting to move back towards the stairway but Monty reached out to stop her as he pulled back her damaged tactical suit to reveal a burn to her upper arm.

“I thought Athena was seriously injured as well and how far along is the evacuation?” Monty asked her as he moved her to sit down on the stairs as he dropped and began rummaging in the medpack.

“It looks worse than it is” Angie said but stayed still as her brother started to cut open the tactical suit to get a better look at her arm and neck area.
“I’ll be the judge of that. Now report while I get this checked” Monty said and Tori could tell he wasn't liking what he was seeing of his sisters injury. Honestly she couldn't blame him with her limited first aid training and what she was seeing of the injury as well. Angie rolled her eyes at her brother but turned towards Tori before giving a report of the situation.

“Athena is injured and should be resting but she’s running around here somewhere. As for the evacuation I only have a few Charlie’s left to oversee before I come back to be with my mates” Angie answered and took the offered canteen of water from her brother and took a drink.

“You’re done for the day, you have first and second degree burns to your arm and neck. You need to be next to your mates to start healing or risk the chance of infection. No arguing, that’s an order” Monty said when Angie went to protest but closed her mouth with an audible click at the tone that her brother was giving her. Tori didn’t blame her, she’d be hard pressed to argue with the man on his order, but luckily Tori outranked Monty and he couldn’t make his order to stay at the HUB official without putting it in her records his reasoning why.

“Thank you, at least I can order you to follow doctor orders” Monty said glancing momentarily back at her.

“The joys of being a high ranking Agent” Tori said smirking at the man before earning her a snort from him.

“I’ll make sure the lead medic left here knows he’s in charge from now on to get the rest of the Charlie’s back to base” Nix said before going up the stairs to go find the medic in question.

“Well now that’s settled why don’t we head towards your mates and then I’ll get you cleaned up. I need better lighting and another pair of hands to do this” Monty said helping Angie up and keeping an arm around his sister’s middle as they led the way up to the second floor. Hunter grabbed the medpack left on the floor and they quietly followed the siblings as they led the way towards the rest of their family. With every step closer, Tori could feel panic and self loathing washing over the bond from Fitz and it was enough almost to bring her to her knees with every crashing wave.

“Guess we aren’t the only ones whose bond has strengthened in the last few hours. Are you okay?” Hunter asked giving her a worried look before offering his elbow for her to use as they walked. Taking the arm she gave Hunter a gentle smile as she squeezed his arm. Tori knew that though Hunter put on the mask of a scoundrel and cad to the world while he had been undercover, she knew that he was really true gentleman underneath it all and she was glad he was finally being able to show it.
“You are correct I can not only feel them physically but emotionally and it’s a bit more than I’m use to feeling. I thought it was intense with both of them, but now I can only imagine the learning curve we will have to deal with with everything else going on. Right now I just want to get to Fitz and calm him down. How’s Jemma?” Tori asked as they finally made it to where their family was resting after the battle. They watched Monty move Angie towards her mates while Phil went over to join them and began following Monty’s instructions.

“I’m guessing the same as Fitz but while he’s agitated Jemma is catatonic” Hunter told her handing Monty the medpack before making their way over towards Tony, still in his Ironman suit as he leant against the door frame looking inside.

“And nothing has changed” Tony said without even looking at them. “I’m glad you are here Tori. Maybe you can help Izzy snap him out of it. Maria already has Skye running her program on a Psychologist that use to work for SHIELD years ago, she says he’s the best so I’ve already told her I want to put him and whomever else she recommends on retainer for us. Something tells me we are going to need the staff.”

“Well that’s the plan, why don’t you come inside old man and shut the door” Tori said passing Tony and went to the wall where Maria and Izzy were watching Fitz pace from. Her entrance didn’t cause a visible change in Fitz but she could feel it through the bond that he knew she was there. Izzy opened her arms and Tori gladly went into them, letting them hold her as the physical closeness to one of her mates calmed her in a way nothing else could.

Closing her eyes she let the heightened sense of Izzy through the bond check her older mate for any injuries. Hunter had been right their bond had been strengthened and changed since the end of the battle. Not only could she sense Izzy and Fitz physically she now also sensed them emotionally now. They’d have to see if it was something permanent or something that might go away over time. It wasn’t unheard of, mates who had been in stressful situations developing a double bond for a time but it was almost unheard of lasting past a couple days. But something told her inside that this wasn’t going to be the case, that they were now double bonded just the same as Maria and Skye.

“Hey you,” Izzy said bending her head for a kiss which Tori willingly gave before pulling back.

“Hey yourself,” Tori said turning around in Izzy’s arm to lean against her mates frame. Izzy’s hands came to rest on her hips and Tori let herself for a moment wonder what it would be like in a few months when the bump would start showing. She could easily imagine Izzy holding her like this as they sat down on a couch or lounged on their bed, just with her hands in a slightly different position as Fitz read to the child still in her stomach in his scottish brogue. Curiosity came across the bond, knocking her momentarily out of her silent musings, not only from Izzy but also from Fitz as he stopped pacing to watch them with his head slightly tilted to the side.
“Where did you go just now?” Izzy asked her, her voice carrying in the silence of the room. Tori looked around and noticed that not only did Fitz stop pacing but it seemed like his curiosity had somehow pushed through to Jemma who was now looking around the room slightly confused. That would be another thing they would have to look into eventually, it seemed the already strong twin bond seemed to have strengthened as well. Hunter gave Tori a thankful smile as he sat down next to Bobbi and Jemma on the ground. Her glance around the room came across Tony and Maria who were now on the opposite wall watching all of them but also watching the now closed door to the room.

It was now the moment for her to tell her mates and share with their family the news and she didn’t know how to tell them. Glancing around the room again she caught Hunter’s amused smirk at her dilemma before he raised an eyebrow at her as if in a silent challenge. The absurdity of the moment was not lost on Tori as she realized that Hunter had become someone she would call a best friend in such a short time. No one would guess that by the book Victoria Hand would be best friends with someone who had thrown the book out the window years ago but then again she was mated with Izzy who might as well be a female version of Hunter at times. ‘I guess there is some truth to the whole opposites attract nonsense.’

Shaking her head to clear her wayward thoughts she grasped one of Izzy’s hands and slowly moved it towards her stomach. Fitz watched them confusion in his emotions and posture but it took Izzy only a moment to realize what the significance of her gesture meant as excitement and pure love flooded through the bond as arms tightened around her, holding her. Izzy’s thumb beginning to move up and down might have given it away to Fitz as his eyes went impossibly wide as the first indication that he was starting to get what she was trying to tell them. His eyes went up to look into her face then down to where Izzy’s hand rested on her stomach.

Slowly Fitz came to them while both of Izzy's hands now pressed and held her stomach. Stopping Fitz shared a look of wonder with her and Izzy before he dropped to his knees and sobbed into her stomach. Gently she carded her hand through his hair and looked up towards Tony.

“Guess I get to tell Pepper and Bruce that we are going to be grandparents” he said with a small smile and Tori would swear that there was tears in the man’s eyes.

Maria closed the door gently behind her letting those inside the room have some privacy as she came out again to the main room to get an update from Angie before she began thinking of how she would move their injured back to Neverland. The vehicles they had arrived in were totalled and they would need another way of getting back to the base. “Athena to Skyefall.”

“Go for Skyefall” her mate said from the other side of the planet and Maria just wanted to be there with her, holding her. “I miss you too my love. I have us on a private channel. How are you holding
“I’m going to be a large bruise in the morning that’s for sure and I need to get my arm checked, I either dislocated the shoulder or broke something” she said moving over to where there was a table and some chairs letting herself sit down for a few moments to rest. “And you?” Maria asked knowing that her injury had to be taxing on her mate.

“I’ll be alright. Shut it Uncle Clint” Skye said and Maria heard Clint snort from somewhere near Skye and felt her mates ire aimed towards the man.

“Skye” Maria started but was interrupted.

“Honest, once this is done I’ll get some food and rest and I’ll be alright” Skye answered and Maria sighed before making note to make sure Tasha and Clint got Skye to sleep after this was done.

“Alright baby. I need the eta on Nightstick and his group and an idea of how much longer we have till we can get all the injured and civilians out of here” Maria asked as Tony came out of the room and moved to sit next to her at the table with a goofy smirk on his face. Years ago she would have loved to wipe the smirk off the billionaires face because it usually meant trouble for her but now she couldn’t help but feel happy for the man.

“Stand by my love” Skye told her and Maria could hear talking in the background. “Nightstick eta is less than two hours and you have just about that amount of time for the rest of the medevacs and getting all of the civilians to holding so they can be processed according to Dr. Warder.”

“Copy that. I see the good doctor heading my way now. I’ll let you know when we are moving back towards Neverland” Maria said as Monty started checking on her arm and her wide collection of cuts.

Steve scrubbed at his face before taking another drink of coffee and finding the cup empty. Grimacing he got up from where he was reading files and watching interrogation videos on Raina aka “The woman in the flower dress”, watching the videos made him feel like he was watching a tape on loop but he felt like he was missing something. The super soldier serum he had been given in the forties not only affected his body by making it stronger, faster and quicker to heal, it also affected his mind by making him smarter.

He was quicker to pick up patterns and make connections, well in the areas he had real world experience in. Despite the way different levels of technology of the forties to now he wasn’t totally
lost, but learning technical things wasn’t on his list of things to do when he first woke up from the ice. Technology never could attract his attention for long even then and he had been more then happy to let Howard be the techie of their trio. Now though it was just Sharon and their unknown third and he was slowly getting acclimated to the tech but investigation and tactics had always been his strong suit.

“Glaring at it won't change the image you know” Sharon teased him as brought down a plate full of sandwiches and a couple bags of chips. Placing his coffee down he moved to quickly help her with the plates since the majority of what she was carrying was for him and is crazy metabolism.

“I know but I feel like we are missing something, the syntax in which she says certain things is reminding me of something but I can’t put my finger on it and it’s starting to bother me” he said placing the plates down before going back for his coffee and making another cup for Sharon.

“What about it is bothering you?” she asked before taking a bite of her own sandwich.

“It almost sounds like she was brainwashed but our scans and the psychologist have all ruled that out. She is just a true believer....” Steve said but stopped as his mind finally found what it was that was bothering him. “She’s a true believer. Just like some of those that followed Red Skull and even Hitler, they believed in the hate filled rhetoric of Hitler and the Red Skull’s master plan.”

“Okay so she’s following some megalomaniac with a master plan that can suck in people with his words. We knew this Clairvoyant fellow has to be something if he’s getting highly decorated soldiers from multiple nations to turn their backs and become his Centipede soldiers” Sharon said as she tipped her hand towards his plates of sandwiches indicating for him to eat.

Picking up a sandwich he took a bite and chewed as his mind turned out the problem. Megalomaniacs were something of a specialty of his because not only did he help the fight against Hitler and the Nazis but also against Red Skull and Hydra. In his mind Loki didn’t count with their new evidence of his being controlled but then again whomever was behind Loki’s failed invasion had to be a megalomaniac in space or another realm but that was another bridge to cross when it came to it.

No whoever this Clairvoyant was he or she was playing things close to the vest, while not being completely quiet he was slowly building a small army but he hadn’t made any major moves to announce his rule over the masses. It talked of someone or an organization with the ability to have a long plan...just like it took the long plan for someone to infiltrate SHIELD to the levels they were seeing. They did find some individuals trying to get rich by stealing and selling tech or information on the black market but there were those that seemed to following orders that were in tandem with others.
“JARVIS bring up the interrogation of Grant Ward” Steve said having a bad feeling in the pit of his stomach.

“Steve what are you thinking?” Sharon asked putting her sandwich down and pushing away the plate, his feeling of dread messing even with her appetite.

“The long game. You can’t infiltrate SHIELD as far as someone has without it being a really long game. The Clairvoyant is just a name, probably an actual person but still just a person in a large whole” Steve said as he stood and walked closer to the screen of tv’s against the wall as the image of Grant Ward chained to a table came onto it. He knew he was watching a dead man now but it still made him angry that the man on the screen betrayed those on his team and almost got Skye killed. “Play the video JARVIS.”

The video came to life as Ward sat there cool as a cucumber as both Natasha and Clint walked into the room. Clint stood at the door arms crossed as Natasha walked to the opposite end of the table from Ward and sat down with barely a sound from the chair. “Is this really necessary?” Grant asked indicating his hands.

“You tell us Mr. Ward. Two missions back to back where an Agent on your team had been kidnapped and here we are” Natasha said leaning back in her chair.

“Skye’s not an agent, she is only a consultant and not a very good one in fact” Ward answered shrugging his shoulders.

“Actually kid is an agent, as of a few days ago. Hill signed off on it, the paperwork just hadn’t caught up with your unit” Clint said and Steve recognized the interrogation tactic. Two interrogators at different parts of the room making the prisoner have to move their head back and forth to speak with the different speakers.

Bucky and himself had used it a few times in the field after watching Peggy and a Lieutenant Fury use it to devastating effect to those they brought back alive to be interrogated...that reminded him he would have to ask Nick if he was any relation to that Lieutenant Fury. They were different ethnicities but one thing he learned was that mix racial relations was more acceptable now in this day an age. Shaking away the wayward thoughts he knew he turned his attention back to the video.

“And a rookie warrants the Avenger’s attention?” Ward asked but he was fishing.
“Not a rookie no, but when Phil was taken during your last mission it got dropped on the Avengers plate. We met Skye when she was doing her assessments with Hill and that’s when Phil went missing. Did you know it was your “consultant that wasn’t a very good one” that found Phil?” Natasha asked Ward sounding almost bored at his lack of knowledge.

“He doesn’t know, didn’t think it could be someone like Skye that could find the information. Let me tell you Mr. Ward that kid has got skills and we at the Avengers take notice of those with skills and we sent her sniffing into your team because there had to be a mole. And can you guess what we found Mr. Ward?” Clint asked from the doorway and Steve glanced over to where JARVIS’s biometric readings of Ward were on the bottom of the screen, he noticed that got a physiological reaction from Ward but on the outside the man showed no sign.

“We found you Mr. Ward in all your dirty glory” Natasha said but the man only smiled a menacing smile at her causing Clint to move away from the door. There was an audible crunch as Ward’s mouth started foaming and his body started to seize up. Clint instantly grabbed Natasha and pulled her out of the room just in case it was something that could harm them too but JARVIS couldn’t be harmed and he had kept recording but the video and audio in the room. Steve watched as Ward finally slumped against the table his mouth moving but he didn’t hear anything.

“JARVIS playback the audio after Natasha and Clint leave the room and can you zoom in with an angle on Ward’s mouth” Steve asked as he felt Sharon come up next to him.

“Ready Steve” JARVIS said once the video and audio were queued.

“Play it” Steve said and watched closely as Ward’s body slumped against the table with his mouth moving but no words came out.

The being known as The Asset to his handlers blinked his eyes as he came out of cryogenic freezing again. He felt the pod being lifted up and knew he was about to be dropped on his face so as fast as he could moved to brace his fall. On his knees now he coughed up chunks of blue gunk, this was a necessary part of the process of his freezing and fought back the urge to shake because any sign of weakness was met with swift punishment. Shaking from the internal cold and the pain of his coughing would definitely be seen as a sign of weakness from those that controlled him.

Deep down he knew it wasn’t always this way, but those memories were distant as if in a dream. He began to hear the words that would cement whomever had woken him control over the person he would become at the end of those words. With the last words the Winter Soldier was awake and fully ready to comply with his master’s wishes.
“Nightstick to Skyefall we are on final approach” Kevin radioed as he and Stephen put the Quinjet in a hover just a mile outside of the perimeter. There had already been a few news helicopters that had broken the airspace around the battle and it was now being guarded closer in by a couple attack helicopters. Everyone and their uncle wanted to see where only hours before had been a battle not only for Earth’s safety but that of the other Nine Realms according to the Asgardians and it was taking not only Air units but increased manpower on the perimeter to hold back the press and curious civilians.

“Skyefall copies. Ironman is airborne and moving to escort you in. Stand by in position” he heard the young woman respond back and waited. Minutes later he saw a red and gold speck move closer towards them.

“Ironman to Nightstick, I see you boys. Head this way and I’ll escort you into Delta” Tony said to him and they followed the man and landed when he pointed to a spot just in front of a brick building that looked to be recently cleared away. As soon as they landed Kevin saw a mix between SAS and Royal Marines take up positions around the Quinjet and began to guard it. He followed behind Stephen as they moved Thomas between them before lowering the ramp to be greeted by Tony.

“Tactical is a good look on you” Tony said with a teasing smile.

“Shut it cousin, where is Hill?” Kevin asked as he looked around and from the limited view could believe the reports on the number of casualties they took in the battle and blast that ended it all.

“Inside, this way” Tony said and they quickly followed him through even more silent sentries and men that were starting to set up what looked like a basic field HQ. As they went up the stairs they passed men carrying cases of rations and ammo downstairs and Kevin figured that Hill decided to have the Brits hold the perimeter and security as their limited forces from the HUB handled the clean up.

“Nightstick good to see you” Maria Hill said from a table where she had been eating moments before with the others of their small group in what looked like it was a conference room of some type.

“Got here as soon we could ma’am” he replied not recognizing some of the others in the room so kept to the formalities.

“Relax Kevin, we are all family here. Glad you are just as paranoid as always” Maria teased him and he fought back the urge to roll his eyes at her. They might be family but she was still his
commanding officer. “Stephen, Thomas I’ve heard good things. Now you three will be coming back
with us to Neverland so we can question the prisoners before you taking them to the Fridge.”

“Our orders were pick up and direct to the Fridge ma’am” Thomas answered next to him and Kevin
didn’t hide his eye roll for his cousins mates by the book tendencies.

“I know and I’m counteracting them. I understand you two have began to read the files Kevin gave
to you, well this is still an Avenger matter and we get first crack at them before you take them back
to the Fridge. Anyways you guys are the only secure transport we have back to Neverland since the
vehicles we arrived in were totalled during the battle” Maria said as she stood up and looking toward
two Marines and an SAS officer that was in the room with them.

“Colonel Nixon, Captain Gibson and Lieutenant Bishop you will come with us since General
Richmond will meet us there eventually once he can finish arranging everything needed to keep this
area secure. And yes Lieutenant you will get your explanation but the three of you need to be ready
to go down the rabbit hole.”

“You mean this isn’t already down the rabbit hole” the young Lieutenant quipped back causing
many in the room to chuckle.

“Well then Lieutenant, even farther down the rabbit hole then.”
“Nightstick bring her down on the pink square” Tony radioed over as he flew escort on the way back to the Neverland base. In the end instead of making two trips to bring everyone back to the safety of the Neverland base they had decided to pack the Quinjet like a can of sardines. No one after the battle wanted to be separated and Maria didn’t have the heart or the will to push for two trips. Maria knew everyone was looking forward to some food and a few hours of sleep and with the safety of the Neverland base just moments away the back of the Quinjet was now quiet.

“Really Ironman, it had to be a giant pink square? Why not just go for a giant pink flower next time?” Kevin responded giving Tony shit for something that had made her curious first about the base but had forgotten all about it in the rush of trying to arrange forces for the battle they had just fought and won...It was a victory but they definitely paid an insanely high price for the victory and then some.

“Hey don’t knock it, I needed to make it visible at night just in case” Tony grumbled.

“More like you were drunk and didn’t think to use lights like a normal human being” Kevin snickered and Maria knew he was probably right on that front but she was already tired of this conversation, let alone already tired of this day.

“Alight boys, you two can bicker once we get back to base. JARVIS we are on final approach, bring us home” Maria said cutting off the argument. All she wanted was her mate and her bed. She’d get one of the two here and hopefully the other in the next few days to a week once she got back to the Farm. Kevin brought the Quinjet down on the center of the pink square without any issues before he let out a low whistle once he got a look at the underground vehicle and plane storage.

“Are all the bases like this?” Kevin asked beside her as he started the post flight checklist.

“Not quite from what I read up on them after being surprised by this one but apparently Nick and Natasha’s paranoia has been rubbing off on Tony.”

“More than rubbing off if they are all like this...but then again this is Tony so…” Kevin said before grinning.

“With Tony nothing can be simple or small” Maria said smirking as she stood and gave Kevin’s shoulder a quick squeeze before turning towards the back of the jet where everyone was waiting.

“Alright those that have been cleared medically head to bed, get some sleep…” Maria started ordering as she hit the button to lower the ramp only to be interrupted as Nixon’s phone started
playing “Never Give You Up” by Rick Astley. The song choice earned him a few chuckles from those in the Quinjet and an eye roll from Kate as she saw the caller ID on her husband’s phone.

“Like I need you to show me who is on the caller ID. You better answer that, you know how he gets if we don’t answer right away. Last thing we need is him dropping in on us because you know who we have on this damned plane. A week of dish duty says that is why he is calling” Kate said tiredly.

“Suckers bet, love. That is a suckers bet” Nixon said before he answered the phone. “Damn it Wade, we talked about this! Quit hacking my phone!”

“Relax Lover Boy I’ll put it right after this conversation or maybe not, depends if you give me what I want,” the caller that Nixon called Wade said over the speakerphone much to the annoyance of Nixon who now held the phone in front of him.

“Wade we talked about this, there need to be boundaries. If there is any hope of Kate and I not killing you there have the be boundaries” Nixon said pinching the bridge of his nose like he was trying to stem off a headache. Maria looked over towards Hunter to see if he had a clue on what the fuck was going on but Hunter sat there looking like he was seeing, well hearing a ghost. Tony landed outside the now lowered ramp of the Quinjet and she pointed towards him to be quiet. Pointing towards the phone in Nixon’s hand she mouthed “trace that now” to him getting only a nod for acknowledgement.

“Fine, I’ll try to remember yours and the misses little rules. Now for why I have decided to grace you with my own humble but devilishly handsome presence. A certain little birdie that you really should have let me silence years ago for you has let it leak for a price of course that you have captured a Mr. Ian Quinn and since you know I owe him a fun filled day or an eternity of pain depending on my fancy, I want to see him” said the mystery caller Wade starting off in a high pitched voice and ending in a cold sarcastic tone that slightly raised the hair on the back of her neck.

“Wade you can’t kill Wentworth, though I know you and Hunter would like to have a few rounds with the prick, he is too well connected and you are totally not subtle when settling a score” Nixon said giving Hunter and her an apologetic look.

“Hey! I can do subtle!” came from the phone.

“One word for you Wade...Montreal” Nixon said enunciating the cities’ name. The name of the city tickled something in her memory but with how tired she was she couldn’t think why she should know what the two men were talking about.
“Fine you might be right when it comes to Wet Noodle and I’d prefer not having her Majesty's finest sniffing after my fine ass the rest of the my life…unless it’s you and wifey. But fine, no killing Wet Noodle for now but I reserve the right to change my mind at any time. Oh and hello Katey Kate Kate and Lancelot. Nixxie-poo I’m so proud of you, you finally got your head out of your ass and it only took a fucking alien invasion for it to happen” Wade said making Maria wonder if the caller might be slightly unhinged. The whole conversation so far was like talking to multiple people but it clearly was only one person talking on the other end of the line.

“Wade, how are you doing my brother?” Hunter asked while Kate let out a low growl at the phone.

“Chill out Katey Kate Kate retract the claws, I promise I’m not here to get two in the chest from you like the first time we met, that hurt like a bitch and half till it healed. As for your question Lancelot, well let’s just say I’d be better if I could get my hands on Mr. Quinn.”

“Well mate you’d have to take a number behind the Avengers for your turn. The dumbass has landed himself on our shitlist for arranging the kidnapping and torture of one of our own. As it is, we know he has to be connected to something a whole lot dirtier that he is just by himself” Hunter said as he stood up and signaled for Maria to move closer to him. There was silence for a handful of minutes before she heard Wade say anything else.

“Fine. Lover Boy give Lancelot’s boss lady my credentials as a badass for hire, since you all just made it seem “Quinn the totally fucked” isn’t the top of the shit chain I’ve worked up for over the last year I want in, hell I’ll even follow orders and play nice with others. I’ve got nothing better to do… well I do, I could be the filling of a lovely sexy sandwich but I digress….So since your boss lady, hello boss lady, is currently tracking my ass with Mr. Stark’s pretty cool AI; I’ll let this be it, but I’m close and you handsome strapping lads know just where to find me” Wade said just before the line went dead.

“What the hell was that?” Bobbi asked the questions circling around in everyone’s heads at the moment as she looked between Hunter, Nixon and Kate for an answer.

“That my love was Wade Wilson, former SAS turned merc, he got thrown out a little bit before I did when he slugged a then Captain Wentworth, a superior officer, for giving us some really fucking bad intel. He was known as the merc with a mouth and was a friend that I had heard was dead from cancer. Or at least that’s what his fiance had told me almost a year ago” Hunter looked towards Nixon who shrugged as he put away his phone before arching an eyebrow at his wife who had growled when the fiance had been mentioned.

“Don’t give me that look. You might as well tell them, better from us then Wade who will mentally
scar everyone with just the way he is” Kate snorted before she started inspecting her rifle.

“Not dead, he showed up at our door a little over a year ago needing my help digging up information. Cancer had been real but there wasn’t any hope really for him, apparently a guy in a suit that quote screamed government agency end quote recruited him to be a test subject for a new drug that would increase stamina and strength while curing his cancer. At first he told him to go fuck off but you know Wade he was afraid to die, afraid of everything he has in his ledger after Sudan so he let them experiment on him” Nixon said scrubbing at his face before sitting back against the bulkhead.

“I’m taking it worked?” Maria asked silently cursing because here was another group or government playing around trying to create another super soldier. It was just what they needed with everything else going on, Fury was going to be pissed once he found out, hell Rogers was going to give her his patented disappointed face before he realized she was just the bloody messenger.

“Depends on the way you look at it. Increased strength and stamina oh yeah. Healing factor through the roof to the point you’d probably need to kill his ass like a hard core horror movie, stake through the heart, dismemberment and burning before scattering his ashes to the four corners of the earth...most likely.”

“Is he a threat?” Maria asked and watched as the men shared a look then Nixon looked over to his wife who sighed and shook her head in the negative.

“Wade wasn't all that stable before the experiments and he seems to be even more unstable…” Hunter looked towards Nixon for confirmation and got a shrug in response. “What does the shrug mean? Come on Nix what the hell is going on?”

“He’s unstable if he’s been away from his mates for long periods of time, but the longer he’s with them the more stable he becomes. He’s still the obnoxious loud mouth, who just won’t shut the hell up for all that is and was good and bloody holy Wade Wilson but he’s not talking to shadows or empty air. But to answer your question he’s a badass with a heart for the underdog and a commitment to do good, just not in the same way you or I might do it Hill. He's not afraid of getting his hands dirty if it means cleaning out any of his ledger from the night that started him on the pathway of getting kicked out of the SAS.”

“Sudan wasn’t any of our faults the intel was bad, it was all Wentworth’s fault” Hunter said trying to sound convinced but he failed miserably.

“Does that lie help you deal with the nightmares?” Nixon asked sharing a haunted look with his
former brother in arms and Maria couldn’t blame the men. Hunter sighed and shook his head in the negative and in that moment he looked a lot older than he really was. Maria wondered if that look would be her in a few years...

“I can understand the need to clean out his ledger, we have plenty of those in SHIELD and part of the Avengers as well. Do you recommend and vouch for him?” Maria asked moving the conversation along as she looked between Hunter and Nixon.

“If he’s willing to come in and says he will follow orders he’d be a good ally to have in a fight. I’ve been trying to cover his tracks but you should know that he’s the assassin now known as Deadpool. Ah you have heard of him, of course you have.” Nixon said making Maria wince and she watched as the man ran a hand through his already thinning hair.

“Of course she has, Wade is about a subtle as a bull in a china shop with a nuclear device strapped to it” Kate said rolling her eyes at her husband. Maria couldn’t agree more with the analogy that for the assassin/vigilante known as Deadpool and why Montreal had seemed familiar earlier. Wherever Deadpool went death, destruction and mayhem were sure to follow and this was the man that wanted at her prisoner...a small part of her was almost tempted to let Deadpool do his worse to Quinn and be done with it but she knew she couldn’t at least not yet, they needed information.

“Okay just who are his mates?” Maria asked starting to think of the logistics of protection and a hundred other things when it came to bringing in high level targets and turning them into assets and protecting those closest to them. It wouldn’t be the first one or the last one of these things she’d ever done.

Kate snorted when Nixon groaned but she beat her husband to the punch, “You’re looking at the poor sods or lucky devils, the jury is still out on the verdict of this bloody fucked up sideshow.”

‘Well damn, didn’t see that one coming’ Maria thought with a tired sigh and wished she could go to bed but knew now that wasn’t going to happen because she wasn’t going to keep mates separated if she could help it. ‘That and even a possibly slightly unhinged assassin/vigilante would still be a bonus to have on our side if shit goes pear shaped. Hell he will fit right in with this crazy family.’

“How do you want to do this Maria?” Tony asked knowing that the woman was going to go back out despite being exhausted to go track down and bring back Kate and Nix’s mystery third mate.

“Can you show Kevin where he can house our special guests for the night and assign rooms for those that still need to be assigned. Everyone injured is to go medical to be cleared by Monty before
getting food and some rest. I’ll take Nixon and Kate with me to go get their third” Maria finished as he began checking her M4.

“I’ll come with you” Loki said trying to stand up but swayed a bit first before a steadying arm from Valkyrie caught Loki before he could fall.

“No, Loki you stay here and rest. You did more than enough today and I’d rather you be rested in case we need you tomorrow” Maria said placing a hand on the demi-gods shoulder and giving it a squeeze.

“Then we’re coming with you three” Hunter said after he and Izzy had shared and brief look between the two of them and then their mates.

Tony saw Maria begin to argue but Bobbi beat her to the punch. “Don’t argue Maria, just hurry up and get back.”

“Fine. Tony you have your orders.”

“Yes deputy director ma’am” Tony said shooting off a mock salute to the woman earning him an eyeroll from her and chuckles from some of the others. “Alright Kevin, your lot can follow me. Captain Gibson since you aren’t injured why don’t you come with us and I can get you a room assigned and a change of clothes to get settled. Everyone else to medical, almost all of you know where it is” Tony finished with a slight frown from his last statement, they only knew where medical was because they all had spent an overly large amount of time in there since they had arrived at the Neverland base.

Tony waited till the large group heading to medical disappeared around the corner before turning to Maria and her group. “I’ll put the base on lockdown when you leave, let JARVIS know when you are inbound and he will lower the defenses for you to come home.”

“Thanks Tony we will be back” Maria said giving him a small smile before leading the way to the stairs that would lead to the small carpark in the warehouse above.

“Alright Kevin, we are keeping our guest black bagged and covered till we get them to the cells after that we can take it off. But not till then because I don’t want a chance of either them seeing our layout. Now the cells are specially designed by me to be sound proof so they will hear nothing but we will hear everything from them since they are wired for audio and visual observation. You can
have the feeds sent to your rooms if you want but otherwise they are hardwired to the guardroom
down the hall from the block” Tony said as he watched the other men get ready for the transport.

“How many cells do you have at this facility?” asked one of the men that Kevin had brought back
from the Fridge. It was the lawyer that was mated to the specialist that was one of many offspring
part of the Carter legacy...Thomas, that was his name.

“I have three small high security cells and one large high security cell that can be used for a mass
holding area if we ever need it and I hope to the light, we never do but I’m a Stark so everything has
to be big....”

“And Fury’s paranoia is starting to rub off on you,” Kevin interrupted from behind him and Tony
couldn’t argue with that statement no matter how much he wanted to.

Monty gave a reassuring smile to Jemma as the young scientist pushed Kara in a wheelchair over to
the ct scan area of the not so small medical wing that was inside the Avenger’s Neverland base.
Bobbi, her mate, only a few steps behind still armed to the teeth but looking around Monty could see
that despite moving under the defenses of the base no one was relaxing just yet and after what they
had seen earlier today he didn’t blame them. The two mates and Kara passed by Thor who stood to
the side of curtained off area where he knew that Jane and Valkyrie were helping bandage Sif’s ribs
that were broken. Monty would have liked to get an xray of the ribs to make sure nothing serious
was happening but he was told that in a day or two the Asgardians healing would have taken care of
the issue completely and not to worry.

Next to Thor was Loki sitting in a chair a bit stiffly since his ribs were bandaged already talking
lowly to Dr. Erik Selvig. The famous astrophysicist already had his head wrapped and was laying in
one of the rooms many beds as he would be waiting out the night in the medical wing so Monty
could keep track of the man’s concussion. Pained expressions on both men’s faces had him
concerned at first but he had been told earlier lowly by Thor when he had approached that not to
worry they were only talking about a painful shared memory.

Across the room his eyes landed on another bed that held both Tori and Fitz as they laid there quietly
talking to each other as they waited for Izzy to get back to the base with Maria and the others from
picking up a possible new member. They probably didn’t need to be there but he decided that until
Izzy was back Tori was to stay where he could see her. Monty watched as Fitz’s hand lightly came
to rest on Tori’s stomach and he pulled his eyes away not wanting on intrude more than he already
was on the growing family’s time together.

His eyes scanned around the room again and found his younger sister Angie as she walked her mate
through cleaning and bandaging up her burnt arm just two beds over. Monty could clearly hear and
see the worry between the two young women as they waited for Jemma and Bobbi to bring back their third from the CT scan he had ordered. He was sure all Kara had was a concussion but it was better to be safe than sorry as he turned back to his computer screen to view the CT and MRI scan results of his other patient Melinda May.

“Alright Phil and Melinda, we have confirmed the tear to the eardrums isn’t as bad as we suspected and we will do another scan in the morning to see if there are any changes. Only thing we need to worry about right this minute tonight is your concussion Melinda but I doubt Phil won’t mind checking on you every few hours so if you want we can move you back to your rooms” Monty said waiting for Phil to stop signing but could see the relieved look on both of their faces.

“We would like that very much Dr. Warder” Phil answered for the both of them.

“Alright give us a few moments and I’ll have someone help you back to your room” Monty said before his computer dinged with new test results from Kara’s scan and sighed in relief as he made his way over to Darcy and Angie as they waited for Kara to come back.

Hunter pulled the SUV over and parked it down an alley between two very derelict apartment buildings in one of the more sketchy parts of London. Maria looked around the nearly deserted street only seeing two people sitting outside a small storefront that advertised 24 hour Mexican food. Everywhere else was dark and boarded up for the night, or in some cases most likely forever.

“I’m guessing this is it?” Maria finally asked ending the silence that had encased the SUV the whole drive from Neverland. It had been only a short drive but Hunter never asked Nixon or Kate where to go to find their mate but Deadpool had said that the guys would know where to find him.

“This is it, if Wade isn’t unaliving anyone or scaring them for life with his lack of filter he is either a: getting laid, b: eating chimichangas or c: blowing something up. It doesn’t get more simpler than that with Wade” Hunter said earning a snort from Kate. “The hole in the wall to our right was an old haunt of our SAS unit. Wade would drag us here when we were in town and too drunk to care about the quality of food.”

“This is your mate, how do you want to do this?” Maria asked turning away from the street and looking towards Kate and Nixon.

Something landed on the roof of their SUV with a loud thud followed by a few seconds later a groaned out “Oh that was a bad idea.”
“Wade you are a bloody idiot! And bloody lucky the SUV was reinforced!” Kate shouted at the roof earning her a bark of laughter followed by some swearing. Maria turned towards Kate and Nixon with an raised eyebrow as she lowered her M4 from pointing at the roof and placing the safety back on. Nixon sighed as he unbuckled and stepped out of the SUV onto the foot rail that ran along the sides.

“Hunter pop the hatch and come help me move dumbass into the cargo area so he can heal” Nixon called out as he started to climb onto the roof.

“Aww Nixie you care, unlike somebody!!!” Wade called out as Hunter rolled his eyes and got out of the SUV.

“I care when it’s not your own stupidity, now quit whining! You will be healed before we even get back to where we will be staying” Kate yelled back as she flipped over the seat into the third row of the SUV next to Izzy. Maria got a brief look at Kate’s face before she turned towards the cargo area of the SUV. The woman could lie to herself all she wanted to but Maria could see the worry in the woman’s eyes as clear as day.

Izzy flipped over the seat into the second row and rolled her eyes at Maria, “Never a dull moment is it anymore?”

Darcy pushed the wheelchair containing Kara while Angie kept pace next to them turning one last corner before they made it to a room that had been set aside for the three of them to use. Angie opened the door with her good arm and led the way inside to a pretty plain but large room that was dominated by a bed against the far wall. To their right was another door to what looked like a large bathroom while to their left was another door that was opened to reveal a large walk in closet.

Tony had told them it was to be their room to use any time they were at the base and needed to crash or just needed some space from everyone else. Anything they wanted to do to make it their own space they were to let him or Pepper know any preferences and that he would get it done for all their rooms in all the Avenger bases. It was a lot to take in at times but she knew that she wasn’t alone in that feeling when she looked at her mates.

Between meeting and now they hadn’t had the time to bond with everything going on and Darcy knew they would need to bond soon if they wanted to keep their sanities. The itch to complete the bond was just under her skin and she wondered if it was worse for her since she didn’t have the chance to bond with either of them like they had with each other, but again their bond was still only a few days old as well. First though they needed to rest because Kara still had a concussion and Angie had burns to her arm that were also going to take time to heal, Darcy could deal with a little bit of discomfort till then.
“Alright, Tony said the bathroom was big enough to for the wheelchair to be inside it while we get all of us cleaned up” Darcy said pushing the wheelchair towards the bathroom.

“I think our mate just wants to see us naked. What do you think Kara?” Angie said wrapping a strong arm around Darcy’s middle after they got into the bathroom.

“I think you are right Angie,” Kara said trying to get up from her wheelchair.

“Um duh of course I want to see you two naked, but Kara you will sit in that chair or so help me” Darcy said a little breathless but still trying to be threatening as Angie kissed on her neck and her other hand came to caress one of Darcy’s breasts. Another hand grabbed onto the tactical belt she was still wearing and pulled her around as she was moved to stand in front of a still sitting Kara.

“I’ll stay in the chair if you let Angie and I undress you so you can sit in my lap as we get cleaned up” Kara said looking up at her through eyelashes as she began undoing Darcy’s belt.

“Um you two are injured and are suppose to be taking it easy...ahh god Angie,” Darcy moaned at the end as Angie bit her earlobe making her knees jerk.

“Ooh Angie I think our mate liked that, what do you think?” Kara asked smirking as weapons were removed from holsters and her tactical belt was slowly removed from around her waist.

“I think you are right, and Darcy love we are injured not dead” Angie said softly into her ear before Darcy felt the other woman grind up against her. “And we will not spend another night not having you be ours, say you will be ours.”

“I’m yours. I’ve always been yours” Darcy said before she let herself go into the need to bond with her mates.

Walking into medical Tony looked around and saw that Fitz and Tori were still off to the side of the room but it seemed his son had finally dozed off while Tori leaned back in the bed, eyes closed but her hands still were playing with his hair. Next to the bed Bobbi and Jemma sat on a chair, his daughter curled into her older mates lap as they rested. The position couldn’t be comfortable and Tony wanted to either join them all or send all the kids to bed but he knew none of them would leave till each of their thirds were back inside the base’s security. Pulling some blankets off of a cart Tony
quietly moved towards the sleeping group and gently covered up first Tori and Fits then Bobbi and Jemma. Bobbi cracked an eye open at him and Tony fought back the urge to blush. “Need anything?” he whispered instead.

“Any word?” Bobbi asked.

“Should be back within the half hour” Tony said softly moving a piece of stray hair out of Jemma’s face.

“Then we will be okay till then” Bobbi said closing her eye and relaxing. Tony began to walk away but only stopped. “Hey dad?”

“Yeah?”

“Get some rest old man” Bobbi said with an impish smirk.

“Soon kiddo” Tony said fighting back a chuckle. He had just gotten back from getting the four Asgardians plus Jane settled into their rooms. Tony knew that the new trio still hadn’t time to bond just yet and was glad he would be able to give them some time alone together. Though he doubted any of them would be getting up to any fun activities tonight but there was always the morning and he already told JARVIS to activate anyones sound and privacy protocols if they forgot about it.

Last thing he wanted to do was walk down the hallway and hear that happening behind any of the doors of those he considered family, especially his children’s doors. Intellectually he knew they were full adults that don’t need him to play the over protective father figure but apart of him still wanted to play that part. Bruce and Pepper had told him that it was a completely natural feeling and instinct and that it was okay for him to feel like that as long as he didn’t go overboard with it like he tended to do.

The door to the medical wing opened up knocking him out of his thoughts as both Loki and Valkyrie come back inside the medical wing but this time each in a pair of the gray sweat pants and white t-shirts that he had stocked in all the bases in almost every size. The sight of the two Asgardians out of their battle armor was definitely an odd sight but only because he’d never seen the two so relaxed. Having only been enemies with one the last time they had met and the other one only just meeting hours ago. Tony figured he’d get use to it but he also realized he would probably need to start stocking the bases with everyday wear clothes in all sizes as well, he would let Pepper loose on that project when he talked to her next.
As they passed Tony he felt a brief squeeze to his shoulder from Loki, neither of them needing to say anything to the other. He watched as they made their way directly towards the bed that Dr. Selvig was currently sleeping in. The astrophysicist was the only member of the team forced to stay in the medical wing overnight since he was a blank and had no one to wake him up hourly for his concussion check. At least he knew that was Dr. Warder’s reason for keeping him but Tony doubted Loki would be going anywhere any time soon. The guilt that Tony knew Loki must be feeling towards the doctor because of the last time he had been on Earth kept him at the man’s side. It didn’t matter that Loki wasn’t in charge of himself last time he was on here, the guilt for his actions were still there.

Valkyrie was an unknown for Tony but what he had seen of the woman in action and after was that her and Loki were close and that were he went she went as well. They weren’t a mated pair but there was still something there, that Tony couldn’t put his finger on but even though usually something unknown would drive him nuts he let it be. In the scheme of things he didn’t know at the moment this wasn’t even near the top rung of things he needed to know.

Sighing Tony moved towards the office that he knew Dr. Warder was using while he was here and knocked on the door to get the man’s attention. “Mind if I come in?”

“Of course! Come on in, it is your facility Mr. Stark. I’m just updating everyone’s charts waiting for Maria and her small group to get back” Dr. Warder said leaning back in the chair and taking a drink out of a coffee cup and pointed to a fresh pot off the the side.

“It’s your facility as well Dr. Warder, you are family so therefore you are an Avenger” Tony said pouring himself a cup of coffee before sitting and stretching out his legs.

“If we are family then call me Monty,” Monty as he leaned forward to grab his coffee.

“Then call me Tony. Now Monty because I know Maria will ask about it the minute she gets back, which should be soon, I need to know what our injuries look like and what is the game plan.”

“Surprisingly and thankfully the injuries to the team were not as bad as they could have been. Selvig, Kara, and Melinda are the only three with concussions but those are easily treatable. Angie has 1st and 2nd degree burns to one of her shoulders but as long as we keep it clean and her on antibiotics she will be fine. The only one we have to worry about is Melinda because I confirmed that the eardrums have tears in them again, those can take up to three months to heal and during that time she can’t fly or be in the field” Monty said he began tapping his pen on the desk.

“It’s just the eardrum not any other internal damage?” Tony asked wondering if the device Helen had
been working on would be able to help. It would be the first time using it on the ears or even in such a confined area of the body but if it worked Melinda’s three month recovery could be shortened to just hours if not days. He knew from personal experience the device would work on Angie’s burns turning recovery from a painful few weeks to just a few hours.

“As far as I can tell at the moment. Why? Have a gizmo somewhere in all your toys that might be able to help?” Monty asked him with an raised eyebrow and smirk on his face.

“Something like that. JARVIS is Helen awake?”

“Why are we bothering Dr. Cho?” Maria asked from the doorway behind him and Tony turned to answer the woman. Tony took in Maria’s appearance and handed the commander the cup of coffee he had just poured for himself, she needed it more than he did at the moment. A passer by wouldn’t realize that the woman before him was exhausted but Tony could see the tiny droop in her shoulders and the dark bags starting to form under her eyes.

“Looks like you could use it more than me Commander” Tony teased waving her inside into the chair he just vacated.

“Always the flatter, Tony. I don’t know how Papper and Bruce puts up with it” Maria said sitting down as she took a sip of the coffee. A commotion in the medical ward through the door grabbed Tony’s attention as she finally realized the newest member of their group was in the room in an outfit that made him blink for a moment. It looked like a from head to toe red spandex outfit with black and white spots for the eye holes. The choice of weapons though is what caught his attention the most since the man had two katana’s strapped to his back while Tony counted at least two handguns, a tactical belt and at least three knives on his person.

“And I thought Caps uniform was ridiculous” Tony said trying to fight his amusement and failing. Maria snorted and shook her head before quickly taking a drink of her coffee.

“Ridiculous outfits aside, I think he will fit right in with the group. Lord knows he will give you a run for your money in the not having a filter on his mouth category Tony. Or even Sharon a run for her money in being a pain in my ass.”

“Now who’s the flatter” Tony said in a teasing tone and was pleased to see the small smile on Maria’s face before she turned back to Monty.
“Dr. Warder, you have three new patients that need a full bonding physical done since it seems they never got one. That and apparently their bond has been... *hinky* since earlier today” Maria said shaking her head when she used the word hinky. “We might need to do physicals on everyone in the morning because according to Izzy and Hunter they feel it too. Now how are our injured and what do we need to get them back up and running? And I’m still waiting on the answer to why we are bothering Dr. Cho.”

“Told you,” Tony said earning him an eyeroll from Monty. “Because if we can arrange secure transport she could help with one maybe two of our injuries that are going to take a long time to heal” Tony said as he looked out the door into the medical wing to see the newest member of their ever expanding group begin to inspect a bed pan of all things. Looking past the group he could see Izzy talking with Tori as she sat on the side of the bed waiting for Tori to be released.

“Who would have thought that Tony Stark would be a romantic...” Maria started pulling his attention back to the conversation at hand as she figured what he was trying to do without it being obvious.

Izzy let go of some of the tension she was feeling as soon as she kicked the door shut to their room. Dropping their gear bags by the door her eyes followed her mates as they moved towards the bedroom area. Since the explosion earlier the bond had been going...haywire, for lack of a better word. It was more clear than ever before and they were also starting to have the sensations that made her believe it was turning into a double bond. Physical and emotional bonds were rare but their little group had been sticking statistical norms on their heads like crazy recently. ‘*What was one more statistic*’ she thought sardonically.

Walking into the room she could feel Fitz’s doubt across the bond again and she watched as Tori moved to stand in front of the young scientist and make him meet her eyes before whispering lowly to him. The itch just below her skin intensified and she shared a heated look over Fitz’s shoulder with Tori before she allowed herself to move forward. Izzy had ignored the itch as long as she could but she could sense her mates needing her both emotionally and physically in that moment and any self control she had was gone in that instance.

Fitz stiffened momentarily against her when she placed a strong arm around his middle, resting her hand with his mark over his heart where her words were next to Tori’s words. “Easy there Curly” she husked out and felt him finally relax against her, letting her take his weight against her.

“I’m never getting away from that bloody nickname” he whispered softly his voice thick with emotion and the bond a chaotic smorgasbord of emotions and sensations as Izzy watched Tori brush away gently tears from their younger mates face.

“No you aren’t. Now all three of us are getting undressed and heading for that gloriously large
bathtub, where I plan on touching every inch of skin on the two of you till we pass out. Now I want you to go in there get undressed and start the bath” Izzy said her voice dropping into the tone that let them know she was in charge and felt it as Fitz shuddered against her. Arousal flared across the bond from both of her mates and it damn near brought her to her knees by the force of it as she shared a heated knowing look with Tori.

“Do you understand your instructions?” Tori asked before claiming Fitz’s lips in a lust filled kiss that just watching made Izzy’s already jump started arousal to go into overdrive.

“Yes ma’am” he whimpered once Tori pulled away from the kiss and started moving for the bathroom dragging him with her by the front of his shirt.

“JARVIS, engage sound and privacy protocols” Izzy said as she began stripping down as the sound of water turning on from the bathroom greeted her.

Tony sighed as he finally shut the door to what was his, Bruce and Pepper’s suite at the Neverland base. Every base had a personalized room to the styles of each of the Avengers and their mates. In almost all the bases there were rooms to spare for expansion and background support personnel and it seemed like he was going to need to get Pepper and JARVIS’s decorating expertise going on rooms for their newest members.

Even though he had grown up with money, it didn't mean he didn't understand not having a space of his own or a feeling of belonging. His early childhood to early teen years have been being shuffled from one stuffy boarding school to another only to be kicked out when he failed to conform to any set of rules or standards set before him. The only time he had gone home was during the winter holidays when it seemed his only use was to be paraded around by his parents guests or shareholders only to be ignored when the parties were over.

Summer holidays were a whole other situation where it seemed like he was only to be near his parents for the beginning of July before being shipped of to his godparents. His trips to stay with Aunt Peggy, Angie and Uncle James were some of the only times he felt in his younger years like the adults cared for him. Though they were strict they encouraged him to explore in many areas of life but taught him some of the valuable life lessons that you would expect to learn from a parent. It also was a time where he could hang out with other kids and not have to hold himself to such the high standards the Stark heir should hold himself too.

Now though with Steve’s confession and insight to who is father was before and during the war compared to the man Tony grew up with. Now looking back on his childhood he wasn’t seeing everything with such jaded and angry perception of not only his father but also his mother. Tony understood as he got older his mother did try to repair their relationship not only with herself but also
between Tony and his father. Their deaths had left him very angry and bitter at all the unresolved feelings he had towards the two of them but he knew now he would have to let it go and learn from all the mistakes his parents made with him. Hopefully not to make the same mistakes with his own children and future grandchildren.

Growing up that way though wasn’t all bad though, it gave him an ability to read people in both business and personal settings that hardly ever steered him wrong. It was with this ability that it gave him an understanding in the way his teammates, turned friends, now turned family all craved the same things he did. The rooms he knew were only a small part of it, it was also the facilities and the equipment that not only gave them stability but the confidence they needed to risk their lives do their jobs. Tony knew he had enough money to last himself several lifetimes and it was only growing, couple that with his technology and his non monetary resources he could provide everything for his family.

The thought of family reminded him of the news he needed to give to Bruce and Pepper. He would need all of Bruce's help in looking into what they needed to do to childproof all the bases. To be honest that is something he should have already started on when he realized just how many young children the Carter Legacy really had. Tony would also need to start on contingency plans for the children, he’d have to get Maria to join those skull sessions as well. Not only was Maria an amazing tactician but she had a mind for logistics that rivaled Pepper’s on everyday of the damn week.

“JARVIS, how are our guests settling in?” Tony asked as he went to the small bar in the room and poured himself a small tumbler of whiskey.

“They are settling in for some much needed rest sir. I have the health monitors on in everyone’s rooms just in case and will alert those considered to be the medical staff if anything happens. Did you want me to connect you to your mates?”

Tony shook his head to clear the exhaustion he was feeling as he opened his mouth to ask if Pepper and Bruce were awake only to have JARVIS answer the question without him asking it. Tony wasn’t even going to ask the AI how he knew that’s what he was about to ask because the AI knew him better than he knew himself and Tony was way beyond the age of lying to himself. “Alright can you get us connected?”

“Connecting now sir” JARVIS answered him before the screen in his living room blinked to life and showed his two mates.

“Hello Red and Green” Tony said as he let himself drop on the couch facing the screen careful not to spill any of his drink.
“Tony” Pepper started as both her and Bruce rolled their eyes at his nicknames for them. “I should say I’m surprised you are still awake but in reality I’m not.”

“Oh trust me loves, I’ll be passed out like a frat boy at the end of a kegger party soon. But I wanted to talk to you two before that happens to get you two started on some projects” Tony said taking another small drink of whiskey.

“What type of projects?” Pepper asked as she grabbed her Starkpad from off screen.

“I’ll need both of your help to design new rooms for all our new members and couples, also we need to start child proofing all the bases, including the Farm if Natasha and Clint will let me near it” Tony said starting to set up the conversation for the big reveal.

“We can do that Tony but even with the children from the Carter legacies in the mix there aren’t really any that would need child proofing for that our normal security procedures won’t cover” Bruce said pulling up the side of the screen a list of all the children and ages that were currently under the protection of the Avengers.

“True our normal security protocols should work for them but I want to revamp them just incase for those age ranges but we also need to work on procedures for infants that need to be in place in the next 9 months or so while we might as well for toddlers while we can since it will be needed in the next few years” Tony said taking a drink and watching the confusion on his two mates faces and tried to hide his smirk behind his glass.

Comprehension first hit Peppers face followed by a combination of a gasp and squeal “Who?”

The reason finally clicked for Bruce as well as he looked at Tony expecting him to spill the information. “Fitz it seems has gotten Tori pregnant. She is a little under a month along but it seems she’s already having morning sickness so Dr. Warder ran the tests. Congrats Grandma and Grandpa.”

“And just who are you going to be Tony?” Pepper asked him, with her hands on her hips but her eyes glistened slightly with unshed tears.

“I’m going to be Pop’s.”
Nicholas felt his shoulders relax for the first time in days as the smells of his mother’s cooking and the deep booming laughter of his father washed over him. For a moment he allowed himself to go to years long gone when his small family all lived in the same house, he could almost fool himself into thinking that it was like it once was and that he’d go into the kitchen to find his brother Trip already at the kitchen table books spread out before him working on homework. He missed the days when it was just his mother, father and brother Trip at home spending time with each other but those days were a thing of the past since his father had become the Director of SHIELD. His father had been paranoid before but once taking over the position he had become even more paranoid for their safety and trips home were now rare and to be cherished.

Removing his cover he hung it up on the hat rack by the door and looked into the mirror seeing the dark bags under his eyes standing out against his fair skin. Baby blue eyes stared back at him while he rubbed at his buzzed cut dark brown almost black hair. He'd been staying at his mother’s house since the Code 99 had been activated and though he slept it wasn't restful because any little sound woke him up. Paranoia over everyone’s safety kept him on edge as he had spent many sleepless nights watching the video feeds around everyone's houses, it would have been easier to move his cousin’s mates to his mother’s house but the ladies would all kill him where he stood for even suggesting it.

"Of course it wasn't really paranoia if someone was out to get your family, well maybe me too and not just because I was adopted by them” he thought with a sigh and stopped rubbing his hair as he stared at his reflection looking past it. To the world at large he was Captain Nikolai Tesla of the United States Marine Corp, adopted son of Colonel Nicholas Tesla and Colonel Henreitta Tesla of the United States Marine Corp. To the world he was the child of a family friend that had died overseas that the Tesla’s had adopted but reality was something completely different. Only a few people knew of his real identity, Nicholas Fury III, of course that wasn’t even his real name. No one knew that, all he could be remembered being called before being adopted was that he was number 626.

Nicholas knew he had been adopted at a young age but it never bothered him because his mother and father had loved him just as much as his brother Tripp. At the age of five or six he had been rescued by his father, Aunt Angie and Uncle Dum Dum when they had found him in a human testing facility that some SHIELD agents had raided hours before.

Closing his eyes Nicholas could remember that day like it was yesterday, it was a gift and a curse for someone who sometimes wished they could forget the past. That day had been a normal day at the facility he had been kept at, the only difference with that day was he was suffering from a broken ankle. Weakness wasn’t tolerated in any form so he never cried out in pain for fear of ending up like the young boy that had been 607. Another thing that wasn’t tolerated was failing orders and tardiness and he had been late changing out of his pt gear into his swim attire when the alarms had sounded.

Nicholas knew that the broken ankle he had suffered earlier that morning had saved his life because in that moment an order had been shouted over the speaker system and the guards who had been training them that day had opened fire on the hallway of the other assembled boys. Screams were
heard as blood began to run under his door and Nicholas had done the only thing he could think of, he hid in one of the empty cabinets in his room and waited for the guards to come for him.

More screams and explosions rocked the facility but slowly everything died down but still he didn’t dare move from his hiding spot for fear of being found by the guards that had just killed everyone he knew. He hadn’t been close to any of the other boys, talking or any type of friendliness was quickly punished severely but he still knew them in a weird way. Hours had passed but still he hadn’t moved till he started to hear unfamiliar voices in an unfamiliar language. Curious he had opened the cabinet door to see out and must have been seen because his father and Aunt had opened the door fully only seconds later while Uncle Dum Dum had a rifle trained right at him.

Nicholas remembered that it took them a while to coax him out of the cabinet because he didn't want to be punished for hiding. It had taken his parents, because that's what they were blood or not, years to break him of habits and behaviors he had developed in his first couple years of life at the facility. Years later when he was older and was starting to show signs that he wasn't totally normal his father had sat him down giving him the files pertaining to the time when they had found him.

Nicholas thought back to the file had been given all those years ago and knew his father didn’t shield him from the fact that the other kids experimented on with him had either been drugged or shot as whoever ran the facility ran trying to cover their tracks as they fled. Since day one Nicholas always wanted to meet the four agents responsible for making his rescue possible but had never been able to do it. His father had told him that his facility had been raided because two of the agents very own child had been kidnapped and hadn't survived and they had gone on a sanctioned but dark spree trying to find those responsible. Though he wanted to thank them he didn't want to rub salt in the wound and was resigned to thanking them silently everyday in the way he lived his life.

Shaking his head he took a deep breath and let it out, as he turned his head at a noise. His father came into the hallway with a small smile and two beers in his hand. “Welcome home kid. Long day?” his father asked completely straight faced but his eye gave him away with his amusement while handing him one of the beers.

Nicholas laughed taking the beer and opening it because his father damn well knew it had been a long day since it had to be SHIELD once again saving the day, this time in England. “You know it was. Asgardians with Ironman thrown into the mix fighting an unknown Alien race. While the English were mostly tight lipped” he said following his father out towards the garage. “How bad is it Pops?”

“Bad enough. Angie was there part of the team on the ground, she was injured but last I heard a couple hours ago everyone made it back the Avenger base near there. She should be now resting with her mates” his father answered sitting on the couch in the garage. The garage had always been where they had spent anytime together when he was home bonding over their love of old school muscle cars. Their last project together before he left for Annapolis sat outside the large garage door
parked in the driveway.

“Mates? Avenger’s base? And England is not why you called the Code 99 is it?” Nicholas asked as he took a drink of his beer and watched as his father sighed and shook his head.

“Yes mates, the family just got bigger and a whole lot crazier. Between all the new mates and the other legacies now thrown into the mix, family gatherings now have even more potential than before of becoming international incidents” his father said rubbing his bald head before continuing.

“As for the code 99, that would have been your cousin Sharon and though at first I was pissed about it...she was right to do it. Apparently I’ve been holding things too close to the vest again and she called me out on it with Maria and the Avengers to add weight to the scolding and with the information they’ve been able to dig up your Aunt Peggy would be chewing me out a whole lot worse if she could...I thought I was playing the long game, but it seems I was actually being very short sighted” his father said closing his one good eye and leaning his head back against the wall.

“How bad is it Pops?” Nicholas asked waiting and dreading the answer because in that moment he’d never seen his father look so old and defeated.

“SHIELD’s compromised. Maria and I have been investigating since New York, but we've only just scratched the surface so the Avengers have taken the lead. Once you link those to your biometrics you’ll have access to the Avenger secure server that Maria’s mate set up. There is a lot of reading but what you need to know is that this is a shit sandwich kid and I don’t know how it will end” his father said not opening his eye.

“What do you need me to do?” Nicholas asked looking away for the first time this conversation began as he started to set the phone and tablet to his biometrics. Looking at the server on the tablet he blinked at the amount of data on it already and knew that sleep would be a distant thing for everyone in the house not that anyone had been sleeping well to begin with.

“Three things. First I wanted to get your permission to put your real files on the server. Turns out Maria’s mate, Skye was that little girl I told you about all those years ago and why you couldn't meet the agents responsible for your rescue. Somehow she survived and found her way to SHIELD and her parents. What we know is on the server along with the names of the four agents you have always wanted to meet. And it's all connected somehow, just don't ask me how yet.”

“Could I meet them and her?” he asked suddenly nervous about meeting the agents responsible for giving him a family that loved him.
“Do I have your permission?” his father asked ignoring his question for the moment.

“Yes, we always knew this day was going to happen. I would have eventually joined SHIELD but I wanted to join the Marines first just like you. And the second?”

“I want you on the conference call with me in a few hours. I’ll introduce you to the four agents, Maria and Skye then. Just be ready for them to yell at yours truly but this is your life and I wasn’t going to release the information without talking to you first. As for physically meeting them we will see what we can arrange but if this all goes pear shaped like it has the potential to, you will get your wish.”

“Okay I’ll call in for tomorrow, no problem. I was pretending to not feel well once mom let me know you were home. I was planning on playing hookey anyways. What’s the last bit?” Nicholas asked already with an idea what it was going to be.

“I’ll have Skye hack in and cut your orders but I need you to get to the triplets in Afghanistan, get them set up with the new gear then get back to watch over your mother and their mates. Nicholas if you have to, I want you to activate the Prometheus protocol. I hope it doesn't come down to that son but we might not have a choice” his father said giving him time to process everything they had discussed. They sat out there drinking till his mother came to get them for dinner.

Jemma watched as Thor summoned lighting and hit each device and heard her twin shout in joy as the readouts spiked each time on the devices to the needed levels. But she wasn’t looking at the readouts on the Starkpad she looked out to where each device stated giving off blue lights but then warnings started screaming from her her brothers tablet and she knew something was about to go horribly wrong... The moment of elation was gone as he watched they systems pushed to their limits and as they glanced away from his Starkpad and shared a horrified look with each other. They desperately tried to figure a way to fix it, but there was no way to fix it, there was no time because something was about to go horribly wrong.

“Jemma!” Jemma turned to see Bobbi next to her but that was wrong because Bobbi shouldn’t be there...

“Jemma, come on love wake up” she heard Bobbi say as she sat bolt upright fighting back the panic and horror she felt inside. Images of the day before cascading before her tightly closed eyes as two pairs of strong arms wrapped around her middle holding her tight as she began to cry. Jemma’s body shook from the after effects of the nightmare and the sobs she heard herself crying. Her chest tightened as she fought off the panic attack the nightmare had triggered. It had been years since she
had one, the panic attacks only stopping after Fitz and her had met at the academy.

“We are here love, you are safe” Hunter said as he picked her up gently and placed her into the lap of Bobbi. Grabbing one of her hands around the wrist he placed her hand between Bobbi’s breasts. Moments later she could feel Hunter’s calloused hands as they began rubbing circles on her back. “That’s it love, copy Bobbi follow her breathing.”

Minutes passed with them in bed just like this as she finally got her breathing under control and it didn’t feel like she was going to have her heart burst from her chest at any moment. Her eyes felt puffy and she felt embarrassed that she had woken her mates up because of a stupid nightmare. “I’m sorry I woke you two,” Jemma said softly after hiding her face in the crook of Bobbi’s neck.

“There is nothing to be sorry about sweetheart, we all get them from time to time. This is a normal and natural thing, don’t let anyone tell you differently” Bobbi said placing a finger under Jemma’s chin and forcing her to make eye contact before kissing her forehead. Jemma bit her lip as her eyes were drawn to Bobbi’s lips and she could feel her body and the bond react immediately. “There is my beautiful mate.”

“I’m not beautiful, my eyes are puffy and I probably look a right mess right now” Jemma said laughing lowly trying to look away but Bobbi’s hand gripped her chin and wouldn’t let her look away.

“You are beautiful no matter what my love, puffy eyes and all” Bobbi said softly before capturing Jemma’s lips in a soft kiss. Hunter’s strong calloused hands began to wander her body as the bed shifted behind her. The bond flared between the three of them and Jemma broke off the kiss with a gasp as the strength of the bond hit her full force from both of her mates.

“Took you long enough love,” Hunter said a chuckle vibrating against her skin as he started placing open mouthed kisses to her back, while Bobbi began to do the same with her neck. Jemma felt the familiar burn just under her skin that she had experienced before she had bonded with Hunter and Bobbi. It was impossible, the burn shouldn’t be this bad but she felt it just there as the bond kept flaring enough to make her breathing labored. Hunter’s chuckled words finally registered her hormone fueled mind as she realized that she was getting both emotional and physical sensations from both of her mates through the bond.

“How?” she asked and let out a particularly loud moan as Bobbi pushed her back against Hunter’s strong chest as she began to kiss and suck on an already overly sensitive nipple.

“God that’s beautiful,” Hunter husked from behind her as one of his hands found her other nipple.
and began playing with it. “It started yesterday after the explosion and it’s slowly been building up. You were in shock so didn’t notice it at first but we aren’t the only one’s though . . .”

“Less talking, more us. Then maybe talking and medical,” Bobbi ordered before beginning to pull on Jemma’s legs her intentions more than clear as Jemma let herself loose herself in the process of rebonding with her soulmates.

“I need a favor” Fury said from the other end of the line of the phone and Maria barely bit back a sigh as she rolled onto her back. Looking at the clock she could see that it was just a little bit after 0800 London time which meant she had gotten just a handful of fitful hours of sleep before she had been woken up by her boss slash friend asking for a favor. Maria remembered a time when just a handful of hours would have her growling and threatening whomever with latrine duty but with shock she realized she felt well rested and not as sore as she had every expectation to feel that morning. “Another thing to have medical look into” she thought before dragging her attention back towards the conversation.

“From my boss or from my friend?” Maria groaned out because a favor from her boss was an implied order, from her friend on the other hand if she didn’t like it she could always say no and she was half tempted to say no anyways just so she could go back to sleep.

“Both” she heard Fury sigh on the other end.

“I’ll take ominous things your spymaster boss says for five hundred Alex” she snarked out and heard Fury snort in amusement as she rubbed her face. “Ok I’ll bite, what do you need?”

“I need you to arrange a conference with you, Skye, Phil, May, Natasha and Clint. I have information to share but first only to you six then I’ll dump it on the server” Fury said and if his tone wasn’t setting off warning bells this was now.

“Why do I have a feeling I’m not going to like what I hear? And why are you still hiding information? Damn it Fury you already know you are on thin ice with the Avengers” she asked sitting up and throwing off the covers before looking around for her go bag for a clean pair of pants, she could keep on the t-shirt she had slept in.

“Look Maria I will admit I was wrong and you all were right, I play things sometimes closer to the vest than I should but this is a Rule 13 situation. I’ll be introducing you all to the person whose story it is and I promise full disclosure but I had to talk to him first before I did it, you’ll understand why when I introduce him.”
“Fine, but can you get somewhere more secure than the Hellicarrier?” Maria asked finally finding her bag and pants under her discarded tactical suit. Picking up the tactical suit she looked at it for a moment before tossing it towards a corner for her to wash later.

“I’m not on the Hellicarrier, that’s an LMD. This gave me the perfect opportunity to go home to see my wife and cut out some of the stops planned for Kevin. I promise, I’m trying to help Maria” Nick said with a sigh and Maria could hear exhaustion in his voice.

“Alright Nick, I believe you. Let me go wake Mel and Phil and then I’ll get the Farm on the line. Just so you know Mel damaged her eardrums again during the battle so Phil will be signing for her. I’ll call you once I get everyone together. Are you ready to go on your end?” Maria asked walking out of her room and knocked on the door next to hers that had Mel and Phil in it.

“Yeah, we’re ready” Fury said as Phil opened the door blinking at her for a moment before seeing the phone to her ear.

“I’ll call you back Nick” Maria said before hanging up. “Nick wants to talk to you, Mel, Tasha, Clint, Skye and myself to introduce us to someone and give us all more information. Says it’s a Rule 13 type of information as to why he didn’t give it up in the original data dump” Maria said to Phil and watched as he signed the news quickly to Mel.

“I guess after this we need to do the interrogations and get a status of everything? How long have we slept?” Phil asked as he moved towards their bags and Maria leant against the door frame signing for Mel.

“Might as well since we are now up. If they aren't awake by the end of the conference call I'll be waking the others then” she answered already making a mental list of everything that needed to be done since she was now awake. “As for sleep only a handful of hours and being that you are moving pretty decently I’m guessing you aren’t as sore as you have every right to be this morning.”

“Now that you mention it, you're right. I guess it will be a day of tests then as well. Go ahead and wake the Farm and we'll see you in about twenty minutes” Phil said as he closed the door after she turned to leave. Thinking twice about it, she first dialed Natasha’s number because after getting her up she wanted to talk to her mate without being interrupted at least for a few minutes. Maria needed to hear Skye’s voice this morning and not just for work purposes.

“This had better be good Hill,” Tasha answered without even a hello.
“Trust me I’d rather be in bed but Nick called and wants a conference and I need you, Clint and Skye up and ready in about twenty minutes” Maria said getting to one of the many conference rooms inside Neverland and started up the coffee pot in the room.

“What now?” Tasha asked but Maria could hear her waking Clint up and telling him to be quiet so not to wake Laura but to leave a note.

“He’s got information that didn’t get put in the original data dump but he doesn’t want to release it till after our conference. Says it’s a Rule 13 situation and that he has someone to introduce us all to.”

“Not his story to tell? Well this is bound to be interesting” was Tasha's only response before her friend hung up the phone. Rolling her eyes she dialed Skye’s number as she fought back a yawn that shook her whole body. ‘Okay maybe I'm still a bit tired.’

“Is everything okay my love?” came Skye’s sleep filled voice and Maria smiled softly.

“Yeah it is now.”

“You are lucky I love your cheesiness, I wish you were here I miss you. But by your emotions I'm guessing this isn't purely a social call because we've both only had a couple of hours of sleep and we should still be sleeping,” Skye said sticking Maria on speaker phone before turning on a faucet.

“I miss you too, I would be there if I could right now dragging you back to bed..”

“None of that while you are half the world away or I'm not going to be able to concentrate on whatever has us up” Skye scolded her but Maria knew her mate was teasing, well partly through the bond.

“Damn foiled” Maria said snapping her fingers earning a laugh from Skye. She let the laughter and emotions associated with it wash over her as she poured herself a cup of coffee. “You're right though Fury wants us, Clint and Tasha and your parents in a conference call. Says he's got someone for us to meet and information not in his original data dump to Sharon that he wants to share with us first before he puts it on the server. Says the information was a Rule 13 type of situation.”
“Rule 13?” Skye asked and Maria heard a door open before footsteps echoing slightly as her mate walked in the underground facility under the Farm. She knew that Natasha and Jenny had decided to keep everyone in the underground bunker sometime yesterday saying it was easier to keep everyone safe that way since they didn’t have enough adults to go around with all the children. Maria knew she needed to find more people they trusted to move them to the Farm for security but it was a matter of who could they really trust?

“Rule 13: You have information but it’s not your story to tell” Maria said as Mel and Phil came into the room and poured themselves some coffee.

“Well…that's slightly ominous coming from tall, dark and piratey” Skye said after a moment and though the statement was scary in one way, the way her mate said it made Maria start laughing uncontrollably.

“I'll call you on the screen in a moment. Do me a favor and tell Nick to text me confirmation of what new location I'm calling him at, since he added four new ones yesterday while we were all busy with the battle” Natasha heard Skye say before pausing with a smile on her face, “I love you too.” Skye hung up her call and took a sip of the coffee Natasha handed her before starting to type away on a StarkPad.

“How are you feeling kid?” Clint asked their niece as she sat down next to Clint still relishing in the newness of their bond with Laura.

“I'm alright, just a bit tired but nothing a little rest won’t fix” Skye answered them as her phone buzzed and she started typing away more on her tablet before two of the screens blinked to life on the wall. One showed Maria, Phil and Mel and the other showed Fury in a room that looked like it could be a normal living room in any american home. “Hello parentals” Skye said and shocked everyone when she also signed what she was saying.

“Um kiddo when did you learn sign language?” Phil asked as he signed the question for Mel.

“During one of my stints at the orphanage. One of the girls, Maya was deaf while another boy Matt came in that was blind then there was Emma. We made quite the quad for a while till I got moved again. Reminds me I need to check in on them and one other friend. Last I heard Matt was studying law, Emma was deployed with the Marines while Maya was a lot like me, searching for answers....” Skye trailed off with a distant look on her face.

“Skye?” Maria prompted and Natasha watched as her niece seemed to come to and shook her head.
“Sorry wool gathering but Maya blamed SHIELD for her father’s death like I blamed them for being left at an orphanage. What I found for her was a whole lot more than I was able to find on myself when I was hacking SHIELD but it seemed her father was turning state’s evidence against a man called the Kingpin that runs Hell’s Kitchen. Somehow Kingpin found out and had Maya’s father killed right in front of her or at least that’s what SHIELD suspected” Skye said turning back to her tablet and Natasha knew that any agent now tied to that case would be going through Skye’s program looking for the rat.

“Skye put Jasper Sitwell and John Garrett to the top of your list to investigate” Fury said pinching the bridge of his nose. “They were the case agent and specialist assigned to that case, I wish to say we caught Kingpin and put him away but he’s still running Hell’s Kitchen despite this new masked vigilante that’s running around there being a thorn in the Kingpin’s side.”

“How do you know I was…?” Skye asked looking up in surprise but Natasha knew like everyone else knew that Skye had an inquisitive mind that needed to know the answers. It’s what made her an amazing investigator now and what had made her a very dangerous hacker before she had gotten on SHIELD’S radar and found her family.

“Because it’s what I would do. I’m also going to dump information on the server for you on the masked vigilante that is making Fisk aka the Kingpin’s life hell recently. If you can figure out who he is, I’d like to be able to talk to him to let him know he has support if needed” Fury said before taking a drink of what Natasha knew was going to be black coffee that was strong enough to eat paint.

“Skye run your search and let’s see if we can find your friends, I think your mother and I would like to meet them” Phil said smiling gently to his daughter and Natasha felt emotion swell in her chest. Happiness for her friends and Skye but also sorrow at a childhood long lost, not only for Skye but for herself. Natasha knew her friends and their daughter now had a chance to build something still but she knew that her wish for more from her own parents was a pipe dream. Her mother was long ago dead and buried as a martyr for mother russia when she was only a few years old. While her father was a ghost, a myth in the intelligence community but Natasha knew he was quite real she had the scars and haunting memories to prove it.

Natasha felt Clint take her hand under the table and run a thumb over her knuckles in a soothing motion. At first they couldn’t feel each others emotions but the longer their bond stabilized with Laura the more apparent it was becoming they were starting to share a double bond the same as Skye and Maria. They were going to ask Michael and Jackie to do a workup for them in the morning since they couldn’t deny it any longer. Taking a breath she gave Clint’s hand a squeeze back before getting the conference call back on track. “Fury you asked for this, it’s your show.”
“Alright, I hate to bring up bad memories but this bit of information is from just after Rayne err Skye was kidnapped. Do you four remember that facility you hit in the Swiss Alps?” Fury asked them and Natasha shared a pained look with Clint before looking towards the screen with Mel and Phil on it. Mel was signing lightning fast and she knew her friend and sister in all but name was upset about having to remember that particular opp. It was one of the first facilities they hit after Skye had been kidnapped and what they had found had turned their stomachs of course after that mission what they found only seemed to get worse.

“We all remember it like it was yesterday Nick, we hit the facility and what kids they hadn’t killed by drugs by the time we made it through the defenses were shot as the guards and medical staff fled. We ended quite a few of them before they could escape but we weren’t able to rescue any of the kids” Phil said his voice filled with emotion as he translated what his mate was saying.

“Angie, Dum Dum and I arrived at the location a few hours behind you just like we did at any of the facilities you four hit during that time. Peggy knew that you four worked better when alone so she ordered the three of us to stay one step behind you three. We were ordered to clean up any loose ends and gather any intel you might have missed and watch your back trail. We were always nearby watching making sure you didn’t bite off more than you could chew without some backup. In that facility there was one survivor, a little boy no older than five or six was our best guest at the time” Fury said while tapping on a tablet.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Natasha demanded after a moment of shock that she was sharing with Clint. Could there have been other survivors that they had missed in their haze? She knew she wasn’t the only one thinking that question as she began going through all the memories from that time with a different set of eyes.

“Peggy didn’t want to rub salt into fresh wounds when it came to the child especially since he didn’t know anything other than what he and the small group he had been attached to had gone through. We extracted him from the location, while Peggy and James came to retrieve him. They brought him back to my wife to run tests on and try to see what had been done to him. Though Henrietta was never a SHIELD agent she was a legacy and was one of the family physicians and Peggy didn’t trust anyone in SHIELD at the time since we couldn’t tell how Hyde knew Mel was pregnant since you two only told a very select few” Nick said before taking another drink of his coffee.

“Is he like me?” Skye asked from beside her and Natasha reached out to comfort the clearly shaken young woman. Natasha wondered how many kids were out there like her, like Skye or like the young boy that was now a man they were just learning about.

“Not quite with your abilities but he definitely is not what we would call normal. I’ve put his files up on the server and everyone looking at the changes in you Skye can use his bloodwork and files as a comparison though from what Henrietta has told me it’s not really a comparison your blood work is as different from his as both of yours is from a ‘normal’ human.”
“Nick you said you wanted to introduce us to someone. I’m guessing it is him?” Maria asked because clearly Phil, Mel, Clint and herself was still in shock at the news.

“Yes, I did. Come here son” Nick said to someone off camera and Clint and her shared a look because they now understood the Rule 13 situation. If it had been one of their children they’d be just as protective as Fury was being with their origin and identity. They both turned back to the screen and Natasha suffered another shock because the young man on the screen was like looking at a younger version of the man she believed to be her father. Only this person had close cropped hair and not the ragged mop that her father had on his head the day he shot her five years ago. “I would like you all to meet Nicholas Fury III but known to the world at large as Captain Nicholai Tesla.”

“A Marine like father, like son” Phil said but her mind was spinning...Natasha felt it as Clint quickly turned her chair and pushed her head down between her legs. It had been years since she had a panic attack but Clint and even Laura were sending reassurance and calm through the bond towards her. She could feel it as Laura came closer and it had only to be seconds before Laura was talking softly as she knelt before her.

“Love listen to my voice, feel my breathing” Laura said as Natasha’s hand was brought to rest on Laura’s chest. “That’s it, it’s okay. Breath in and out my love.” It took a few minutes but soon Natasha was able to drag her mind back with the help of Laura and Clint. Sitting up Natasha pulled Laura up off the ground and pulled her into her lap with her hand skimming under Laura’s night shirt to rest on her stomach, she needed the skin to skin contact more than ever to ground her in the here and now.

“Thank you” Natasha said lowly for her wife’s ears before taking a deep breath. “Skye pull up the file titled Winter Soldier on the server from the data Clint and I gave you all a week ago…”

“Natasha he’s a myth, a boogie man” Fury started but she cut him off.

“I know you want to think so but when I’m looking at a much younger version of the man that is the sole reason I can’t wear bikini’s ever again I’d beg to differ and I can bloody well prove it” Natasha said as she took the tablet that Clint handed her that had the query queued up for JARVIS to run for them. Looking up at the young man that Fury had just introduced as his adopted son she saw a questioning fear in the young man’s blue eyes and hit the button to test her theory.

“What do you mean?” Fury asked looking between his son and Natasha and she didn’t blame him. A beep from the tablet made her look down and read the results she knew were going to be there but knowing and *knowing* are two different things.
Natasha felt both Laura and Clint’s reassurances through the bond as she took a deep breath and put the DNA results on the screen of the conference call for everyone to see. Looking up again she met blue eyes with her green and smiled at the young man.

“Hello little brother.”
“Well damn, I didn’t see that coming” Maria said sitting back in her chair at the Neverland base after sharing a look with Phil and Mel. That was twice in just hours that she either said that or thought that about all the new information coming into them.

“I don’t think any of us did” Fury finally said as he dropped onto one of the couches behind him. Though they were at odds at the moment over the whole mess they found themselves in with the investigation she still worried for Fury as not only her boss but also as a friend and her partner. The man had pulled her bits out of the fire a time or dozen, of course she’d done the same for him as well but in that moment she was worried for him. As he sat there on the couch with his one good eye closed she’d never seen him more emotionally naked or looking so close to his age.

“Finding out some of my origins, doesn’t make me any less your son” Nicholas said giving his father a squeeze to the shoulder only to have Fury place his hand on top his son’s hand giving it a squeeze back. “Hello big sis, could there be more of us?”

“I’d say it’s more than probable but the resemblance to the man I’ve suspected for sometime was my father, or that would be our father was just too uncanny for me to ignore” Natasha said as she shrugged her shoulders.

“Well it’s a good possibility and I find it ironic that you were one of the ones that saved me from that hell. Thank you, all four of you. I’ve wanted to say that since Dad told me about how he happened across me” Nicholas said finally letting go of Fury’s shoulder and sitting next to the man on the couch.

“Your welcome, I just wish we had paid more attention when raiding the facility” Natasha finished with a sigh looking towards Clint then at Mel and Phil. “But I can be honest I’m glad it was Fury that found you when he did, I don’t know...back then we were a wreck and I don’t think I would have been able to care for you like it seems Fury and his wife did. Thank you Nick.”

“It was my honor Natasha,” Fury said before clearing his throat and looking towards Maria. “What is your status at Neverland?”

“Healing and resting with some possible new members to add to our little group. I’ll know more once I read them in but I’m more than sure they might join us since they have a personal stake in this as well. Dr. Cho with escort is on her way here to help assist Dr. Warder to see if a device she’s been working on for Stark can help our two most serious injuries” Maria said yawning near the end as she dropped the new files on the shared server. Mel gave her a pointed look as she pushed Maria’s coffee
cup closer to her. Maria picked it up with a long suffering sigh earning her a chuckle from Phil on the other side of Mel.

“Just who are these new members and who is escorting Dr. Cho?” Fury asked before taking a drink of his coffee only to spit it out after reading something on the tablet and Maria didn’t need two guesses on what file he had just seen. “You have gotta be shitting me!”

“Nope. Wade Wilson former SAS turned merc but now known as the assassin Deadpool is the third to Colonel Lewis Nixon and 1st Lieutenant Kate Bishop. Our initial scan of Nixon missed that but it’s only a year old and they have been very careful about being seen anywhere with Wade since by that time he was already operating as Deadpool” Maria said trying to not laugh at Skye’s consternation on missing something and by her mates determined tapping at the tablet she was introducing a few new protocols already into the search program.

“Rogers isn’t going to like this information” Fury said after reading the brief two paragraphs she put at the beginning of the file and Maria didn’t even try hiding her snort.

“Tell me about it, but this is why I think they will be joining our little group. Tony’s already made noise about making Wade an Avenger and bringing his mates into the group with their skill sets already. At this point I can’t find fault with that idea, we need the manpower and we know things just keep heating up” Maria said as she looked Fury in the eye and dared him to disagree with her on this.

“Do it” Fury conceded finally with a sigh and mumbled something about family gatherings and international incidents as he rubbed his one good eye. “Where are we going to base them?”

“Out of sight, out of mind most likely. I’d like to keep them as an ace in the hole force that no one knows we have” Maria said looking towards Natasha and Clint.

“Send them here Maria, we can use the extra help with security and maybe it will give the triad time to get their bond to stabilize. It doesn’t seem from what Monty put in his initial assessment that it’s not fully stabilized even after a year together” Clint said after sharing a look with Natasha and Laura.

“I’ll think about it but Wade has little to no filter so my main concern is anything he might do or say that would unintentionally traumatize the children. God knows just a thirty minute car ride with him was enough for me to want to shoot him in the foot” Maria said before continuing. “As for Dr. Cho she is being flown by Noelle and and two other agents she trusts from the Treehouse. Agent Morales is seasoned and one of her top agents, while the other is a kid so new he squeaks apparently but is being assigned to Morales to train.”
“I read the file of Agent Jackson, his father is the one that runs our Communications program at the Academy while his mother was killed in action a few years ago. Anything else we should know about now?”

“Yes, Monty will be doing new workups of all us that were in the battle yesterday. As far as we can tell everyone that had their bondmates there with them are having increased sensitivity across the bond. As for those bonds where only part of us were here I’m not sure but I’m ordering it for all of us at this time. I’ll be passing the information the General Richmond for the civilians to be checked out as well when I speak with him later” Maria said before an alert sounded across the base.

“Medical personnel to holding cell two” JARVIS voice intoned and Maria instantly pushed back her chair as she heard her ear piece drop automatically into the all hands emergency channel.

“JARVIS lock us down now” she yelled as she sprinted out the door trusting that everything would be covered as Phil started issuing orders in her ear, letting her get to holding cell two.

Monty sat bolt upright in bed as the alert sounded across the base. “Medical personnel to holding cell two” JARVIS intoned and he cursed as he hopped out of bed not bothering on throwing on a shirt as he grabbed his emergency kit.

“JARVIS I’ll need you to guide me!” he yelled out and started following the lights that started blinking along the floor to show him the way. Just as the full lockdown alarm sounded around the base as well. Skittering around the corner he almost ran into Maria as she ran through the intersection. He followed her down the stairs as he stepped off he could hear more feet following behind them. Turning another corner Monty saw Thomas and Captain Gibson both men in boxers but armed at the door as it stood open for them to enter.

They ran through the door into the small cell block wing as Maria quickly moved to the side to let him pass. Dropping his bag inside the cell he could see “Ian the intern” having what looked like a seizure as both Kevin and Monty’s brother Stephen tried to keep the young man from doing more damage to himself from his fit.

“Bobbi get me his vitals. Jemma prep a tube for intubation” Monty ordered the two women who followed him into the room as he started pulling out a syringe and ativan from his bag. Bobbi moved into Stephen’s spot as she quickly cut the young man’s shirt off and stuck leads on his chest.
“He’s crashing!” Bobbi called out and he could hear the chaotic beeping of the machine she had just turned on. Monty pushed the ativan and not seeing any improvements as Jemma handed him the tube and light to intubate as he traded spots with Kevin.

“Fuck his throat is completely swollen, push a round of epinephrine and start an IV line, prep for a tracheotomy he’s having an allergic reaction to god knows what” Monty ordered as Angie ran into the room and pulled out the emergency tracheotomy kit from the bag and moved closer to him. He took the scalpel from Angie as Kevin, Stephen and Maria moved to hold down his patient as he began to cut into the man’s throat.

“Alright I’m in, Angie bag him” Monty ordered as he looked over towards the portable monitor and frowned at the vitals as they kept getting worse. “Push another round of epinephrine and start him on cortisone...fucking hell charge the paddles!”

“Charged, clear” Bobbi yelled out and everyone in the small cell moved back as she shocked their patient but the only sound they heard in response was the tone for a flatline.

“Charge again! Start chest compressions. Round of adrenaline. JARVIS ask Jane and Darcy if they know if their intern was allergic to anything” Monty ordered.

“Charged, clear” Bobbi yelled out and everyone moved away again but moved back instantly as the patient continued to flatline.

“Dr. Warder they said that patient said something about a peanut allergy once” JARVIS told him and he cursed because how the hell did the man have anything peanut in the cell.

“Another round of adrenaline, prepare to shock again” Monty ordered as he looked around the cell trying to see what could have caused the reaction and he came across a white object a few feet away and with a gloved hand picked it up and got a whiff of peanut oil and knew they were fighting a losing battle. “Damn it he had a false tooth, someone go next door and knock out that idiot till we can search his mouth for one as well!”

“Charged, clear” Bobbi yelled out and Monty watched as Maria got up and grabbed her 9mm on her thigh as she ran out of the door. Everyone else moved out of the way as the patient was shocked again with no response.

“Charge again” Monty ordered as he opened up his patient's eyes and shined a light quickly in them,
they barely responded. “Another round of epinephrine and adrenaline.”

“Charged, clear” Bobbi called out one time and Monty watched as their patient’s body jumped with the shock but the tone of flatline still rang out in the small cell and seemed to echo around them.

“That’s it I’m calling it” Monty said standing up as he watched Bobbi turn off the machine. Pulling off his gloves he threw them down onto the body thinking ‘What a god forsaken waste.’

“Quinn was hit with dendrotoxin, he’s unconscious for now but I have Nixon and Deadpool standing over him with more in case he even twitches” Maria said from the doorway as she looked into the room with a blank expression. “As for this one I want an autopsy done right after we make sure Quinn doesn’t have any suicide paraphernalia on him and if he does I want it removed and I really don’t care how.”

“It’ll be done. Who the hell are we dealing with Maria?” Monty asked the question they were all thinking in their minds.

“I have no clue. Once Quinn is cleared I want him in interrogation and at this point I might just let Deadpool at him” Maria said only stopping when a muffled cheer came most likely from the man in the next room. “JARVIS get Steve and Sharon aware of the situation and give them the full video from this cell and tell them I want a full analysis of it ASAP.”

“Neverland base this is SHIELD T36 requesting permission to land” Jeffery said conscious of the fact that his new S.O. was watching everything he did as he kept them steady on their final approach to the Avenger base. He only had a few hours of flight time under his belt but both the senior agents had said there was no time like the present to assess his flying skills since they might be needed sooner than later.

At first he didn’t understand why the head of his facility had taken such an interest in him personally but once he had been read in he understood they were in need of anyone they could trust. Jeffrey had been ordered to not contact and warn his father but only because they hadn’t gotten one of their team to the Academies. The lines there weren’t the secure communications that were now running through Avengers. It was eating himself up inside but he knew that there was already a plan to get someone there soon so his father and a few others that they knew could be trusted were read into the investigation.

“SHIELD T36 proceed to the pink square and shut down so you can be brought in” came the answer of a British male over the comm with laughing heard in the background before the connection was cut off. Shaking his head he could understand the laughter as he realized they were dead serious about the large pink square on the runway at the base.
“Sweet light, they weren’t joking it really is a pink square” Agent Morales snorted from the copilot seat as he shook his head beside him before turning and yelling back into the passenger/cargo area “Hey Walters better get your woman to stop tinkering, it’s time to buckle up!”

“It’s not tinkering!” came back from Dr. Helen Cho whom they had picked up along they way with more equipment from a Stark facility in South Korea. Jeffrey clearly tried to ignore the bantering of the senior agents and the scientist because if not having your boss watching your every move as you flew the Quinjet wasn’t stressful enough, let’s add the stress of having your bosses bosses mate on the Quinjet with probably a few million dollars worth of equipment stashed in the cargo hold.

“Secure!” was yelled from somewhere behind him in the cargo hold.

“Steady Jackson, you are going to feel a slight jolt in the controls but you have this” Morales said as he reached with one hand to engage the hover of the Quinjet. He felt the jolt of change of engines as he slowly lowered the power to lower them to land. They bounced slightly as they finally touched ground but he quickly lowered the power fully and started the powering down checklist.

“Good job Jeffrey!” Agent Walters said from behind them and he couldn’t help but laugh off the tension he had been feeling but it soon turned to panic when he felt the plane jolt again. It took him a moment to realize that they were lowering into the ground a quick look towards both of his bosses had him spot their angry face and he was glad it wasn’t aimed toward him this time.

“Damn it Control a little warning next time” he heard Agent Walters yell into her headset and he winced when all he heard in response was laughing before there was a yelp and the transmission was cut off just as they finally stopped lowering into the underground base.

“Damn it Control a little warning next time” Maria heard over the radio as she walked into the main control room with Kate Bishop following behind her. Walking towards Hunter she smacked him in the back of the head as he laughed at his little prank. While Kate smacked Nixon and glared at a doubled over laughing Wade.

“I’d smack you, but we already know you already like it a little bit too much” Kate said briefly pausing before smiling almost innocently but Maria wasn’t buying it and neither was Wade who had stopped laughing abruptly once he saw that face.

“Uh oh, I’m a dead man….well as dead as I can be” Wade said watching his mate warily.
“Not dead just no sexy times for the next week for you” Kate said an evil smirk playing on her lips at her two mates.

“Death would have been kinder!” Wade whispered horrified at his punishment.

“Maria you wanted to see me?” Kevin asked from the control room door right on time.

“Kate you know what I need you to do, get it done. Wade you head to interrogation and meet up with Bobbi, I want Quinn singing” Maria said motioning between the three stooges. “Kevin you are with me heading to our newest arrivals” she said making her way to meet up with their new arrivals and ready to surprise Kevin with his mates. Maria stayed silent as they made their way to the underground hangar bay.

“New…” Kevin began to speak but stopped when they walked into the bay and saw the back of the Quinjet already opened up to reveal his two mates and two other men.

“You three have an hour maybe more, make the best of it” Maria said leaving a stunned Kevin behind her as she walked to the Quinjet. “Noelle, Helen you three have an hour maybe more. JARVIS will lead you to your new rooms.”

“Don’t have to tell us twice” Helen said before dragging a shocked Noelle over to a shocked Kevin. Maria watched for a moment as the smallest of the three mates was easily able to drag her mates away and couldn’t help but laugh a little bit at the sight.

“Now you must be Agent Morales and Agent Jackson. Welcome to Avengers base Neverland I’ll help you two with the equipment and get you settled into rooms, since I’m not quite sure how long Helen and Monty will need” Maria said taking the cargo list from a shocked Agent Morales. ‘Still got it.’

Steve sighed as he stopped the video again and wanted to throw the remote at the wall but instead dropped it onto the table next to him as he started to pace. This wasn’t the first time nor was it the second but the third time someone had died in their custody by using a false tooth but this time it didn’t look like the kid wanted to die. As soon as he had woken up in the cell he had been agitated more and more as time passed. That was until his last hour when he seemed to be crying and resigned before he stood up squared his shoulders and flipped off the camera before collapsing.
Despite his gut telling him the intern didn’t want to die, all of it reminded him too much of the Hydra agent he had chased after the murder of Dr. Erskine. It was too damn similar but Sharon had pointed out that it wasn’t just Hydra agents that killed themselves when captured by the enemy. The current Centipede soldiers apparently had a built in kill switch that they didn’t understand how it worked because they had never been able to capture a fully intact unit.

“That’s new video. What happened?” Sharon asked yawning wrapped up in a blanket from the doorway. She had been sleeping when Maria had sent and requested him to watch the footage and didn’t want to wake his mate. His mate needed sleep just like any other regular human and he wanted to make sure she got it but his anxiety must have leaked through their bond and woken her up.

“Sorry love, didn’t mean to wake you. Maria had sent over another video of a suicide in our custody. Ian the Intern from just a little while ago. I’ve been watching it since then along with the other two comparing the videos” Steve sighed opening up his arms and felt his anxiety lessen with her in his arms.

“Any similarities?” Sharon asked as she stepped back and sat down on one of the chairs while he turned around and poured them both fresh coffee.

“Some but also some major differences. JARVIS play the new video, please.”

“Welcome to Neverland General Richmond and Lt. Braddock” Maria said holding out her hand as she stood at the foot of the main entrance to the underground complex with Tony next to her. The two men were being led by what she had started calling the British contingent of their group minus Wade Wilson. Deadpool at the moment was currently being distracted by Kevin and Stephen Carter trying to get information out of Ian Quinn. At first she was hesitant to let anyone but General Richmond know their location but after Skye vetted Lt. Braddock she had let him and only him join the General and only after confiscating all electronic equipment before they got in the cars.

“Neverland, really Commander Hill? If I didn’t know any better I’d say this location is a SHIELD base. A SHIELD base that is in direct violation of our mutual assistance agreement that has been in place since SHIELD’s founding” Richmond said as he shook her hand while looking around. Maria knew that now the major threat of alien invasion her counterpart in British Intelligence was going to be asking her quite a few direct questions about the base, hence why she had made Tony stand next to her.

“Actually the base is my doing General Richmond. Neverland is primarily one of my properties and one of the now many Avenger bases and safe houses all over the world” Tony said stepping up and holding out his hand to the General.
“An Avenger base with SHIELD personnel in it, using it” Richmond said as he shook Tony’s hand.

“To answer your question, yes, no and it’s complicated” Tony said shrugging his shoulders before turning towards Hunter “They are waiting for you in medical, you’re up next on the poke and prodded tour.”

“Oh yay! General if you will excuse me and I’ll be done hopefully before it’s time to escort you back to your headquarters” Hunter said with mock sarcasm before becoming serious again. Giving the General a quick salute he didn’t wait for a response before hightailing it to medical.

“Gentlemen if you will follow us, we will lead you to a conference room and we will let you know what we mean” Maria said as she began leading the way to the main conference room.

“I sure hope so but first I want to know how the hell you got Hunter to go to medical without a full armed escort?” General Richmond asked her and Maria had to remember General or not Richmond had at one time been both Hunter and Nixon’s commanding officer in the field when Hunter had been active SAS.

“Easy his two mates are in medical waiting for him for another evaluation. It is one of the things we need to discuss with you, so far those of us that are bonded have been having increased sensitivity from our bonds since the fight” Maria said as she walked into the conference room and took a seat at the head of the table. “We need you to check the civilians for any strange effects if they are bonded.”

“Understood any idea on the parameters of the increased sensitivity?” Lt. Braddock asked taking a pad of paper and pen from a pocket in his uniform jacket. Clearly Lt. Braddock came prepared assuming he would be without electronics while here.

“JARVIS please start recording for the record. Those present are myself Dr. John Montgomery Warder to perform the autopsy of the person known to SHIELD as Ian Boothby, graduate student and intern to Dr. Jane Foster and Darcy Lewis. Ian Boothby was in Avenger custody after being seen interacting with known criminal financier Ian Quinn. Cause of death seems to be a self inflicted allergic reaction that led to anaphylactic shock and cardiac arrest. Found on scene was part of a hollowed out molar tooth that had what seemed to be peanut oil residue in it. All attempts to revive Mr. Boothby failed. JARVIS please start the scan of the body” Monty said as he backed away from the table and went to go look at the screen on the far wall of the room.
Taking a drink from the coffee that had been on the desk next to the monitors he watched as JARVIS began his scan. Monty stretched and tried to get the muscles in his back to relax after giving over two dozen post battle physicals on top of another nine more in depth bonding physicals to those newly bonded, new to the group and those that were at the battle yesterday. After the autopsy, he was planning on taking a long nap but a few seconds later he was choking on his coffee as it burned down the wrong pipe at what the scan revealed and any hopes for a nap went out the window.

“Son of a bitch! JARVIS full electronic lockdown on this room, sound the base security lockdown and start running a scan of our firewall and see if there was any low level transmissions that might have gotten in or out since our arrival” Monty said as he moved a surgical tray closer to the body and after quickly throwing on gloves he started to open up the area as the lockdown alert was broadcasted across the base.

“Maria and Tony are on their way Dr. Warder and scan is complete of the firewall there were no previous unauthorized transmissions or current transmissions from the device” JARVIS said as Monty heard the door to the lab slide open.

“Please tell me that is not what I think it is” Maria said glancing at the scan as she pulled a pair of gloves out of the box and quickly putting them on and standing by to help him.

“I’d be lying if I told you it wasn’t” Monty quipped as he saw Tony start pulling up a 3D rendering of the area and started to manipulate the image using JARVIS.

“Holy shit it’s the most intact of these damn things we’ve gotten so far. JARVIS have someone bring Helen here, we are going to need her expertise in biomechanics,” Tony said before reaching for a pair of gloves. Every damn Centipede soldier they had captured had one of these ocular kill switches but it didn’t just kill the person it also destroyed the unit at the same time so they couldn’t even begin to see how the things worked. This time they might just have a chance to finally get ahead of the devices.

Skye took a drink of her coffee as she watched the video of one of Daredevil’s fights in New York City on one screen, while on another two screens her search programs looked into the background of an Agent Garrett and an Agent Sitwell. Most of her attention was on the video though because something was nagging her brain telling her something was familiar with the figure but she couldn’t think what it was, and then she saw his exposed back.

“JARVIS stop the video and rewind and enhance the video around Daredevil’s back” Skye asked as she put down her coffee before she blinked at the frozen image a few times.
“Skye are you okay? Did you see something?” Natasha said from another desk in the control room. They had both been in the room running searches down different avenues of potential allies and enemies.

“Yeah but I think I’ve finally lost my damn mind” she said sitting back and running her hands in her hair. ‘I’m going nuts, Matt is bloody blind for fuck’s sake. It can’t be him…”

“That scar is distinctive, that should make it easy to confirm his identity if we track down who he is,” Natasha said from beside her after wheeling her chair over and looked at the frozen image on the screen.

“That’s the thing, I’ve seen it before. I know who Daredevil is…” Skye said as she finished hacking into a friend’s medical file and pulling up the image she needed for comparison. ‘Damn it, I hate being right sometimes’ she thought as she brought up Matt’s file on her database because friend or not he had been ran through her program.

“Isn’t that..” Natasha started then stopped.

“My blind foster brother who is a lawyer, yes. Hence why I thought I was going crazy but as you said it, that scar is distinctive. What are the chances of two males sharing the same height and build would have it in the exact same spot?”

“Little to none. Tony is suppose to be going back to New York, I guess it’s time for him to make contact with your brother and bring him into the group. If anything the Avengers could always use their own lawyer” Natasha said the last bit dryly because if anything of this investigation came to light they’d probably need a whole team of lawyers.

Skye snorted at the last comment before a ding from her computer brought her attention back to her other two screens and she frowned at the results. “Well that is two more on our dirty list” Skye said as she added the names to the ever growing list before rubbing her face. It seemed for every good agent they cleared they put at least twice that many on the dirty list and at least another five more to the questionable list. At this rate there wouldn’t be much of a SHIELD left once they made their moves...if they had any moves to make with a problem this large.

“Sitwell and Garrett?” Natasha asked from one of the other desk areas in the now modified command center. The command center over the last few days had been rearranged to have multiple smaller working stations around the room with the bank of monitors for the security systems for the FARM against one wall. The smaller stations around the room could be moved to the center of the room to form a large conference table if needed.
“Yeah, both of them are just throwing up to many flags in my search. Sitwell more than Garrett but I don’t want to take the risk. My worry is if I remember right one of the legacies is on Garrett’s team?” Skye asked pulling up the information on her screen.

“Trip, he is Fury’s biological son but he’s also a Jones legacy through his mother. We need to kick this up to see if it is plausible to move him somewhere else without raising suspicions” Natasha said before being interrupted by JARVIS.

“Excuse me but it seems Neverland has gone into lockdown mode again” JARVIS said while bringing Neverland’s base security feed onto another bank of monitors on another wall.

“Again? Didn’t the British General and his aide just arrive an hour or so ago? What caused the lockdown?” Natasha asked while alerting the other adults at the FARM of the situation.

“Dr. Warder did after I completed my scan of Mr. Boothby’s body” JARVIS said bringing up the scan before they could even ask.

“Is that?” Skye began to ask before she stopped while getting a priority call from the pirate.

“Yes it is. Better answer Fury since he probably just saw your search results on Garrett and Sitwell. I’ll keep tabs on Neverland.” Natasha said before turning towards the bank of monitors for Neverland.

“Hello Mr. Pirate, I guess you saw my newest editions to the dirty list?” Skye asked rubbing her eyes again trying to fight off the migraine that was forming either from Maria’s worry or her own she wasn’t sure. ‘It’s probably from the both of us.’

“Are you sure on this confirmation?” Fury all but demanded of her but she bit back her initial response when she remembered that Fury’s other son was a specialist on Garrett’s team.

“Yes I am. Neverland just went on lockdown again but once it’s lifted I can get us all on a conference call” Skye started as she began setting up the conference call.
It had already started out being a long day with a morning reveal and a medical lockdown that resulted in the death most likely by suicide of a prisoner. After that it had been having to organize multiple physicals to take place not only here but also at the FARM and Avenger Tower. Then it was the fun explanation of having a base in England that technically shouldn’t be there, only to have said base go into lockdown again while reading in a British General and his flag Lt. into a very complex investigation.

Forty-five minutes later she was just now coming back from Dr. Warder’s lab Maria felt the headache begin to form behind her eyes and guiltily knew that she was sharing it with Skye. A wave of love and understanding came across the bond just as her phone beeped with a message from her mate asking for a conference call ASAP and knew it couldn’t be something good if Fury was requesting it.

“General Richmond I’m sorry for the delay” Maria said as she came back into the conference room. She had left the General and his aide with tablets with full access to the investigation files and from the looks of it both of them had read a lot of it by their expressions.

“I’m guessing that all is secure” the General asked her as she started typing away setting up the video conference. “And where is Mr. Stark?”

“No immediate threat to us at the moment as much as we can confirm. Turns out the prisoner that died this morning in custody might have had an early version of the ocular device that the Centipede soldiers we’ve been coming across are equipped with. As for Tony he is trying to determine with our other scientist and doctor if it was the reason behind the prisoner’s death this morning” Maria said as she waited for the video call to connect.

“As for your internal investigation are you sure it’s that widespread?” General Richmond asked just as the conference call was just connected.

“As far as we can tell General and I can’t go any higher because the one World Council member I know the identity of is on the suspected dirty list. Some of the things going on and wrong were level 10 so only the council and myself were in the loop on these” Fury said as he sat once again in an average living room.

“Well Director Fury, I can give you the name of the British representative so you can check her out, but I can guarantee she will check out clean” Richmond said raising his hand to silence Lt. Bradock when he began to protest.

“That would definitely be a help since she will hopefully know who the other members are. Hello
again General Richmond, did your techies confirm I put your firewall back together and better than before?” Skye said from another screen and Maria could feel her mates smug satisfaction on the last statement through the bond and failed not to smile.

“Yes they did and I appreciate it Agent Skyefall” General Richmond said before continuing. “The name you want to check out is Dame Patricia Braddock Hawley.”

“I’ll get on it. I’m guessing there is a familial connection between you and the councilwoman Lieutenant?” Skye asked as she began typing away off screen.

“She is my mother” Lt. Braddock answered not looking totally happy with the reveal of who his mother really was.

“I’ll make sure then to check her quick, I hate doing this to family members so I can understand the uneasy feeling it is giving you but it has to be done. If it helps you feel any better, I’ve even ran those I consider my foster sibling through our database. I don’t like it but we have to be careful who we trust in a time like this” Skye said giving the Lieutenant a small smile before turning towards Fury.

“Reason we need this call is that Skye finished already her search on Garrett and Sitwell, both have flags, too many flags to be a coincidence” Fury said with a grimace.

“And we need to reassign Trip ASAP without making anyone suspicious” Maria said sighing as she let her head fall back against the high backed office chair she just sat down on. “Cut him orders to the HUB and he can route from there to here and join with 616 as a specialist since they are short one. Only fitting we steal a specialist from Garrett again since it was his last one that got killed.”

“I’d rather him be sent home, but 616 would be the least suspicious reassignment” Fury said nodding and Maria watched as Skye began typing away again.

“Orders have been sent. Trip should get them the next time his team makes contact and then make his way there. I’ll let you know when he is on his way to the HUB.”

“Good. Lt. Braddock once Skye here clears your mother, can we count on you to get to her and read her in?” Maria asked waiting for the man to nod his ascent. “Excellent, we will also need to give you all secure communications devices tied directly to the Avenger secured network. Use these to get in touch with us.”
Antoine Triplett punched the wall of his quarters when he got back from mission where they had lost a few more agents in their hunt for Mike Peterson aka Deathlok. The man seemed to always be one step ahead of them or always knew where they were going to be and he was beginning to think there was more to the ‘Clairvoyant’ than anyone was saying to him. Of course officially he was just a lowly level 6 specialist, not the double legacy he knew he was that if he wanted to could be level 8 or higher if he was one to trade on his family's name instead of wanting to earn everything the hard way.

Walking over to his terminal he quickly assessed his systems and saw that he had a message that looked like new orders. Groaning he opened them up and quickly read them and knew instantly that something was up. Quickly taking out his phone he popped the sim card out and placed the newer sim card he had been given in and watched as the phone loaded.

He had two text messages from his father one saying to get to his new assignment asap and the other telling him to watch his six since Garrett was now on the suspected list of agents that were dirty. The thought of Garrett being dirty pissed him off but a knock at his door quickly took his attention away from his anger. “One second” he called out as he changed out the sim cards and put his new one once again in the dog tag that had a secret compartment in it.

“Come in” Tripp said as he stood and made his way to his closet and pulled out his duffle bag. Garrett walked in and it took everything in him to smile at the older agent like he always did.

“I’m guessing you saw your new orders?” Garrett asked as he leaned casually against the doorway.

“Yes sir, direct flight to the HUB where I am to be reassigned to SHIELD team 616. Whatever that is” Tripp said as he kept packing his gear as he kept his senses aware of Garrett at all times.

“Seems like you are taking Grant Ward’s old spot. The team leader recently got him killed a few weeks back” Garrett said seeming to be upset at the idea. “Watch your six out there the team leader is a bit of loose cannon and call me if you need anything.”

“Yes sir,” Tripp said just barely keeping back the incredulous look from John Garrett calling anyone else a bit of a loose cannon before the older agent left him to his packing.

‘Pot meet kettle’ he thought shaking his head at the closing door. ‘Better stock up on snacks and coffee before I get on the transport since I now have time to read everything. Well maybe not everything. ’
Chapter 44

Chapter Summary

So you will recognize characters that are owned by Disney but not Marvel in this chapter. I read a fanfiction years ago that the characters alternate names were actually code names when they use to be spies...Don't know what ever happened to that fanfiction but the idea stuck. So when I was trying to find other orphans that could be Skye's foster siblings by choice the person just would not leave my head. It got to the point I was dreaming the connection so there you go.

Maria Hill was already in a foul mood when she walked into the main conference room almost a week after the Battle of Greenwich. Everyone that was at Neverland minus Quinn was already in the conference room talking amongst themselves waiting for her. They had been waiting for her for a while because her video conference meeting with the World Security Council in her office had gone over. Just before the meeting she had been blindsided by Fury, by giving her a file of a once believe dead SHIELD agent. Akela Amador had shown up on their radar and that only because Skye’s snoopers had picked up the original file’s video evidence being deleted from an unknown source. Skye had been working on tracing it but so far no dice, so 616 would be investigating Akela Amador once the meeting was over.

Putting Akela Amador coming back from the dead aside that wasn’t the only reason for her foul mood, no that was because Fury had backed out of the meeting with the World Security Council leaving her having to defend herself without any back up from anyone. Fury had disappeared without a even a goodbye, well he did tell her he would have to skip the meeting but still! And as per his usual mode of operating without saying who or where or why, so he was most likely lone wolfing it again doing god knows what. Light only knew if he had given them everything that he had going on off the books of SHIELD, it wouldn’t surprise her if he had a small army with equipment stashed somewhere. The man’s paranoia knew no bounds it seemed at times, Tony was right to say once that Fury’s secrets had secrets which had even more secrets…

Shaking her head she thought back to the World Security Council and at this point all the Council members could do was bicker back and forth and only agree on one thing, they were pissed about her calling in outside help to deal with containment for the Battle of Greenwich. Even though she had agreed with Councilwoman Braddock Hawley that to maintain her cover she would need to agree at least in the meetings with her counterparts, Maria would have liked some backup against the incessant whining. In truth though once the Councilwoman had been read in by her son and General Richmond she agreed with Maria’s call to call in British forces and was gravely concerned by what they were finding as they dug deeper into SHIELD personnel.

Sitting down in her chair she pinched the bridge of her nose trying to stem off the headache she knew was building. She had been up late last night talking with Skye, Natasha, Tony and Fury trying to get everyone's assignments together. Well Fury till Skye had shown him that Akela Amador
was alive, then he had made some quick excuses and was off the call faster than Steve could eat a New York pizza. Fury’s sudden departure had to be something to do with Amador’s supposed death and she had pulled the file wondering what. Maria was now sure there would be more Fury would be revealing to them and if not she would have to drag it out of him kicking and screaming if she had to.

Putting secret keeping bosses aside she put her mind back on the task at hand, everyone’s assignments. It wasn’t the greatest of use of their resources but with so many unknowns they were all wanting to at least have cover for everyone if everything went pear shaped. Reaching for her StarkPad she noticed that the conference room table was slowly vibrating with the forces of Wade’s foot tapping one of the legs. Wade on a good day could give the Tony Stark years ago a run for his money in the most annoying category.

“Wade if you don’t stop shaking my damn table I’m going to shoot your foot” Maria growled and was pleased to see the table stop vibrating almost instantly but it also had the simple effect of everyone’s attention being on her. Taking a deep breath Maria closed her eyes and hoped she didn’t wake up her mate with her foul mood. Letting the breath out she let her love for Skye cross the bond before focusing once again on the meeting ahead.

“Alright people we have new members and a lot of holes in our coverage that need to be plugged. I wish I could keep mates together but for a lot of you I can’t” Maria said with a sigh and shrug of her shoulders.

“We understand Maria, we all know the drill and appreciate that you tried” Phil said giving her shoulder a gentle squeeze from beside her and she saw the understanding in everyone’s eyes around the table.

“Alright, first I need some information. Thor from what I understood from you and Sif when you first came here you had no intention of leaving Earth anytime soon?”

“That would be correct. Odin has made it clear our union with Jane is unwelcome in his eyes. We left Asgard after going against my father’s orders in regards to Jane” Thor said giving his much smaller mate’s hand a squeeze that was resting on the table. The much smaller Jane Foster looked like a child compared to her mates as she sat between them.

“Alright and what about you Loki and Valkyrie?”

“I’m in the same if not a worse off boat than my brother. As I told you my mate is here, I just have to find her and atone for everything I have done. I’m not worthy of her but I have every intention of
“I go where he goes” Valkyrie said hooking her thumb towards Loki. Maria now understood the connection between the two. Former lovers they had parted ways on good terms when Loki had developed his soul mark. They had remained close friends with even Frigga sending Valkyrie after Loki, Thor and Sif to help them. It was only after the Battle of Greenwich that it came out that Valkyrie had her own unknown soulmate here on Earth.

“Understood, okay. Then I’m going to assign where I need you the most. We are trying not to put too many eggs in one basket because if someone realizes we are investigating SHIELD we would be too tempting a target. Thor, Sif, Jane and Dr. Selvig I am going to have you stay in Avenger Tower in New York with Tony and his group. Jane and Dr. Selvig you will have the run of the facilities while there and will have full access to all research projects currently open for the Avengers and also in the SHIELD records” she said trying not to laugh at the excited look not only between Jane and her mates at being able to stay together but also between Jane and Selvig on having the run of the labs at Avenger Tower.

“Thank you Lady Hill” Thor said causing Maria to roll her eyes and half heartedly glare at Loki’s highly amused smirk. Apparently Maria still hadn’t fully trained Thor to call her Maria yet.

“Thor, Sif and Jane take this time to let your bond to fully stabilize, Bruce will be handling any further assessments. Now Loki and Valkyrie I have a favor to ask. Would you two mind going to the Stark facility in South Korea with Dr. Cho and basically being her bodyguards incase anything does pop off? I’d move her but then I’d have to move all her research staff and though Tony has the ability to do that it would raise a number of red flags we don’t need.”

“Not a problem. It would make it easier to go see an old friend in Nepal” Loki said after sharing a look with Valkyrie who had nodded her ascent as well to the request.

“Excellent, Tony is also moving a squad of the Iron Legion to the facility as back up for you. Hopefully they aren’t needed but I’ll feel much better knowing you two have back up if everything goes pear shaped. Also Loki you can go see your friend the only thing I ask is that you mask who you are in public till I get something out that you were under mind control and not responsible for New York but understand that might not be for a while. The security council is having kittens about you at the moment as far as they are aware you are back in Asgard after helping us. Noelle can your group give them all a lift on your way back to the Treehouse?”

“Sure thing. When do we leave?” Noelle asked and Maria knew that she had seen the weather report by her grimace.
“You can leave now if you want, your group is staying unchanged. And you’ll need to tack on some extra flight time to go around the storm that is directly in your flight path. Kevin, Stephen and Thomas if you three want to leave now as well take the garbage with you and provide support to each other at least part of the way to your locations go for it. Kevin once you get back to the Fridge arrangements and credentials will be set up for you to get to Afghanistan to notify the triplets there. I’ll give you your next assignment after that” Maria said watching those named gathering their things and begin filing out of the door.

“Now that just leaves the 626 and 616 groups. Tori you and Izzy will head back on the next transport out to the HUB with Dr. Warder, Hunter and the body of Ian Boothby. Tori I don’t want to see a report of your going into the field again till that baby is born. Hopefully I can reassign you and Izzy somewhere else once you start showing...”

“But since I just became head of the HUB if you pull me for another assignment too soon it will raise red flags we don’t need” Tori said while Izzy grimaced at the logic.

“It’s not ideal but I’m hoping to make up a base or project and leave Blake in charge of the HUB but it will have to wait till you start showing” Maria said while shrugging her shoulders.

“We understand” Izzy said giving her a nod that Maria was thankful for because she knew she couldn’t move them right now.

“Fitz you will stay on with 616 and you have already met Trip who will be joining your team taking Ward’s spot. Also joining your team will be Bobbi as a combat specialist but also as your replacement for Skye for now. Trip, Bobbi and Mel will be running both you and Jemma through an accelerated training course to get you at least comfortable in combat and weapons.”

“I’ll keep an eye out for Fitz” Bobbi said to Izzy and Tori and getting a smile and nod in return.

“What about Kara and Angie?” Izzy asked and Maria knew she was hoping not to loose her and Tori’s newest “rookies” so soon.

“Kara and Angie will be staying till the clean up is finished then they will be back to HUB afterwards. Bobbi you and one other person can be the ones to fly over to Greenwich” Maria said as she glanced at the phone seeing a text from Fury that he was about to make contact and that he would call her when he was done with his meet.
“But that is at least a level 7 position and I’m only level 5 right now” Kara said trying not to sound she was pointing out the obvious to a superior officer.

“I know it is” Maria said tossing Kara her new credentials that showed her as a level 7 specialist. “Congratulations consider it a battlefield promotion. Angie you will be assigned here as well but as the medic for the investigation team. Keep your eyes open and take the time to learn all you can while here. After cleanup has been completed then you two will return the HUB and remain on the 626 team.”

“Understood, what about Darcy?” Kara asked sharing a concerned look with Angie over the head of their mate.

“She will be going back to me to the FARM to get an assessment for combat and weapons skills then we will get her trained up even more. While that is happening Darcy you will be helping us at the FARM to analyze and organize the data from the investigation.”

“Got it boss lady!” Darcy said and Maria shook her head in exasperation because from what she heard Dugan was the same way. Skye and Darcy, she had a funny feeling were going to get along like a house on fire and Maria knew she might be regretting this decision at some point in the near future.

“And 616?” Phil asked before taking a drink of his coffee.

“I have a case for you to look into, stay here while your team gets ready to leave. I need you on it right after I brief you” Maria said trying not to let the shock she had felt from the case file Fury had sent her before her meeting with World Security Council. Closing her eyes briefly trying to fight back her worry she once again opened them up before turning towards Nixon, Bisop and Wade. “You three are also heading back with me to the FARM so your bond can stabilize and we need the help with security. Wade there are over a dozen small children there so please try to muzzle it because if you don’t I won’t stop any of their guardians from beating the crap out of you.”

“My money is on Natasha” Mel said under her breath but Maria knew Wade heard because he perked up at the name.

“Pft. I’m not afraid of no mama bear” Wade said smirking at Mel.

“Well you should be since that “mama bear” as you named her is none other than Natasha Romanoff
aka Black Widow” Mel said and Maria was surprised but not surprised at the same time to see Wade’s now scar free face visibly pale for a moment as he audibly gulped. Even though he was healed Maria knew it would be an ego boost to Natasha to know her reputation was still intact if even Wade was slightly afraid of what she could do to him.

Fury pulled the baseball hat down using it to cover up his eye patch and trying to blend in with all the tourist out and about for this afternoon’s boat festival and show. It was an annual event apparently dating back to when the town was first founded a hundred and whatever many years ago. He honestly couldn’t care less but it was a perfect way to meet without raising a few eyebrows in the small town. It was northern Maine but that wouldn’t stop the busy bodies gossiping about the mayor’s new beau; he thought internally smirking just picturing Regina’s face if that were to happen. The extremely quiet woman picked the wrong profession to “retire” into if she wanted anonymity and in a very small town no less.

Glancing around he saw an unknown blond haired woman with both of Regina’s boys. Both Alexi and Henry had grown a lot since the last time he actually saw the boys outside the occasional picture. He quietly watched for a moment trying in vain to push back the memories seeing the boy always brought to the front of his mind. The woman with them seemed to sense Fury watching them because her eyes slowly started to scan the area around her and the boys while her hand slowly moved towards her waist band.

Fury started moving away and towards his meeting with Regina where he planned on asking her who the new muscle was because she sure in hell didn’t clear it with him about adding someone else to the unofficial protection detail. Moving out of the festival he headed more towards the fish packing warehouses and turned into the alley they had agreed to meet at. His hand slowly moved away from where one of his knives were hidden when he confirmed that it was only Regina and himself in the alley. “You told Koenig you needed to see me?”

“I need you to run a name for me off the books” Regina said taking a folder out of her purse.

“Everything is already off the books. Why can’t Koenig run this?” he asked taking the folder and glancing into it to see the picture of the same blonde woman he had seen moments before with the boys. ‘Ok not muscle that Regina’s brought in our her own.’ Regina had full name descriptive details with an evidence bag behind the sheet with a hair sample and DNA swab. That was Regina always detailed and organized it was why she had been one of his top female agents/specialist he had.

“Because Koenigs good but not that good” Regina scoffed trying to play it off but to Fury he felt something more was in play.
“Still waiting for the real reason why” Fury said watching his former specialist with a raised eyebrow.

“She’s my soulmate and I don’t want her anywhere near a SHIELD database” Regina said with a barely contained sigh and Fury could tell there was still something more bothering her.

“What else haven’t you told me? Last time we talked you didn’t have a soul mark or at least one you didn’t bother to disclose to me” Fury asked watching her micro expressions and knew it was going to be a doozy if Regina told him what it was, she might just tell him to fuck off instead.

“She is Henry’s birth mother. He found her and brought her here when he overheard me talking about my soulmark that developed just a few weeks after we last met. Alexi hacked the sealed file and the two of them snuck off without anyone else realizing it till they were already being brought back from Boston by Emma. Well we would have noticed if wonder ditz didn’t cover for them.”

Fury bit back the urge to yell because Alexi had left the town unsupervised but knew losing his temper now about it would do anything to change it. The boy was enhanced they just didn’t know exactly how other than his insane reflexes and high IQ, they were still waiting because it seemed to always unlocked during the teenage years if not later under a high stress situations. Though the IQ could have been from his mother who had been a scientist in the middle of defecting while she was pregnant with Alexi. He stood there waiting for a few more minutes waiting for Regina to say more but finally prompted “And?”

“She says she’s a Marine MP but she doesn’t move like any regular devil dog I’ve met. And with Alexi and Henry I can’t take the risk. If she is something or someone else…” Regina said with a sigh and an uncomfortable look to the folder in his hands.

“What about your other charge?” he asked already ready for the roll of the eyes he was expecting. To say Regina couldn’t stand the woman she was guarding was an understatement, especially since it was possibly her actions that might have led to the ambush that all but wiped out the rest of Regina’s team including the team led by Agent Daniella Mills as well. Fury hadn’t known of it at the time but the two had been secretly lovers for almost a year by the time of Daniella’s death. Regina, Daniella and the two scientist had survived the ambush but Daniella had died a days later from internal injuries that hadn’t been treated as she worked to get everyone to safety.

Daniella had to have known she was slowly bleeding to death but didn’t stop till she had led them to the secret Providence base and activated the distress beacon. By the time Fury and some of the family had arrived to help whoever sent out the distress beacon Danielle had already passed away. Regina never knew Daniella Mills had been a cover for Daniella Margaret Carter but that story had been blown out of the water when some of the family had realized they had been too late to save Daniella.
For Daniella to break protocol and take her small band of survivors to Providence had led Fury and the family to believe something had made Daniella to believe that SHIELD wasn’t safe to contact. The family had decided to honor Daniella by protecting those she gave her life to protect. They had kept the small group of survivors at Providence. The scientist had given birth only a month later to Alexi and passed away from complications during the birth.

“For someone so damn smart she still a naive little ditz! Though now that Nolan is in the picture he deals with her mainly so I only have to deal with her every so often” Regina said and Nick had to agree that David Nolan, her mate had seemed to be a godsend when dealing with the former scientist.

“Alright I’ll have the new hacker I’m working with check her out. If there is anything to find, Skye can find it. Now I know I don’t have to tell you this but there are some things going on that is a rule of six type situation. I couldn’t bring them with me to our meet but Koenig will be kitting you out with new tech. The new stuff with be running off the Avengers private network with their hacker Skye running it all, kids a genius. It goes without saying don’t trust anyone with SHIELD that doesn’t say the right code phrase and knows your counter” Fury said placing the folder inside a special pocket in his jacket.

“What’s going on?” Regina asked a worried expression on her face as he turned to leave the alleyway. She wasn’t just an agent in that moment she was a mother worrying about her two sons.

“SHIELD’s been compromised. I have evidence that one of the agents we believed died during the ambush that almost killed you is alive and working for someone” Fury said expecting the response he got out of the woman before him.

“Who?” Regina lowly growled and Fury remembered why her call sign had been the Queen, even if those that feared her called her something else, the Evil Queen. Regina had earned a reputation of being a hard ass and ruthless when it called for it on missions.

“Akela Amador is alive, I have a team that I can trust with my life on it tracking her down now. When the new tech arrives you’ll have full access and will be able to see some old friends again. Hill and the Avengers have taken over the investigation and I’ll need to let them know you are alive and who you’re protecting. Daniella’s death is going to be connected to this...I guarantee it” he said before walking out of the alleyway and toward his car. Koenig had met him halfway between Providence and Storeybrook in a clearing with the car but it was still a bit of a drive to pick up his jet.

“Are you alright?” Mel asked closing the door to the conference room on the Bus. They were just
now at cruising altitude with the plane on autopilot. They’d soon need to brief the team but for now they were alone in the conference room as they stared at the photos from the op that Amador had been presumed dead from. A friend from the academy had been the leader of the team Akela Amador had been on and old wounds were ripped open looking at the photos.

Mel saw out of the corner of her eye when Bobbi came back near the conference room but she minutely shook her head and watched as the woman retreated. Honestly she knew Bobbi and Trip would handle the twins and keep them distracted with training till they were ready to brief them on their mission. Which left her more than enough time to deal with the emotions rolling across her bond with Phil. To an outsider Phil would like he was in complete control as he leaned against the holo table as he looked at the small section of the main screen with a picture of a once thought dead agent.

“Akela was smart, talented, a bit more of a lone wolf than I liked but she was good, it was why I recommended her to be placed on Regina’s team. Thinking that if anyone could do it Regina could teach her and bring her out of her lone wolf mentality. I thought I had lost her along with everyone else on that mission and the scenes from that ambush haunted me...to be honest they still haunt me” Phil said softly still not looking at her.

“What happened? This has to be a mission from right after...I went to admin” Mel said pushing away the memories of why she had been in admin at the time that was for later, for now Phil needed to talk he needed to exorcise this demon from his mind or he wasn’t going to be much use to anyone.

“About a year after, when I started to become more handler than field agent. Fury and I sent in a four woman team tasked with bringing in a seven month pregnant Russian biomechanics scientist that had been given experimental drugs while she was pregnant. She never would tell us who the father was or how she escaped and managed to get to Canada of all places. Or even got who her real bosses were she wouldn’t tell us anything till her and the child she was carrying was safe. We just know that her seeking us coincided with an uptick in Russian intelligence chatter and the mysterious deaths of a lot of key players” Phil said pausing but Mel knew by his emotions that he wasn’t done.

“The pick up went as planned till the team stumbled into one of our scientist specializing in biomechanics. We never were quite certain who the men were really targeting but they went after both scientist so the team put them down hard and secured both scientist for good measure till we could straighten it out.”

“Says they were leaving one of those pay by the hour motels on a seedy part of town when they were recognized” Mel said reading the file from another section of the screen. “What was the our scientist doing there? An affair?”

“Birds. There had been a thread posted asking for some help caring for a sick bird that the other scientist read online and went to go help” Phil said and shrugged when Mel gave him an incredulous
look. “I kid you not, it’s further down in the file. We actually did find the posting online after the fact.”

“So either they were targeting the second scientist and got lucky spotting your team or…” Mel said trying to wrap her head around the story.

“Or we had a leak in our operational security. I thought it was the first at first but…” Phil sighed and she could feel his sense of betrayal come across the bond like it was a physical thing. “Anyways we thought they got out clean when they made it to a safe house in upstate New York. I sent a second team to help with the original team with the escort of our scientist but they were ambushed as they arrived at the safe house.”

“That’s when you suspected someone tipped them off?” Mel asked knowing the answer.

“Yes but Fury and I could never prove it definitively, though we tried. I guess this proves it” Phil said with a sigh before scrubbing at his face. Taking a deep breath he continued, “All electronics were disabled, some type of advanced for the time EMP bomb. We aren’t sure what happened with no cameras. Fury and I both went over that scene with a fine tooth comb, outside was easy to piece together but inside the house was a whole different story. When I arrived on scene with a quick response team the house was fully engulfed. We thought everyone had been killed but we had never been fully sure they used some type of accelerant that turned that house into ash.”

“It’s not your fault, you know that right?” Mel said as she moved closer and leaned against the holo table with their shoulders just barely touching as she pushed love and understanding across their bond. They had been doing this job for far too many years. There weren’t that many from their Academy class that were still alive and active in SHIELD. Most were retired, dead or disabled and they didn’t get to this part of their careers without a good share of memories that haunted them in the dark of the night or the silence of the early hours.

“I know but it doesn’t make it easier” Phil said softly and she felt it as his determination started to build up and reach across the bond to her.

“We will find her” Mel said without a doubt in her mind.

“Then what?” Phil asked after a moment of hesitation. He asked the question they had been avoiding for so long between them and the Avengers since the investigation started. What do they do with all those guilty of betraying their oaths to SHIELD?
“Can you all come up here to be briefed on our mission?”

“On our way boss” came Trip’s voice back over the intercom system before the click of the line disconnecting.

“Ready or not.” Mel started with a smirk and Phil chuckled.

“I hate leaving your mother to just Maria” Phil started but stopped when his wife put up a hand.

“We aren’t. Natasha is on her way to the Tower...” Mel said as the conference room door slid open.

Emma Swan laughed as she watched Alexi and Henry play one of the carnival games at the boat festival that the town was hosting. She had spent the morning with the boys at the festival since Regina said she had something to do at City Hall before meeting them for lunch. The hairs on the back of her neck stood up and her eyes immediately began scanning the crowd trying to find the source. Emma spotted a dark skinned man watching the boys with a baseball hat pulled low over his eyes, or eye. Since she could just catch the strap of what would be a eye patch before the man quickly turned away and headed towards the exit. It was the second time today she felt like someone had been watching her but the first time she spotted someone actually doing it.

Emma was sure she’d never seen the man before in town but something about him seemed familiar almost like she’d seen him or met him before. Trying to shake it off she looked away from the disappearing man as he was swallowed by the crowds. It was probably nothing just her mind making connections that weren’t there, the shrink the Marines had made her go talk to had told her that moments of hyper vigilance was normal after a trauma like hers.

Emma was healed even if she did gain a crap ton of scars to carry with her for the rest of her life. It was one of the reasons why she was thankful that Regina wanted to take things slow because she didn’t quite know how her mate was going to respond to seeing them, let alone how she was going to explain it to her. Her story of being a Marine MP was just this side of the truth, since her unit was a new specialized tracking and intelligence unit within the Marine Corps Military Police Division.

Shaking it off she smiled as the boys turned around after they finished their game both of them with stuffed animal prizes under their arms smiling. “I don’t know about you two but I’m hungry and we should start heading our way to Granny’s to meet your mom.”

“Food is always a good thing!” Alexi exclaimed.
“That’s because you are a bottomless pit!” Henry responded laughing at his older brother bumping shoulders with him as they started walking out of the festival. They were good boys and Emma couldn’t think of anyone better that she would have wanted to raise her son. Giving him up for adoption had been one of the most agonizing decisions she had ever made but looking back now she could tell it was the right decision to make.

‘Never again’ Maria thought fighting back the urge to strangle either Tony or Wade. Two hours stuck on a plane with those two jackoffs as they crossed the Atlantic to New York was enough to try even the Pope’s patience. The fact that she didn’t shoot either one of them should have automatically qualified her for Sainthood. Of course that wasn’t the only reason she had a headache, no that pain was also at Mel and Phil’s feet for what they asked of her before she had left Neverland. Sighing Maria dropped her radio into the communications channel.

“JARVIS we are about to begin our final approach to the Tower, has our ride from the FARM arrived yet?” Maria asked as Darcy yelled to those in the back to buckle up. She had given the intern turned legacy a flying lesson and had even allowed her to take control of the Quinjet for an hour. It was her goal to get as many people trained in flying as possible. Flight simulator time was definitely on the schedule for everyone without their certifications.

“Welcome wagon has arrived Maria, Bravo deck is clear for landing. I’ll be waiting, we need to talk” Natasha said surprising Maria since she thought it was going to be Clint picking them up to take them all the way back to the FARM. Of course she now needed to make a pit stop for Mel and Phil before she headed to the FARM to see her mate. If Maria could remember right Natasha had met “The Dragon” before and was liked by the legend in the CIA. Maybe she should send Natasha in first to talk to the Dragon.

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania otherwise known as Amish country was as Mel had put it was the perfect location to house the living legend that was now a retired CIA officer that was otherwise known as her mother. Lian May didn’t know Phil was alive, let alone that her only granddaughter was alive, had been found and was now engaged. No the dubious honor now fell on Maria to not only tell her all about that but also let the woman know that because everything going on she might be targeted because of her connection to Mel, Phil and Skye.

“Copy that. Positioning to Bravo deck” Maria said biting back a groan because Natasha wanting to talk would mean the nap she was hoping to have was probably nothing but a dream at this point. She swept around the tower before engaging the hover as Darcy sat next to her and took notes on the landing procedures. Bringing it down with barely a bounce Maria began the post flight checks but was stopped by Tony.

“I got post flights go talk to Red and some rest before Red drags you all back out to see the cows”
Tony joked and though Maria wanted to smack him up beside the head for the bad farm joke and just for good measure she was too tired and too much on edge. Grabbing her go bag she moved through the now empty cargo area as everyone else had left to head inside the tower and were probably being mother henred under Pepper’s ever watchful eyes. Maria stopped suddenly as she came to realize why Natasha had called her out before they landed. Quickly Maria dropped her bag as she caught her mate’s running leap into her arms as soon as she was down the Quinjets ramp.

Holding Skye in her arms something again clicked deep within her and in that moment she knew she was home as she buried her face in Skye’s hair. Taking a deep breath she let the scent that was uniquely her mate wash over her. They stood like that for what felt like forever but was only minutes before she hesitantly put Skye down before bringing their lips together in a gentle kiss.

“Missed me?” Skye asked smirking as they continued to stare into each others eyes.

“You know I did, my love” Maria said pulling her smaller mate once again into her arms to hold her. Looking over Skye’s shoulder she saw that Natasha was smirking and talking on the phone and knew that Phil, Mel and Natasha had probably arranged this and couldn’t help but feel grateful. Sighing she stepped back and led Skye back into the tower and dropped onto the couch, pulling her smaller mate into her lap.

“So we have to visit the Dragon” Natasha said smirking as she elegantly flopped down on the couch opposite theirs in the Avengers main living room.

“Who’s this Dragon?” Skye asked as curled up in Maria’s lap. Her tiny mates hands snaked under her top to get the skin to skin contact they needed. Whatever they had been exposed to in Greenwich seemed to have strengthened their connection even more and they needed the contact again as if they were newly bonded. Maria didn’t mind the contact at all and knew she had been craving it, but she also knew they needed the bond to stabilize since no matter how much she wanted to she couldn’t hide out at the FARM. She would have to return back to either New York or D.C. in a week maybe a little more. If she started disappearing like Fury all the time it would raise too many red flags.

“The Dragon is your Grandmother and a damn legend in the intelligence community. She’s retired on an old farm in Pennsylvania and your mom wants us to go make contact with her to let her know not only about you but also your father and the investigation” Maria said as Skye’s fingers started to draw lazy circles against her skin.

“When do we need to leave?” Skye asked looking between Maria and Natasha.

“Not yet. You two need some rest and Skye we need you here for when Tony meets with Matt to
bring him in on this. As you said he won't believe us unless he sees you in person and confirms we aren't pressuring you or harmed you in any way” Natasha told them just as Pepper followed by Bruce came into the living room and shot Maria a glare.

“I hate you. Not only did you pick up an old version of Tony but you had to pick up one that is even worse” Pepper said as she flopped down on the couch next to Natasha. Bruce stood behind his mate and began massaging Pepper’s shoulders.

“Hey I resemble that remark!” Tony said from the doorway that led back to the balcony coming from the flight decks. Pepper only leveled a glare with an eyebrow raised at Tony before he quickly threw up his hands in mock surrender. “Point taken.”

“Good boy, now sit down” Pepper said and Maria once again silently wondered about their triads dynamic but then remembered that was something she definitely didn’t need to know about. Time to change the direction of the conversation before her imagination started jumping down rabbit holes she really didn’t need to be jumping into.

“I’d say I’m sorry but I’m not. We need the help and at this point I’m desperate” Maria said before turning to her mate “And the Matt I’m assuming Natasha is talking about is your brother the lawyer. Why are we bringing him on?”

“Because Matt is somehow DareDevil don’t ask me how because I’m damn sure going to find out how the hell my blind brother can move like that” Skye said with a shrug before sighing when her face must of shown her doubt. “It has to be him the evidence is just too overwhelming so we have him on his way here tonight before dinner to meet with Tony. Figured we could always use another lawyer and Matt’s specialty is criminal law while Tony mainly has corporate lawyers.”

“Alright so we have five hours before he arrives?” Maria asked and rolled her eyes at the smirk Natasha threw at her. She’d throw something later at the redheaded woman right now her hands were otherwise occupied.

“Go you two. Reconnect. I’ll make sure to have JARVIS wake you in enough time to get ready” Natasha said with a smirk on her lips but a very soft look in her eyes. Maria didn’t have to be told twice as she stood up from the couch in one go earning a surprised squeak from her mate. They both ignored the snickering coming from behind them as they headed for the elevator and their floor.

Skye let out a surprise squeak as Maria stood up from the couch lifting her up without even any evidence of hesitation or strain. As the doors to the elevator closed she quickly moved her legs to
“JARVIS our floor, no other stops” Maria groaned out as Skye felt her back pushed up against one of the elevator walls. Maria’s mouth found hers and they were soon in a battle of tongues and teeth as Skye squeezed her legs pulling Maria closer to her earning her a gasp from her mate.

“JARVIS lock it down” Maria said breaking off the kiss as the elevator opened and Maria carried her onto their floor. Skye could feel their bond thrumming with their need for the other and slowly moved her lips and teeth to the spot she knew would drive Maria even more crazy. “If you keep that up we won’t make it to the bedroom.”

“And that would be a bad thing?” Skye teased then gasped out as Maria once again pushed her up against one of the walls breaking the lock she had on her mate’s neck. Maria used the pressure of the wall and ground against Skye. “Fuck me!”

“That is the goal” Maria quipped back at her before claiming her mouth hard in a kiss that seemed to last forever.

“Bedroom now” Skye said breaking off the kiss using her hands to run her fingers in Maria’s hair to give them both a moment to breathe. That and to give them long enough to think other than their need to connect right here and now because the burn was just under their skin and worse than their original time together, at the rate they were going they wouldn’t make it past the living room floor. Not that there would be anything wrong with that but Skye had been here for over an hour or so on her own and had prepared something to surprise Maria.

“As you wish” Maria said effortlessly carrying her towards their bedroom but her mate stopped short at the entrance to their bedroom as she saw all that Skye had arranged. A soft gasp escaped Maria as her eyes took in the candles placed around the room as soft music started playing for them. “You’re amazing” was whispered against Skye’s lips as their lips once again met this time in a soft kiss.

“I know, now put me down so you can unwrap your present” Skye husked in Maria’s ear earning her a shiver and a spike of desire through the bond after she had broken off their kiss again. She felt it as Maria slowly lowered her down and her feet were just touching the ground when Maria’s shaking hands found the hem of Skye’s tshirt and brought them up along with the shirt to reveal a red and black lace bra.

“There’s more” Skye said finally finding her voice and watched as Maria took in a deep shaky breath before Maria began trailing kisses and light touches down her neck, her breasts and her stomach. Finally going down onto one knee Maria stopped her fingers against the clasp of Skye’s pants as she
looked up to her. Her mate’s pupils were blown wide and Skye wondered not for the first time how Maria was able to keep control, she knew that Maria would go slow till Skye said it was okay.

*I want her to lose control and I’m pushing that control to its limit, but not yet*’ Skye thought as she gently ran a hand through Maria’s hair earning a pleased sound from her mate but Maria never took her eyes off of Skye’s face searching for consent. With Skye’s past Maria wouldn’t act until she said to. “Take them off.”

Maria visibly took another shaky breath before undoing the button and slowly pulling Skye’s pants down revealing in a black and red lace thong that left little to the imagination. “See something you like?” Skye asked hiding her uncertainty behind cockiness but she knew Maria felt it come across the bond.

“You know I do, light you’re beautiful” Maria whispered barely audible to Skye’s ears but she still felt her face heat up with a blush as her mate pushed what she was feeling across the bond.

“It’s not over yet” Skye said pulling Maria back up before gently kissing her before she sat down then slowly slid backwards onto the bed breaking off the kiss as she did.

“Oh?” Maria asked as she watched Skye lean against the headboard. She felt warmth rush between her legs and fought the urge to squirm when her mind compared the intense look Maria was giving her was to the one of a lion watching its prey. The confidence from knowing Maria desired her and no one else was a heady drug to her self esteem but also her libido and the burn under her skin was an ever growing thrum of power.

“Behind you on the dresser” Skye said leaning against the headboard of the bed. Watching as Maria finally tore her gaze away and moved over to the box on the dresser. Maria slowly opened the box and the intense spike of desire across the bond was enough to make Skye gasp as the burn under her skin increased even more. “I remember one of the conversations about fantasies a couple nights ago and thought we could try it.”

“When did you...” Maria started to ask but stopped before looking over her shoulder and asking “Are you sure my love?”

“Yes, I’m sure. As for when, I ordered it that night after our conversation and I had it delivered here. I wasn’t having it delivered to the FARM. I love Tasha but she’d tease me relentlessly if she knew... I was going to ask for you to pick it up on your way back to me but this is even better” Skye said watching after she answered the first question as Maria’s whole body seemed to shiver before she brought herself under control again. As she continued to talk she watched Maria’s taut muscles as
she stripped off her clothes and slowly pulled the harness up over her now naked form.

“Come here” Skye ordered her voice barely above a whisper because the sight in front of her was beautiful and the burn under her skin was now just this side of painful. Maria closed the distance in two long strides before slowly climbing onto the bed and Skye moved to her knees to meet her mate in a desperate kiss.

“How?” Maria asked breaking off the kiss as her mate’s hands moved to remove her bra and tossed it somewhere in the room.

“Your choice, but know this I need you in me now” Skye moaned as Maria’s mouth found one of her breasts and began to tease the nipple.

“Lay down” Maria said backing up and waiting till Skye was on her back legs apart. Her panties were then slowly dragged down as open mouth kisses were placed down one leg and then up the other. Maria’s tongue found her clit and two fingers quickly entered her as she had to fight down the urge to cum right then and there.

“Maria, please! I’m not going to last long our first time and I want the first one of the night with you in me” Skye gasped as her fingers found themselves gripping Maria’s hair.

A low growl almost brought her over the edge but Maria pulled away and moved up her body giving her a hard kiss. Skye tasted herself on her mate’s tongue and moaned into the kiss. Pushing upwards with her hips feeling the head of the strap on push up against her entrance. Skye broke off the kiss trailing kisses to Maria’s ear as she husked “Make me yours.”

“JARVIS is Mr. Stark still meeting us in the conference room?” Happy asked after the elevator doors shut and it began moving but Matt was more than sure there was only the three of them in the elevator and never heard Happy pull out a cell phone. The fact that they were now in Avenger tower on their way up to meet with Tony Stark aka Iron Man was a bit surreal. The same Tony Stark that apparently had heard of their fledgling law firm and wanted to put them on retainer because they came “highly recommended”. The “highly recommended” part is what had him worried and Foggy giddy at the thought of being on retainer for one of the Avengers. The other part that worried him about the whole thing was what would Tony Stark, an Avenger need of a criminal defense attorney.

“Sir hasn’t informed me of any changes to his plans” said a british accented voice that seemed to be coming from the walls of the very elevator.
“JARVIS you know that doesn’t mean anything” Happy said before he must have noticed Matt’s bewildered look that he knew was on his face or possibly Foggy’s face as well. “Oh sorry introductions. JARVIS meet Mr. Matt Murdock and Mr. Foggy Nelson, gentlemen meet JARVIS. JARVIS is Tony’s AI and runs Avenger Tower’s systems and keeps Tony somewhat in line.”

“Well I do try” JARVIS said with what Matt would call a fond exasperation tone In his voice before he continued. “Good to meet you Sirs. Please let me know if you need anything while you are here.”

Matt was surprised, JARVIS seemed to be a real genuine AI and a polite one to boot. Skye would be so jealous when he heard from his foster sister next. Skye’s hacker handle was a play on Terminator and they had debated for hours growing up about the possibility of a real AI in their lifetime.

“Hello JARVIS, it is nice to meet you” Matt finally said realizing that this whole trip was surreal as he heard Foggy also mumbling a reply in greeting.

“Don’t worry, after a while you will get use to JARVIS” Happy told them as the elevator continued on it’s way up.

Matt doubted they would get use to JARVIS since once Tony Stark realized they weren’t the law firm for him they’d never be back. They had nothing as a small just starting law firm to offer a client like Tony Stark. “That and I’m hesitant to know what skeletons a man that had the nickname ‘Merchant of Death’ has in his closet. Fisk is already one too many rich megalomaniacs that I have to deal with, don’t need to add Tony Stark to that list. Even if he seems to be one of the good guys.’

“Here we are gentlemen. Follow me” Happy announced as the elevator dinged and the doors opened. They continued down a hallway to their right and Matt felt Foggy’s hand gently on his elbow guiding him, not like it was needed but perceptions needed to be maintained and all that nonsense that his friend insisted since finding out that Matt was DareDevil.

“Have a seat gentleman Ms. Potts and Mr. Stark will be in shortly” Happy said as they were led to a small conference room. Matt felt it as Foggy guided his hand to the back of a chair and settled down gently into it being careful of the partially healed ribs on his right side.

They were in all standing in Sergels Square looking around at all the locals and tourist moving around either coming or going from the many shops and restaurants in the area. Phil glanced to his right and saw Mel taking everything in as they tried to bring into focus the facts of the case set before
them. He knew that the twins were behind him as they discretely scanned the area for all types of things with their StarkPads while the dwarves were high up in the air. Bobbi and their new addition Trip would be behind them watching their back end and making sure the twins didn’t get to lost in science that they hurt themselves.

“Diamond broker in Sweden hires twenty five military age males, similar build, same eye and hair color. Gave them all the same outfits including red masks to hide facial features and sent them on various routes throughout the city heading to one location. Each man got a briefcase that was the same model, brand new and only one of them filled with diamonds. No one, not even the owner knew which briefcase was the actual briefcase with the diamonds in it. Amador somehow knew which case had the diamonds and followed five of the carriers into that subway” Phil said pointing to the entrance after the twins indicated they were done scanning the area.

“But how did she know?” Jemma asked as they got up and headed back for the truck.

“That’s the multi million dollar question of the hour” Phil said once they were back in the truck and Mel was starting to move them to the next station down the line. “The train made an emergency stop, at the next stop. When Swedish police arrived all five men had been found dead, one case gone and Amador vanished into the tunnel system all within a matter of minutes. Nothing that Amador couldn’t handle she was a master thief by age 20 it’s why we recruited her instead of locking her up, but how did she know which man had the case?”

“We need to figure out the how, as well as figure out who she’s working for because someone tried removing all trace of this case from SHIELD’s systems. It was only caught by Skye because her snooping programs are watching for anything like this happening” Phil said watching the grim looks pass between Bobbi and Trip while Jemma and Fitz automatically started brainstorming.

“So this is the foster sibling of Skye’s that we are going to put on retainer for the Avengers?” Pepper asked as she watched the internal cameras that showed Matt Murdock and Foggy Nelson as they made their way to the conference room on the Avengers main floor.

“He is, among other things if Skye is correct” Tony said as he watched to two men sit down and noticed that Matt was still favoring his right side when he sat down. ‘He must still be healing from his last fight with Fisk’s goons’ Tony thought before continuing out loud “Skye is more than sure that he is DareDevil and if she’s right he needs our help just as much as we might be needing his in the future.”

“Maria and Skye should be here in a few minutes” Pepper said as Tony opened the door that led to the conference room. The plan was to wait for Maria and Skye but when did he ever stick to a plan, especially since he had an opportunity to screw around a little bit.
“Mr. Matthew Murdock I presume?” Tony said as he strolled into the room with his well crafted public persona in place. Across his bond he could feel Peppers exasperation as she followed him into the room to keep him in check, well at least try to, he was Tony Stark after all. They were suppose to wait for Skye and Maria but he wanted to get the measure of the man before he saw his sister and knew she was behind this.

“I am and you are?” Matt Murdock asked standing up and unerringly found Tony’s hand that he had put out for Matt to shake.

“You move pretty good for a blind guy” Tony said smirking and heard Pepper’s sigh from behind him.

“Forgive him. He was absent the day they taught tact at his school” Pepper said glaring at him and he just shrugged.

“It’s alright Ms?” Matt Murdock said shooting a charming grin Peppers way.

“Oh right introductions. I am Tony Stark and with me is Pepper Potts. And you must be Mr. Foggy Nelson, welcome to Avenger Tower” Tony said as he shook Foggy’s hand then moved to flop down at the head of the conference room table.

“Sit gentlemen.” Tony waited for the two men and Pepper to sit down before he asked. “I bet you two are just this side of curious why we called you.”

A moment passed and neither man said anything though it was a close thing since Matt had to place a hand on Foggy’s arm to stop him from talking. “Oh I’m going to like you Mr. Murdock or can I call you Matt? I’m just going to call you Matt. So why we called you out of all the law firms I have my pick from. I believe we have a mutual acquaintance a young hacker by the handle of Skyenet” Tony said and watched as Matt Murdock’s face totally shut down.

“And if we by chance know this hacker, what has she done?” Matt said picking his words carefully. Tony looked at the two young men and nodded to himself not disappointed in the least by Matt’s poker face. Card nights in the Avengers were about to get even more interesting.

“Why is it always that I had to have done something?” Skye asked in a teasing voice from the doorway that Tony and Pepper came in just minutes before. Tony laughed at the shocked and
bewildered expressions on both Matt and Foggy’s faces respectively. Matt was the first to recover from his shock as he stood up and opened up his arms for Skye to run right into them. Tony glanced over towards Maria and saw a small smile on the woman’s face as she waited a few steps behind her mate.

“You were suppose to wait Tony” Maria said but her attention was fully on Skye’s reunion with her brother in all but blood.

“Yeah when do I ever follow the plan when I have a chance of messing with someone a bit” Tony said with a shrug before he felt Peppers hand on his shoulder giving it a firm squeeze. ‘Tonight should be interesting’ he thought before turning his attention back to the scene before him.

“Usually because you were the first one in trouble when we were kids!” Matt finally quipped after he let go of Skye from a hug. The comment earned him a punch in the arm that he took with a gentle smile.

“Prat! And that’s rich coming from you Mr. Devil of Hell’s Kitchen and don’t you try denying it” Skye said shaking a finger under the man’s nose.

“What’s going on Skye?” Matt asked his voice saying he was being serious instead of joking like he was just moments before.

“I now work for the Avengers and we need your help, but first meet my soulmate Maria Hill, Assistant Director of SHIELD and main liaison for the Avengers. Love, this is Matthew Murdock my brother in all but blood.”
Bobbi let her fingers twirl around the strands of hair as Jemma slept peacefully next to her on the small bed. If Hunter had been here they would never have fit on the bed and even with two it was cozy but Bobbi was glad to have it. The room had originally been Mel’s bunk but she had moved the last of her stuff into Phil’s room, now their room. It had left Bobbi able to take the room behind the cockpit with the slightly bigger bed for her and Jemma to use.

She was now three of the trained pilots on the BUS and had the planes autopilot open on a screen on the other side of the bed while she went over files on her StarkPad. Mel and Phil were currently getting some rest, or doing something else she didn’t need to know as Trip and her watched everything else. Soon the older couple would be getting up and relieving them so they could get some rest as well. A soft ding from her StarkPad and then in her ear com, drew her attention as she checked the video clip sent her way, visually against the picture of Amador.

“I see it Trip, where and when was this?” Bobbi asked as she slowly extracted herself out of her mates hold trying not to wake her.

“Three hours ago in Belarus but now that JARVIS knows where to look he and Skye’s programs have found other times in the last year when she has gone there” he answered.

“Alright I’ll get the BUS moving that way, go ahead and wake Coulson and May” she said as she sat down in the pilot seat. “SHIELD 616 to SHIELD Control.”

“Five more minutes” Skye groaned against Maria’s shoulder as their alarm went off, telling them it was time to get up. They had a three hours drive to where her grandmother had retired to. Natasha knew where to go and would be driving them while Kate, Nixon and Wade would be staying at the tower till they got back. At first Maria had wanted them all together and fly there but Natasha had said that it would be better with just the three of them driving, citing that she didn’t know what type of air defenses Lian might have installed.

“I wish we could, but we need to get up before Tasha comes in here without knocking again” Maria said kissing her forehead.

“Alright I’m up” Skye said grumbling as she rolled out of bed and stumbled towards the bathroom and turned on the shower. No one would ever accuse her of being a morning person but she also barely got any sleep between talking with Matt till he left around ten last night. The real reason why she barely got any sleep was because her and Maria had been making love till the wee hours of the
morning.

Just thinking of last night set a spike of desire through the bond that was answered from her mate and she turned the shower water colder trying to push down her desires. It had been bad enough the night before Tasha had come into the room since apparently they both had been out cold enough not to wake to JARVIS. Tasha had come in and found them both naked in bed, Skye still on top of Maria with Maria still inside Skye. ‘At least we had the blanket covering most of us. Though by the knowing smirk Tasha kept giving us I wouldn’t be surprised if she knew what had happened.’

Stepping out of the shower she quickly wrapped a towel around herself as she smelled coffee coming from the kitchen and moved that way to get some caffeine in her system. “You do love me!” Skye said as Maria turned around and handed her a mug just how she liked it.

“Very much” Maria said before stealing a kiss and heading for their room and to shower as well.

Tony sucked his finger as he got shocked again by the now extracted bionic eye of the now dead intern. He had already disabled its broadcasting capabilities and the Towers firewall was on full lock down just for good measure as he tried to localize transmissions so they could see what they were working against. Cobbling up some makeshift connection wires had been the easy part, even the makeshift power source had been easy, well sort of. The hard part had been working past his heebie jeebies about connecting them with a dead man’s bionic eye. Everything he was doing was being recorded and would be sent to Helen once he was done or he hit a brick wall in getting the thing working.

“Ahah! I win!” Tony said to himself as he finally got an image of his labs ceiling to show up on the screen that was hooked up to the eye. “Alright now to download the programing and to run some tests.”

“You know talking to yourself is a sign of insanity” Wade said from the doorway before coming inside.

“Pot meet kettle” Tony said with half his mind on the conversation as Wade started rambling that he was talking to the author and not himself. Tony ignored it as he began to localise the programing that broadcast the view of the eye to whoever sat watching and waiting to hit the kill switches. Streams of code flashed up across his screen as he watched it trying to find something they could use. He wanted to not only stop the transmissions but track them and stop the kill switch protocols from being in acted. If they could to that it would make things a whole lot simpler on their end.
Four hours after they had left Natasha pulled the luxury sedan up to a sprawling one story brick house. The house was situated between two fenced in pastures one with cows and the other with horses free roaming. It was a large farm property that she knew Lian May had retired to with two other associates that were a married mated couple. Between the three of them they had the place wired and bobby trapped for anyone dumb enough to track them down in retirement.

Glancing in the rearview mirror she could see the nervousness in both Maria and Skye’s eyes as they looked around from the back seat. It wasn’t everyday that one came to see the living legend known as the “Dragon” in her retirement to tell her that only is her granddaughter thought long dead and buried was alive and right in front of her. Or that her son in law was also alive despite her going to the funeral with her daughter.

‘How the hell did I get the fun of doing this? Oh right, Mel called in the favor I owed her for Bulgaria’ Tasha thought as she watched the older chinese woman they had come to see come out onto the porch in jeans and a flannel shirt. To anyone untrained they’d just see a little old lady but Tasha knew that old or not, retired or not Lian May probably could kick her ass and still keep every piece of hair in place while doing it.

“Come on you two, you will be fine” Tasha said after taking a deep breath and stepping out of the car and watching as Lian recognized her. “Lian it is good to see you!”

“And you Mrs. Romanoff, I don’t see my wayward daughter with you” Lian asked coming down the porch and glancing behind Tasha with a worried expression as the other two doors opened for Maria and Skye.

“No she is not, but I bring news. I want to introduce you first to the two women behind me” Tasha began but was interrupted.

“Assistant Director Maria Hill, if you are here it’s probably not good news, and isn’t your associate a bit young to be a chaplain” Lian said and Tasha realized that seeing the Assistant Director of SHIELD, the organization that her daughter works for was making Lian jump to some dire and grim conclusions. Tasha cursed herself and Mel because neither of them had thought of that aspect of their plan because by the look in her eyes Lian May was steeling herself for some really bad news.

“Former Director May I promise it’s not the news you are thinking. We just talked to your daughter Mel two hours ago when her team checked in on a case. She couldn’t come here so sent us to give you some news” Maria quickly said picking up on what Tasha just realized.

“My daughter has gone back into the field? And you let her after Phil’s death?! Are you all insane or
just plain stupid?!” Lian asked clearly shocked and pissed by the news and it wasn’t surprising. After Bahrain Mel had swore off field work and after the supposed death of Phil, her mother was once again assuming the worst.

‘Damn it this isn’t going right. Damn it Mel you should be the one to do this!’ Tasha thought before she was surprised by Skye speaking up in their defense.

“Dad’s not dead. Well he didn’t stay dead at any rate so Fury faked his death. As for Mom being in the field again, she didn’t want Dad out there unless she was watching his back.”

“Mom and Dad?” Lian asked in a small voice and uncertainty in her eyes as she took in Skye and Natasha knew the older woman was seeing the resemblance just as she had when she first met Skye.

“Yes Ma’am. My name is Skye, but I was born Rayne May Coulson and I am the granddaughter that you thought dead all these years” Skye said pulling out a piece of paper from her back pocket and handing it to the clearly now in shock older woman.

“How?” Lian asked not knowing how loaded of a question that was.

Emma stood up from the booth as Regina made her way over during her lunch break. They had been eating lunch together every other day since Emma had arrived in the dead of night three weeks ago after being found by Henry and his older brother Alexi. Emma had been recuperating and waiting for the shrinks to release her back to active duty when the words showed up against her skin.

The words on her skin at first had Emma running scared because she knew to meet her mate she would also be meeting the son she had given up for adoption and she didn’t think she was ready. She had run to a whole other city but still had been found and in that moment knew Matt was right. Matt had given her hell about running from her past and that she couldn’t run from fate forever. Once she opened the door though to the sweetest boys, one whom was the son she was afraid to meet she gave up the fear to fate.

_She immediately bundled the boys into her bug and drove from Boston all the way to the wild woods of northern Maine to a sleepy coastal town called Storeybrook. It had been a tense drive with the boys asking her a million and one questions all the while Emma’s nerves had gone tense as the boys refused to call their mom to tell her they were alright and when asked if they had cell phones they had said they purposely left them home so they couldn’t be tracked and brought back home by their Uncles._
Arriving though at a large white house had brought the reality of it all crash down on her as the boys had jumped out of the car. Emma sat there fighting back a panic attack as she took a few deep calming breaths then got out of the car herself. Emma stood rooted on the sidewalk and took in the scene of an older but gorgeous woman bear hugging the boys before pulling back and checking them over for injury like any good mother would. In that moment she knew that her son had won the adoption lottery and she wondered what it would have been like to have had someone fuss over her like that when she was younger.

“So you’re Henry’s birth mother?” had pulled her out of her thoughts and she had looked up into darkest brown eyes as she had ever seen and felt she could get lost in them forever. After hearing the words she was no longer running scared, Emma was still scared of fucking it all up but she was no longer running.

“I am, and I have no idea how Henry found me, but I’m now glad he did” Emma responded softly hearing the gasp from the woman in front of her.

“Quarter for your thoughts dear?” Regina asked from across the booth pulling Emma out of her thoughts, concern etched on the older womans face.

“You’re overpaying for them again” Emma quipped back earning a small smile from her mate. “I was thinking of the night we met.”

“Do you...regret it?” Regina asked uncertainty in her voice.

“Not at all, I stand by my words” Emma said reaching for Regina’s hand and giving it a quick squeeze before letting go. They were keeping their status quiet as they worked things out and took things slow for the sake of the boys. Alexi had been Regina’s former lovers son that had died tragically in childbirth and Regina never thought she’d find someone again.

Emma had years of neglect and abuse as a foster child to work through along with her guilt of giving Henry up for adoption. The adoption worked out in the end, but still she had years to feel guilty over it. While she had found structure from the Marines she still had issues from her multiple deployments and not knowing when the Marines would find her once again fit for duty. The local shrink, Dr. Hopper thankfully was approved by the military and her first session with him was tonight before going to Regina’s for a family dinner.

“Still coming by for dinner tonight? I know the boys are looking forward to seeing you” Regina
“Only the boys?” Emma asked teasing as she saw her mate slightly blush and counted it as a win.

“I guess I could say...I’m looking forward to it as well” Regina said with a look that made Emma swallow. They had barely kissed but even Regina must by now feeling the pull for them to complete the bond. Emma knew before she went anywhere near Regina tonight she’d need to take a very cold shower.

“How long have they been together?” Lian asked as she put a mug of tea in front of Tasha while she watched her granddaughter from the kitchen. After hearing the young woman's story while having it confirmed via video chat with Melinda she watched in awe. To be so young and yet to go through so much, Lian shook her head and watched the two mates that were at the dining room table.

They had been there for the last thirty minutes after Tony Stark, of all people, called Rayne or Skye as she preferred to be called, for her help on a programming issue. Both had apologized for the interruption to their conversation but it might lead to a break in the case they were working on and might help Melinda and Phil in the field.

If it was one thing Lian knew, it was that breaks in cases sometimes came at the most inopportune times and had showed the two ladies to the dining room while her and Tasha had continued into the kitchen. Maria had run out of the house and returned with backpack handing it dutifully to Skye as she continued to talk to Tony Stark a mile a minute. Lian had never been tech savvy and was quickly lost in trying to follow the conversation. Within moments Maria sat their patiently holding up a StarkPad while Skye’s fingers flew over her keyboard of a laptop on the table.

“A couple months, but their bond is the strongest anyone has ever recorded, I can guarantee you that” Tasha said drawing her attention away from the two and that bit of news was shocking.

“Tony I think we can create a program to scan immediate areas for these damn devices and possibly piggy pack off the transmission so we can see what they are seeing” Skye said sharing a look with Maria who only nodded and Lian could see they were in tune with each other better than even Melinda and Phil.

“What type of sensors are we talking about? I can put some devices on rush production if I know what you need” said the ever present voice of Tony Stark as you heard some background noise as it seemed he was moving around.
“Do you have the specs on Fitz’s D.W.A.R.F’s? I think Snow White has the sensor we will need” Skye said as she stopped briefly to take the mug of tea with a small smile towards Lian. She had brought over tea for both Skye and Maria as they continued to work through the problem that was presenting itself.

“I do, hold on. God these are genius, but they are my kids. We’ll need to collaborate on upgrades but Snow White is to the correct one to use. How soon can you get a program up and running for us to test? I have a similar sensor in one of my suits that I can use to do a quick field test” Tony said and Lian raised an eyebrow at Tasha as she came back into the kitchen.

“Mel and Phil aren’t the only newly minted parents. Tony found out that one of his one night stands resulted in twins. Ironically the twins and Skye were all on the team that Mel and Phil were running till we started figuring everything out” Tasha said with a smirk.

“Well it sounds like he is a proud papa instead of running scared, that’s very much unlike his father” Lian said with a sigh as she thought of her old friend Howard Stark, though in later years she was more on friendly terms with Maria Stark than her husband.

“He is. He has taken to it like a duck to water” Tasha smirked again before taking a drink from her tea.

“Just a few more minutes” Skye said fingers flying as she bit her lip concentrating and Lian had to fight back the flashback of a younger Melinda doing the same while working out a math problem. “Alright the program has been sent to you, upload it and then let me know if the sensor picks it up.”

“Hold please. Hey Deadpool make yourself useful, carry this box outside of the lab so we can see if its working” Tony said from the other end of the conversation.

“Eww is that the dead dude’s eye? I’m not touching that!” Deadpool could be heard asking and Lian sent a look towards Tasha who only nodded to her question but she wasn’t sure which question or if it was to both. Was that a yes to a dead man’s eye or a yes to the fact the Avengers now had the assassin known as Deadpool working for them.

“Deadpool take the damn eye downstairs and quit your whining or I’ll let Widow and Hawkeye use you for target practice” Maria said drawing Lian’s attention and she realized that the woman was perfectly serious about the threat.
“Damn it no fair! Fine” Deadpool said with a sigh.

“Good now go take it downstairs to the living room to start with and keep going down. I want to see what the range is on this sensor. JARVIS will let you know when to come back with it” Tony said and they could hear Tony pushing the assassin out of his lab.

“I have a funny feeling there is more to the story than I have been told so far” Lian said giving Tasha a look that in her days had junior agents wetting themselves and running for the hills. Her daughter’s best friend was made of stronger stuff but she still looked back towards Maria who had come into the kitchen holding a small box.

“Much more,” Maria said handing her the small box that Lian opened up finding all new tech. “SHIELD has been compromised and the Avengers have now taken over the investigation from Fury.”

“And from you” Lian said pulling out the phone.

“Nope I’m first and foremost now an Avenger, as well as your daughter and granddaughter” Maria said before shocking her even more, “and now since you’re family so are you if you want to join us.”

“Short Bus check in” came Mel’s voice over the radio and Bobbi fought back the urge to laugh at the drawn out sigh from Phil in the front seat of the van.

“I’m picking the codenames next time. Go for Short Bus” he said giving both Trip and herself a dirty look at their barely controlled snickers. They had pranked the two older agents but mainly Phil with the name and they would now have to wait for the older agents responses to the prank.

“Incoming data packet from Skyefall for the Twins. Its suppose to be a new program for Snow White” Mel said over the radio and just that little bit had both Jemma and Fitz excited as Trip pulled the van over on the side of the road to park as they arrived on the edge of the town.

“Copy that, we have arrived Twins and Mockingbird staying behind while we check out the town” Phil said giving them their orders as he got out of the van. Trip had to jog to catch up to Phil as they moved to blend in with some of the foot traffic.
“Holy...” Fitz started but stopped as he quickly connected the drone named Snow White to his laptop.

“Holy what? Don’t leave us in suspense Fitz” Jemma said next to him sitting on the bench that was against their work area.

“Sorry dad and Skye figured a way of locally tracking down a signal from one of the eyes and piggybacking the signal so we can see what they see” Fitz said after unplugging Snow White. “Bobbi can you stick her out of the window so she can go airborne?”

“Sure thing” Bobbi said moving towards the front and letting the drone out of the van. “She’s airborne.”

“Good now to start scanning...” Fitz said but stopped mid sentence as a black and white image showed up one of the screens of a van parked against some trees but there were three people inside...Bobbi’s blood ran cold as the image flicked to show colors and then rushed forward. Bobbi only had moments to react as she grabbed both Jemma and Fitz and throwing them towards the back door.

“Out the back door!” she yelled as the van was hit the and sent them flying against the roof and the side of the van as it toppled over onto its side. Ignoring the pain in her shoulder she got up and visually checked over Fitz and Jemma as they moved to get up. Grabbing her gun she kicked out the back doors of the van and saw another car now speeding away already out of range for her to use her gun.

“Short Bus to Bus and Rovers we were just attacked. Subject has fled and unable to pursue, the vans on its side in a ditch, it’s a loss” Bobbi said over her comm as Jemma came out of the van favoring her leg while she helped Fitz who had a cut along his scalp that was bleeding profusely.

“Bus copies. I’m on my way with the truck. Deep Clean protocols in affect. ETA twenty minutes” Mel said and Bobbi breathed a sigh of relief as she pulled out the first aid kit and handed Fitz a gauze pad and moved him to sit against the van before getting Jemma to sit down with a hiss next to her brother.

“Rovers five minutes out” Phil said and Bobbi could tell they were hustling back to them.

“That was close” Jemma said before pulling her night-night gun from the holster on her thigh and
putting it on her lap. Of the twins she was the less dazed and Bobbi gave her a small smile before kissing her forehead.

“Yes it was. Keep watch as I check Fitz over” Bobbi said moving to assess if Fitz had a concussion to go along with the gash that might require some form of stitches. After determining that Fitz didn’t have a concussion she moved to check the gash, it was right on the border of probably needing stitches in her opinion but would leave it for Jemma to decide once they got back to the bus.

“Fitz hold the gauze pad, I need to wrap your head to get you ready for transport back to the Bus” Bobbi said bringing his hand up to hold the gauze where she needed it.

Bobbi was busy wrapping up Fitz’s head gash when Phil and Trip came running over towards them. Jemma at first lifted up her night-night gun covering Bobbi’s back but put it back in her lap when she confirmed it was only Phil and Trip. She reached over and gave Jemma’s hand a squeeze as Trip took over the triage on Fitz’s head gash and she sat next down to her mate, she was going to be sore in the morning.

Emma sang along to some AC/DC as she drove back through the quiet little town from Regina’s house towards the little Bed and Breakfast she had been staying at since she had arrived in town just a little under three weeks ago. It was late and the streets were deserted as everyone was already in bed in the quiet little coastal town. As it was Emma was going to have to sneak into the Bed and Breakfast and hope she didn’t wake the old proprietor as she came in the front door. After the boys had been tucked in and gone to sleep Regina and her and retired to the living room with a glass of wine each.

The conversation flowed easily between the two women but Emma was still not able to fully disclose her job and she felt deep down that there was something more to Regina than met the eye. Conversation had led to cuddling which had ended with a very hot and heavy make out session that Emma knew she would need a cold shower once she got back for any hope of getting some sleep.

Turning onto Main St she saw flashing lights coming from two patrol vehicles between her and a civilians car slightly blocking the road. The hair on her neck stood up as she took in the scene and knew something was wrong but she didn’t pick up on it till she noticed the doors to the bank were open. ‘Easy Emma you’re just being paranoid, Mr. Olson’s daughter must have forgotten to lock the door again’ Emma thought since it was the talk of the town that the woman kept forgetting to lock the doors forcing the Sheriff’s to secure the bank almost nightly once the alarm company but those thoughts were cut off as gunfire erupted from the bank.

Emma saw one of the officers go down before she was forced to duck down as the glass from her bug erupted above her. ‘Shit! that’s going to sting’ as she felt the glass cut into the exposed skin of
her back since a thin tank top wasn’t even a bit of protection. Reaching towards the passenger floorboard she used her once discarded overshirt to clear the glass away as she flipped the floor mat and pressed the combo to her gun safe. Her squad had given her hell when she modified the old bug to add the safe but it wasn’t like it would fit under the seats and she didn’t like going anywhere unarmed. In the seconds it took to get her 9mm and the two extra clips out of the safe answering gun fire erupted in response back.

Emma opened the passenger side door hearing the gunfire continue quickly crawling out before rolling out of the car to the ground. A deputy came around dragging his partner with one arm as he fired with the other as she finished her roll. “Armed Marine on your six, I’ll cover you!” she instantly called out as instincts and training took over as she leveled her 9mm and let off a double tap to one overly bold guys chest inside the now shattered windows of the bank. The overconfident guy drop and Emma watched as his partner finally stopped firing long enough to grab his friend and drag him back inside.

The pause was just what she needed to run and grab the other shoulder strap of the wounded officer and get him behind cover just as gunfire erupted from the bank again hitting against the side of the cruiser they were now behind. Emma watched as Deputy Nolan leaned Sheriff Humbert against the wheel of the cruiser, blood coming from a wound just behind his vest and knew it wasn’t good.

“10-13! 10-52! Officers down. Main and Harbor at the bank. Be advised suspects have automatic weapons. Armed civilian on site in support” Emma heard Nolan say as she pulled out one of her kbars from her calf sheath and quickly stabbed the cruiser tire bringing the backside of the car lower to avoid ricochets from going under the cruiser. “Give me that!” Nolan said and she quickly tossed him the knife. Nolan deftly caught it before rolling to the side to stab the other tire as well.

Emma caught the sight of blood on his pants as he rolled back and saw that he had been hit as well in the upper thigh and was surprised he had been able to walk on it let alone drag Humbert to safety. She had met Sheriff Graham Humbert and Deputy David Nolan the night she had brought the boys back and had met Regina for the first time. Though much wasn’t said between the them that night and she didn’t have much cause to talk to the men other than the occasional friendly hello in passing.

“Didn’t peg you as a devil dog,” Nolan grunted as he used the knife to slice open Graham’s vest to get a better look where the bullet had pierced through the vest and into his friend. “Damn it we got complacent and lazy and we walked right into it.”

“Yeah well, even I thought it was something simple like it has been when I was driving up even if my instincts were pinging. Shows me to ignore my sixth sense for trouble. I just got back home from deployment and thought I was just being paranoid like the shrinks warned me might happen” Emma said tossing Nolan her flannel overshirt. “Use this and keep pressure on his chest.”
“I did three tours with the Rangers in Afghanistan, never thought I’d be seeing this shit here of all places. You?” Nolan answered grunting as Emma quickly used her own belt as a tourniquet for his leg.

“Me either, I was on my fifth deployment when I got sent back stateside to heal after an ambush” Emma said as she quickly looked around the end of the car and returned fire hitting the second guy at least in the shoulder but he barely staggered before he opened up again on their position. “I think ones down I just put one in the other guys shoulder but he barely fucking twitched when I did it.”

“Well it’s either a vest or PCP, my guess is PCP” Nolan shouted as another round of gunfire hit the other side of the cruiser pinning them down again.

“Then I’m going to need more than my 9mm to stop him unless I get a lucky headshot, which with this lighting it's a 50/50 chance. That and we need to move you guys again because I doubt this cruiser is going to hold up much longer” Emma said as the distant sounds of sirens started to fill up the night coming closer as radio traffic flowed from Nolan’s radio. “When your backup arrives I’ll cause a distraction have them get you back far enough that the ambulance can get you and the sheriff out of here.”

“If you can get to it, there is an M-16 in my trunk. Ammo is in the safe next to it combo 9-1-1. There should be an extra vest in there as well, put it on. I don’t need Regina after my ass because you got hurt” Nolan said pointing out his cruiser just a few feet away the trunk was facing away from the bank but Emma would have to sprint fast across the way to get to it without being hit.

“How do you know about us?” Emma asked dropping her now empty clip and slamming another one in. They had decided to keep it quiet and take things slow much to the disappointment of the boys.

“Regina and I are friends. Now if you run I’ll cover you” was Nolan’s only answer and Emma knew he wasn’t telling her the full truth. Filling it away for later Emma took a deep breath before giving a look to Nolan then towards Humbert who looked in a bad way, they needed to get him to a hospital quick.

“Alright on three I’m going to run for it” Emma said as she silently counted down on her fingers. As soon as it hit three she watched Nolan pop around the other side of the car and start shooting into the bank as she ran for his car. Shooting she quickly hit the back tire closest to her as she tumbled behind the other police cruiser. Ignoring the pain in her arm as she shot the lock out of trunk and reached in for the M-16 and vest. The combo on the safe was trickier but she finally managed it and grabbed the ammo.
Looking back over towards Nolan she saw as a tricked out Mustang pulled up with another civilian and what looked like an EMT running low for Nolan and Humbert. Bullets flying over top their heads before diving for the back of the soon to be totalled police cruiser.

‘Here comes the Calvary right on time, even if it’s someone who has probably watched to much Fast and Furious by his driving’ she thought before shaking her head. Either way they would have to do in getting Nolan and Humbert to safety. Emma slammed a magazine into the M-16 and switched it to three burst setting as she took another deep breath to steady herself before looking over towards Nolan. It took a moment before getting his attention and signaling she was ready and getting nod in return.

Having the large gun in her hand and the sound of gunfire was almost enough to have the edges of her vision blur as she felt a flashback coming on. Gritting her teeth she knew that Humbert or Nolan didn’t have time for her to get her shit together so she quickly stood up and began firing into the bank as she slowly advanced. ‘Just like fireline training’ Emma thought trying to convince herself.

Emma hoped the other person and EMT were pulling back Nolan and Humbert to safety but Emma couldn’t stop to see if that was the case. As soon as one clip was done she dropped it on the ground and slid in another without missing a step but that brief pause was when the guy popped up and she felt a burning sensation along her temple and then her thigh. It wasn’t ideal but his popping up from wherever he was hiding was when she was able to get him as one bullet took him in the neck and then another in the head in a spray of blood and gore.

Slowly she crept into the bank not hearing anything other than her own breathing as she cleared the first guy she had hit and then cleared the last guy. Weapon trained she looked into the shadows of the dark bank and listened for any sound of anyone else hiding.

August Booth cursed and swerved but quickly righted himself when he felt pain come across his bond. He felt fear in that moment because the pain was immense before his bond went dark with one of his mates. Graham wasn’t dead but it was bad enough to knock him out and August fought not to be taken over by the primal rage of their other mate Ruby. He sent reassurance through the bond towards both of his mates as he reached over for his phone, something told him this was going to be big.

“10-13! 10-52! Officers down. Main and Harbor at the bank. Be advised suspects have automatic weapons. Armed civilian on site in support” he heard David say over the scanner as he flipped a switch on his mustang to turn on the police siren and lights as he raced through the sleepy towns streets. Just the thought of any of the civilians in the area backing up Graham and David was enough to give him a sense of dread. Then the words hit him officers down, not officer down which meant David was hit just as bad as Graham.
“Bravo-two responding” he said as he quickly dialed a number. It was an automated pager system for their group and he put in the code for everyone to go into lockdown. Moments later his phone rang with a distinct ringtone he knew was the Agent he had just left at an abandoned campground.

“Koenig no time to talk Huntsmen and Charming are down, get to Snow White and then the Queen and stand by” August ordered not waiting for confirmation as he hung up the phone. He knew Koenig wasn’t far from town since he had just met with the man to pick up new tech gear to bring to Regina. Why they needed new tech when they just got an upgrade less than a year ago was beyond him but he was already using his new phone already at Koenig insistence.

Turning a corner he cursed as he barely avoided running his mustang into the side of the ambulance Ruby was driving on her way to where Graham was injured. “Red pull over and get in with me, we will need to go in hot and heavy!” he shouted into his radio as he slammed onto his brakes as he popped open his trunk to quickly get his tactical vest on and pull out his M-4 and the extra ammunition.

“Doc, stage the ambulance a block away on the north side of Main we will call you when we need you to pick us up” he ordered his wife’s partner while tossing his extra vest to his wife.

“Got it” Doc said visibly relieved he wouldn’t be going into the danger zone. August couldn’t find it in himself to blame the kid, he just wanted to be a doctor and was soon to leave for med school in the fall. He was only working as an EMT for the summer trying to earn some extra spending money.

“Bravo-two and Red are coming in hot, eta 3 minutes” August said as he jumped back into the car as his wife took to the back seat sitting sideways as the med bag was ready to go on her back.

“Copy that” David said over the radio pain evident in his voice as August could hear more gunfire in the background. The seconds ticked by in the cruiser and neither of them said anything but both knew that Graham was down and that it wasn’t good. They didn’t talk about the fact they had felt it when Graham had got hit and knew to respond before David’s voice called in the 10-13. August felt his fear but he also felt that something primal that was purely Ruby since the incident that forced her into retirement and knew he’d have to say something to keep her focused on Graham and leave the fighting to him.

“Ruby take care of Graham and David, I’ll take care of the rest” he said and watched as his mate stared him down before the feral look dialed back down in her eyes and across the bond.

“Copy that” Ruby finally said after taking a deep breath and visibly shaking with the effort of getting herself under control.
“Good, get ready and stay low. Three….two…..one!” He yelled as he pulled on the parking brake and twisted the mustang around so they could get out with some cover. Staying low as he ran hunched over under a sea of bullets as he got to Graham and David first but Ruby wasn’t far behind him.

“Who the hell is that?” August asked after taking a breath and looking around as he took in the situation. He had spotted a blonde at the back of David’s cruiser getting out the gear and putting it on.

“David if you don’t die from your wound Regina is going to kill you putting her mate in danger!” Ruby said startling the hell out of him as she started getting Graham ready to move him once it was safe enough.

“Mate?!” August said shocked he had been gone for over a month doing a favor for Fury. ‘What the fuck happened while I was gone? Leave for three weeks on a favor for Fury and come back to this! Guess that explains the extra tech gear’ he thought keeping a watch on the bank and this Swan person.

“She’s a marine, not like I could have stopped her! Anyways she is the only reason I was able to get Graham to safety. She said to move back as soon as help arrived and I have to agree with her because this cruiser isn’t going to hold up much longer” David said and August had to agree with his assessment. “Is Graham ready, because I think Swan is about ready to move?”

“He is ready to move. I’ll drag him back to the alley along the pizza place. August you are going to need to help David get back and both of you watch our six!” Ruby said tying a strap to the stretcher she had Graham on. August didn’t argue with his wife as he quickly hoisted David over his shoulder in a fireman carry as he heard Swan start firing on the bank causing a distraction and drawing away the gunfire so they could move.

Slowly he backed up trusting David to tell him if he was about to spill both of them on their asses as he kept an eye on the bank with his M4 ready to provide fire even if the angle was bad. It took a moment to believe what he was seeing but as he watched Swan move he knew the woman had special forces training as he watched her drop an empty clip while slamming in a new one. In the heartbeat between emptying her clip and replacing it gunfire erupted from the bank but still she advanced and with another three burst from the M-16 In her hands everything went silent in the street.

“About to hit the curb. Set me down on the lip and I’ll keep watch while you go help Swan clear the bank” David said as they heard radio traffic that the ambulance was moving up on their position with
Deputy Petite escorting them. August put David down and leaned him up against the brick front of the pizza place, he glanced over towards Ruby and Graham but had to push back the urge to stay with them.

“Hey August, approach with caution Swan is a devil dog just back from a bad deployment.” David said pulling him from his thoughts as he checked his M4 and nodded to acknowledge David’s warning. Moving forward he kept his M4 pointed down but ready to move up to shoot in an instant as he proceeded to the bank where Swan had disappeared.

The crunch of glass under his feet made the blonde woman whirl around with the M-16 leveled at his chest, a glazed over expression in her eyes. ‘Shit, she’s having a flashback’ August thought as he quickly let his M4 drop and hang from its clip on his vest and he put his empty hands to the side.

“I’m Deputy August Booth, we haven’t met but you saved the life of one of my mates back there” August said his voice calm and even though he had a locked and loaded M-16 pointed at his chest. The sound of the doors to the ambulance doors slamming before he felt it as both of his mates were beginning to move farther away. “They’re heading to the hospital. Want to go with me to wait for them?”

Slowly she lowered her weapon till it was pointing towards the ground as she looked past him towards where Graham and David had been moments before. Emma Swan didn’t answer him at first as her eyes slowly lost that glazed over look that was a tell-tell sign of a flashback. “What about them?”

“Officer Petite will take care of them” indicating the officer that had just arrived that stayed back with a hand signal. Emma sway and August quickly grabbed her by the elbow steadying her on her feet and almost slipped in the small pool of blood at her feet. “Shit you’ve been hit!”

“I’ve had worse, and I think I might have scared up my back even more now” Emma said as Petite moved quickly to secure David’s M-16 from her.

“Petite go get me the first aid kit from your cruiser and meet me at my car” August said as he quickly scooped up Emma in his arms before she got too dizzy to stand.

“Regina is going to kill me” Swan said a few moments later after August had opened the passenger side door of his mustang and set her on the seat.
“She just might. Now where are you hit?” August asked taking the kit from Petite before moving to help Emma out of the vest. As he looked for visible injuries.

“Back and arms have cuts from when my windshield was shot out and I’m pretty sure I took one in my right thigh” Emma said and hissed as he felt around her black jeans covered thigh and noticed the gunshot.

“Looks to be a through and through but I’ll have the doctors assess you” August said quickly grabbing gauze, tape and pressure bandages and wrapping the wound.

“If I pass out, don’t let them put me under. I don’t do well under anesthesia, almost died on the table last time” Emma said with a breathy hiss as he finished wrapping her thigh and pulling it tight.

“Gotcha Swan no nighty night drugs for you. Petite secure the scene till your other brothers get here. Until I say so no one else is in this crime scene but our guys. Do I make myself clear?”

Maria wrapped her arm around Skye from behind as her mate leaned against one of the posts in the wrap around porch. Skye moved from the post and leaned back against Maria’s frame and as their hands locked over Skye’s stomach they both breathed a sigh of relief. It was an hour after a late dinner that had been small and quiet.

It had been an unspoken request to avoid talking shop at the dinner table as the four ladies had sat down to the simple meal that Lian had shown Maria and Skye how to cook. They had decided to stay the night while Lian got somethings in order for her to leave the farm to her two partners for an extended time since she had decided to come out retirement to help the Avengers and SHIELD with their problem.

Lian May was a wealth of knowledge of not only how to hunt down double agents but also how to track exactly who they worked for. Her future grandmother-in-law had earned her spurs catching double agents in the CIA during the height of the Cold War. She would be joining them at the FARM adding another adult to the security to help secure all the children now there but also so she could get to know her granddaughter better.

“Being a city kid it still blows me away everytime I see the night sky filled with so many stars” Skye said quietly, it was a whisper against the backdrop of all the nighttime noises that came with being in the countryside. It was quiet in the country in its own way from the city, there was still noise but it would stop almost instantly at any loud sound.
Maria kissed the top of her mate's head as she squeezed her arms, “I know, it surprises me as well. I'll have to take you camping in the Sierra Nevada’s there is this one campsite on a cliff about a day's hike in on a certain trail that overlooks a river valley. The sunset and then the nighttime sky is breathtaking.”

“Sounds amazing, and I bet there would be no one there to interrupt us” Skye said the last with a sigh of frustration as her StarkPad on the bench behind them beeped with a new priority data request. Maria reluctantly let her mate go but moved to join her as the signal went from the priority alert to a full on alarm.

“What the hell?” Skye said falling back onto the bench before letting out a growl of frustration and a spike of fear as another alarm dinged on her StarkPad.

“JARVIS CONNECT ME WITH THAT DAMN PIRATE NOW!” Skye yelled as she handed it to Maria. Pulling out her laptop Skye began typing away furiously on the keyboard as JARVIS connected the call. Skye’s shouted command to the AI drew Tasha and Lian outside towards the porch worry written on both women’s faces as they took in the clearly upset Skye.

“Pirate do you have any agents in Storeybrook, Maine?” Skye asked before Fury could say anything as the call connected and Maria swore because she knew from the look on Fury’s face it was something that he again had kept from her.

“What happened?” Fury asked.

“Some type of botched robbery on the bank by the local PCP dealer. Idiot opened fire on their main street with automatic weapons thankfully after everyone had closed up for the night. Currently the dealer and an accomplice are dead, two cops that pinged in the files that you dropped onto their server earlier flagged now as injured while my foster sister somehow was injured in the firefight as well. Why she is there instead of...oh shit that can’t be coincidence....” Skye said typing away again off screen.

“Skye what can’t be a coincidence?! And who is injured?” Fury asked and demanded of her attention.

“My foster sister is Emma Swan, she’s clean by the way so I don’t need to investigate her again the only thing that's loose in her background is the son she gave up for adoption...wait, well that explains why they hell she’s all the way there when she was heading to Boston last we heard from her.”
“Emma Swan is your sister? Don’t answer that of course she is, I had been given that name to research by Regina when I met up with her because she requested it and because of the case your parents are on” Fury said worry evident in his voice.

“Wait you mean Regina Manor is still alive?” Tasha asked her voice cold letting Fury know how pissed off she was at the moment once she saw the once believed to be dead agents picture on Skyes computer. “Who else?”

“Regina and Daniella made it out of the ambush alive with the two scientists. Daniella got them to safety to an old SSR base that was bought by the Carters and turned into a secret shelter for them if it was needed. She hit the distress beacon but by the time we arrived she had died from her wounds” Fury said with a sigh as he pinched the bridge of his nose.

“Wait if it was a Carter family shelter that means…” Tasha started but stopped when Fury gave her a nod to confirm her suspicions.

“Daniella Mills was a Carter. Jenny’s oldest daughter in fact. It damn near destroyed the family when we lost her. The files are now on the server. I was hoping to keep them out of this, Regina has two boys to think of now but with Amador making an appearance I couldn’t risk it. Regina knows something is going on but I don’t know if Eric Koenig has made his meet up down from Providence to get her the new tech I left for them. Who is injured?” Fury asked worry evident in his voice and Maria worried not for the first time if her friend was on his way to a stroke or heart attack with all the stress.

“Graham Humbert and David Nolan along with my sister have been rushed to the hospital. Humbert took one to the chest while Nolan took one to the leg. Emma took one to the thigh and has multiple lacerations to her back” Skye said finally looking up from her screen and Maria could still feel her mates undercurrent of worry for her sister.

“Wait stop. Go back, that’s your sister?” Tasha asked point to the picture of a blond woman.

“Yes, why?” Skye asked as her fingers continued to fly over her keyboard.

“Because Steve and I rescued her and her unit after they had been captured” Tasha said and wincing from something remembered.

“Then I need to thank both of you, since I know the full story. I just didn’t know it had been you and
Steve that rescued her and the guys” Skye said nodding to Tasha before her fingers started up again pulling up maps.

“Damn it I wish we had the QuinJet with us” Maria said doing the math in her head from the maps Skye had already pulled up for her on how long it would take them to drive there from where they were at.

“Don’t worry about that Maria, we got the emergency alert here at the FARM, the Tower and the HUB part of the backup protocols we now have in place. I’ve got Tony rounding up the Brits and your gear and will meet you with the QuinJet. He says he’ll redline it and be there in thirty minutes” Clint’s voice calmly as his video also dropped into the conference call. “Fury I’ve been told to tell you to expect an angry call from Izzy.”

“Duly noted, I’m expecting one already from Mel and Phil” Fury said with a sigh before looking towards Maria and Skye. “Keep me informed on any changes. Signs and countersigns are in the files. Approach with caution since Regina’s priority will be securing everyone as best as she can with the small amount of resources she has. The files of those that now call Storeybrook home are also on the server.”

Emma felt the last dregs of the adrenaline rush slowly fade as she kept glancing out of the room and towards the doors that led deeper into the hospital where the sheriff and his deputy had been rushed off to surgery from the ER just after she had arrived. They had want to rush her back to surgery but finally listened when she told them what happened the last time she was in surgery. Her injuries though serious wasn’t what almost ended her up in pine box, it had been the anesthesia and the doctor finally listened to her when she used the medical terminology she had been taught to use. Once they had agreed only local anesthetics they proceeded to get her patched back up after a scan showed that nothing vital had been hit. She had been lucky, it could have been much worse she knew but she knew the worst part was coming. Next was her back and her arms and she wasn’t looking forward to letting anyone seeing the damage done to her back as she let the nurse cut her out of her already destroyed shirt.

Emma had been working on the courage to tell Regina about the injury and the scars but hadn’t quite gotten there yet. Now she didn’t have a choice because she knew she would need help changing the bandages. The alternative that Regina wouldn’t want her after seeing it was her worst fear and she pushed the thought away.

Emma heard the doctor and nurse hiss at the sight of her back and knew it wasn’t from the multiple lacerations she had from the shot out glass of her windshield. It was guaranteed that they were hissing at the scars from the acid burns to her upper and mid back. Months later the burns had healed
but the scars remain like they always would.

“Miss Swan…” the Doctor started to ask but she interrupted them.

“Sgt Emma Swan, 5th Marines Military Police. The burns are a few months old from Acid” Emma said hoping they’d not ask to many questions. The official story was that they had been ambushed but held their own while getting back to safety. The real story involved her unit being captured in said ambush. After their captors had realized she was a woman they had tortured her using battery acid to try to get the guys in her unit talking. It had taken an elite unit from some secret organization to get them out and only because they happened to be after the same bomb maker.

Afterwards the unit was sent back stateside to heal since none of the guys had been without serious injury. She knew the higher ups were waiting till they healed up and got the all clear from the shrinks to put them back into training. When the boy had found her three weeks ago she had been itching to get back to her guys, not for the fighting but for the sense of family and doing something with her life. Now though after meeting her son Henry and his adoptive brother Alexi, not to mention her soulmate Regina she wasn’t sure anymore that she wanted to go back. During all these thoughts the doctor and nurse quickly stitched up what needed to be or bandaged the rest on her back and were soon done.

“Thanks Doc” she said as the nurse helped her up to sit back onto the bed and put on the hospital gown. Emma hoped someone could stop by her room at the B&B and bring her a change of clothes since everything was going to end up in the bio waste bags.

“No, thank you Ms. Swan. Now rest and I’ll be back in a few hours to see you” the doctors said before he and the nurse left her to rest.

Rest though was the last thing Emma was going to get because she knew she wouldn’t be able to till she heard word on Humbert and Nolan. Emma also knew that her being hurt would ping on Skye’s radar and she could expect a call from her foster sister any time now. Fidgeting with her phone she took a deep breath and let it out trying to figure out why she felt so on edge. It wasn’t the adrenaline from the fight that was long gone so she tried to use some of the exercises Dr. Hopper the town’s psychologist had given her just that evening before she had dinner with Regina and the boys.

She would call Regina and let her know what was happening but Deputy Booth said he would take care of that and bring her and the boys to see Emma. Emma wasn’t so sure on letting the boys or Regina see her like this but knew she couldn’t hide this from them either.

Commotion from the front of the ER though put the on edge feeling in perspective when she heard
Regina arguing with the nurses there. And though the soulbond was incomplete she realized she was already experiencing Regina’s emotions and Emma prayed that Regina hadn’t felt her getting injured. It was one of the fears she had about bonding with Regina, a civilian because she would be putting her mate through hell if they completed the bond.

Moments later she could hear the clack clack of her mates high heels on the hospital’s linoleum floor followed by other footsteps as her mate was brought towards her by the nurse that had helped the doctor patch her up moments before. Regina came into view with both Alexi and Henry following closely behind her as she moved quicker once she spotted Emma who just opened up her arms and waited as Regina, Henry and even Alexi ran into them.

“I’m alright, I promise” Emma whispered into Regina’s hair as she held her slightly smaller but older mate as her shoulders shook while both boys openly cried as she held them. “Hey guys, I promise I’m okay. I’ve had much worse than this being with the Marines.”

The on edge feeling slowly lowered as she held Regina in her arms but it didn’t fully go away from her mate and that worried her. Regina knew she was a Marine but she hadn’t told her mate about the many scrapes she had gotten herself in while overseas. Slowly the sniffles from the boys slowed and Alexi moved Henry over to the other bed in the small room. They both sat there, talking in whispers as they watched her as Emma continued to hold their mother in her arms.

Pressing a kiss to the top of Regina’s head, Emma saw that Deputy Booth was now more heavily armed with a double shoulder rig being hidden by his windbreaker on top of the service weapon peeking out from the side of his hip holster. Booth was fully on alert as he watched the nurses go about their duties and Emma knew someone in protection mode when she saw one. Mary Margaret, Henry’s teacher was sitting in one of the chairs next to another woman she recognized from the diner attached to the Bed and Breakfast she had been staying at.

Though the other woman now wore an EMT’s uniform that still had blood on it as she quietly talked to Mary Margaret. Both looked like they had been crying but while Mary Margaret looked like she was about to burst out in tears again at any moment, the other woman looked determined and even Emma could tell she was armed as well.

The unknown was a short but chubby man who smiled at her as Booth took a step back to let the man enter with a tray of drinks but what caught her was that he was armed as well. Not as well armed as Booth’s small arsenal but he moved about the room handing out drinks with a practiced ease and grace that reminded her of someone who had studied martial arts for a long time, even if his physique reminded her of someone that might have been behind a desk for too long.

Slowly Regina pulled back from her arms and Emma reluctantly let her go as they finally looked each other in the eyes. Emma saw Regina’s fear but a steely determination that made her wonder just
what the fuck was going on but before she could say anything her phone filled the room with The Offspings “The Kids Aren’t Alright” that was reserved for her foster siblings. Emma only needed one guess which sibling it was though and if she didn’t respond quickly enough Skye would make her life hell for it.

Regina looked to her the at the phone raising an eyebrow probably for her song choice but Emma really hadn’t told her much about the orphanage growing up or her foster siblings. The song was a perfect example of her childhood at St. Anne’s Orphanage in Hell’s Kitchen.

“That will be my foster sister Skye, she’s a hacker and my information hitting a hospital system flagged her response” Emma said as something she didn’t recognize flashed across their incomplete bond. Biting back a hiss as she reached over and grabbed her phone, worry spiked over the bond from Regina but she softly smiled to her mate to let her know she was okay. She knew she would need to explain more about Skye to Regina because knowing her sister if she was close enough she was about to have a visit from her anti-establishment hacker of a sister. It was from an unknown number but that didn’t surprise Emma. Skye was a hacker that she knew was probably on multiple watch lists, hacking her phone would be child’s play to Her sister.

‘Hello sister, even stateside you couldn’t stay out of trouble could you?’ Emma snorted when she read the message and looked towards Regina and saw that though it was the middle of the night her mate was like always impeccably dressed but there was something more to it this time. Regina her mate was armed...another ding from her phone drew her attention from her mate and wondering why she was armed.

The music began playing again and Emma was forced to open up her phone again since it locked up in the few moments staring at the mate. ‘By the look on your face you are realizing something is up and it is. Show the next message to Regina and she will know what to do’.

“What the fuck?” Emma said and looked again at everyone in the room and knew she wasn’t being told the full story if her hacker sister knew who Regina was and knew something was up. The music played again but she stopped it quickly as she read the next message.

‘Trust me, I’ll explain but give the phone to Regina first.’

‘Daniella. Activate Providence Three. Foxtrot Four with Seven. Activate ExodusTwo.’

‘Use new tech and I’ll establish the connection. Omega and Athena standing by.’
“Message is for you” Emma said trusting Skye and handing Regina her phone only to feel the anxiety and determination from Regina flash even stronger over their incomplete bond and Emma instantly responded with reassurance and love back. Regina looked up from the phone quickly and Emma’s suspicion there was more to Regina than met the eye flared up again.

“Booth, Koenig” Regina said letting both Booth and the unknown man see the phone. She watched as Booth's already tight shoulders tightened more making the EMT on the chair look at him with worried eyes. ‘Shit they must be a triad with Humbert’ she thought.

“I’ll go grab the gear and then we can leave to do the pick up” Koenig said with a smile and squeezed Booth’s shoulder as he took the keys Booth was already holding out for him. Koenig quickly and quietly left the room while Regina moved to show the phone to the EMT and the still crying Mary Margaret.

“Here take this” Booth said pulling out one of his 9mm from his shoulder holster along with a couple clips of ammo. Emma hadn’t noticed him as he moved towards her, all her focus on her mate who was now whispering to the EMT and Mary Margaret. At first she wanted to argue the point of needing a gun in a hospital but the look in the other man's eyes and the sense of almost overwhelming worry from Regina was enough to quiet her protests.

“Mom?” Alexi asked bringing everyone’s attention to the boys in the room. Alexi was still awake but Henry was curled up with his head in his brother’s lap sleeping.

“Providence Three. Exodus Two” Regina sighed looking at both boys as resignation crossed over the bond making Emma’s worry go up ten fold. She wanted answers but as Regina moved closer to hand her back her phone Emma pulled her mate into her arms and Regina immediately stiffened.

“I don’t know what is going on, but it will be alright. I’m not going anywhere. My family, my choice” Emma whispered and finally felt Regina let loose a shuddering breath as she relaxed fully into Emma’s arms.
Chapter 46

Mel heard her phone buzz and ding on the bedside table and threw out a hand to catch it as it fell off. Phil stirred behind her but he didn’t wake as his arm pulled her closer into his partially clothed body and she wished they had some more time but at the moment they were just catching a quick nap as Bobbi and Trip kept an eye on everything else. Unlocking her phone she saw that she had a new text from Skye with an attached file.

*Pirates latest data dump has someone in it you and Dad might want to reconnect with. We are inbound to the location now and will soon set up communications for the new base.*

_Love you._

_Your Girls_’

’Somewhere we might want to reconnect with and a new base?’ Mel thought as she opened up the file trusting Skye and Maria’s instincts. The file loaded onto her phone and Mel let out a soft gasp as she quickly sat up in bed, the movement and sudden uncontrolled spike in emotions waking up Phil beside her.

“What’s wrong? Nightmare?” Phil asked groggily next to her but quickly noticed her shaking hands holding her phone.

“Regina is alive, Fury faked her death and our daughter is on the way to her location with Maria” Mel finished just as the internal Comm system buzzed. “That will be either Bobbi or Trip with more information, apparently Fury dropped more files onto the server.”

“Damn Fury and his secrets. Are there anymore people he’s hiding?” Phil said getting up and Mel could tell her mate was feeling all sorts of emotions from when she told him about Regina but frustration mainly at their boss. “What about Daniella?”

“Skye and Maria only sent Regina’s file directly to me” Mel said getting up and moving behind Phil and wrapping her arms around his middle stopping him from getting dressed.

She had heard about Regina’s and Daniella’s deaths, even went to the funeral but didn’t realize till now how much it had affected Phil, she didn’t know until recently he had been the handler for the mission. Mel held him till he let out a shuddering breath and turned around in her arms burying his face in her hair as he silently cried. Moments passed but she stayed still he let out one more shuddering breath before straightening in her arms. Mel felt it as he brushed a kiss on her forehead
before stepping back when the internal comm system beeped again.

“On our way” Phil said before turning off the connection. “Thank you.”

“Always, I’m not going anywhere. Ready to find out what really happened and what’s now going on?” Mel asked as she quickly got dressed.

“I don’t know what is going on, but it will be alright. I’m not going anywhere. My family, my choice” Emma whispered into her ear and Regina had to fight down the urge to cry into her mates shoulder in relief. The secrets had been weighing her down since the night Henry and Alexi had brought Emma home and she had been scared Emma would runaway and leave once she found out. Instead of leaving though, Emma had reaffirmed with words and the feelings across their incomplete bond that they were a unit, and no matter what they would get through it together.

Regina let Emma hold her for a few more moments, Emma was injured but she was here and safe and Regina took comfort in her mates steady presence. Reluctantly she pulled away when Koenig came back into the room carrying a duffle that he handed over to her. “Here is everything. We’ll connect in the truck to at least listen in.”

“Understood, you two watch your six” Regina answered putting the duffle on the bed.

“Understood Boss” August said giving Ruby a kiss before turning to Emma. “Take care of them.”

“Without question” Emma said giving Regina a soft smile as the two men finally walked out the door.

“Ruby can you and Mary Margaret go and see if there is an update on David and Graham? They are going to ask and I’d like to have an answer for Fury and Hill. I’m going to get this all powered up and organized” Regina said unzipping the bag and looking inside to see tablets for everyone as well as phones and all the accessories to go with.

“Need any help?” Emma said pulling Regina out of her mental inventory of everything in the duffle. They had enough to give everyone one of everything including all the protective cases to put over the electronics.
“Yes, take this” Regina said handing Emma an already booting up StarkPad as she started pulling out everything else with Alexi’s help as Henry continued to sleep on the other bed in the room. Regina smiled softly at Henry while bumping shoulders with Alexi. Her boys were amazing children that were turning into even more amazing young men, she just hoped they didn’t have to grow up so fast. That hope though she had a sad feeling was going to be hard to keep if what Fury hinted at was true. Ringing from the now booted up StarkPad pulled her away as Alexi continued to work, she knew her oldest was worried about what might happen next and he needed something to distract him.

“Skye!” Emma said happiness in her voice and Regina could tell it was a genuine emotion from the feelings she was getting across their incomplete bond. The feeling of happiness coming from Emma she would take any day over the feeling of barely restrained fear and pain she had felt earlier that night coming from Emma. Of course if she was admitting anything to herself she’d rather have the barely controlled desire she had felt Emma and herself were fighting even earlier that night on the couch.

“Hey Sis, Natasha is just finishing getting us airborne. We are inbound for Foxtrot Four ETA...” a voice said and Regina moved towards the side of Emma’s hospital bed. The dark haired woman on the screen was a few years younger than Emma but she sat in what would traditionally be the navigators seat since her back was to the cockpit window just behind the co-pilot’s seat. “Natasha just gave the signed for 30 minutes and that we are red lining the engines.”

“You all don’t need to redline the engines...” Regina started but was interrupted.

“Oh yes we do Regina,” said a woman that slid back the co-pilot chair and maneuvered it to sit next to the first woman. It took her a moment but she realized just who was speaking to her, Maria Hill was the Deputy Director of an organization that thought Regina long dead and buried. And with that realization she realized the time for hiding with her family was over with, in one shape or form, her life was about to be changed again drastically.

“And just why is that Deputy Director Hill?” Regina asked trying to figure out what was going on.

“It’s Maria to you since these two are foster siblings, which makes them family in every way that counts in my book. And since this beautiful menace next to me is my mate that makes you family since Emma is yours” Hill finished with a soft smile towards her mate that placed her head on Maria’s shoulder.

“Beautiful menace that’s a new one for you” Emma said with a laugh and Regina could feel her mates genuine happiness before it disappeared when the Emma from earlier in the night emerged across the bond. This Emma was determined and though Regina could feel her fear it was under a tight control, this Emma was a warrior and in charge in every sense of the word. “What the heck is
“Sgt Emma Swan, United States Marine Corp meet my mate Commander Maria Hill, Deputy Director of SHIELD and former Captain United States Marine Corp as well. As to how your anti establishment hacker of sister drank the kool-aid….Well I went looking for my parents, found them and so much more but that’s a story for when we are in person” Skye said before smirking. “By the way welcome to the family Regina; it’s large, loud and it will never be a dull moment.”

“As I’ve said, family reunions now have the potential of becoming international incidents” Fury said joining the call with a snort.

“Oh hush Nick you worry too much” Maria said surprising Regina when she realized she was serious and teasing all in the same breath. “Anyways Tony is flying escort and says he will need a space to check our engines once we land.”

“Copy that, Koenig says he will fly with Stark to take the Quinjet up to Providence while I drive you all back to town” August voice said with audio only.

“Good then have Koenig lock it down and then drive down with the second truck” Regina said looking towards Emma who gave her a small smile and something in her mates eyes had her heart rate going faster as she realized it was lust.

“Emma I suggest you read Regina into exactly what you do. You have permission isn’t that right Colonel Tesla?” Skye said causing both Regina and Emma’s heads to turn back to the conference call in time to see Fury nod the affirmation. Regina watched as Emma face filled with shock when she recognized the alias of the man in the conference call.

“Permission granted and that extends also to you Regina. No more secrets, not between family and especially between mates. The Avengers don’t work that way, am I right Maria?” Fury said as he leaned back in his chair.

“That’s right Nick, glad to see you’re learning. Regina we will talk when we arrive” Maria said with a smirk before cutting the connection.

“Did she just say Avengers? As in battle for New York against aliens Avengers?” Emma asked eyes wide and Regina couldn’t help but laugh at her mates shock or maybe it was her own. She knew joining SHIELD it was going to be an interesting ride, but something was telling her the ride was...
only just beginning.

Fitz winced again as he kept absentmindedly scratching at the cut on his forehead, he had been trying to rest but he was coming to the conclusion it was a lost cause. He didn’t believe he needed stitches and had argued the point with Jemma until his sister had video conferenced his mates into the discussion. ‘Bloody stitches’ he thought finally getting up and getting dressed to go to the lab. Fitz sighed as he felt his mates love come back across the bond trying to soothe away his irritation and felt bad because chances were he had woken them up.

Walking past the command center he saw Trip talking to Coulson and May discussing something about the case and what looked like a recreation. ‘Probably of the ambush that supposedly killed Amador’ Fitz thought as he spotted Amador’s photo on one of the screens along with the other agents who had died but it was the photo of Amador that he glared at before storming past and down the stairs to get to his lab. He sighed walking in finding the lab was empty he loved Jemma but with his irritation at his inability to sleep he’d most likely be an ass and make her cry, which was the last thing he wanted to do.

Of course he was on edge from more than the stitches or the lack of sleep because he saw a certain set of results from Jemma’s bloodwork that she quickly deleted off the server. Jemma had quietly told him not to say anything that she wanted to tell her mates together first in person if it could be arranged. Knowing the results and thinking of Tori being in Jemma’s position from earlier today was enough to make Fitz angry as hell and he couldn’t tell anyone why other than being irritated with the stitches, which he was, but still priorities!

Pulling up the Amador file and the schematics on the eye and the drone known as Snow White he frowned. Fitz knew the programming was solid on Skye’s end it was the hardware that they need to improve on. The problem was he didn’t have anything close to being strong enough, let alone small enough to fit on Snow White in his cache of electronics. Maybe if he had access to a SHIELD base he could cobble something together up from a bunch of spare parts but they were constantly on the move. He didn’t know when they would go to a SHIELD base anytime soon so he could go shopping for parts, let alone have Jemma tell Hunter and Bobbi in person her news.

Letting out another frustrated sigh he banged his head on the table forgetting about the stitches and yelped from the pain. Breathing slowly he tried to push past his anger and fear as well as a good amount of pain to try to think clearly. He needed to think and not let his emotions control him like they were ever since the battle in England though Monty said he could also be experiencing mood swings since Tori was pregnant. His StarkPad next to him started ringing and he groaned as he answered “Yes?”

“Is that any way to greet your mates?” Izzy said making him turn his head still against the table towards his tablet. “Come on Curly talk to us, what’s got you so bothered?”
Fitz took a deep breath and then sighed as he sat up in his chair and scrubbed at his face before looking over towards his mates who were in bed cuddled up. God he wished he could be there right now when they first met it had always been him in the middle but ever since the battle and finding out about Tori being pregnant they had felt the need to put her between Izzy and himself. Right now he just wanted to be just like that because he was afraid something was going to happen, their lives including their unborn child’s life was not guaranteed and that scared him.

With that thought it also made him think of Jemma again and he felt almost the same level of protectiveness he now felt towards Tori come over him for his sister and her unborn child. He was the oldest twin by a few minutes which made him her big brother and his protective instincts were almost screaming at him to get her to somewhere safe but he had promised and he couldn’t break that.

“We can’t help you Curly if you don’t talk to us” Tori said her voice soft as she lay against Izzy’s chest. Fitz watched as Izzy ran fingers through Tori’s hair and let out one last huff.

“I’m sorry if I woke you two, I can’t sleep after earlier and…” Fitz let out another frustrated sigh as he scrubbed his face trying to push back his tears of fear and frustration at everything in that moment.

“It’s okay to be scared and frustrated Curly, if you weren’t a little bit scared from earlier I’d be more worried. You’re not field trained, everyone is working hard to rectify that but you were caught unawares. It happens from time to time even once you’re as seasoned as Tori and I” Izzy said giving him a small smile while her and Tori pushed love and understanding through their bond. “It’s okay to let yourself feel what you are feeling now that you are in safe place to do it.”

With that simple statement, Fitz lost the battle with keeping his emotions bottled up and cried their in the lab with his mates watching on. He felt their need to comfort him in every way but they could only send their love and acceptance through the bond wrapping him up. After a few minutes he let out a small laugh as he wiped his eyes of his last tears. “Thank you.”

“Anytime Curly, doesn’t matter the time call us. Or talk to your team heck even call your dad..” Izzy said but stopped when she must have felt his emotions spike when he realized he had been so stupid for not thinking of his Dad when he was trying to figure out his hardware problem.

“I’m so stupid, why didn’t I think about Dad when trying to figure my hardware problem! I love you so much but I gotta call Dad!” he said blowing a kiss at the screen feeling his mates amusement as he hung up only to start calling his Dad.
Skye held Maria’s hand as they followed behind the newly met August Booth who was walking beside Natasha as they made their way to the upper floors of the small hospital. They had gotten word that Emma had been moved to a more permanent room for at least a day or two and that David Nolan was soon leaving Post-Op to join her in the room. Graham Humbert on the other hand was just about done in surgery and would be moved to the room next door probably sometime in the morning.

It would just be the three of them at first visiting the hospital but Kate was already on the roof providing overwatch as Wade and Nixon stayed in the truck to provide support if needed. Kate had been the one to read that August, Graham and Ruby were a triad and Maria had decided that their team would provide security while August and Ruby helped Graham with his healing. Kate was in charge and reported directly to Maria and Natasha.

Thankfully Wade’s constant chatter was cut off by putting the triad in their own Comm net that could be dropped into the local emergency channel if needed. Skye also knew her grandmother went to the base with Koenig and Tony to see what type of setup everyone would have once there. Providence was a base they only had a name for but no schematics or inventory so her and Tony would check it out and report back.

It has been momentarily amusing to see not only Koenig but Booth as well recognize her grandmother as they almost fell over themselves to greet her. Then the realization that she didn’t just have her parent’s legacy to live up to but also her grandmother’s legacy and had serious doubts if she could live up to it. Reassurance and love had come across the bond as Maria had given her a gentle smile pulling her away from her self doubt.

“It will be okay” Maria said as she gave her hand a squeeze pulling Skye out of her thoughts again just like she had done when they first arrived in Storeybrook.

“You know this will be a change, usually it’s you two in the hospital bed” Natasha said from in front of them looking back as she walked.

“I wish it was no one in a hospital bed,” Skye said but held up a hand stopping Natasha from speaking. “But I know with our lives and what we do that’s not going to be possible.”

“Maybe one day, but not anytime soon” Maria said giving her hand a squeeze again as they turned a corner and realized that David Nolan was just now being transferred into the room.

“They’re going to be a few minutes so I’ll go get another round of coffee for everyone and be right back” August said as he turned around and walked towards the cafeteria and Natasha quickly joined
him after a nod from Maria. They were using the buddy system till they could determine if the bank had been a calculated ambush against their newest members or if it had just been a case of the normal risks of police officers walking into a crime in progress.

Skye spotted Regina being bracketed by two boys. The oldest had to be Alexi, the son of the defected scientist who had died in childbirth. While the youngest had to be Henry, the son Emma had given up for adoption. Skye saw the resemblance to Emma but also realized how eerily similar both boys even looked even to each other. Something about the boys seemed familiar Alexi more so than Henry. The similarity was tickling something in her mind she couldn’t quite recall.

“Quarter for your thoughts?” Maria asked pulling her out of her thoughts.

“Overpaying for them again and I don’t know something seems familiar about both boys but I can’t put my finger on it. I think it’s just my gift going haywire again or maybe it’s my tired mind” Skye said shaking her head and squeezing Maria’s hand as they were spotted by Alexi who pointed them out to Regina. Skye knew Maria wasn’t fully happy with the explanation but would drop it for now till they were able to discuss it in private.

“Regina it’s good to finally meet you, even if I wish it was under different circumstances” Maria said with a smile on her face and Skye could tell Maria was genuinely happy to see the woman alive. Even though it had been before her time Maria had heard stories of the woman before them, that and her mate knew how much this meant for their parents.

“Hello future sister in law and nephews!” Skye said making the boys smirk and Regina blush as she took in the newest additions to her ever growing family. Emma, Matt, Maya and her had all been orphans and never adopted but now they had such a large amazing extended family. Skye felt Maria’s hand squeeze her own and the sense of happiness was shared between the two of them across the bond.

“It’s good to meet you two as well” Regina said as one of the nurses indicated that they could head back into the room. Skye made a beeline for Emma’s bed that was closest to the window that had a large built in shelf like table underneath it. The other bed held a still sleeping David Nolan with his mate curled up in it with him, one of her hands just over his heart.

Emma opened her arms and Skye quickly ran over to hug her sister before pulling back to look her over for any other undocumented injury much to Emma’s amusement as she said “I’m alright sis, you know I’ve had worse.”

“Doesn’t make me worry less, I know you heal easily..but that still doesn’t mean I don’t worry”
Skye knew that Emma didn’t pick up on the pause or at least she didn’t pick up on any signs of Emma noticing it. Maria though did pick up on it. The spike of emotion when she said it would have given it away and she felt Maria’s silent questioning across the bond. Emma’s healing wasn’t on the level of Steve’s, Natasha’s or her own healing factor but it was still unnaturally fast. It wasn’t fast enough to get her on anyone's radar but Skye knew that something that would take a week to heal was usually fine within a few days for Emma.

“I know but I’m okay. Now answer my questions, when did you start carrying a gun, do you even know how to use it and you said you found your parents?” Emma asked in rapid fire mode as Skye took a step back to let Regina claim the seat next to Emma’s bed while the boys perched themselves next to the window. Skye used the distance between herself and her sister to give herself a moment to think. Looking around her eyes settled again on the boys and something clicked as the pieces fell in place and she felt her gift that had only been getting stronger since Hyde’s experiments take over.

“Skye?” she heard Emma ask worry in her voice as Skye swung around her backpack and used the table to pull out her tablet and jump into the Avenger personnel folders.

“Hold on a moment Emma it seems your sister is about to go down a rabbit hole..” Skye heard Maria say to Emma using their codeword to use when Skye’s gift was going nuts as kids, Maria had decided to use the same codeword for when it even happened now.

“I’ve never seen it shut her down like that” Emma said but stopped when Maria started to speak again.

“I know but a lots happened since you two last talked. Dr. Hyde got a hold of her and experimented on her and we’ve been wading through the changes as they come. Breathe love think through the problem” Maria said as a pair of strong arms circled around her waist pulling her in and calming her thoughts. Skye could hear someone gasp and her money was on Regina to recognize the scientists name but she barely registered it as she finally found the first something she was looking for.

Skye felt Maria’s questioning curiosity when Nicolai’s picture came up on her screen and then her mate followed down the rabbit hole as understanding came across the bond as Skye shifted through photos of him growing up. Then Skye pulled up Natasha’s file including photos with different hair colors and styles and felt Maria stiffen behind her but it only lasted a moment as she the tapped the file to bring up the genetic information section of the files.

“Run it, full press” Maria said before a kiss was placed to her temple. Skye’s fingers flew over the tablet and put JARVIS on the comparisons. Skye let out a shuddering breath as the urge from her heightened gift eased as she sagged against Maria. Strong arms held her up as she watched the progress of the scans she was running.
Tony yelped as he hit his head on the underside of the desk of the main terminal for Providence’s communication network. The base needed an upgrade but he was already making mental lists of what was needed to get it upgraded to the Avenger base specs. Ignoring mental lists though he pulled out his earpiece for his phone and answers the call from Fitz.

“Hey kiddo or is it kiddos? Anyways what’s up” he asked booting up the terminal and hoping his jerry rigged set up would work till he could get the new systems here.

“It’s just me Dad, I need your help with a hardware problem” Fitz said and Tony felt something he didn’t quite understand when Fitz said he needed him but made another mental note to discuss it with Pepper and Bruce when he saw them later.

“Swing away kiddo. What do you need? I’m guessing it will be for Snow White?” Tony asked as he silently did a happy dance as the main terminal booted up and JARVIS automatically began setting everything up all while bringing up the image of Fitz in the lab on the Bus.

“Yes I need stronger sensors but nothing on the Bus is small or strong enough for what I need. That and Snow White doesn’t have a long range of travel” Fitz said and Tony pulled up the schematics again and had to agree with his son. They could probably fabricate something but that would take time and right now Fitz and Jemma’s teams were flying blind.

“Problem is even I don’t have anything that strong that is that miniaturized. We can make something no problem but it will take time” Tony said saw as Fitz frowned.

“We don’t have time Dad, we need something we can use to capture the signal from Amador’s eye so we can track her down” Fitz said giving a frustrated huff and Tony was shocked to realized that even though he had just found out about Fitz, his son had the same irritated huff as he did. ‘Must be a Stark thing, even if I never saw my father doing it’ Tony thought as he tried to work through the problem.

“What if I lend you the suit I had used to test Skye’s program to use as a drone. I can send it to you to either be controlled by you or JARVIS can control it and report his finding to you. Either way it’s not a fix but it’s at least a band-aid for us till we can get a sensor small enough for Snow White. Though it might need to be something else we design for long time use” Tony said already typing up the orders into JARVIS’s systems to launch the suit to Fitz’s location.

“Thanks Dad” his son said with a smile on his face as Tony watched his shoulders finally begin to
“Anytime kiddo, now why don’t you help me with the design on the new sensors..” Tony began as he pulled up what he half assed threw together after he had talked to Skye and knew between the two of them they could make it a hundred times better.

Natasha carried a box full of assorted pastries, snacks, fruit, water and juices while August carried two trays of coffees next to her trying not to spill. When they had arrived at the cafeteria they both started laughing when August’s stomach made its protesting presence known. Though he was laughing August looked sheepish when most of the cafeteria staff had turned towards him from the sound.

‘What would Laura do?’ Natasha thought of the small group here that had to be under an insane amount of stress with three of their own injured and in the hospital. Automatically Natasha knew what Laura would do she would start cooking to get everyone fed and watered. Natasha knew she couldn’t cook, but she could buy a bunch of snacks and drinks for now till things in the town opened up in the morning. Then they could do a food run once they decided what was going on and how long they were staying.

A request for a box was met with some surprise but soon she had loaded up the box with things for everyone to pick from and had told August to not only get coffee, but some juices, sodas and water for everyone to pick from as well. At first August had protested but Natasha had quietly told him not to worry about it, that the Avengers took care of their own and he and his mates were now a part of that as well. Anyways the cost of the cafeteria trip with be a insignificant blip on the shared Avengers accounts that were maintained by Tony and Pepper. Natasha could almost hear Pepper and Tony saying that this is what the accounts were set up for in the first place. After the battle of New York, Pepper had been quick to get all the rights to the Avengers merchandising and had used it not only to supply the Avengers but to donate massive amounts of money to the clean up of New York.

Turning the corner they found the hallway empty other than a brunette female who was casually leaning in the doorway keeping watch. ‘That must be Ruby’ Natasha thought and her suspicion was confirmed when the woman smiled upon seeing August. The smile didn’t fully reach her eyes but Natasha couldn’t blame her when their third was injured and they weren’t allowed near till he was moved into the room next door.

“Think you have enough?” Ruby teased as she moved to take one of the trays of drinks from August.

“Maybe but I figured the extra wont go to waste with two growing boys and don’t let Skye fool you she can pack it away as well” Natasha said teasing her niece as she walked into the room. The
custom ding for a high priority alert from Skye’s StarkPad and then a gasp from both Skye and Maria had her on edge as she watched the two for signs of what type of alert had just came in.

Natasha wasn’t sure if it because she went on alert but she focused on the boys that were sitting next to them on a bench like table that was against the far wall. Her mind and body went numb as her mind raced along the connections she was making. The similarities could be coincidence but looking closer at Alexi and then over to Henry then to the woman who had to be Emma, Natasha’s mind couldn’t let it go.

The young boy Alexi quickly scrambled to pick up the dropped box not realizing he was the reason Natasha had dropped it in the first place and she watched him with wide eyes. She could feel her phone vibrating in her jean pocket but her eyes kept darting back and forth between Alexi and Emma and then finally landed on the other boy Henry.

The one time she had met Emma before she had been in bad shape and Natasha had been more worried about getting the young Marine to a hospital fast then to look at the woman she had saved closely. Even then she doubted she’d see the familiar bone structure unless she was in the presences of the two younger boys. Either way something deep down inside of her was telling her she was right.

“Тетушка?” Maria and Skye asked at the same time as they moved away from the boys and towards her. Their voices pulling Natasha out of her shock enough to start doubting herself but something told her deep down she was right. She wasn’t jumping at shadows, she wasn’t just seeing connections where there wasn’t any to be made.

“What are the chances that I would find a brother then possibly more siblings later the same week? Before I’d say impossible but with Skye impossible is being turned on its head. Look at all the new mates and familial connections being made..’ Natasha thought glancing briefly towards Skye and Maria but her eyes went back towards Emma and the boys.

“Nicolai” Natasha said softly to the room and looks of confusion were on everyone’s faces, everyone but Maria and Skye. She knew the other two understood what she was saying as Skye moved closer to her as Maria’s phone started ringing with the tone she knew was for either her or Clint when they called.

“That will be Clint. Natasha sit. Skye show her” Maria ordered as she unlocked her phone and stepped outside of the room already trying to calm Clint and Laura.

“Drink Тетушка” Skye said putting an already opened water bottle in her hand and Natasha realized
she had somehow found herself in one of the chairs sitting.

“My gift had already made the connection and JARVIS finished running the scan as you walked in” Skye said as Natasha fought past her emotions to stay calm as she drank the water Skye had given her. Natasha felt it as Clint and Laura pushed love and acceptance across the bond and she closed her eyes as she let those feelings became her own.

She heard Maria walk back into the room and felt the hand on her shoulder as Maria showed her support. Natasha had always wanted a family to call her own, the Red Room had stolen that all away years ago with their graduation ceremony. Fate though apparently had other plans.

“Everything okay?” Emma asked from her bed and was thankful when Regina placed a hand over Emma’s hands in her lap. Alexi has already moved over to table that was along the wall that had the only window. With Henry, August and Ruby’s help they were starting to pull everything out of the box. While Mary Margaret was curled up with David on his bed one of her hands resting just above his heart.

Emma knew that the woman traveling to the hospital with Skye and her mate was an old coworker of Regina. Old coworker when her mate had been some type of field agent in a clandestine paramilitary spy organization. Now that Emma knew a bit about her mates past it explained certain things she had picked up on that had given her pause. Though old coworker of Regina’s didn’t explain the redheads behavior. She wasn’t shocked to see Regina she was shocked to see Emma.

It took a moment but then it clicked where she had seen the woman before. Months ago when she was being tortured the woman had been on the team that rescued her and her unit from certain painful death. Shock flooded her and she felt Regina’s worry come across the bond as she squeezed Emma’s hand trying to reassure her. Emma took a deep breath and looked for something blue, finding something blue she then counted the electrical outlets in the room. After that it was another breath released that she was able to push the flashback away.

“Emma?” Regina asked but Emma didn’t look away from the redhead who was now watching her intently.

“You were on the team that pulled my units bacon out of the fire late last year” Emma said confident that had to be the reason the woman was shocked to see her but then she remembered she had been just as shocked to see Alexi and Henry.

“Yes and I’m glad Steve and I got there in time. Steve will be glad to hear you survived, we were
never told either way about your unit but I already knew that it was you before we got on the jet to get here. That wasn’t the reason behind my reaction though...” the woman said pausing as if she was either trying to screw up her courage or decide what to say next. Something inside Emma though thought it was a little bit of both.

“I was born Natalia Alianovna Romanova in the former Soviet bloc but you can call me Natasha. I grew up much like you and Skye in that I never knew who my parents were. I was born to be a weapon and tool for Mother Russia, that was my sole purpose and I was raised accordingly. After escaping as an adult and pushing against everything I was told, I started to search any records I could get my hand on trying to find any family I might have. After years of digging I came to the conclusion on who my father was and even met the man....” Natasha said shaking her head at the last bit as if to clear away a painful memory but soon she stood and walked towards the bed and held out the StarkPad she had been gripping moments before.

“The man has distinct characteristics that seemed to have been passed down to all of his children. Characteristics that you, Henry and even Alexi share” Natasha said but Emma barely heard it as she saw the results flashing in her hands. A gasp was heard from Regina beside her but Emma quickly looked up to the woman who was her sister and saw unshed tears in her eyes.

“You’re my sister?” Emma asked truly wanting to believe it but didn’t dare to begin to. It had been her wish always to find her parents, instead she had aged out of the system and even Skye’s skills couldn’t do much to find a non existent trail. In the end she believed that it was the family you make that mattered and she loved Skye, Matt and Maya like they were her real siblings.

“Half sister and Alexi’s full sister but there is one more of us. Nicolai is your twin, the match is too close to be anything else and he will be ecstatic to meet you” Natasha said as she reached out a hand to Emma but hesitated. Emma though unsure knew Natasha had to be unsure as she was as well and reached out with one of her hands and pulled Natasha into a hug.

“We figured out the sensor strength issue” Fitz said knocking to the door of the command center. The young engineer looked beyond exhausted standing there and Phil sighed because he didn’t doubt he was going to get an angry call from either Tori and Izzy. Phil had no idea the engineer was even up already after being sent to rest in his bunk after Simmons had given him stitches. He glanced towards Tripp with a raised eyebrow but the specialist shrugged as if he didn’t know Fitz had been awake and working despite being ordered by his sister to sleep.

“You were suppose to be resting Fitz” Phil said gently not trying to hurt the engineers feelings but the young man just shrugged.

“Couldn’t sleep, so talked to Izzy and Tori till they mentioned Dad and then called him. I’ll sleep
after this but Dad is sending us one of his old suits I can control it or JARVIS can run it but it will be our drone for the time being” Fitz said with a shrug and a yawn making Phil happy he just might get away without hearing from an angry Tori and Izzy if he could get their mate back to his bunk and to bed.

“Come on Fitz, bedtime for you” Mel said probably thinking along the same train of thought as he was. His mate was already herding out Fitz when the young man stopped and turned around.

“One more thing, we think we can hijack the signal if Skye is able to help us, then possibly we can remove the bad eye before replacing it with something that Dad is already designing with Dr. Cho” Fitz yawned again this time his jaw audibly popped as he swayed. Phil watched as Mel moved quickly and got Fitz’s arm around her shoulder before lifting him bridal style as he fell asleep standing.

“Contact JARVIS and get us an eta on that suit” Phil ordered Trip as he waved the specialist back to his seat. Phil moved quickly as the Command Center door opened for them and he moved to get the door to Fitz’s bunk open for his mate. Stepping inside Fitz’s bunk he quickly pulled down the covers and moved to the side as his wife laid down the passed out engineer on his bunk and began stripping him of his shoes. Phil moved out of the bunk just as Mel covered up Fitz and gave the young man a kiss on his forehead before closing the door.

“Not a word” Mel said passing him and Phil mimicked zipping his lips shut making his wife laugh softly as she kissed him hard as she pulled on his tie to bring him closer. Phil blinked for a moment after the kiss ended and watched as his wife put a bit of sway in her hips heading to the cockpit.

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