Fight Song

by JadelynTate

Summary

Darcy, Charm, and Pietro get some help--and some surprises--as they go looking for the only person they know of to have the 'Chair of Agony, zero stars, would not do again' experience.

Second in the series, you NEED to read Fallen Angel before you read this or you will be very very lost!

Notes

So...I was spoiled for a few things for Antman. That will eventually play into this but I'm gonna tell you now, this is gonna be more of a bridge story than anything else and will PROBABLY not have any spoilers for the movie. I'm warning for it just in case. I know Spidey's officially coming but I'm ignoring that to go with Andrew Garfield's Spidey. So tie-ins for Amazing Spiderman 1 & 2. Also, after this everything will be very very AU as I'm sure Civil War will screw everything up. :)

BTW, some have already found me I think, but I have a tumblr. You can find me here.
Mostly its fandom reblogs but I do occasionally post stuff from fics, including this one. On a side note, how badly will you all kill me if I tell you Pietro's theme song for this fic seems to have become "Bleeding Out" by Imagine Dragons?
Prologue

The Playground

“Coulson.”

Phil Coulson blinked several times as the voice on the other end of the line registered. “You have very interesting timing, you know that?”

“So I’ve been told. I’m calling for a reason.”

“I figured as much. What do you need, sir?”

“It’s not what I need, this time. It’s what you need to know.”

“And what might that be, sir?”

“You’re being hunted.”

“Not a lot new there. They’ll have to join the line. Who is it?”

“Someone who knows you…and who knows the Avengers. Darcy Lewis.”

“…Jane Foster’s intern?”

“The very same. Phil…let yourself be caught.”

“Sir?”

“You want to talk to her.”

“…Are you ever going to just give me a straight answer?”

“Now where would be the fun in that?”
Like a small boat on the ocean

Chapter Summary

In which Darcy and Charm make a new...can you really call someone a friend when they're spying on you?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“This is my fight song
Take back my life song
Prove I'm alright song
My power's turned on
Starting right now I'll be strong
I'll play my fight song
And I don't really care if nobody else believes
'Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me”

San Francisco, California

"Who’s strong and brave, here to save the American Way? Who vows to fight like a man for what’s right night --"

“Question,” Steve asked the moment she answered her phone. “I was a soldier for years, right?”

“Yeeeeeess...,” she drawled out, brow furrowing in confusion. “Technically, you might still be a soldier. Were you ever officially discharged?”

“Right,” Steve said, ignoring the question. “So tell me, why do I have to keep assuring people I know what I’m doing?”

Darcy laughed, all confusion suddenly gone. “I take it Fury’s driving you nuts again?”

“Again?” Steve grumbled. “He never stopped.”

Across the pool, she could just make out Pietro looking up at her laughter, brow furrowed when he saw the phone. Unfortunately, the little boy he’d been having his water war with took the opportunity to hit him square in the face with another shot of the water-gun. The boy’s sister, who Pietro had gone to help when it was clear she was outmatched by her elder sibling, retaliated by lobbing a water balloon at her brother’s head. Darcy caught the eye of the kids’ mother and they shared an exasperated grin when Pietro yelled something unintelligible and proceeded to dunk the kid while his sister giggled from the safety of the ladder. It was a good thing they’d already spent the better part of the last week getting to know the family; otherwise, she didn’t think the whole thing would have gone as well as it had. As it was, she and Charm were 98% sure the dad was applying to the local Avenger Response office that had just been opened. She’d sent an email to Hill telling the woman he was good people. She hadn’t heard back yet on whether their hunch was right.
She listened absently as Steve ranted about the latest fracas he and Fury had had about the team, typing in the laptop Stark had sent her a week into their hunt. It was connected to JARVIS 2.0, now called EDWIN because JARVIS had pretty much ceased to exist when Vision had been created. Tony had decided to quote, “let the old guy rest in peace and have his son take over.”

Tony had subsequently hung up on her when she’d then asked if that meant EDWIN called him Grandpa.

“…Anyway, that’s my issues at the moment,” Steve finally wound down; she hadn’t heard a single word he’d said but a quick check with Charm assured her at least one of them knew what he’d been complaining about. “What about you? How’s everything going?”

“Well, Alcatraz was a bust so we’re planning our next step,” she answered and then paused. “And when I say we, I mean Charm and I. Pietro is currently waging war with a six year old.”

“Am I going to have to call PR?” he asked, amusement lacing his voice. “Or Wanda?”

“No,” she assured him, glancing up to find the girl had finally left the safety of the ladder and had turned on Pietro—he was flailing in place as he was attacked both below and above water. She snorted as he lost his balance and fell over, taking the girl with him. “Trini and Oliver are a couple kids staying at the motel with their mom while their dad does a week long job interview. We’re at the pool. Hold on.” She quickly took a picture of the kids hanging off Pietro as they tried to tip him over again. Her timing was especially good this time, as she managed to catch him mid bellow. She quickly sent it to Steve and then put the phone back to her ear. “As you can see, Pietro is losing. Badly.”

The other end was silent for several minutes before Steve must have finally seen the photo. He started snickering. “I’m going to forward this to Wanda and Barton,” he said and Darcy laughed.

“Tell them there’s more where that came from,” she said. “Seriously, the amount of blackmail this trip has given me is amazing.”

**That is not why we’re here, you know,** Charm said mildly as Steve told her much of the same over the phone.

“Well, no, I know that,” she answered. “But it’s a perk!”

“What’s a perk?” Pietro asked, plopping down on the chair next to her and sending chlorine water droplets everywhere. Looking across the pool, she saw Jason bending down to kiss his wife as both his kids tried tackling him. She smiled before realizing she had two different people waiting for answers (three if you counted Charm but since she was in her head already…)

“Nothing,” she answered with an innocent smile at her boyfriend. His eyes narrowed, obviously unconvinced, and she turned back to the phone. “Steve, anything else you wanted to talk to me about? I think Pietro and I are going to dinner…once he takes a shower. I do not like the smell of chlorine.”

“Nothing to report from this end,” he said and he was full of amusement again. “Let me know when you decide what to do now though, okay?”

“Yes sir, mon capitan!” she said, sending a sloppy salute into the air even though he couldn’t see her. They said their goodbyes and Darcy stuffed her phone back into her purse. Across the pool, the family was packing up and she turned to Pietro to find him watching them with a wistful look on his face.
“Hey, I wasn’t kidding about the shower,” she told him and he turned back to her, eyes still a bit muddled from his thoughts. “As much as I like the view, I do **not** like the smell.”

“But you like the view,” he repeated with a smirk. She rolled her eyes and quickly packed up the laptop.

And if she and Charm were secretly sneaking glances at the water droplets falling down well-defined abs and a lean, runner’s build, well, no one but them had to know.

~~*~~

Darcy dropped off the laptop and her work and headed down to the bar ahead of Pietro. He promised to get the smell off and then join her before they decided on where to eat out this time. “Bar for two?” she asked the hostess when she got there. The woman glanced behind her and she smirked. “He’s on his way.”

The woman flushed but stuttered out that they would have a table in about ten minutes if they wanted to dine in. In the meantime, she was pointed to two seats at the bar. Darcy headed over, even though alcohol didn’t effect her the same way anymore. She slid into a seat next to a pretty brunette.

“I’m probably gonna sound like the busy-body I was accused of in high school,” the woman next to her drawled when Darcy sat down and ordered. “But I take it the hostess knows you?”

“She’s been here a few times when we came for dinner,” she answered with a grin. “Chicka has the hots for my boyfriend.”

“Good-looking?”

“Criminally. And with an accent to match,” she said. The woman laughed.

**You realize we’ve run into her before, yes?** Charm asked in her head. **In Atlanta.**

*I’m aware,* Darcy agreed. **Contrary to popular opinion, I DO pay attention. Which means she’s either HYDRA, SHIELD, or…**

**One of Coulson’s.**

*That’s the hope.* Out loud she held out a hand, “Darcy.”

“Skye,” she replied in kind, shaking it with a smile.

**Bingo,** Charm said. **That’s the name of one of the new agents who was working with Coulson before he became the new director.**

**Yup.** She frowned, really wishing the files she had found had been more detailed. All they’d really contained was the name of the team Coulson had created and that he was alive to lead it. It didn’t even have pictures. The only reason she knew what Fitz, Simmons, Ward, and May looked like was because they’d been agents prior to joining the team—Agent Skye, not so much. Everything else about the project…well, apparently it had been so important, none of it was actually on file. It made her wonder just what else had been off the books and thus, completely off their radar.

“What brings you to San Fran?” Sky asked.

“Trying to find an old friend,” she answered. “He’s…well, I have a few questions for him.”
“Such as…”

She can’t have been an agent for long, Charm noted in her head as Darcy debated how to answer. She’s not being even remotely subtle in her questioning. Even you know better. Darcy ignored the bit about her, deciding instead on her course of action.

“Why he hasn’t told the Avengers he’s still alive,” she said and she and Charm could both see the moment Skye acknowledged her words and the meaning behind them. “I have no problem with Agent iPod Thief, though I am miffed he let us all think he was dead. Mostly though, I just want to ask him for some help.”

“With what?” Skye asked, all pretense gone, if it had even been there to begin with.

“I’m hunting for someone, besides him I mean,” she said. “Coulson could help me find the guy. I think.”

“Why are you hunting for this person?” Skye asked and all of a sudden Darcy and Charm both saw the ear piece she had in. Darcy rolled her eyes.

“Know what, tell Coulson to get his ass down here,” she said. She paused and then added, “Also, he helps us find a former Howling Commando, Steve might forgive him for lying about his death.”

With that, she waved the bartender down and ordered another whiskey. Coulson would come, of that she had no doubt. She’d heard all about his fanboyish tendencies where Cap was concerned. Natasha and Clint loved talking about it whenever they were in the mood to reminisce about the believed deceased agent. She figured he’d do whatever he could to help the red, white, and blue soldier.

“Alright, you caught my attention,” Coulson said, slipping into the seat on her left. It bracketed her between the two and if she were anyone else, it would make it easy to subdue her if necessary. Unfortunately for them, she wasn’t just anyone…and her control had gotten a LOT better than it’d been before, so she wouldn’t even have to switch with Charm to freeze them (though the explosions were still a no-go). Coulson ordered a water and turned to her. “Though I thought better of you, bringing the Captain into this.”

“I talked to him this afternoon,” she said, taking a sip of her drink and trying to control her reaction to his hand. “A certain one-eyed bastard is driving him crazy.”

“Fury can do that to a person,” Coulson agreed easily. He had to have noticed her reaction but he was man enough not to actually say anything or give her away. She wondered absently when it had happened…and how. “Why are you trying to find me?”

“Because you’re a better spy than Tony is,” she said, sitting down her drink. “Have you heard of the Winter Soldier?”

“You are not stupid enough to be going after him,” Coulson said, sounding somewhat alarmed. Which for him, she knew, was pretty damned alarmed.

“That’s a matter of opinion,” Pietro said, coming over. “Agent iPod Thief, I take it?”

Charm snorted in the back of her head. Coulson sighed, giving her a look when his agent choked on her drink. Darcy scowled. “I know what I’m doing,” she told Pietro with a glare as he sat down next to the new SHIELD director. Skye shifted uneasily at the man being surrounded. To the older man she added, “And yes, I am going after him. Out of all the people on the planet, I’m probably in the
best position to actually get through to him.”

“I’ve read about the Soldier,” Skye said, not even bothering to hide her incredulous opinion. “What could you possibly have that can help? He’s a psychopath.”

Darcy quickly cast out a net even as she passed her drink down to Pietro, who downed it like a shot. “That bartender is about to have a very bad night when his boss sees what he did,” she said, frowning. “I kinda feel bad about it.”

“What?” Skye asked and then followed Coulson’s staring down the bar to where the bartender was pouring some alcohol into a cup…and kept going, Darcy having only froze the guy, not the drink. Coulson turned around, taking in the fact the entire room was frozen. Just as suddenly as it began, it stopped, people continuing whatever they’d been doing. The only one who noticed were the ones who’d been doing something that kept going, like the bartender pouring the drink. Skye looked unnerved but Coulson had focused on her.

“What happened?”

_That’s a loaded question, _Charm said heavily. She paused. **But a good one. He has to know it wasn’t your choice in the matter. He would have asked ‘how,’ otherwise, not ‘what.’**

“Strucker and List decided to try and make me enhanced,” she shrugged, silently agreeing with Charm. “It worked.”

“You did this?” Skye asked, still unnerved. Darcy shrugged. “Just to…”

“To show us that despite appearances, she might actually have a chance of handling the Soldier,” Coulson said, looking thoughtful as he studied her more closely then he’d been doing before. His eyes kept flickering to Skye as well, which put Charm on guard even more than she’d been before.

“The enhancement was forced on her,” Pietro said, tone unhappy. Whether it was from the memories or from dealing with SHIELD Director Coulson was up in the air. “Like the Soldier’s own abilities.”

“We believe Zola gave him a bastardized version of the serum,” she told Coulson. “That’s how he survived the fall not to mention everything else he must have gone through.”

“The fall?” Skye asked, frowning. Darcy looked between the two; neither one seemed to know what she meant. Sure, Coulson could be acting but somehow she didn’t think so. Which meant…Fury hadn’t told him the Soldier’s true identity. Well, that was a surprise.

“The Winter Soldier, we know who he was before the Russians got him,” she told Coulson. He frowned and she nodded. “A Howling Commando. Steve recognized him in DC.”

“That’s not possible,” Skye said before Coulson could. “I remember my history lessons, not to mention all the stuff I learned at SHIELD…and with Trip. All of the Commando’s are dead.”

“The ones who walked away from the second world war are,” she said, looking at the realization on Coulson’s face, the genuine dismay as he put the pieces together. He of course would know of the one soldier who had fallen and who had done so in a place where the Russian’s could have recovered him. “But there was one who didn’t technically walk away with the rest.”

“James Buchanan Barnes,” Coulson said heavily. “Otherwise known as Bucky.”

“Cap’s best friend,” Darcy agreed as Skye stared. “Now you see why I’m trying to find the guy?”
Chapter End Notes

_Fight Song_ is Darcy's theme for this one. _Bleeding Out_ is officially Pietro's. Still not sure about the others. :)

Sending big waves into motion

Chapter Summary

In which explanations are had...

Chapter Notes

"My Happy Ending" by Avril Lavigne is Skye's theme for Fight Song. Just FYI.

San Francisco, California
Darcy followed Coulson into the hotel room he’d taken over. Skye was behind her, with Pietro bringing up the rear. Inside the room, Darcy wasn’t entirely surprised to find two more agents there, both of whom she recognized. “Agent May, Agent Fitz,” she greeted both. The former was standing across from the door while the latter was sitting on a bed surrounded by tech. Agent Fitz frowned but it was Agent May who spoke.

“Have we met?”

“No,” she answered cheerfully. She paused and then added with a wry smile, “Natasha spoke highly of you when I asked her though.”

That caught Coulson’s attention. “She knows you’re looking for me?” he asked even as Agent May smiled quickly at the compliment.

“No,” she assured him. She waved at the agent jokingly referred to as the Cavalry. “She thinks I’m hunting down Agent May, actually. I think Fury told her to drop it so she didn’t dig further. Tony wasn’t around otherwise your cover would probably already be blown. You know how he is when Fury says no.”

His lips quirked into a little smirk as he nodded in agreement. “Fury told me to let myself be caught,” he said, going over to the fridge and pulling out a bottle of water. Skye had settled near Agent Fitz, who had obviously been in charge of the surveillance, if the tech around him was any indication. Agent May, though obviously relieved at the mention of Fury, had not dropped out of her stance.

She’s ready for a fight if need be, Charm noted as Darcy declined his offer of a drink. She took a seat at the standard issue desk and chair, Pietro leaning against the wall next to her. He crossed his arms, watching them all warily. She wondered if they knew who, exactly, he was and what he could do. Coulson might, she thought, but she wasn’t sure about the rest. A lot of the facts about the new members of the team were still being kept a closely guarded secret. No one knew anything about the four of them except their code-names and though there was cell phone footage, they were all too blurry to give a clear image of them. Wanda and Vision, having fought with the team a few times since Sokovia, had more media than either her or Pietro.

“So what do you think we can help you with?” Coulson asked, settling in the other desk chair. Agent May had opened the bottle for him and to Darcy’s eye, he didn’t seem bothered by the inability to do
such a mundane task. Either he was already resigned to his injury or he was a really good actor.

Actor, Charm answered in her head. **His eyes tightened just a small fraction when she had to do it.**

“As I said before, I’m trying to find Sergeant Barnes,” she answered.

“You mean the Winter Soldier,” Agent May corrected. Darcy studied the two older agents.

**You may need to tell them what the Captain told us, Charm advised. I don’t think they’re going to just let us go now that they know.**

Yeah, well, *if need be we have a couple aces up our sleeves*, she reminded her and Charm smiled.

“I mean Sergeant Barnes,” she repeated firmly. “Steve told us what happened in the carrier.”

She quickly and succinctly retold what Steve had divulged, though she left out a few of the more… personal things Steve had shared, such as deliberately dropping his shield and the whole “end of the line” thing.

“You’re saying Barnes broke free of the programming?” Coulson stated as she wound up.

“We believe so,” she answered as Pietro shifted next to her. She ignored that. “The last thing Steve remembers is a silver arm pulling him up out of the river.”

“The Winter Soldier saved him?” Skye asked from the bed.

“He was found on the riverbank,” she shrugged. “There were footsteps leading away that were deeper on the left, as if that side of the person’s body was heavier in some way.”

“The arm,” Agent Fitz finally spoke up.

She nodded. “What we’ve found so far indicates it’s fairly light but its not the same weight as a normal limb. It’s made of metal, after all.”

“How can you be sure of any of this?” Skye asked skeptically. “It could be a trick.”

“Might be,” she acknowledged even as she wondered at the tone to Skye’s words. “But we know its possible to break the programming of the chair so…”

“How do you know that?” May asked instantly. “HYDRA only used the chair on him, didn’t they?”

She knows a bit more than she’s let on, Charm said.

**No shit, Sherlock,** she replied as she studied the agent.

My name is Charm, her alter-ego reminded her blandly. **Or would you rather I start calling you Watson?**

Shut up, that’s perverted even for us. Over Charm’s snickers, she said, “They used it on one other person that we know of.” Skye and Fitz were easy enough to read but the older two were harder. Nevertheless, she and Charm were fairly confident they hadn’t known that. “How much do you know about what happened in Sokovia?”

“Not as much as I would like,” Agent May said with a pointed look at Coulson. He sighed.
“Fury hasn’t even told me all of it,” he said and this was obviously an old argument. He turned back to Darcy. “We know the basics.”

“Such as…?”

“Iron Man made a psychotic robot that went Skynet,” Skye answered in a tone of voice that spoke clearly what she thought of the man’s actions. “Sokovia paid the price for his holier-than-thou act.”

Darcy’s jaw tensed as Pietro went utterly still next to her. “Okay, you don’t know Tony so no go making assumptions missy. Tony was trying to help when he made Ultron,” she said with a glare at the other woman. She even shook a finger in her direction, just because of how naive that black and white view was. “And for the record, he’s acknowledged he screwed up. You do NOT get to guilt him for a mistake or I swear to god, I will find every single mistake you made and flash it the heaven’s batman style.”

Skye paled.

“It wasn’t Stark’s fault,” Pietro said, speaking up for the first time since they’d left the bar. Darcy whipped her head around to stare at her boyfriend in shock. He ignored her, not looking at anyone. “He wouldn’t have made Ultron if it weren’t for Wanda’s vision. If anyone’s at fault, it’s her and me.”

Charm took control then, not giving Darcy a choice. She stood up, turning to face the Sokovian. “We will discuss your change of heart about Iron Man later,” she informed him. She tapped his cheek and he reluctantly locked eyes with her. “But you know it is not your fault either, right?”

His blue eyes were anguished as they stared at her. “Wanda and I—”

“Do not even go there,” Charm warned and he snapped his mouth shut. “It is everyone’s fault and no ones fault. You cannot take the entirety of that guilt upon yourself.”

“I—”

“Ah!” Darcy wrestled back control to wag a finger in his face too. His eyes crossed as he focused on it with a frown. “If I had this conversation with Tony I can have this convo with you too.” A slight cough made her remember they were not alone. She glared at Pietro, who looked dubious. “Later,” she promised him. “When there’s no audience for your ass whooping.”

“As you wish,” he replied dryly. She made a face, ruing the day she’d introduced him to The Princess Bride.

“You’re not allowed to use that phrase when I’m mad at you,” she told him, not for the first time. He smirked.

“But you respond so perfectly to it.”

“We know what Skye said,” Coulson said evenly, no indication of the conversation they’d been privy to. She turned and sat back down in her chair, Pietro sliding down to sit with his legs bent and his back against the wall, closer to her than he’d been before. Though still pale, Agent Skye was watching them speculatively while next to her, Agent Fitz was smiling slightly. Agent May was outright smirking. Coulson ignored all this. “We also know that four new figure’s joined the Avengers around the same time. Very little of them is available to the public, however.”

It was clear he was hoping they would give them some more info on that front. She smiled and glanced at the man next to her. He grinned and sped away, leaving the room door ajar. “Door!” she
shouted and the door slid shut in a blur of white and blue.

“Um…”

“If he’s smart, he’s getting me coffee,” she told the flabbergasted Fitz and Skye. To Coulson and May she added, “His codename is Quicksilver. He was the one who nearly died. Wanda is his sister, known as Scarlet Witch. They’re both from Sokovia. Yes, they worked with Ultron for a bit but that had a whole lotta backstory you don’t know and I’m not telling and if you bring it up, I will shut you down hard. My threat still stands.”

Skye suddenly looked stricken. Coulson didn’t seem perturbed but May was clearly uneasy. She decided to take a gamble. “Agent Barton’s taken them both under his wing.” She could have mentioned the whole godfather thing but while she figured Coulson knew about Laura and the kids, the others were likely another matter.

Coulson smiled faintly and that was one agent taken care of. May still seemed too tense. Charm?

She cannot hope to fight someone who can disarm her before she could blink, Charm noted in her head. She’s not going to relax around him for a time yet. She cannot trust him.

I was afraid you’d say that, she sighed as a knock came. She stood up and opened it after double checking it was actually her boyfriend. It was and he was holding a tray of coffee’s.

“Did you remember to pay this time?” she asked and he rolled his eyes as he handed the coffee’s out and nodded. May didn’t touch hers but Skye, Fitz, and Coulson all accepted them gratefully. Darcy took large gulps, sighing in bliss when she realized it was her favorite.

“So you’re Quicksilver,” Coulson said. “Were you the one who experienced the chair?”

“No,” Pietro answered shortly and there was the loathing again. She pinched him. “What?” he asked, scowling.

“He thought he was working with SHIELD at first,” she told Coulson. “Turns out, not so much. By the time he realized it was actually HYDRA, he was kinda fucked.”

Oddly enough, that got a reaction from May. She nodded and there was a brief look of commiseration before her face went back to the stone mask.

“I’m assuming your sister was the same, then,” Coulson said and she could have kissed him for the lack of censure in his voice. Instead, since she knew that wouldn’t go down well with Pietro, no matter how funny it might be, she decided to throw the man a bone.

“It was me,” she told him and he didn’t look all that surprised; he’d probably just been waiting for confirmation. Fitz and Skye hadn’t put those pieces together though and both looked horrified. May seemed to have come to some sort of conclusion and her shoulders relaxed. She was still prepped for a fight but it was an improvement.

“After you were enhanced, I’m assuming?” she asked.

“Righto,” she agreed. “HYDRA didn’t take it well when I told them I was not going to work for them, powers or no powers. It wasn’t a pleasant experience but at least we found out a few things about it that will help Barnes.”

“The chair doesn’t wipe the memories,” Pietro said. “Just buries them. Which is why Darcy came back.”
Neither mentioned Charm. They’d long ago agreed to keep her secret from Coulson unless they absolutely had to reveal her presence. As it stood, only the Avengers, Hill, Pepper, Jane, Erik, and Fury knew about Charm and just how independent she actually was. Not even Ian knew

“So Sergeant Barnes is likely still there,” Coulson nodded. “And given your powers and your similar experiences…I can see why Captain Rogers sent you to find Sergeant Barnes in his place.”

“Steve’s keeping the team ready cause Thor’s pretty nervous about a few things that have popped up the last few years,” she offered. “The Star Spangled Man with a Plan would be here otherwise.”

Coulson nodded, smiling slightly as he studied her again. She tried not to fidget. She seemed to have passed some sort of test because he took a deep breath. “What do you need from us?”

“Anything you have on the Soldier’s activities,” she said immediately. “EDWIN’s got a couple leads I can give you but he’s been busy helping Tony. We don’t really know what to do with them.”

“EDWIN?”

“The new JARVIS,” she answered and watched the frown appear on the agent’s face. Coulson seemed about as mournful of the loss of the sassy AI as she’d been. Of course, she still had regular contact with Vision, who retained several aspects of JARVIS’ personality quirks. It wasn’t the same though and everyone who knew both was well aware of it.

“Skye,” Coulson said, turning to the woman on the bed. “I want you to stay here and work with Darcy on what she has and what we can find for her.”

“AC?”

“Consider it a vacation from active duty,” he said with a brief smile. Skye frowned but nodded anyway. She seemed troubled.

I wonder why, Charm mused. Think we’ll be around her long enough to find out?

*You are such a nosy rosy,* she snickered. She turned to Pietro. “You game with staying around here?”

“As long as I get to eat sometimes soon, I’m game for anything,” he said pointedly. She blinked, her own stomach rumbling. They’d completely forgotten about dinner.

“May, Fitz, and I need to get back to SHIELD,” Coulson said. “If there’s anything more…?”

“I won’t tell them,” she promised, standing up. Coulson looked relieved. She gave him her best disapproving glare. “But you really should tell them yourself. Clint especially, he still blames himself for your death.”

Coulson didn’t bother to try and tell her what she already knew, that it wasn’t Clint’s fault. Instead, he just nodded, looking pensive.

She wondered if she should mention Tony was already working on a new arm for Barnes. If (when) Tony found out about Coulson’s lack of hand, he’d probably have some spanking new prosthetic made before Coulson was out the door.

They said their goodbyes, Darcy making plans to meet up with Skye the next morning. Instead of walking out like any sane person, however, Pietro picked her up and sped away. She laughed when he deposited her back in their room.
“I’m going across town for dinner,” he declared as she bounced on the bed she’d claimed. “What do you want?”

She didn’t bother asking what had gotten his panties in a twist. She’d long learned he wouldn’t tell her and it wasn’t worth the argument. She told him she was craving Mexican and he nodded and sped out. She leaned back on the bed.

“That could have gone a lot worse.”
Like how a single word can make a heart open

Chapter Summary

Darcy, Charm, and Pietro have dinner...and then go through their evening routine.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

San Francisco, California

Knowing it would take at least twenty minutes before she could eat (no matter how fast Pietro could run, he still had to wait for the food to be cooked), Darcy decided to take a shower. She was just pulling her hair up into a bun when there was fumbling at the door and Pietro came in with delicious smelling food.

“Gimme,” she ordered, taking one of the bags and setting it on the table. He gave her a slow appraisal, starting at her bare feet and legs up to the shorts and tank top she was wearing. There was a lot more skin tonight than she would usually allow but she was out of her normal pajamas. As it was, she was fairly certain Wanda was the one to throw these into her luggage because she and Charm couldn’t remember packing them. She really needed to find a laundromat.

“As you wish,” he said with a grin to tell her he liked what he saw. She rolled her eyes.

“Twice in a day, you must be really trying to get back on my good side.” The look of want quickly morphed into one of aggravation.

“Can we not discuss this tonight?” he asked. “You and I both know nothing you say is going to change my mind.”

Darcy pursed her lips. He’s not wrong, Charm said. He’s too stubborn to see the truth.

It was NOT his fault, she said.

No, but he’s not going to accept that just because we say so, the other said.

“We need to find a laundromat,” she said instead of the one hundred and one things she’d rather say. Pietro relaxed, slouching in the other chair as she dug into her food. It was still steaming. God, she loved his speed.

“I’m almost out of underwear,” he agreed around a mouthful of beans. He swallowed and leered playfully at her. “I might go, what is the term? Commando? Tonight.”

Darcy choked on her food. “Wha—what?” she stuttered out, once she’d taken a large gulp of water. Pietro gave her an innocent look.

“I have no underwear left that’s clean,” he told her. “I might have to go without for a few days.”

Darcy’s cheeks burned red. Charm was no help, either, spluttering in the back of her head. It was thoroughly discombobulating, her inability to roll with the sexual innuendo Pietro threw out. Most of
the time she was able to give as good as she got but sometimes, like now, he managed to get to her in a way few ever had.

She took a deep breath and turned her gaze to the mirror across the room. When Pietro was distracted by a piece of tomato falling out of his taco, she bit hard on her bottom and top lips, turning them just that much more red and swollen. She couldn’t do much else given she’d been showered but it would be enough, she thought. Now she just had to wait for the opportune moment...

As Pietro took another large bite of his taco, to best get the parts dropping out in his mouth, she casually reached over with her foot and ran her toes down his own legs. He startled but Darcy had already withdrawn her appendage and was focused on the straw on her drink. Out of the corner of her eye, she could just see Pietro staring at her, wide-eyed, in the mirror.

And you say you’re not evil, Charm snickered in her head. She quirked her lips up into a half smile.

“What?” Pietro asked.

“Charm,” she answered, popping off the drink with just a hint of tongue.

EVIL! Charm repeated as Pietro’s eyes followed her mouth as she wiped at it with a napkin, which allowed her to hide a smile.

“Care to share?” he asked.

“Not particularly,” she smirked. “Also, if you really want to go commando, I wouldn’t stop you. Free country and all.”

“And you?” he asked lowly.

“And me what?”

“Are you gonna go commando?” he smirked. He leered playfully at her chest, telling her exactly which article of clothing he was hoping she’d run out of. “If I’m low on underwear, you must be as well.”

“Have you seen these girls?” she asked rhetorically, scoffing at the very idea of not wearing a bra all day. Ouch didn’t even begin to cover it. And after a very bad trip to Rome when she’d been fifteen, she always went above and beyond when it came to how many pairs of bras and panties she took with her on trips.

“Not in their full glory,” he answered and it was lucky she’d been expecting something like that because otherwise she’d likely have been blushing again.

“Well, this package will stay wrapped,” she answered, lightly touching his leg with her foot again. “I’m obviously more prepared of the two of us.”

It wasn’t the sexiest thing she could have said, she easily acknowledged, but that didn’t seem to matter to Pietro, who swallowed heavily. She sort of wondered where his mind had gone. They finished their dinner in silence.

Two months of this back and forth, interspersed with the occasional make-out session. It wasn’t like they didn’t have plenty of free time in the hunt but they’d silently agreed not to progress immediately to sex. For one, both were still healing, Pietro physically and her emotionally. For two, Wanda would know the minute they returned for a break or a visit and neither wanted that. Pietro knew better than her, but even Darcy was aware the witch could be downright annoying.
So instead of sexy-times with her admittedly hot-ass boyfriend, they’d taken to exploring all the places they’d visited. The had bickered about where to go, Pietro wanting to go to anything that got his adrenaline up. Darcy, on the other hand, wanted more quirky places or, baring that, museums. They bickered like crazy but so far it had all worked out okay. At the very least, it made the hunt seem more like an actual road-trip instead of them trying to find an assassin by way of a spy.

Once dinner was done, she cleaned up as Pietro wandered over to start going through his luggage. By the time she had everything in the trash and the table cleaned, most of his clothing was in a pile at the foot of his bed. Unlike what he’d said, he did actually have a pair of clean boxer-briefs, which she could see inside the duffel bag. He was frowning though, so she paused on her way to her own suitcase. “What?”

“I don’t have any more shirts,” he told her with a frown. He sounded baffled. “At all.”

“We are definitely finding a Laundromat tomorrow,” she decided. She went through her own stuff, frowning when she realized she too was down to one outfit…and the shirt was one Wanda had packed. Double checking a few things, she finally decided she could wear one of the other shirts as it didn’t smell and had no stains. She had sandals so the lack of socks wasn’t a big deal. She glanced at his duffel and found he still seemed to have one pair still clean. It made sense, she’d worn the sandals more than a few times, but he’d always worn sneakers or the more resilient the running shoes Tony was experimenting with and sending every so often for him to test. Because of that, he had WAY more socks than she did.

“I’m going to change,” Pietro said, stuffing his dirty clothes back into the duffel after he’d taken out the clean ones. Those he dropped on the chair by the table.

They went through their nightly routines, taking turns in the bathroom before settling in the queen bed.

“What time do you want to get up?” Darcy asked, picking up the clock to set it. Pietro groaned.

“Not seven again,” he pleaded.

“If we must.”

“Skye,” she reminded him simply. He groaned again but didn’t argue. Charm smiled in the back of Darcy’s head.

They had started the trip with two queen beds in every hotel and motel. That had lasted up until Darcy had her first nightmare.

“No…please…no…THOR!” She sat up straight in bed, chest heaving as the nightmare kept tiny tendrils on her brain. She didn’t know it at the time, but her eyes kept flickering between blue, gold, and white as the two persona’s tried their damnest to calm down.

“Darcy?” Pietro asked from where he’d gotten up. On instinct, Charm took over and stuck out a hand, freezing him in place. She nor Darcy knew how long they all remained like that but eventually the last tendrils loosened enough for common sense to take over.

“Shit,” Charm muttered, waving a hand and unfreezing their boyfriend. He didn’t seem to have noticed, though he had to have known what had happened. Instead, he sat down on the edge of the bed.
“I’m not going to ask you to tell me because I don’t do that,” he said after a minute of mutual staring. “But maybe you can talk to Wanda?” She gave him a look and he nodded, looking awkward. “Thought not.”

She didn’t tell him it wasn’t the battle this time. It wasn’t even the chair or the enhancement procedure itself. No, this nightmare had been about her doing exactly what her programming had been, killing the Avengers.

God, did she understand Tony a lot more right now.

This has got to stop, Charm noted tiredly. We need to be at our best when we face the Soldier and these nightmares are zapping our strength.

Well, if you have an idea, be my guest, Darcy replied, just as exhausted. She’d actually been having nightmares most nights since they’d started this trip but until now, Pietro had been seemingly oblivious.

Unfortunately, I do not, she sighed.

“Scoot over,” Pietro ordered suddenly and she blinked owlishly at him. His face was firm, resolute, and she knew without a doubt that if she fought him on whatever crazy had entered his head, there would be very loud words said, most of them probably not nice. So she did as she was bid, too tired to get into a knock-down.

He grabbed the pillows from his bed and then slipped into the spot she’d vacated. She crossed her arms and stared at him, unimpressed with this idea. She liked her bed just as it was, thank you.

“Don’t look at me like that,” he ordered. He paused and then, so softly she wouldn’t have heard him if it weren’t for his closeness, “We could both use the comfort.”

He’s always had Wanda, Charm said suddenly and Darcy’s eyes widened in surprise. I doubt they’ve spent a whole lot of time apart since their parents died.

Which included their sleeping spots, Darcy realized. And if we can have nightmares and he not notice…he could do the same.

Without further protesting, she laid back down, curling into the pillows she salvaged from where he’d tried stealing another one.

It took about two weeks but eventually they just gave up the pretense and got a single bed. Though they did come, the nightmares weren’t as bad after that. She also found out Pietro had been having nightmares too, though neither talked about them.

As Pietro pulled her to his side, one arm curled around her middle and the other grabbing her outstretched hand, she wiggled a bit to get more comfortable. She heard his breath catch but otherwise, he didn’t respond. Once both were comfortable, she let go of the reins and allowed Charm to take control.

“Goodnight Pietro,” she whispered.

“Goodnight, Charm,” he replied sleepily and Charm felt a smile curve their lips. “Night Darce.”
I am *this* close to saying eff it and adding the Xverse to this, movies be damned. Not quite sure how I'd get around the different Quicksilver's but...*raspberries*

Also, this WILL have spoilers for ANTMAN after all. I went and saw it Sunday and...yeah. Spoilers. Sorry. :( If it makes it any better, I'm fairly certain a lot of people already know the particular spoiler by now.
*coughs* WhatyoutalkingaboutCapWILLfindout*coughs*
I might only have one match but I can make an explosion

Chapter Summary

Darcy, Charm, and Pietro discover just how quickly things can get going when you add Skye and Fitz to the mix.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

San Francisco, California

When Skye knocked on the door the next morning around ten, Pietro had already taken off to try and find a laundromat. After an hour of argument that had finally ended with Charm forcibly taking control, Pietro had all of their clothes to throw in the washers. He wasn’t comfortable staying with Skye yet, her being an unknown SHIELD agent, but he trusted Charm to be able to handle herself against the other women. Thus, he’d be remaining out of the room until Skye left or he ran out of things to keep him busy, whichever happened first.

“Hello,” Charm greeted the agent, opening the door as the TV blared something about a Thomas engine and an attack on a police officers house. Skye nodded, typing at a tablet in front of her face and seemingly not noticing the fact her eyes were a different color.

“So, I started looking through all the info SHIELD has, anything we still have on the Winter Soldier,” she said, still frowning at her tablet as she walked into the room. Agent Fitz followed behind meekly, holding a box full of electronics. “I think I have an idea of what he’s been up to since DC, which gives us a starting point if nothing else.”

“Forgive me, Agent, but if I recall correctly, Director Coulson said you had to leave last night?” she asked lowly as Skye perched on the chair. Charm saw the female agent’s eyes flicker to the TV with a frown before focusing back on her.

“I convinced AC to let Fitz stay with me,” Skye answered before the other agent could. “He could use the break too and I’m just a hacker.”

“You were Coulson’s tech support before the fall,” Charm recalled and he nodded. He seemed to be gearing up to ask something, so she waited patiently.

“Why are your eyes a different color?” he finally blurted out.

“Side effect of the enhancement,” she answered easily as Darcy crowed. They’d had a bet about who would notice the difference first, Skye or some other poor schmuck of an agent Coulson sent to follow them. Charm had, erroneously, thought it would be the female agent, given she’d be working more closely with them.

“What triggers it?” the agent asked, fascinated.

She deliberately winced. “I would rather not discuss that, if it is all the same to you,” she requested. He seemed to think he’d stepped on an emotional land-mine because he immediately looked contrite and nodded.
“Of course, no, I under-understand,” he said, stuttering a bit. “So, Skye, your research?”

She turned to the female agent, who was studying her with a compassionate expression. *I kinda feel bad about this now,* Darcy murmured.

**As do I but we agreed it was better to keep our dual persona's a secret unless we had to,** she reminded the other woman.

*I know, I know,* she agreed.

“I managed to dig up a list of HYDRA bases the Winter Soldier had been stored at or staged some of his missions from,” Skye told her, handing the tablet over. It was a couple dozen locations, from all over the world. Several had asterisks and she asked about them. Skye smirked. “Those are the bases that, since DC, have suddenly and quite violently found themselves infiltrated and destroyed.”

“He’s probably taking revenge on the people who tortured and controlled him,” Fitz said. “It’s what I would do.”

“It might be more than that,” Charm mused. “Not just revenge but prevention. These bases had to have had the technical capabilities to keep the Winter Soldier not just in control but in fighting form. Which means they likely had extra chair’s and/or cryo pods. Not to mention the engineers to fix any damage to his arm.”

“Preventing these bases from being able to do anything similar in the future,” Skye nodded. “Do you really think they had more than one chair, though?”

“We know they did, the Captain found a couple at the different HYDRA bases they raided before Sokovia,” she answered. “So far, the Avengers have recovered three. The Captain is certain there are more.”

Skye nodded. “That makes sense, see the three bases with the large A next to them?” she asked and Charm nodded. “Those are bases that the Avengers took out.”

She frowned, studying the list again.

“Do we have a timeline of the destruction?” she asked and Skye looked at Agent Fitz, who’d pulled something out of the box and had been fiddling with it. He nodded, holding out a hand, and she gave him the tablet. He hooked it up to the device and Charm blinked when a hologram not dissimilar to Stark’s lit up the room. Skye started moving things, switching between files, until she found what she’d been looking for.

“Here,” she said and Charm took a step forward to see it was exactly what she’d been asking for. The dates all seemed to be a few weeks in between each attack, though twice there was a long stretch of nothing. The locations were next to the dates and she frowned.

“Do we have a world map?” she asked and Fitz tapped on the screen before a map appeared, each of the attacks flying to the location they belonged.

*We’re missing attacks,* Darcy said immediately once the image steadied. *Look, most of the locations are about equal in distance from the last one, except those attacks that had longer wait times between them.*

“We’re missing some,” she said aloud, agreeing with Darcy’s assessment. Skye frowned.

“This is the only list I could find,” she argued.
“It is HYDRA,” she replied. “If they can hide in plain sight in SHIELD, I do not think it would be
difficult to hide a few extra bases as a precaution. After all, Fury managed it, did he not?”

“Point,” Skye said after a moment. “Where do you think—Fitz, what are you doing?”

The screen had zeroed in on the first stretch in the timeline, the tech agent measuring and making the
screen fly so quick it was making Darcy slightly dizzy. “Skye,” he said after a moment, “Look for
attacks in La Rochelle, France that fit the Soldiers…uh, the Soldiers…” He looked a bit lost and a lot
annoyed as he fought to find the term.

“MO, got it,” Skye finished, opening her laptop and setting it on the bed. Charm watched Agent Fitz
as he went back to figuring out a possible second location based on trajectory, distance, and time.
Charm had already determined it would be somewhere in the southern tip of Spain but he was liable
to get a more accurate location since she was basing her choice on the visual in front of her.

Speaking of which…She turned away and studied the map again. “Hmmm.”

“What?” Skye asked, looking up.

“He hasn’t done anything in North America yet,” she noted. “But his path…he should be coming
around soon, if he’s not already back on the continent.”

“Probably somewhere in the northeast, based on this trajectory,” Fitz added. A red line appeared on
the map, circling and zig-zagging around the world. Fitz had flagged the area around Granada, Spain
as the best possible location they were missing. It was slightly to the left of where she’d considered.
She made a mental note to ask why that area.

“Couldn’t he skip it? I mean, DC is northeast,” Skye said.

“I do not think so,” Charm disagreed. “The list you had has two bases in New York. The one
HYDRA blew up and the Avengers took over, and Brooklyn.”

“Yeah, AC said Brooklyn used to be an old SSR bunker under the city. I guess it’s where Peggy
Carter, you know, the woman in the Captain’s locket? It’s where she worked after the war, before
she ended up director,” Skye told her. She went back to her computer screen, shaking her head and
her eyebrows raising in response to some memory. “Coulson was not a happy camper when he
realized HYDRA had taken it over. It’s supposed to be storage though, that’s what all the HYDRA
files we had said.”

“I believe, from the information he gave me before we started this hunt, it is also where the Captain
was injected with the serum,” Charm said. “Where it all began, so to speak.”

“Well, that explains Coulson’s annoyance,” Fitz muttered. Skye gave an agreeing grunt, eyes
narrowing as she typed rapidly at her computer.

_The path he’s taking would lead him straight to Brooklyn_, Darcy noted in her head softly. _Unless he
saves that one for last, I think we know where’s he’s going next._

**Why would he save that one for last?** Charm asked, confused.

_Because that’s where Steve got his super on_, Darcy shrugged.

**Yes, but would he know that?** she asked and Darcy blinked.

_Point, _she conceded. _I don’t know that Steve would have ever told him where exactly it happened…_
and even if he did, how likely is it that would be something he would have remembered by now?

“We don’t know how much of his memories he has gotten back,” Charm said aloud. “It is likely he is unaware of the Brooklyn bases connection to the Captain. I believe that is where he is going to go next.”

“I found La Rochelle,” Skye said instead of answering. She threw a picture of a burned out building up in the air for all three of them to see. She looked worried. “If he’s planning on destroying the Brooklyn base…it’s mostly underground, in between subway and sewer tunnels.”

“He may not consider the repercussions of the above ground buildings,” Fitz realized. “And depending on when the last time they were renovated was…”

An explosion could do a lot of damage, Darcy finished in her head.

“I suppose I know where Pietro and I will be going next then,” she said aloud. She paused. “Thank you for your help. It has been greatly appreciated.” And quick too; she couldn’t help but wonder just how long it would have taken just the three of them to figure this out on their own.

We need to let Coulson know he needs to start sharing intel, even if its through Maria, Darcy said. If we had had this info from the start, EDWIN probably would have pinged on it a few months ago.

Though agreeing with Darcy, Charm watched, curious, when Skye paused and then turned to look over at Fitz. He looked back and she tried deciphering the hidden conversation but, as usual, she failed spectacularly. “Coulson said to stick with you for a while,” Skye finally said, turning back to her. Charm raised an eyebrow at the stubborn tilt to her face. “If you’re going to Brooklyn, than so are we.”

“We’re going back to New York? Back home?” Pietro asked from the doorway. In his arms were both of their duffel bags. He looked irritated when Charm gave a bemused nod, Darcy laughing in her head. He scowled. “After I just finished all the laundry?!?”

Chapter End Notes

I wasn't originally going to have Fitz but there he was, walking in after Skye. How could I say no?
San Francisco, California

“Alright, you call your sister and tell her to make up the couch,” Darcy told Pietro after it was agreed the two could come with. “I’m not sure how sleeping will work but we’re going to put them up while they tag along.”

“We can sleep together,” he suggested without hesitation.

“And what will Wanda say when she realizes this?” she asked archly.

“She already knows about the arrangement,” he shrugged. Darcy eyed him a moment.

Did you know about that?

No, but I am not entirely surprised.

“Fine,” she said, shaking her head. She grabbed her own phone. “Anyway, you call and warn your sister and Vision. I’m going to call Steve and then Tony.”

“Why are you calling Stark?” he asked, confused.

“It’ll be faster to get there if we fly.”

Aware Skye and Fitz were watching and no doubt listening, she speed-dialed Steve, hit speaker, and then waited.

“I swear to God, Darcy, if Fury doesn’t stop, I’m going to kill him,” was the first thing Steve said when he picked up. Pietro and Darcy both snickered as Skye and Fitz just stared, eyes going wide.

“You’re on speaker phone, Steve,” she informed him.

“I really wish you’d stop doing that,” he sighed, chagrined.

“It’s rude to converse without Pietro,” she shrugged. Her boyfriend sent a brief thumbs up, murmuring on the phone with his sister. “What did Fury do now?”

“He hired another group of old SHIELD agents,” he answered, voice aggravated. “He’s supposed to run it through me first, that was the agreement.”

“Technically the agreement was that he would run any new civilian or military recruits through you,” she reminded him. “It’s a loophole but…”

“SHIELD is military,” Steve replied flatly.
“They’re federal agents.”

“Same thing.”

“Okay, moving on,” she said, realizing this was an argument she would not be winning anytime soon, no matter how right she was. Stubborn didn’t even begin to describe Steve some days. “I have a couple new leads, thanks to a contact of Maria’s. We’re heading back to New York as soon as Stark can get flights.”

“Stark’s here, hold on, I think he’s bugging Dr. Foster in her lab again,” he answered immediately. His voice wasn’t as tight as it had been before, which meant she’d judged the dropping right.

“Yay, Jane!” she grinned, catching sight of Fitz choking as he stared at her wide-eyed. She giggled, sending him a wink. Then she burst out laughing, not because of Fitz but because of what suddenly came through her phone.

“I swear to God, Stark, if you—you broke it! You broke it! I told you not to break it!”

“Ow, ow, Selvig, call off your puppy!”

“Uh…”

“Puppy?! I’ll show you a puppy! GET BACK HERE, YOU COWARD! PEPPER, YOU’RE GOING TO BE A WIDOW!!”

“We’d have to be married first,” was Pepper’s calm response to Jane’s threat.

“Uh, I have Darcy on the phone!” Steve called out as she, Pietro, and even the two agents laughed. “She needs to talk to Tony so please stop hitting him with your clipboard! Dr. Foster! Tony! Oh, for the love of—!” There was a clatter as the phone was apparently dropped and then what sounded suspiciously like a scuffle. Several times she heard Jane’s pterodactyl screech of rage and once Erik’s bellow of pain over Tony’s vicious and impressive collection of curses. She couldn’t quite make out Steve most of the time but she was pretty sure he was muttering very uncomplimentary things as he waded into the fray.

When someone finally picked up the phone again, Darcy was practically hyperventilating from laughter, Skye and Fitz both had tears falling down their cheeks, and Pietro was periodically twitching at super speeds as he curled into a ball on the bed, laughing his ass off as his sister demanded to know what was going on. “Hello Darcy,” Pepper’s voice came through the line. “How are you doing?”

“Please…please tell me someone is recording this!” she gasped out.

“I’ll have EDWIN send you the security footage,” she chuckled. Darcy cackled. “So what did you need from Tony?”

“Four flights to New York from San Francisco,” Charm answered, having taken over for the still frenetic Darcy. “Names are Skye…”

“Johnson,” the agent in question offered in a hiccup.

“Skye Johnson and Leo Fitz plus myself and Pietro. Johnson and Fitz are agents Maria pointed us to whom she thought might be able to help. They did, we believe we have a location on the Soldier, but we need to be in New York so they are coming with,” she answered.
Darcy, finally calm again, took over once more. “Think they’re calming down?” There was a crash, a groan of pain that sounded suspiciously like Steve, and then Jane started pterodactyl screeching again. She snickered. “I’m going to take that as a no.”

“ASAP or can you wait?” Pepper asked, laughing as the people in the room all began going at it again.

“ASAP, preferably,” she answered. “From what we’re thinking, there’s a time table at play.”

“I understand,” the SI CEO agreed easily. “I think…yes, EDWIN just confirmed it, the old jet is still in LA. I’m going to reroute it to you before it comes back to New York. We’ll set it up and then I’ll text you the details.”

“Why is the old jet in LA?” she asked. “I thought you said Tony was going to sell it.”

“He was but Tony’s donating it to the team instead,” she answered. “And before you ask, yes, we still have the quinjets. This will be for non-missions. Like Steve and Natasha’s interview with Ellen next month.”

“Oooh, can I tag along?” Darcy asked, perking up. “I adore Ellen.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” she laughed.

The two said goodbye just as there was another crash and Steve’s furious bellow at the genius billionaire could be heard even above Jane’s screech.

“Sometimes I seriously wonder why we agreed to join that team once we find Barnes,” she informed Pietro.

“Wanda would kill us if we didn’t,” he reminded her.

“Oh yeah.”

“You’re joining the Avengers?” Sky asked, eyes wide. Leo didn’t look much better. Darcy shrugged.

“I have powers, might as well use them for something,” she said. “And while I would be a benevolent overlord, I’d probably have to kill a bunch of my friends to pull it off and blood is so hard to get out of the carpet.”

* * *

The jet was waiting for them on the tarmac at the airport when they finally made it through security. The pilots were already doing pre-flight prep and the airport crew were just waiting for the four to get aboard before disengaging everything. Not a single one of them wasn’t loaded down with gear so it took a bit before Darcy realized they weren’t alone on the plane.

“Rhodey!” she exclaimed, dropping everything in a seat and pouncing on the other man. He laughed and hugged her back, smirking at Pietro over her shoulder. He really loved needling the speedster. She didn’t need to look back to know her boyfriend was scowling.

She and Rhodey had hit it off immediately upon meeting. Pepper thought it was because of how similar to Tony she was but really, Darcy thought it was more of the fact they’d each insulted the billionaire within minutes of their first meeting. Not a lot of people insulted Tony the way they did and even less got away with it.
“Ladybug,” he greeted her with a grin. She rolled her eyes at the nickname but tolerated it because she could and often did call him much more annoying things. His eyes flickered past her and Pietro to where the two agents were stowing their gear and trying to remain invisible. “Who’re your friends?”

“Agent contacts Maria set us up with,” she answered. He relaxed slightly and she grinned. “Don’t worry, Iron Butt, they’re on the up and up.”

He grimaced. “Are you ever going to let that go?” he pleaded.

“You were voted by the people as having a better ass in the suit than Tony,” she reminded him with a grin. “It’s not going away anytime soon.”

Rhodey gave a long suffering sigh but let it drop. Instead, he moved past her. “Maximoff,” he greeted Pietro. Darcy watched as her boyfriend nodded curtly and then went back to stuffing his duffel bag in the overhead compartment. The new Avenger held out a hand to Leo first. “Colonel James Rhodes,” he introduced himself. As he shook Skye’s hand, he gave her a charming smile. “Most people just call me Rhodey.”

“You’re the War Machine,” Leo said and Rhodey laughed.

“That I am,” he said. “And thank god for that—I hated the name Iron Patriot.”

“The paintjob was atrocious,” Skye informed him. “I think I’ve seen Jackson Pollock’s that didn’t burn my retinas that badly.”

Rhodey laughed, practically bending over. Darcy was chuckling herself; as much as he hated the name, the paint job was the worst thing. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see Pietro hiding a smirk as he slammed the compartment closed.

“Yeah, yeah it wasn’t pretty,” Rhodey agreed. “I take it you’re a field agent?”

Skye blinked, taken aback. “How could you tell?”

“The way you’re holding yourself,” he answered. “Reminds me a bit of Natasha and Maria.”

Skye didn’t seem to know what to do with that information, which led to Rhodey, Pietro, Darcy, and Fitz to all snicker.

**He’s not wrong, Charm noted in her head. She may need vast work on her undercover work but her body language is not dissimilar to Agent Romanoff’s.**

_I’m looking forward to those two meeting_, she murmured back as Rhodey led Skye over to a seat, Fitz following as he and the older man discussed the basic technology behind his suit. _Coulson had input in both of their SHIELD training._

**Should be interesting,** she agreed.

**Brooklyn, New York**

The Soldier watched the building across from his vantage point carefully. From what little he’d been able to get out of the scientists he’d interrogated in Europe, this was supposed to be a storage facility for HYDRA, not an active base. The people coming in and out, several of them he recognized from his fractured memories, said otherwise. His eyes narrowed as he saw someone he was fairly certain had been a handler at one point. He was in the perfect position to shoot anyone coming in or out of...
the front entrance and though it was a good backup, that wasn’t what this mission was about.

_We’re going to burn ‘em to the ground_, Bucky Barnes whispered in his head.

_Yes_, he agreed. _And we shall not stop until every HYDRA base is destroyed._
Wrecking balls inside my brain

Chapter Summary

Darcy, Pietro, Skye, and Fitz arrive in New York.

Chapter Notes

I was going to post this tomorrow but it's looking like tomorrow is going to be crazy busy. So here you go today!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Manhattan, New York

They’d been met by a driver at the airport, courtesy of Pepper. Rhodey had helped them figure out how to Tetris their gear into the vehicle and then left to pick up his own car from storage to drive up to the New York facility. They promised to have pizza at some point before they left and when Wanda and her brother were otherwise occupied. Wanda’s greeting at the door to the apartment, with two agents in tow, was a bit more subdued than it had been in the past. Nevertheless, she and Pietro had both gotten tight hugs. Skye and Fitz’ had had no reaction to Vision, who’d been sitting on the couch watching Dog Cops when they got in. Apparently the mind gem was still working.

“How have things been going here?” Darcy asked once she’d shown Skye and Fitz to her room. They were apparently planning to share the space, even though Vision had offered his own. Darcy figured it was a safety precaution.

“Wilson is a bit out of sorts,” Vision replied with a small smile. Wanda outright smirked.

“He got his ass handed to him by an ant,” she informed Darcy with way too much glee.

“…an ant?” Pietro asked, with the same look on his face he sometimes got when he thought his internal translations had screwed up.

“Antman, or so he called himself,” Vision nodded. “He can shrink to the size of an ant and seems to have some sort of special affinity with the insects. He got into Wilson’s suit and disengaged the wings.”

“Where was this?”

“At the facility,” Clint said, coming out of the kitchen. She jumped to her feet, not having known he was there. He gave Darcy a big hug, and grasped Pietro’s hand, all while grinning like a loon. “Stark is pretty sure he went into the old storage containers his father had for old SHIELD tech. He’s going through it all now, to find out if anything is missing.”

“So that’s why he’s there,” Darcy said, smiling. “I was wondering.”

“When was this?” Pietro asked.
“A couple days ago,” Clint replied, eyes flickering behind her. She turned to find Skye and Fitz had joined them.

“They’re new SHIELD and on the up and up,” she assured him. He looked skeptical. “Trust me, there’s no one I better trust than their CO. Also, Maria’s vouched for the entire team.”

“Melinda May trained me,” Skye spoke up. She was standing at parade rest, looking nervous but resolute when he studied her more openly. She nodded at him in greeting. “Agent Barton. It’s…an honor to meet you.” She said this with absolute sincerity, which, considering who they unknowingly shared in common…Darcy hid a grin when Clint finally nodded.

“Aren’t you supposed to be in Iowa?” she asked, hoping to change the discussion.

“I’ve apparently been driving people crazy so I was sent to New York to see if there was anything I could do,” he answered with an amused grin as she mentally translated “people” into “Laura.” The look in his eye told her he knew exactly what she’d just done but was willing to go along. “So far, nothing has come up except some prep consults for Steve. And Wilson’s pest problem, which Cap still doesn’t know about. Natasha’s been having a field day making insect puns whenever Wilson and Cap are in the same room.”

“Sounds like fun,” Darcy snickered, even as Charm wondered just how antsy Clint had to have gotten for Laura, She of the Infinite Patience, to have tossed him out.

Pretty damn antsy, most likely, she answered mentally. Also, nice pun.

Thank you, I try, Charm replied, sounding smug. There was a pop from the kitchen that had Clint cursing and going back to check on whatever he’d been cooking. Vision joined him, chuckling at the vitriol Clint was spewing towards the oven. Pietro and Darcy looked at each other and then at Wanda.

How long has he actually been here? Charm asked silently.

A little over a week, she replied. Don’t worry, I don’t sense anything wrong with his and Laura’s relationship. He truly has just been antsy.

Good, Pietro replied, folding his arms.

“Telepaths,” Skye suddenly blurted out. All three of them swung towards where the brunette was standing next to a fidgeting Fitz. “You’re all telepaths, aren’t you?”

“I am,” Wanda grave a regal nod. She was studying Skye more curiously at the quick way she’d figured it out. “I can also allow for two or three way communication between myself and others.”

“So you don’t have telepathy too?” Fitz asked her and Pietro as Skye nodded, blatantly internalizing what she’d been told.

“Too?” Wanda asked, eyebrow raised archly as she looked at the two of them. Darcy held up a hand.

“Don’t start, I had to get his attention somehow,” she said aloud. Mentally she added, They don’t know about the explosions, just the immobilization.

And I am fairly certain Skye herself has some sort of gift, Charm added. Pietro nodded in agreement.
Coulson’s reaction to certain information…I think she does too, he told them. And it must be fairly new.

*Thats probably why he wanted Skye to assist us,* Darcy mused quietly. She shrugged. *Okay.*

Wanda’s eyebrows raised high on her forward. *Okay?* she parroted. Pietro rolled his eyes but didn’t get involved. He’d long ago learned the hard way it didn’t end well for him. His prediction that he wasn’t going to like them being friends had been proven true more than once.

*I trust Coulson to know what he’s doing,* she answered. *He’s always been a fairly honest jack-booted thug.*

Wanda and Pietro both snickered as she sent them her memory of him returning her iPod.

“Do I want to know what they’re talking about?” Clint asked, coming back out of the kitchen. He was talking to Skye and Fitz.

“I have no idea,” she said. He raised an eyebrow at them but when all three just looked innocently back at him, he snorted.

“Fine, keep your secrets,” he said. “Dinner’s done anyway.”

“Is it edible?” Pietro asked instantly. Clint scowled at him. Darcy motioned for Fitz and Skye to join them in the dining area as the two men began squabbling.

“Trust me, as funny as it usually is, you do not want to get in between those two,” Darcy advised.

“Do they not get along?” Fitz asked, frowning.

“Let’s just put it this way,” Wanda drawled with a wicked grin. “Clint sometimes forgets he’s not mine and Pietro’s father.”

~~*~~

“So…,” Wanda said they finished eating what turned out to be an actually edible casserole (Darcy was fairly certain that was Vision’s doing). “Steve shared the picture of Pietro’s valiant battle with the six year old with me. Do you, by chance, have anything else on what my dear brother has done on this country trip?”

Darcy giggled as Pietro groaned at the question. Skye and Fitz just stared, still uncomfortable with the easy camaraderie between them all. Next to Wanda, Vision was smirking and Clint was cackling.

“I do, indeed,” she informed her. The witch raised an eyebrow as Pietro stared at her, horrified. She smirked. “In fact, there was an instance I’m not sure he even remembers…he was very very plastered. It was after he found out Thor sent a case of Asgardian mead for all the supers who can’t get drunk off normal earth alcohol anymore. The incident in question involved your brother dancing down the streets of Boston.”

“Oh?” she asked, smirking at Pietro’s groan of dismay. Wanda looked gleefully at her. She was obviously well aware of how her brother looked when he tried dancing drunk. “Do tell,” she purred.

“How about I just show you?” Darcy offered instead, freezing Pietro before he could snatch her phone out of her hand like he’d done the last time she and Wanda had compared notes.

What followed was an entertaining viewing of a video of Pietro, dancing like a maniac, down the
streets of Boston.

The ensuing hilarity was even worse than when they’d called Steve and he’d walked into Jane and Tony’s latest skirmish. Darcy’s favorite part, in all honesty, was when he’d come across a giant painting of a squirrel on one of the walls. It never failed to make her cry from laughter. By the time Darcy and Charm had unfroze their boyfriend, Clint and Wanda both had copies of the video and had sent it to the rest of the team not present.

“I hate you,” Pietro sighed as Clint tried getting up off the floor and only managed to fall back down again. She kissed his cheek in mock sympathy.

“No, you don’t,” she said. He rolled his eyes and she smirked. “If it makes you feel any better, I can share the video I was sent last week by Laura?”

“The one you started crying at?” he asked eagerly as Clint abruptly stopped laughing.

Darcy smirked. Oh yeah, she thought gleefully as Clint began trying to bribe her into not sharing the video of him trying to wrangle Lily’s new horse and failing spectacularly. I still got it.

Chapter End Notes

*coughs*  Aaron Taylor Johnson danced in a REM music video. Go. Enjoy.

Also, next chapter things start heating up!
I will scream them loud tonight

Chapter Summary

Darcy and co get to work.

Chapter Notes

So, I drove in Denver for the first time and managed to get lost only twice. Luckily, I have a great friend who talked me through how to fix the mishap (I'd been trying to get to her house the first time, leaving her house the second time).

In the meantime, the next chapter is not quite finished so it will probably be a few days. I'm trying to get this done in the next couple weeks, though, as school starts up again on the 24th and I'll be mucho busy with that. :)

Enjoy!

Manhattan, New York

“So what brings you to New York anyway?” Clint asked the next morning as they ran around preparing to head out. Vision and Wanda had already left for a training at HQ but Clint had remained behind. He was sitting at the table, watching them in amusement and, she wasn’t surprised to see, concern. “And can I help?”

“We think the Winter Soldier is coming here to takeout a HYDRA facility that’s supposed to be storage,” Skye answered promptly. Darcy turned to raise an eyebrow at the woman. She grimaced. “Right, sorry, your op.”

She smiled, not actually all that bothered. She’d been planning on telling Clint anyway because, let’s face it, not even Charm had much experience in this sort of thing.

I have plenty of experience that will work in our favor, Charm argued.

_Clint is a sniper by trade_, she reminded her. _He’s used to surveillance. You’re more for after the surveillance has all been done._

And I suppose you think you’d have a better chance of sitting still for this? she asked skeptically.

_Hell no_, Darcy admitted. _Which is why I didn’t argue as much about Skye and Fitz tagging along._

You want them to do the grunt work, Charm realized. She sounded both amused and exasperated.

_Someone’s got to_, she shrugged. Turning to Clint, she realized he and the other three had been watching her in amusement. _Just how long did that conversation take?_
“She’s not wrong,” she said aloud when Charm admitted she didn’t know. “We have a clear trajectory of destroyed HYDRA bases with the same MO and the same things in common, besides being pro-Nazi. If he stays on present course…”

“He’s coming here,” Clint finished. His brow furrowed, arms crossing as he thought it over. “Where? I didn’t even know HYDRA had a base in New York besides the military one Nat and Steve blew up.”

“Brooklyn,” she answered, not even bothering to remind him they technically didn’t blow up Zola’s bunker, HYDRA did. She explained what they’d uncovered via Coulson, without mentioning said man’s name. “Like Skye said, it’s supposed to be storage.”

“Supposed to be doesn’t mean it will be,” Clint said, arms still crossed as he stared down at her. “And even storage spaces will have guards, especially if the things being stored are of a particular value. Also, I want to be back in Iowa when you tell Rogers they took over the spot where he became super!Steve and his mentor guy got killed.”

“I’ll do my best,” she answered with a wince. *I want to be in Iowa too. Think Laura would be up for visitors?* Charm just laughed.

“Alright, exact location?” he asked, un-crossing his arms and rubbing his hands together. Darcy and Pietro looked to Fitz, who stared back, startled.

“What?”

“Your fancy schmancy maps?” she prompted and he jumped up.

“Oh, right!” He scrambled to get the devices he used for projection out and set it so the map appeared on the dining room table. He typed in his tablet for a few minutes before a satellite feed zoomed into the location in question.

“Which one is it?” Clint asked, frowning.

Fitz pointed out the building in the middle. “This is the front entrance,” he explained. “According to the files, it’s posing as an old insurance building that went out of business.”

“That’s ironic,” Pietro muttered. Clint’s lips twitched but he didn’t say anything.

“Most of the base itself is underground,” she told him. “An old subway station that never got off the ground so they converted it during World War two.”

“What sorts of things are they supposedly storing?” he asked, eyes still fixed firmly on the image.

“Mostly it’s weapons and ammunitions…but we think they have a mental recalibration chair,” Skye answered after Darcy sent her a questioning look. Darcy took a deep breath, resolutely not thinking about it.

Denial ain’t just a river in Egypt, Charm noted softly.

*Shut up.*

“I know Stark wants the chair,” Clint noted, his own features tense. Whether it was in deference to her or his own history rearing its head was anyone’s guess. “The ones we found all seemed to be missing key components but they were all different things.”
“What do you mean?” Fitz asked, frowning.

“I don’t know for sure but we think HYDRA wanted to make sure only certain people could use the chairs, so they took different things out in each location,” he explained. “Only the authorized technicians would have what they needed and be able to use it.”

“Which would also work if their Soldier went off grid, like he has,” Fitz said. “I mean, if the machine hides the memories away, it might be able to bring them back too if they recalibrate it.”

“Which means the Soldier wouldn’t be able to force them to fix him if he defected,” Clint nodded, sounding approving. Fitz flushed, a pleased smile lifting his lips at the praise. He turned to Darcy, eyebrows raised high in question. She shrugged. He rolled his eyes.

One of these days… Charm sighed wistfully. Darcy smiled slightly, eyes crinkling in amusement.

One of these days, she agreed and then focused back on Clint. “So am I correct in assuming you’re coming?”

He nodded, straightening from his slouch. “Let me get my gear.” He disappeared into Vision’s room, where he’d apparently slept the night before.

“So the Old Man’s coming, huh?” Pietro asked, sidling up to her side. He wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her into his side as Skye and Fitz repacked his things.

“We need to humor the mother-hen,” she reminded him. “Otherwise, he gets annoyed and then we get annoyed and then Cap and Nat beats us all up in training when we stop by to report in.” Pietro snickered.

“I am not a mother-hen,” Clint grumbled, returning with the case that housed his travel bow and quiver.

“So says you, Old Man,” Pietro replied instantly. Clint responded quite maturely by flipping him the bird.

Brooklyn, New York

He’d disappeared the moment he’d heard movement coming up the stairwell. The building he was in was fully abandoned, there should have been no one there. Yet as he watched from a second vantage point, he could clearly see a group of people plopping down mere feet from where he’d been sitting.

That’s an Avenger, Bucky said when they focused on the oldest of the five people. The other four were clearly much younger, though all but one showed an awareness not typical for their age range. They must be agents of some kind.

HYDRA? He asked back, hand tightening on his rifle as the Avenger looked around, as if sensing the scrutiny. He wasn’t the only one, the one with white hair (Bleached, Bucky scoffed in his head) and the two dark haired women also seemed uneasy. They did not seem to know why, but they were. Only the curly-haired man setting up what looked like computer equipment appeared completely at ease.

Or as completely at ease as he can by, casing the joint, Bucky noted and the Soldier blinked, studying the scene again. Bucky was right, he decided. They were observing the HYDRA base.

Have the Avenger’s finally realized there is a HYDRA base here?
Maybe, Bucky shrugged. *Steve always was the smart one...well, most of the time. He’s done some pretty stupid shit but he usually had a reason. Dumbass reasons, but he had ‘em.*

**The Captain is not there,** he reminded Bucky as they watched the two women confer quickly with the tech before settling down on the rooftop, the one next to the white-haired man and the other next to the one at the computers. The older man had pulled out his bow and was working on it as the white-haired kid next to him observed the HYDRA base through binoculars. None of them seemed happy but what they were observing.

Realizing they weren’t leaving anytime soon, the Soldier went in search of a vantage point that would allow him to watch both this new group and the HYDRA base.

~~*~~

“He’s here,” Clint announced calmly to Pietro and Darcy, keeping his voice as soft as possible so as not to alert the two agents nearby. He knew Darcy at least trusted their handler but he wasn’t willing to risk the loss of Steve’s best friend, not until he knew more. Darcy was being too cagey on just who that handler was (not to mention, Clint hadn’t even known May was back in the field, let alone training anyone). He trusted Darcy, he did not always trust her instincts.

Pietro went still next to him and Darcy’s eyes flashed as Charm took over. “How can you tell?” she asked.

“Who else is going to be watching us watch HYDRA?” he asked with a mirthful smirk. “Besides, I could see the glint of his rifle when we came in and there are signs of a long vigil on this rooftop.”

“We took his spot?” Pietro asked then, keeping his voice just as low. The two SHIELD agents didn’t seem to notice.

“Not Sheldon-style took but close enough,” he agreed. Pietro looked confused. He raised an eyebrow. “Darce hasn’t introduced you yet to The Big Bang Theory, has she?”

“Is that a movie or a TV show?” he asked wearily, as if he’d been through similar conversations in the past.

Clint chuckled as Charm shot her boyfriend a commiserating look. As the two talked, Charm obviously fighting to keep Darcy from taking control and arguing with them, he went back to observing both the HYDRA base and the surrounding rooftops. His instinct, the same ones he trusted when he brought in Natasha, told him they were fine. He didn’t sense they were in any danger and he was pretty sure the Soldier was smart enough to realize HYDRA agents wouldn’t be spying on their own base. So they were safe, for now. If anything, anything at all changed, well... he’d brought his bow for a reason.

Another glint and he turned his head slightly to find the Soldier staring straight back at him, his body almost completely hidden in the shadows. If it wasn’t for the glint, he might not have noticed him for a while. He side-eyed the lovebirds (Darcy had finally wrestled back control and was lecturing them both about the importance of understanding media) before focusing back on the Soldier. He gave a brief nod and then deliberately turned back to the ground below.

It’s Natasha all over again, he thought to himself with a smile. Hopefully this turns out just as well, even without Coulson here to back me up.

**Undisclosed Location**
Phil Coulson smiled as the satellites showed him exactly what he’d been hoping they would show him. Skye and Fitz had found themselves with one of his best.
Can you hear my voice this time?

Chapter Summary

This was really not what he signed up for.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

**Brooklyn, New York**

Though he wanted to from the moment the door closed behind him, he didn’t let out the breath of relief until he was a block from the office building. By then, he was far enough away that it wasn’t as much of a danger than if he’d revealed himself so close.

When he’d applied for the internship in the paper, he’d been expecting an insurance company trying to make a come-back. Safe, normal, something he wouldn’t have to lie to anyone about. Instead, after he’d already been hired and signed a ridiculous amount of paperwork, one of which was an NDA, he’d found it wasn’t even close to what he’d actually be doing. Figures. He goes looking for normal, he gets SHIELD.

To make matters worse, it had taken him all of three days to realize this was not actually SHIELD. Oh, they were certainly pretending to be but some of what they were working on in the medical field alone…no, after three days he’d come to the horrifying conclusion this was actually a HYDRA cell still with access to some of SHIELD’s resources.

Apparently, the universe had a sick sense of humor. Either that or he was in his spot for a reason, had been steered to this building in Brooklyn to do something. So, given all that, he’d told Gwen and the two had been planning on what to do. She wanted to alert the Avengers and while he was actually all for that, he thought it would be a good idea to get some more information before he sent a blind tip to the big guns. Gwen hadn’t been happy but she hadn’t argued either so he had continued his charade, gathering as much information as he was able to get on their operations and the layout of the place.

Luckily they hadn’t yet caught on to the, ahem, spider in their midst. Which meant it would be so much easier to take them out once he gave the Avengers the file he’d been meticulously organizing for whenever he decided it was enough.

Turning the collar up on his jacket, Peter Parker, also known as Spiderman, headed for home, copied classified files hidden safely in his pants.

~~*~~

“Clint?” Darcy asked, staring down the street at the figure they’d watch leave the building.

“Yeah?” Clint had a disturbed look on his face. Everyone else just looked confused or bored.

“Was that who I think it was?” she asked. She’d been read in (ie, Clint had a big mouth when he was drunk) about the Avengers having an identity for the red and blue clad New York vigilante. The first moment she could, she’d looked into the kid.
“Yup.”

“What is he doing in a HYDRA base?”

“Probably getting himself into trouble,” Clint answered with a grimace. “Knowing the kids luck, he doesn’t even realize what they actually do.”

“He’s smart though,” Darcy pointed out, ignoring the growing scowl on her boyfriend’s face. This was not something she’d remembered to share with him so he was clueless as Skye and Fitz. “He might have already figured it out.”

“Then why would he still—” He cut himself off, slapping a hand to his face as he groaned. “Son of a bitch, he’s doing recon.”

“He’s…”

“Either he doesn’t have a clue or he does and he’s doing recon,” he growled, snapping his bow up. “Either one won’t end well for him when he’s found out. I’m going after him. You guys stay here, we need to know as much as possible about these people.”

“Should one of us go with you?” Skye asked, standing up. “As backup?”

“I think I can handle a seventeen year old kid,” Clint drawled.

“Even one with his particular skill-set?” Darcy asked skeptically. She herself could freeze him before he swung away but Clint’s method would probably end in a lot of bruises—for both of them.

“I’ll go with,” Skye offered, already checking her things.

Clint opened his mouth, clearly intending to argue, but Pietro beat him to it. “You will take backup or I will tell Natasha and Laura. At the same time.”

Darcy snickered as Clint blanched.

~~*~~

Skye watched, hiding her amusement, as Clint stalked down the street. Despite his arguing that he wasn’t scared of Natasha (Black Widow, she barely bit back a squeal) and Laura (whoever that was), he’d caved remarkably fast to having her go with. He wasn’t happy about it but he’d stopped arguing. They could still see the figure down the street, walking at a steady but not rushed pace. He wasn’t in any hurry and didn’t seem to realize he’d gained a tail. She wondered just who he was.

“So, question,” Barton said suddenly, turning around and walking down the street backwards. She kept an eye on the teen but focused on the other agent. “Who’s your handler?”

Shit. “Um…”

“Cause Darcy’s being pretty tight-lipped about it and while I know May, I also know she wouldn’t just up and train someone without some incentive…or an order from someone she likes and respects,” he continued as if she hadn’t spoken. “And the list of people she trusts has always been pretty damn short and I imagine it’s gotten even smaller since Cap exposed HYDRA.”

“It has,” she agreed. She decided to try and distract him. It likely wouldn’t work but at the very least they’d keep an eye out. “If you see Agent Grant Ward, take him. He was a HYDRA mole in my team. We’re all a little anxious to get him.”
Barton nodded but even she, who didn’t know him all that well, could tell he wasn’t distracted. “And just who is leading your team?”

“Director of New SHIELD,” she answered evasively. “Fury gave him the gig.”

Barton pinched the bridge of his nose, still walking backwards. “Alright, nice deflection but just an FYI, your poker face sucks.”

“I’m working on it,” Skye answered wryly. That was actually May’s biggest complaint with her recently, actually.

“Also, you gave me way too much info there,” he informed her. “Because the list of people Fury trusts is even shorter than May’s. What I want to know, is just how long Coulson thought he was going to stay in hiding from us?”

Skye stopped abruptly, eyes wide as she stared at him. Barton’s lips twisted in a grim smile, his eyes dark. “And if I wasn’t sure before, that tells me I got it right. You really need to work on your responses. Phil’s slacking. Continue walking, we don’t want to lose him.”

She did as ordered, even as she mentally thought of whether or not to deny it. Finally she decided Lewis had been right, AC really should have told the Avengers a while ago. “He had Ward training me and while that was good for fighting, no one thought about the rest,” she told him. “And just curious, was he always that annoying with his ‘professional resting face?’ Cause it drives me ‘round the bend most of the time.”

Barton barked out a laugh, loud enough to catch the attention of the guy they were following. He looked over his shoulder, studied the two a moment, and must have decided they weren’t a threat because he shrugged and continued on his way.

“Yeah, he’s always been that way,” he agreed. “Get used to it.”

“How long have you known?”

“We never saw Phil’s body and while Fury’s reasoning about the spear made sense, Natasha and I are the best for a reason,” he shrugged. “We suspected it for a while and then when she was dumping all the SHIELD files, she sent anything having to do with Phil to herself. TAHITI and the new 804 team was part of that.”

Skye felt her skin suddenly chill. “DO you know what TAHITI was?” she asked. “And did you know about me?”

“No, what TAHITI was wasn’t in the dump, we figured it was a black out op Fury oversaw personally, he never liked letting go of his people,” he shrugged. “All we know about it was it was able to heal Phil. That’s all we cared about. As for you, no. Natasha does but she said he’d surrounded himself with good people, minus Ward, so I didn’t dig. I trust her judgment.”

“But…”

“If you don’t think Natasha looked into every single scrape she could find about you the moment she found out you were with Phil, you are not a very good agent,” he told her seriously. “There is nothing she takes more seriously than the safety of those she respects and likes.”

Skye swallowed, feeling a bit lightheaded. Part of her was rejoicing that the Black Widow had trusted her to protect AC. The bigger part of her though felt nauseated because the Black Widow trusted her to protect AC. She winced and suddenly felt really really sorry for Mack.
They were approaching a subway station now and she could see the figure walking towards the entrance. She motioned behind him and Barton nodded, getting it. By mutual agreement, they tabled the conversation for the time being. Barton sped up, bow hidden somewhere on his person. She hurried to catch up and was back in hearing range just in time to see him grab the guys elbow and direct the teen away from the stairs with a firm “We need to talk, kid.”

She followed as they were led away, wondering if she would finally find out just why Barton and Lewis had been so concerned about the teenager.

~~*~~

Peter held himself together as he was dragged out of the street and into an alley. He hadn’t thought much about the couple following him until he’d felt the man grab him. Then he’d felt panic. He was in his civilian clothes, he didn’t have his suit on him (he’d stopped wearing it to the internship the moment he’d realized the truth). He couldn’t do anything too big or he’d blow his cover.

“You are one stupid kid, you know that?” the stranger said, voice aggravated and also…concerned? Wait, what?

“What?”

“I mean, yeah, all the spider’s I know can do some really stupid shit—do not tell Darcy or Natasha I said that—” was thrown at the woman as Peter felt all the blood leave his face. “But seriously, recon on HYDRA? You’re a lone-spider, Parker, you’re going to get yourself killed.”

“I took down The Lizard!” he argued before he thought better of it. He couldn’t see the stranger’s face, he was standing in the shadows, but he heard the snort.

“I know dumb luck when I see it,” the stranger retorted as the woman looked startled. He didn’t think she’d known his identity before. So the man had known and hadn’t told her…wait, how did they know about HYDRA?

“How do you know about HYDRA?” he demanded. “And who are you?”

The man stepped out of the shadows, arms crossed and scowling at him. Peter felt a bit lightheaded as relief flowed through him. “Go by Hawkeye,” the man said, introducing himself needlessly since Peter had recognized him the moment he’d hit the light. “And we’ve been watching that base for a few hours…well, we’ve been watching for a few hours, not sure about the Soldier.”

He and Hawkeye were both frowning, probably for different reasons, but Peter was distracted by the woman making a strangled sound. “The Soldier? He’s here?!” she got out. Hawkeye turned to look at her, a slight smile on his face. She got herself back together and scowled at him. “AC was right, you are a little shit.”

“You know, I think that’s the nicest thing he’s ever said about me to a new recruit,” Hawkeye mused with a quick grin. It faded as he turned back to Peter. “You’re an idiot.”

“As my girlfriend has told me many many times,” he agreed. He wiggled a bit and then pulled out the file. “But I’m a resourceful idiot?”

He winced as it came out as more of a question than a statement. What a great impression he was making on the Avenger. A+, Parker, great work.

Hawkeye smirked as if he could hear his inner thoughts. The woman plucked the file out of his hand and started flipping through it as a phone rang.
“Just a day job that someone’s gotta do, it’s kinda hard when everyone looks up to you, try to make it look easy, gonna make it look good—”

“That’s your ringtone?” the woman asked, amused as she looked over the top of the file to stare at the fumbling Hawkeye.

“I blame Darcy, she was playing with my phone earlier, the chorus is her ringtone for me,” he grumbled, finally pulling it out. Peter wondered if he should take this chance to run off but a bigger part of him was more interested in just what was going on…and how the Avenger knew his secret. Hawkeye glared the the phone as he pressed talk. “Speak of the devil, what do you need Darce, I’m kinda in the middle of something?”

Peter watched, entranced, as Hawkeye’s face filled with annoyance and exasperation as the woman on the phone spoke. He fought with himself not to listen in.

“Of course he did,” he muttered. “His sister’s going to kill him.”

“Not if I don’t get there first,” the woman on the line said just loud enough for Peter to make out if he strained a bit.

“We’ll be there in five, don’t do anything stupid Darce,” he ordered.

“I can’t, he took all the stupid with him,” the woman complained. Despite the obvious seriousness of the situation, Peter’s lips twitched. She’d sounded remarkably like Gwen in a snit there. There was a startled shriek through the line then and Peter and Hawkeye both tensed. “Oh, hey, guess who just decided to join the fun? This was so not the plan we had made up for this meeting.”

“We’re coming, freeze him and wait for us,” he ordered again and then snapped the phone off before she could reply. He turned to the other woman, who was watching him in concern. “Soldier’s officially joined the party.”

“We’re gonna have to talk about our communication,” she scowled. Hawkeye didn’t bother with a reply, just turned and headed back the way he’d come. Peter debated a moment and then sighed, resigned, as he jogged to catch up.

Gwen was going to kill him when she found out about this.

Chapter End Notes

Apparently Clint decided he knew all along. *sighs* This was not the plan, Barton!
Also, cookies to those of you who get the ringtone!
“I thought I told you to freeze him?!” was the first thing Charm heard when Hawkeye, Skye, and Spiderman all appeared on the rooftop. She startled slightly when the Winter Soldier immediately pulled a pistol on the latter, not wavering as the kid stared wide-eyed. “Would you drop that?” Hawkeye demanded irritably, stepping forward and pushing the gun down. Charm was fairly certain the only reason it worked was due to surprise. She somehow doubted the Soldier had been expecting the act. Hawkeye looked straight at the Soldier, a mullish expression on his face and just begging to be argued with. “He’s one of us. More or less.”

“He’s been coming for two weeks,” the Soldier said, his voice filled with gravel. Despite his words, he holstered his gun. Hawkeye relaxed somewhat.

“He speaks!” Darcy managed to get out before, scowling, Charm took back control.

Now is not the time to be fighting me, she ordered firmly. Not until we know what is going on with the Soldier. Understood?

Understood. Not liked.

You don’t have to like it, you just have to understand it and follow it.

She ignored the mental image of Darcy sticking her tongue out at her.

“You have spent too much time with Darcy,” Hawkeye informed her, fingers going to the bridge of his nose and obviously not realizing it was not Charm who had spoken. Skye and Fitz both looked very confused.

Hey! Darcy shouted in her head. Aloud, Charm told him “It is not like I can help it.”

“Yes, you’ve been in and out because he’s an idiot,” he told him. Spiderman looked down at his shoes, scuffing his toes. Hawkeye rolled his eyes. “You were both doing recon, his was just more involved.”

“Did you see a room with a chair in it? Had the headpiece from hell?”

The voice that came out of the Soldier then wasn’t the gravel it had been before. This one was just as rough but it had a different tilt to it, not lighter but…she didn’t know how to describe it.

Brooklyn, Darcy said softly. The word you’re looking for is Brooklyn. I’ll bet my entire stash of hidden poptarts that wasn’t the Soldier, that was Bucky.
You have a stash of hidden poptarts I don’t know about? she asked as Hawkeye eyed the Soldier funnily; he too must have heard the difference. She frowned. Wait, Bucky?

“You know me?”

“I’m a friend of Steve’s,” Hawkeye answered, something in his stance relaxing. “He’s gonna be thrilled you’re still in there.”

“I…” he trailed off and Charm was entranced at the almost physical transformation his face took then. Words failed her but she just knew this was the Soldier again. “Have you told him about us?”

“I haven’t,” Hawkeye shook his head. He glanced at Charm. “You’re the one Steve asked to hunt Barnes and the Soldier down, did you tell him yet you found him?”

“No,” she answered. “Darcy wanted the Soldier and Barnes to be the ones to make that decision, to inform the Captain of their whereabouts. He won’t find out from us.”

“Hold on, wait a second,” Skye interrupted then. “Darcy, why are you talking in the third person…”

Hawkeye raised both eyebrows at her and, surprisingly, she was able to parcel out what he was asking. She turned to the two agents and studied them. She sent a mental inquiry and Darcy replied in the affirmative. *They all need to know what the hell is going on before they end up finding out in the middle of some fight*, Darcy pointed out. The second persona nodded. “Because my name is Charm,” she answered. “Like the Soldier, I was created when Darcy was subjected to the Recalibration Chair. Before now, you have mostly dealt with Darcy.”

“Like…a split personality?” Skye asked, frowning. Fitz looked half alarmed, half fascinated but he wasn’t as surprised as his friend. The other brunette didn’t seem to notice. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the Soldier’s eyes widen, the only expression of surprise to be seen. Parker just looked confused.

“Precisely,” Charm answered, focusing back on the woman. “We are two persona’s sharing the same body. However, I can see and hear everything Darcy does and vice versa…She says to tell you not to worry, she won’t go all Norman Bates on you.” Charm paused, frowning, before turning to the smirking Hawkeye. “I do not want to know what she is talking about, do I?”

“Probably not,” Hawkeye answered with a quick grin. It faded to a fierce scowl as Pietro skidded to a stop in front of them. “You are an idiot. What have I told you about running into danger? I said don’t do it!”

“There are apparently a lot of idiots around here today,” she heard Spiderman mutter to himself. Darcy cackled in her head.

*I like him! I wasn’t sure I would, but I do!*

“I got the lay of the land,” Pietro told him, not bothered in the least by Hawkeye’s glare. He did, however, eye the soldier warily. Charm could not blame him, the Soldier had pulled out a knife and though he was keeping it at his side, she did not doubt he would use it if he felt the need. Pietro turned back to Hawkeye. “And we need to move fast. I heard one of the scientists talking—they
“Damnit,” Hawkeye groaned. “Alright, we go in tonight. Parker, think you and Pietro can get us a workable layout?”

“I…think so?” Spiderman said, looking hesitantly at the enhanced. Pietro scowled back at him.

*Please?* Darcy pleaded and Charm relinquished control. The moment she could, Darcy moved forward and smacked Pietro on the back of the head.

“Ow!” he scowled. “What was that for?!”

“Being a dumbass!” she scowled. “We’ll talk about your decision to run back into a HYDRA base at another time. But stop being a brat and work with Parker. He’s a *kid*!”

“Hey!” Parker exclaimed, no doubt annoyed at the special emphasis she had put on the last word. Pietro had relaxed though so nodding in satisfaction, she allowed Charm to take back control.

Charm turned away from the man, not wanting to see her smile, and caught sight of the Soldier. He was smiling slightly as he watched them. He caught her eye and his features immediately slipped back into a mask. She smiled knowingly at him. He scowled back.

*That’s gonna be a fun one,* Darcy snorted.

~~*~~

It took them about two hours to come up with a workable plan. Partly because Pietro and Spiderman kept remembering things that screwed everything up and partly because they spent almost forty-five minutes arguing and/or having to ignore the Soldier. He seemed to be under the impression he was going in alone and they would be the distraction. Finally, Darcy got through to Barnes and though the Soldier obviously didn’t like it, he agreed to allow them to “accompany” him.

“Allright, any last minute questions?” Charm asked, looking around. Everyone shook their heads, aware of their roles. Spiderman was looking a little green but his expression was pure determination. Fitz was fiddling with his side-arm and Skye was watching him with a fond expression. Pietro was already gone, getting into place. The Soldier had also disappeared. Barton, she realized, was watching her in amusement and just a hint of pride.

“What?”

“Steve chose well.”

Chapter End Notes

I am so so sorry about the lateness of this. My official contract year at work started this week so I’ve been getting ready for the kids on Monday (holy hell do I still have a lot to do!) and before that my dad dragged me on a camping/fishing trip. I don’t know when the next chapter will be up but I promise it will be in the next week.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!