A collection of smutty reader inserts. Expanded to Marvel as a whole, instead of just X-men. Feel free to request a one-shot, but know it might take time for yours to be completed.

MOST RECENT: Victor Creed x Reader, published 4/7/19
NEXT UP: Unknown, but accepting requests!
Home (Charles Xavier)

\[
\text{When you find Charles Xavier, you know you’ve finally, finally done something right.}
\]

You’ve been able to feel him since you were a child. The presence of another telepath—it lights up the air like a beacon, a constant thrum of energy that pulses in your head, little pieces of sights and sounds and smells from a life that’s not your own. You couldn’t communicate with words—the distance was too much—but you could see pictures, little pieces of his emotions, and you knew him, even though you didn’t even know his name. You’d known him your whole life.

And then, years later, you hear his voice. Loud and echoing in your head, just repeating the same string of numbers, over and over again—coordinates—so you get in your car and you drive and when you meet him—

Fuck. He’s perfect.

He’s distinctly boyish, with wide blue eyes and brown hair that is just a little curly, standing in the front lawn wearing oxfords and a sweater-vest even though it’s eighty degrees outside—somehow you’d expected that. He stares at you for a moment, and his brow furrows, like he’s confused, like he doesn’t know, and then he makes a sound between a laugh and a choked-off sob, and just smiles so wide it looks like it hurts.

He starts walking towards you. Slowly, at first, and then faster and faster, until he’s running across the lawn, crashing into you and sweeping you up into a crushing hug.

“God,” he breathes. “It’s you. It’s really you.”

There’s a long pause as you both try to reorient yourselves, try to get away from the rampant electricity of just being so close to another telepath—you can feel him, inside your head, so distinctly there, the rush of his emotions almost too much to handle, after spending so long being the only one able to feel it. He chuckles, and then you do, too, and pretty soon you’ve both dissolved into breathless, disbelieving laughter.

There is a man behind the two of you, standing in the grass with his hands tucked into his pockets. He’s sharply dressed, and a pair of dark sunglasses covers his eyes. You don’t notice him until he speaks. “Cute,” he interrupts idly, rocking back on his heels with just the barest traces of a smile flitting across his face. “Who’s your friend, Charles?”

Charles. The name fits. It fits almost too well, has a familiar ring to it that makes you smile again. He—Charles—hesitates a moment, and blinks, like he’s coming out of a trance. He pulls away, almost reluctantly, and clears his throat.

“Ah—Erik. This is—well. It’s complicated,” he begins. “She’s—she’s like me. A telepath.”

The man, Erik, nods slowly, and then offers you his hand to shake. You take it. “I’m (Name),” you say.

“Erik Lehnsherr,” he replies. “I assume you’re here to stay?”

A wide smile spreads across your face. “I guess I am.”
For a while, you and Charles Xavier are inseparable.

It’s just—it’s overwhelming, being near another telepath, but that’s not it, it’s more than that. It’s how the two of you balance each other out, how you fit together, like you had only been half of a whole, incomplete, unimportant, until you’d met him. Your lives meld together so seamlessly it’s both terrifying and exhilarating, it’s something you never want to let go of. Not even once, not now that you’ve found him.

Three weeks pass, and it’s a thrill that still hasn’t faded. It’s a thrill that becomes something else.

“—and remember the carnival? When you were nine—“

“Oh, god, no, not the carnival,” Charles laughs, his eyes crinkling up at the edges. “I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again. Spinning teacups are awful.”

“Your face,” you say, giggling. “God, you were terrified.”

“It wasn’t funny,” he complains, trying and failing to suppress his crooked smile. He cards his fingers through his hair, brushing it out of his eyes. You grin.

“Yes, it was.”

“Right, how about your whipped cream fiasco, then? That was worse,” he teases.

“Oh, no, no, no. I do not want to remember that,” you say, your nose scrunching up. “Gross.”

Charles laughs quietly, and leans back against the couch cushions. The two of you lapse into a charged silence. It’s not uncomfortable, just kind of strange. Granted, most things are between the two of you.

“Don’t you think it’s weird?” you ask, after a moment. “Us, having lived through so many moments together the way we did.”

He looks at you searchingly for a moment. “I don’t know,” he murmurs, staring up at the ceiling. You sigh, and rest your head on his shoulder.

He tenses.

You don’t want to notice, but you do. There is a small pause. He’s uncertain, uncomfortable, surprised, a rush of emotions that swirl through your head.

Charles clears his throat.

“I can feel you,” he says quietly. “More so than before. You’re in my head. How are you doing that?”


“I see,” he murmurs. “That’s—odd. I’ve never heard of anything like it.”

Carefully, he reaches down and takes your hand in his, running his thumb over your open palm. He looks at you, his eyes searching your face. “May I?” Charles asks.
You nod.

He presses two fingers to his temple.

There is a moment, just a second, of charged, tense silence, a stillness that feels almost intrusive, and suddenly you’re aware of him, inside your head. You can hear his breathing, and yours, oddly loud and harsh against your ears, and then you’re between heartbeats, the dull thumping pounding rhythm fading and leaving you empty and clear and alive.

*Hello,* Charles says—*thinks*—softly, his voice echoing in your mind. The pulse of energy travels down the length of your body, sets your veins on fire, makes your skin feel electric.

*Hello,* you repeat blankly, struggling to wrap your head around what’s happening. *This is— Amazing?*

*Yeah,* you reply, staring up at him, unable to look away. It’s like everything else—the room around you and the sounds of the other mutants downstairs and the AC buzzing in the window sill—it all just disappears. It’s just you, and Charles, connected. It’s beautiful. *He’s* beautiful.

The faintest trace of a smile flits across his face.

And then—and then he lowers his head, just the slightest bit, his eyes locked on yours—clear blue eyes, *stunning,* really, but that doesn’t matter, not right now. He looks at you, searchingly, like he’s trying to find something—permission—and you realize you could move away, you could stop this, you could let go of his hand and then whatever it is, whatever it’s going to be, would just cease to exist.

You don’t know if you say yes or if Charles just reads your answer on your face, but suddenly, he reaches up and brushes his fingertips along the curve of your cheek down to the line of your jaw, and he looks—stunned, disbelieving, even, his lips parting as he cups the back of your neck, and there’s one sentence in his head that you can hear over and over again—

*God, she is so beautiful.*

You realize with a crushing sort of certainty that his lips are getting closer. You can’t move. You don’t want to move. And then—

“Guys, dinner’s on the table!”

You start. Charles exhales sharply and jerks his hand back as if he’d been burned. The sound of your heartbeats comes back, swells in the silence, and you are reminded powerfully of the fact that you are both still real. The rest of the world rushes in like being doused in cold water. You don’t remember to move away. You should.

Charles clears his throat, and stands up. He adjusts his collar. His movements are jerky and uncertain.

“That was—” he starts, and then pauses, swallowing thickly.

You stare at each other for several long, tense minutes.

He clears his throat. “Shall we go get something to eat, then?”

You stand up. Charles offers you his arm. You don’t have to read his mind to know that he’s fully aware of what that entails, what it would mean for your powers.
You take it.

Naturally, you are both fine.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Charles doesn’t bring it up, after that.

He barely talks about your powers. He never brings up what had happened between you. There is a tangible tension in the air, every second of every day, and it only grows stronger. You don’t like it.

And it had been almost two weeks.

Two weeks. Two weeks you’d skirted around the issue, two weeks you’d ignored it entirely. And now—well, now, you’re in his bedroom. It’s nearly two in the morning. You’re alone. Charles is sitting on his bed with a thick notebook in his lap, scrawling lopsided notes in the margins. You’re splayed out in the sheets, staring up at the ceiling. You’re both tired, and bored, and just the tiniest bit reckless. It’s not the best mix.

Charles closes his book. The sound echoes, and you flinch slightly.

“(Name),” he says, “Can I ask you something?”

“Sure,” you answer. You sit up on the bed, and turn to face him, resting your weight on your palms.

It’s only occasionally that you don’t know what he’s thinking, but right now, his face is unreadable. Completely and utterly enigmatic, and you know he’s doing it on purpose.

You could read his mind.

You could. You could do it right now. But you already know you won’t. And he knows it, too.

“Do you trust me?” Charles asks finally. His eyes are closed.

“Of course I do. You know that,” you say, your voice soft. “What’s this about?”

The barest ghost of a smile touches his lips for a second, before his unreadable expression returns. “I want to try something,” he says slowly. “A—telepathic link. A full one, between you and I.”

“Like what we did a few weeks ago?” you ask.

Charles coughs, and his brow furrows, and when he speaks, you get the distinctive feeling that he’s picking every word very, very carefully. He always does that. But now—there’s something else, something that you can’t put your finger on that’s making his sentences stilted and choppy. “Yes,” he says. “Like that. But—this—it would be… stronger. The intensity would be much more powerful. And… I won’t lie to you. It could be dangerous.”

You nod slowly. “Do you think it will be?”

He hesitated a moment. “No. I don’t.”

You take a deep breath, and exhale slowly. “All right.”

Charles smiles again, and holds out his hands. He still hasn’t opened his eyes. It’s jarring. You don’t know what he’s thinking.
You realize that despite knowing so much about him—his childhood, his life, his hopes and wishes and dreams—you don’t really know him. You don’t know how his brain works, you don’t know what the world looks like to him.

You don’t really know him at all.

You want to.

“Charles,” you say softly, “Open your eyes.”

He does.

For a second, you are stunned.

Because while his eyes are always clear and blue and searing—this is different. It’s something else. Something more. For a second, you can’t breathe. A chill that isn’t a chill runs down your spine. Your muscles are frozen—paralyzed, and you know that this is it, this is the moment—the only moment that matters, the only moment that will ever matter, even if you don’t know why.

You place your hands in his.

He rushes into your head like the ocean at high tide, and it’s a terribly inaccurate metaphor but it’s the closest the English language can get to the sensation. Charles bites his bottom lip, screws his eyes shut, like the sheer force of it all threatens to sweep him off his feet, but it’s more than that—you can feel it, the weight of the power he’s holding back, and god it makes your body feel electric, buzzing with energy.

He’d been right. This is different.

You can hear him in your head.

Closer, he says, and you don’t know what he means until he pulls you towards him, and then your foreheads are touching and his eyes are dilated, flashing, heated—

Your mind goes blank. Or it doesn’t, or it just feels like it, because it’s suddenly too much. You are above the bed. You are energy, radio static, the dust particles in the air, and you can see yourself. You are looking into your own eyes, and your face is backwards. You are looking back at Charles, the images don’t match up—you are above it all, watching yourselves in a way that is utterly impossible to explain. You’re connected to him—to yourself—in a way that doesn’t make sense.

Oh, my God.

Charles laughs disbelievingly, and your head is spinning, and his head is spinning, and you can feel it—every single thought racing through his head, every single memory. It’s too much and not enough at the same time. It’s so confusing that neither of you can begin to rationalize it.

Close your eyes.

You do.

There is a moment of silence. You can hear the mattress springs creak as he moves, the sound of your twin heartbeats, racing, the warmth of his body. It’s too much. It’s all too much, and you’re both trembling, shaking, your skin electric, your entire body lit on fire, a sensation that should have been unpleasant, and maybe in any other situation it would be.
Charles lets out a breathy little “oh” that you can barely hear, and then he says it again, and his voice trembles, his hands clumsy as they move up your arms, to your shoulders and then across your back. You are painfully aware of it, the light callouses on his hands, how soft your skin feels under his palms, his nervousness and anticipation seeping into your mind until you can’t tell the difference between his thoughts and your own anymore.

He moves closer, and his breath is sharp and hot, his mind impossibly loud, screaming out for him to just do it do it do it and for a second, just a second, you’re confused as to what he’s thinking about--

But then--

His lips brush over yours.

Emotions flare up in the back of your mind like fireworks-- surprise, confusion, pleasure-- but then they’re gone, swept away, buried by a wave of helpless, frantic sort of bittersweet need, to feel this, to feel him, this closeness and intimacy that you’ve spent so damn long wanting, a desperate, hopeless desire to no longer feel alone.

You make a sound. Or maybe you don’t, maybe you think it, or maybe Charles just knows, because suddenly he’s there, his arms warm and inviting and his body pressed against yours, kissing you harder, his telepathic shields breaking, shattering into a thousand million pieces--

With a soft, heady moan, his hands move from your shoulders to the back of your head, and his fingers wind in your hair, tugging you closer, and then his lips are gone from yours and he’s placing gentle little kisses over your cheeks and your forehead and your nose. Your fingers curl into the front of his shirt, knuckles white, as he pulls away and looks at you-- just looks at you, as if you’re not real, as if he can’t bring himself to believe that you’re real, and you realize that you’re probably looking at him the same way, willing yourself to memorize his face, the curve of his nose and his long eyelashes that brush his cheeks when he blinks and the soft fullness of his lips, because this, this, is something you never, ever want to forget.

“(Name),” Charles says, his voice hoarse and strangely loud in the ensuing silence. “God, (Name), god, I--”

Whatever he had been about to say is swept away when he leans forward and kisses you again, frantic, like he can’t stop himself, or he doesn’t want to stop himself, and then his tongue is coaxing your mouth open, and he tastes like toothpaste and peppermint and coffee and something achingly, painfully familiar. Charles pulls you closer and into his lap, and you reach up to tangle your fingers in his hair, digging lightly into his scalp and drawing a frantic little moan from him that pulses and vibrates through your entire nervous system. You realize, dimly, that you can feel him, his cock hard and hot and pressing against you. You roll your hips, just a little, and Charles pulls back with a helpless groan, his bottom lip is red and swollen, reddening even more as he bites it, his blue eyes wide and focused intently on your face.

And then he’s in your head, again, surging, the entirety of his mind and yours connecting. You don’t hear his voice but you can see what he wants, what he wants to do to you, for you, asking your permission, and you’re replying yes yes of course yes before you can even think about it.

Charles screws his eyes shut, and you can feel his muscles tense up beneath you as he lets out a faint moan.

“I won’t ask why, but--” he swallows thickly, “I don’t-- I don’t want you to regret this. To regret me.”
“Charles, I won’t, I couldn’t,” you say, as you trace up his chest and then cup his cheek, brushing his hair out of his eyes-- fuck, he’s fucking perfect-- and he looks at you for a long moment, almost disbelievingly, like he can’t quite wrap his head around what you said. And then his lips part, and he lets out a breath you hadn’t realized he had been holding.

And then--

He’s grappling with the zipper of your skirt, his hands clumsy, unpracticed, uncertain, it slides down your thighs and then you’re moving back, tugging it off, tossing it away as Charles fumbles with the buttons on his slightly-too-big sweater vest, pulling it off and over his head. You lie back against one of his pillows--it smells like him, like peppermint and black licorice and books-- and Charles splays his hands on either side of your head, his hips fitting snugly between your thighs as he kisses you, his tongue in your mouth, one hand coming up to struggle with your button-down.

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“You’re perfect,” he mumbles. “My God.”

The raw intensity in his voice made you shiver, and you are suddenly more aware of him than you were before. And then his shirt and tie disappear, and your bra lies discarded on the floor, and then his slacks and your panties and then you are both completely bare, his cock hard and heavy against your inner thigh, his mouth warm and soft as he kisses across your chest. He’s trembling, and his fingers barely ghost over your skin, pressing against your clit with varying degrees of pressure-- hard, soft, hard, soft-- and then he’s pushing two fingers inside of you, his breath labored and nearly disbelieving, and you moan, fingers digging into his shoulders, leaving little crescent shaped marks.

“Your shirt--” he gasps. “Off, now.”

You sit up, and tug it up off over your head, not even bothering to undo the buttons, tossing it aside. And then everything seems to slow down, and Charles just stares at you, almost reverently, his thumb skimming over the lace edge of your bra.

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“Your shirt--” he stumbles over his words, his voice hoarse-- “God, (Name), I want-- Please, tell me you’re ready.”

He removes his fingers and you feel their loss so fucking intensely you nearly gasp, but then Charles sits up and you move into his lap, hands grasping the back of his head, curling in his hair as he positions himself between your legs. It’s getting to him, you can see it, a flush creeping down his chest and a layer of sweat across his forehead, his eyes gone wide and dilated as he watches you.

And then he pushes in, slowly, carefully, too slowly.

“And then he pushes in, slowly, carefully, too slowly.

“Charles,” you plead, and he gasps like he’s been shocked as soon as you say his name. You watch his bottom lip quiver as he bites it, his eyes meet yours, liquid and pleading, and then he surges forward.

It hurts. You expected it. But you don’t expect the feeling of being so full, hot and cold and good, and then Charles starts to move, slowly, irregular thrusts that send flares of sensation up and down your spine, and then you start to rock your hips in shallow movements that draw out fretful little moans from his mouth. Your body feels like it’s on fire. You can feel it, the intensity of it all, building and coiling inside your stomach, and it can’t get stronger than this, you know it can’t.

Charles is smothering his own gasps as you rock against him, one hand brought up to his mouth, biting on his knuckles, his hair damp and slick with sweat. His eyes lock with yours, and he’s pleading with you for something. You know what he wants. He wants to use telepathy. He wants to be connected so completely that there would never be anything like it. Not with anyone else.
Charles knows already that it would only be him. But this is his way of making sure of it.
You lean forward, and press your forehead to his.

He gasps. And whatever happens, whatever connects the two of you is raw and electric and soaks you right down to your bones, surges through your veins, and just like that, Charles fills you utterly and completely. You aren’t inside your body anymore. You are inside his, you can feel what he feels and you can feel what you feel, too, you have two right arms, you are in between heartbeats, your breathing out of sync, you are him and he is you and you are the same, and you are exactly, precisely the same—

You know, you just know, that every single cell in your body and his body, they are all connected and involved in something fucking enormous, that won’t stop building and building and building, until it’s almost painful. Because--

When two telepaths read each other’s minds, it’s not a connection. It is more than that. It is everything inside your head doubling back in on itself, it is a mirror’s reflection— endless and impossible and huge, a hundred thousand moments in a hundred thousand universes all happening at the same time.

And with every single rock of his hips against yours, you could feel it, the sensation echoing between you, doubling back on itself, growing and growing and growing until it threatened to drown you. It can’t be described as anything other than physical and raw. You’re intensely aware of Charles’ eyes, his fucking endless eyes, locked to yours, and you can’t look away, never look away--

His fingers dig into your shoulders, holding on, trying to anchor himself, his helpless little moans buried in the crook of your neck as you ride him, the pleasure threatening to drown you but not nearly strong enough to block out the litany of oh God Charles please more Charles yes god yes you feel so good so good God I can’t Charles please Charles--

And then--

You can’t breathe. You can’t think. Your eyes screw shut, and there, there it is, the electric pulsing static charge barreling through your body, sharp and startling and nearly painful, and your body was preparing itself for something— something big and much more powerful than anything you’ve ever felt— and you could feel it, coiling like a snake in your stomach, multiplying and multiplying and reflecting back on Charles and then back onto yourself. Charles is breathing heavy, his hips jolting up off the mattress, making broken little noises in the back of his throat, and it’s good, so fucking good, but it’s not enough. You have to see him. You want him to see your face and you want to see his, you want to watch him come apart like this, to know that this is on purpose, this is completely intentional.

You open your eyes.

He glances up, like he’s been waiting for this, for you, and then--

The building impossible coil of utter and complete pleasure flares, fucking explodes, rushes through your body and his body and you’re falling, falling hard and fast and trembling, struggling to stay above the maddening wave of complete bliss, and you can hear Charles swear, the shout ripped from his lungs as he comes, hard, his mouth opening in a perfect O, as the wave crests and crashes down again, rips out something that sounds like a sob from his lungs, or yours, or both, as a thousand million reflections of this moment pulse and ripple through your bodies--
The last wave crests and falls, draws out quiet sounds from the back of your throat.

And then it's over.

You crash, the last tongues of sensation drawing out and sending aftershocks ripping down your spine. You and Charles fall to the bed, a tangle of limbs, curled up together as you both struggle to regain your senses.

When you reorient yourself, you’re tucked under Charles’ arm, leaning against his chest. You feel connected to him, still. It’s good. It fills an empty part of you that you didn’t even know you had.

Charles rolls over and buries his face in your hair.
“Thank you,” he mumbles softly.

I love you, his voice says in your head.
Better (Logan)

Chapter Summary

For the lovely and patient Lady_Rowboatt! I hope you like it!

Chapter Notes

Two things for this fic:
--The reader is around 20-22. Logan only calls her "kid" because he's around 200 years old, give or take a few decades. (headcanon that he, at one point, has called everyone kid with various results-- some don't care, and some, like Professor X, utterly despise it)
--Headcanon!Modern!Logan listens to a lot of stuff like Pearl Jam, Smashing Pumpkins, The Who, etc

You don’t remember getting shot. Not really.

You remember bits and pieces. You remember how much it hurt, so bad that you couldn’t breathe and your muscles stopped working and you just fell, you remember the blood, you remember feeling like you weren’t real, like it wasn’t happening, and you remember someone yelling—screaming, really, and maybe it was you, as everything started to just slow down you fell to the ground.

Seven hours later and you’re opening your eyes to see the white, arched ceiling of the Xavier School’s infirmary. There are canopies of hazy, tinted afternoon sun filtering in through the half-drawn blinds, and the narrow cot that you lay on is the closest to the window, even though you’re pretty sure you hadn’t been conscious to tell anyone that you liked it that way when you came in. Which means someone had remembered.

That someone is sitting in a hard plastic chair beside your bed.

He looks—agitated. His elbows rest on his knees, his body tense and his head bowed.

“Logan,” you say quietly.

Logan starts, and looks up. There’s a flicker of fierce relief in his eyes, followed almost immediately by anger, and you don’t have time to figure out who it’s aimed at—you or himself—because almost immediately he’s pushing up off of his chair and leaning over, hugging you tightly.

He smells like smoke and dirt and blood—he hadn’t cleaned up after the fight, you realize, as you wrap your arms around his neck and bury your face in his shoulder. You know without asking that he hasn’t left your side the whole time, because he’s Logan, and that’s what he does.

“Thank fuck, you’re all right,” Logan mumbles finally, his face pressed into your hair. “You scared the living hell out of me, kid.”

“Sorry,” you reply, as he kisses the top of your forehead.
Logan doesn’t reply. He just holds you, silently, for a long, long time, his breathing shallow and his body tense and his eyes screwed shut, and for a second you are confused, because while Logan has always been fiercely protective about the people he cares about, this is—

Not good different or bad different, just—different. Like he hadn’t quite realized that you were mortal and temporary (as far as you know, anyway, you can never quite tell with mutants) and that one day he might just wake up and find out that you’re gone, and he’s still there, alone.

“It’s all right, I’m fine,” you say quietly. “I’m okay.”

Logan pulls away, and sits back down. He laughs. His voice is hoarse. “Damn it. Damn it, I shoulda been there, I could’ve—”

“Stop it,” you mumble, leaning your head back against the single white pillow behind you and staring up at the ceiling. There’s a dull throbbing sensation on your left side. You ignore it. “It’s not your fault.”

There’s a pause, and Logan opens his mouth like he’s going to argue, but then he closes it again abruptly and sort of slumps tiredly in his chair. He stares out the window for a long moment. And then he takes your hand in his, almost without thinking about it, and runs the calloused pad of his thumb over your knuckles.

“Nobody would say anythin’,” he says quietly. “Tell me what happened.”

You start to shake your head.

But then you stop.

Because—Logan gives you this look, and his eyes are filled with something strong and fierce and indescribable that makes you freeze, for a moment, and then before you know what you’re doing your hand is reaching for the hem of your hospital shirt.

The white fabric is cheap and scratchy, the seam already splitting, and you are acutely aware how it feels between your fingers.

And then you pull it up, exposing the raw, uneven stitch of the bullet wound.

Logan sucks in a breath. He doesn’t react for a minute, and the only sign of his distress is the way his hand tightens reflexively around yours.

“It was—well,” you say quietly, staring down at the stitches and ignoring the slight tremble in your voice. “I was shot.”

The ensuing silence is thick and uncomfortable, almost solid in the space between your bodies, and you swear you can hear your own heart beating erratically in your chest.

Logan lets out a breath, as his other hand hovers over the wound. His fingers brush hesitantly over the uneven stitches. He’s shaking.

“T—I—” You stare hard at your hospital sheets. “It was just supposed to be a border skirmish—me, Storm, Rogue, Bobby and Scott against a couple from the Brotherhood— but—Magneto showed up, and nobody thought he would so we weren’t prepared, and—and Rogue had a gun, you know? Because she has to get close range to use her powers—but he just—Magneto made it fly to him and he tried to shoot Bobby and Bobby deflected it with ice and—“
Your voice catches. There’s a lump in your throat, you can feel the pricking sensation of tears at the corners of your eyes, and you blink them away furiously—you can’t cry. You won’t.

You look up.

Logan isn’t moving. He isn’t talking. He’s completely and utterly immobile, his face stony and unreadable, eyes screwed shut and nostrils flared as he takes a sharp breath in through his nose, and then he speaks, just one word, harsh and guttural and violent.

“Fuck.”

His lips are drawn taut in a thin, flat line. He doesn’t open his eyes, but his hand, the one that had been hovering over your bullet wound, grips the rail on the side of your cot so hard that his knuckles turn white, skin straining with the pressure of holding back his claws, and he looks—vicious. Deadly.

“I’m gonna fucking kill him.”

For a second—just a second—you think that maybe, maybe, Logan is exaggerating, maybe he doesn’t mean it—but then he opens his eyes, and they’re filled with rage, hot and blinding and dark, and he looks—

He looks murderous.

He looks dangerous.

He looks like he meant every single word that he said.

Logan gets up, and the plastic chair scrapes loudly across the linoleum floor. His eyes flash. And then he turns towards the door, his hands clenched at his sides, flinty claws sliding free from between his knuckles, catching the light from the window and glinting in the sun.

“Don’t,” you say. “Don’t, don’t—stop it—Logan!”

He freezes as soon as you say his name, and his claws retract slowly back into his hands. He looks back at you.

“Don’t do it,” you say. “Leave Bobby alone. It’s not his fault.”

Logan looks at you for a long moment, and then the tenseness in his shoulders slowly fades. He takes a deep breath, and sits back down at your bedside.

“Fine,” he says gruffly, after a minute, and offers you a paper-thin smile, his lips pressed tightly together. At least he’s trying.

You smile back.

He takes your hand again.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

Over the course of your recovery, the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, and you find yourself spending more time with Logan.

He comes back to visit every day for the next two weeks, occasionally with somebody tagging along —Bobby or Rogue or Jean—and you spend your time talking and laughing and eating nearly every
kind of Hershey’s Kiss imaginable, because apparently they’re the universal “get well soon” gift. And one day Logan and Bobby and Rogue all come down together and you sit with them sit side-by-side on the linoleum floor, eating all the sweets you’ve hoarded, and Logan ends up throwing all the dark chocolate while Rogue tries to catch it in her mouth because she’s the only one that actually likes them, and it’s fun.

And then, nearly a week later, you’re allowed to leave.

It’s the middle of December, and the first thing Logan does is he borrows (see: steals with the intention of returning) Scott’s car and drives you all the way down to a cheap diner on Long Island for grilled cheese sandwiches. The restaurant is crowded and loud and he keeps his arm around your shoulder the whole time, glares at anyone who looks at you the wrong way, and the emotions that ripple across his face when you raise an eyebrow at him are too complicated for you to read. You don’t ask, and he doesn’t explain it.

You sit in a red vinyl booth with chipped black paint on the wooden paneling, and it’s decorated for Christmas even though it’s two weeks early, but you don’t care, because it’s almost too easy to relax like this and you love it. You eat cheap fries and drink vanilla milkshakes on a table that’s sticky with sugar and listen to the sound of Elvis crooning from the ancient jukebox in the corner of the room and swap stories about places you’ve been and people you’ve met, and you smile the whole time. And then, at the very end, when you’re driving back, you reach over to turn down the radio and Logan looks at you for a moment, confused, and—

“Thank you,” you say softly.

And then Logan smiles.

Not like he does to Professor X or the students he teaches or to the people he passes in the halls—no, it’s a real smile, and it’s crooked, just a little uneven, and his lips are mostly closed except for a little sliver of teeth showing, but it’s—softer, somehow, the corners of his mouth tilted upwards, and it just makes you feel—

It makes you feel acutely aware of the static electricity when his fingers brush yours. It makes you feel warm when he opens the door for you and walks back into the mansion with his arm around your shoulders. It makes you feel—

It makes you feel good.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

You’re sitting on the leather couch in front of the TV in the commons, an empty mug of hot cocoa held loosely in your hand. You’re warm. Cozy, even, tucked up under Logan’s arm, leaning against his chest. He’s watching the warm glow of the television as it plays Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, the second movie in the trilogy (Logan refuses to admit the prequels even happened). A Christmas tradition, he calls it, because he’s not a huge fan of actual Christmas movies.

“There’s another mission coming up,” you say quietly. “On Friday.”

Logan tenses almost imperceptibly, his arm tightening around your shoulders. His face is illuminated strangely by the flickering glow of the television screen. “So?” He grunts.

You swallow. “And the professor wants me to go with them.”

There is a pause, and Logan’s entire body stiffens, and you swear you can hear the very audible sound of his jaw snapping shut. He only says one word, sharp and final, and it cuts through the air
like a knife. “No.”

“Logan, I’ll be fine.”

His eyes flicker shut, and he huffs out a breath. “Fine—kid, you were shot the last time, you were in surgery for three goddamn hours.”

“It was an accident. It happens,” you say, a twinge of irritation rising up into your throat. “You’re overreacting.”


You grit your teeth. “Yeah, except this isn’t your decision,” you say, and your tone might be calibrated just to piss him off, but—to be honest, he deserves it. It’s been a long day, and Logan—Wolverine—is brilliant and dangerous and powerful and way, way too overprotective, and, honestly, kind of an asshole, which begs the question of why you even told him about this to begin with.

He doesn’t respond. But his teeth grind together and you can see the muscle in his jaw twitching as he physically struggles not to get angry. “You’re not going.”

“You’re not my parent.”

Logan growls softly, and the sound rumbles through his chest. “That’s not the fuckin’ point, and you know it.”

“Then what is it? What’s the point?” you snap.

It’s not supposed to sound like a challenge, but it does. Logan tenses. He opens his mouth, and then closes it again. “It’s—” he starts, and then cuts off and curses under his breath, his voice low and ragged, and it’s—

It’s an intimate sound. Too intimate, especially coming from him, and—

And maybe it’s the time, or the stress of the conversation, or the barely perceptible hum of pre-storm tension that’s been ever-present whenever the two of you are in the same room since that day in the diner, but suddenly, something is making you very aware of the older man in a way that you weren’t before. It’s something in the air. Something in the air has changed, gotten thicker or stronger or more pressing, but somehow you can feel it, and you get the feeling that somehow—somehow—Logan can, too.

“Fuck. The fuckin’ point is that—I care about you,” he says finally. “I don’t wanna see you get hurt.”

You swallow.

His hand moves from your shoulder to the nape of your neck.

You don’t exactly want to look at him but you do, your gaze locks with his, and his eyes are dark brown, almost black, flecked with slivers of gold, you’ve never noticed before, why, why hadn’t you noticed before--

It happens so quickly, almost too quickly, because the next minute you are frozen, unable to move, acutely and painfully aware of how close you are to him and how he smells like ash and smoke and thunder and the woods after it rains, evergreen and cheap cigars, something you hadn’t noticed—hadn’t cared about—until now. It makes your heart beat faster, because suddenly he is looking at you differently, he’s looking at you the way he does when he thinks you can’t see, and his eyes are
dark and stormy and he’s getting closer, closer—

Logan stops. His eyes snap shut.

“What are you waiting for?” you ask, your voice barely a hoarse whisper.

“Nothing. S’just—sometimes—sometimes things just click, y’know?” he answers quietly.

You don’t know.

You don’t know.

“But—fuck, you deserve better than me, kid,” Logan mutters, and he sounds—sad, really, or as close to sad as he can get. He doesn’t explain. He just stands up, off the couch and hesitates for a moment before pressing a kiss to your forehead and mumbling “G’night” as he walks away.

And then you’re alone. Alone, and confused, sitting there on the couch wrapped up in a blanket, bathed in the glow of the TV as the last few scenes of Star Wars start to play. You don’t go back to your room.

That night you fall asleep and dream that you’re riding shotgun in Logan’s old truck, his too-big leather jacket wrapped around your body. You don’t speak, but the radio’s turned up loud playing Pearl Jam’s Better Man and you’re both listening. You wake up in the middle of the night with your own arm wrapped around your shoulders, staring up into the dark.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

You go on the mission. Logan doesn’t know. When you get back, he gives you a look and disappears into his room. You don’t talk. You’re not sure if you’re avoiding him or he’s avoiding you.

But then—

Three days pass, and it’s Christmas. Another week and it’s New Year’s Eve, and there’s a party, and Logan is a little drunk, and you’re a little drunk, and somehow you both find yourselves in the stairwell, alone. It doesn’t register, at first, but you can pinpoint the exact moment when it does—because you’re laughing and his jokes are getting more ridiculous and your smiles are getting more inviting and then you both just falter, like you missed a beat, or a cue, or something, and then Logan steps forward, and his expression is inscrutable and he’s standing just a little too close—

It doesn’t even matter. Because your brain is…light, kind of, weightless in your skull, and there’s laughter still bubbling up in your throat, bouncing like a ping pong ball in a spring-loaded cannon, and you feel brave, or maybe you just feel stupid, but either way, you don’t care.

You want to kiss him.

You don’t.

“I missed you,” you blurt out, instead.

Logan hesitates. He knocks back the drink he’s holding in his hand, and sets the empty glass on the banister. “Yeah, uh—Sorry,” he mutters, after a moment. The silence that follows is tense and awkward.

You force a smile. “But, more importantly,” you say, “You missed Christmas.”

And then he turns, and starts up the stairs two at a time, and you follow, down a hall and through a door at the end. He gestures you inside and heads straight for a dresser in the corner as you look around.

His room is minimalist, almost military, with nothing but a bed and a nightstand and one single lamp giving off a faint orange glow. The blinds are closed. It smells like pine and cinnamon and firewood—it smells, almost overwhelmingly, like Logan, you realize, precisely and exactly like him—and it’s warm, almost too warm, as you sit on the edge of his bed and watch as he searches around on his dresser.

Logan turns back around, and he’s got a small blue velvet box in his hand, and he’s clutching tightly to it, like he doesn’t know what he’s doing, which is—funny, almost, because he’s Logan, and he always knows what he’s doing—but then he looks at you, and he holds it out, and you’re taking it with shaky hands and he’s mumbling something about thinking of you when I saw it and—

You open the box.

It’s a necklace. A necklace, a delicate silver chain with a teardrop pear-cut amethyst in the center, and it’s beautiful, glittering in the light and it is entirely too much and you’re staring at it and then you’re staring at Logan and you legitimately cannot fucking breathe—

And suddenly you are back in the common room in the middle of the night with Star Wars on the TV and Logan is saying—

Sometimes—sometimes things just click, y’know?

You do know.

You do know.

You push yourself up off of the bed and you close the space between the two of you and you kiss him first.

Because—

Somewhere between the infirmary visits and the chocolate and forehead kisses and stealing Scott’s car and the impromptu lunch dates and his fucking arm around your shoulders, always, the old movies and long nights and almost-kisses—somewhere between all of that, you’d become so fucking attached to him, to Logan, that if the world blew up within the next three seconds, you’re entirely sure that it would not matter. And you realize, dimly, as Logan’s hand comes to rest on the small of your back and his lips press more firmly to yours that you aren’t ready, you aren’t ready to do this and you never will be, but you also realize that it doesn’t matter.

You pull away.

“Fuck,” Logan says, and the edges of his rough voice are blurred with surprise and want and something else, something that you can’t identify. He falls silent.

The quiet that follows is so pressing that you can hear your own heartbeat, and you’d like to think that you can hear Logan’s, too, as his eyes—nearly black in the faint light from his bedside lamp—lock on yours.
There is a taut, electric moment.

It stretches.

And it tears, and it pulls, and it *unravels*.

And then—

Logan’s kissing you and you’re kissing him and it’s explosive and chaotic and you can feel it in your *bones*, feel it gather in your stomach and curl up your spine and *tear* the breath from the back of your throat. His hands are *warm*, warm and calloused and familiar and tight on your hips, your palms sliding over the broad expanse of his chest, his body pressed up against yours, hard and strong and *safe*—

Your head tips back as the kiss deepens, rough and slow and building, spreading like wildfire and lighting every single nerve in your body, fueling the needy ache of anticipation deep in your abdomen. His hand drags through your hair, brushes over your cheek and the curve of your jaw and slides up under your shirt, callouses scratching against your skin. He’s being so gentle—*so careful*, like you’re glass, like you’re fragile, like you’re liable to break—which is stupid and pointless and so very, *very* true, because as his teeth scrape ever-so-slightly over your bottom lip you know with startling certainty that you are going to *collapse*—

You wrap a hand around the back of his neck, grip the collar of his plaid button-down in a small, white-knuckled fist and tug him closer, curving your body against his, and he makes a sound between a growl and a moan and moves his hand farther up under your blouse and when he thumbs over your nipples through one thin, sheer layer of fabric your skin becomes electric, a low pulsing throbbing rhythm that spreads through your entire body. And then Logan breaks the kiss and he looks at you and he’s saying *fuck I want to touch you baby* and you’re saying *yes yes yes Logan please*, and then his hand moves down, down over the muscle of your thigh, and he pushes your skirt up, out of the way, and you’re choking out a sound you’ve never made before. His mouth trails down over your neck, nipping and sucking and kissing the delicate skin of your throat, his breath coming hard but steady, and you’re leaning against his shoulder, anticipation very nearly setting your entire body on fire. And then—and then you can feel him, feel his fingers through your panties, moving in a tight, irregular rhythm against your clit, and it’s *maddening*, the slip and slide of damp cotton not enough pressure, not enough friction, not nearly enough—

Your muscles are locked, as his finger sneaks under the edge of your panties, and his nail scrapes just a little at your skin, not enough to hurt but enough to wring a whimper from the back of your throat. Logan chuckles, and you can *feel* it, the sound deep and rough and warm and vibrating in his chest. And when he moves his hand again, he rubs a tight, slick circle around your clit, just one, and your muscles tense up, and your thighs fucking *quiver*, and he nips your earlobe and then does it again and again and again—

*Fuck Logan oh my God right there please yes fuck oh god Logan*—

When you come it’s short and sweet, a flash of everything gone hot and white and *good*, and Logan catches your eyes and doesn’t look away the whole time, doesn’t let you look away, either. You don’t think you could even if you wanted to, even if you *had* to, because the way he’s staring at you—it’s like you’re the most beautiful thing he’s ever seen, and it makes your blood run hot and fierce in your veins and it makes you *want* him.

You reach up and you’re tangling your fingers in his hair and pulling him down into a kiss that’s all tongue and teeth, and Logan’s dragging his thumb over your clit, groaning into your mouth when you grind into his hand and the bulge of his cock in his jeans. He guides you back with his hand on
your hip, and then the backs of your knees hit the bed and you’re stumbling, off balance, falling back onto the blankets. You drag yourself further up the bed on your elbows and watch as he works on the buttons of his shirt, tugging off the sleeves and letting it fall to the floor, and—

You stare.

Because Logan is tall and muscular and powerful, and there’s a strength written into the lines of his body that makes you shiver—he’s broad and dark and barrel-chested and impossibly perfect and the way he’s watching you makes you feel like you’re on fire.

You’re tugging your blouse up over your head and then he’s there, Logan is right there, tossing it to the side and unclasping your bra—Jeez, you’re fuckin’ perfect, baby, fuck—and then his hands move down and he’s tugging off your skirt and panties in one smooth motion—so goddamn sexy, (Name), I swear to god—he kicks off his jeans with that same brutal efficiency, not bothering to let go of you, or not wanting to, his hands kneading your breasts and your hips and your ass, like he can’t decide, like he needs to touch you everywhere, all at once.

Logan kisses you, eases you down onto the bed and then he stares, his eyes clear and hot as his gaze rakes over your body, makes you squirm with the intensity of it, a light flush spreading like wildfire over your cheeks. A smile stretches across his mouth, crooked and dirty and deliberate, and then he places his forearms on either side of your head and his muscles are bunched up and solid as he holds himself over you.

“(Name),” Logan murmurs, his voice urgent, his cock hard and thick and heavy between your thighs.

There is a long electric moment when your eyes meet, clashing and dilated and filled with want—Logan pushes into you with one long, slow stroke, and his gaze is locked on yours the entire time.

And it’s—

It hurts, yeah, because he’s big, but it’s more than that, because you feel full and stretched and there’s something helplessly, hopelessly erotic about how Logan’s eyes never fucking leave yours, not for a second. He stills and he grits his teeth and he groans out, “Fuck,” and you consume the word as his hips stutter and rock into yours, spark little flares of pleasure that make you tremble underneath him. And then he starts to move, starts to find a slow, nearly painful rhythm and your breaths are coming out in little gasps and the warmth of his body is suffocating, his eyes still locked on yours—fuck, fuck, I’m not gonna last—and then you lean up and you kiss down beneath his jaw and then follow up with your teeth and he jerks like he’s been struck by a live wire—god yes feel so fucking good, baby—

The angle changes, just slightly, but then Logan is hitting something inside of you that makes your nerves light on fire, and there’s a pressure building up in your stomach that’s hot and blinding and it makes your muscles tremble, your hips rock against his almost of their own volition. He groans your name and you can feel it, your body taut and tense and waiting for the thunderous fucking wave of something that threatens to drown you both—and then Logan’s looking at you and you’re looking at him and it’s intense and powerful and fucking catastrophic and that’s finally enough to break you both open.

Logan leans down and his eyes are brown and flecked with gold and his pupils are blown wide and he’s saying something, he’s saying something and it’s low and tight and hurried and perfect—

“I love you. I love you, I—fucking hell, baby, fuck—“
“Logan—God, I’m—“

Everything goes hot and white and your body *trembles* with the force of it, muscles clenching and fluttering and then Logan makes a low, harsh desperate noise against your neck and gives one last deep thrust and then makes a sound like he’s drowning and coming up for air at the same time. And he’s rolling over, pulling you close to him and his grip is crushingly tight, his face buried in the crook of your neck, holding onto you like you might disappear at any second.

Everything seems to slow down for a while.

When the pieces come back together you’re still lying there, and you’re shaky and your breath is coming rough. Logan’s grip is still tight around you, and he doesn’t react when you shift slightly. In the new, strange quiet, you wrap your arms around his neck and lean against his chest. Logan lets out a long, shuddering breath, his chin resting on your head. You stay that way for a long time.

“You know I love you, too, right?” you say finally, your voice quiet and small.

Logan chuckles, and kisses the top of your head. “Yeah.”
Run (Erik Lehnsherr)

Chapter Summary

Erik falls for a non-mutant. Chaos ensues.
(Requested by Jazz)
The song I listened to while writing this: "Goner" by twenty one pilots (the new one on blurryface, not the original accordion version)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After the events in Washington, Erik Lehnsherr runs.

He runs, he flees up and into Canada, moving from town to town and never staying in one place for long. He grows a beard. He shaves it. He buys a vintage Chevrolet with stolen money. He dyes his hair—first honey-brown, then blond, black, auburn, copper—he buys a grey cotton jacket and a pair of used brown oxfords and various plain crew-neck tees that are virtually indistinguishable from each other; he pierces the cartilage of his right ear with a single silver ring and he gets a small dark chain tattooed on his left wrist without thinking about what it means.

After three months, he glances in the mirror and doesn’t quite recognize the face staring back at him.

Erik is careful, and he covers his tracks. He wonders, idly, sitting with his back to the setting sun in some dingy backwater pub, if Charles is looking for him, if Raven is looking for him, if they even care.

But it doesn’t matter.

He isn’t ready to be caught.

He finds himself in a small town—Adeline, Canada— and he checks in to a clean, nondescript hotel in the center, scuffs his feet along the dirt road and looks up through the dusky pines, searching for the last lazy rays of sunlight. He shoves his hands into the pockets of his jeans, and he just stands there, for a while, leaning against the side of his light-blue paint-chipped Chevy.

And suddenly, Erik Lehnsherr is homesick.

He’s frustrated. He’s tired. He’s—

He’s lonely.

Erik hasn’t seen another mutant in seven months. He feels like an outcast.

A week passes. He doesn’t leave Adeline.

It’s like the butterfly effect.

Erik picks up a job as a bartender, and he saves up his money and rents a tiny apartment in the center of the town and before he knows it he’s somebody again, there are people nodding to him and
smiling on the streets because they know him, and then a week goes by and then a month and he’s meeting a couple of friends in the pub for drinks on a weekly basis. They’re human, they’re not bad or evil or cruel, one of them was just engaged and another has a newborn baby boy, and Erik isn’t used to doubting his ideals but now he’s wondering if maybe he was wrong about them after all, and it’s—

It’s catastrophic.

It’s a lifetime worth of hatred collapsing around him in the shape of a question mark, and it shakes him to the core.

Erik thinks about Banshee and Emma, Azazel and Angel, all of the others like him that the humans had killed. He grits his teeth.

He leaves Adeline.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Erik stays in Bensley, a good hundred miles west of Adeline. He picks up a job as a waiter at a local restaurant, spends his evenings getting drunk at a pub, and he doesn’t make friends. He has a sharp wit and cold eyes and a fucking scathing sense of humor, and he manages to look completely unapproachable without too much effort.

And then Erik meets her.

She comes into the bar at nearly eleven at night and sits down at a stool right beside him, orders some fruity drink that he can’t remember the name of and chats idly with the locals who come and go. She’s too young, too pretty, too distractingly enticing, and Erik did not prepare for this, because before any of his thoughts can gain traction, she’s smiling at him, and asking him what his name is.

He knocks back his clear-cut crystal tumbler of vodka. “Erik,” he says. He’s supposed to sound curt and dismissive, half-cocked and semi-automatic, but he doesn’t. He sounds—

He sounds lonely.

He grits his teeth.

She flashes a fucking devastating smile, and her lips are soft and full and his breath catches in his throat. He gestures at the bartender for a refill. “Just Erik?” she asks.

“Yes.”

She nods slowly, and a complicated emotion flashes in her eyes. Surprise, maybe, at first, but then it’s something like genuine understanding. “I’m (Name),” she says, after a moment.

The bartender refills his glass.

He takes a sip, relishes as it burns down his throat, and then he looks at her, catches her searching playful curious gaze and he cocks an eyebrow wordlessly, setting the glass back down on the counter. He’s drunk. He’s very, very drunk, and something flares in the pit of his stomach, something dangerous that reminds him of the orange-yellow sparks that flare up when a bullet leaves the barrel of a gun, and he grins tiredly and tilts his head and says, “No last name?”

She smiles, again, and it’s soft and playful and painfully earnest. “Nope.”
Erik nods. He *understands*.

He doesn’t leave the bar.

They talk about food and sports and family and basic, *human* things, and Erik makes sure to stay purposely vague but it gets harder and harder as the night wears on. He realizes that her laugh is fucking *intoxicating*, sort of breathless-sounding in a way that hits him hard between his ribs, and he shows her the chain tattooed around his left wrist, and she moves close and then he moves closer, his arm coming to rest around her shoulders, and he’s fucking *drunk*, but he doesn’t *care*. He feels—

He feels— not quite *good*, but *better*, better than he’s felt in a long time.

When the bar closes, he agrees to meet her again on Friday.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Erik wakes up in his one-room apartment with a crippling headache and a crystal-clear memory of what had happened the night before.

It feels like a dream. It feels like it didn’t happen. He can’t even muster up any anger—at himself, at her, at anything—and it makes his chest feel tight.

He wastes a lot of the morning just lying in his sheets and staring up at the grey ceiling.

She is not a mutant. She is *human*.

And the realization that Erik Lehnsherr does not hate her for that hits him right in the center of his chest, and he feels the echo of his heartbeat pound in the hollow space between his ribs, counting down to what he knows will be his inevitable self-destruction.

He closes his eyes.

The next five weeks seem to go by in a blur.

Erik meets her at the same bar, and he’s hesitant, at first, but then he remembers how easily they clicked the first time and he sort of loses himself in being just *Erik*, not *Erik Lehnsherr*. They talk sparingly of their respective pasts and not at all about their futures, but somehow things still work out, and as time wears on, he slowly relaxes. They’re friends. It’s—

It’s *nice*.

They meet once a week, and then twice, and then three, sometimes four times—

The last time they leave the bar early, and he offers to walk her home.

“You don’t even know where my house is,” she teases, and their fingers are wound together—*when the fuck had that happened*—and he can’t tell if it was his doing or hers or just some sort of subconscious synchronization, but her palms are warm and soft against his, and he *likes* it.

“No, but I’m assuming that you know,” Erik replies, a lopsided smirk tugging at his lips.

“You aren’t nearly as funny as you think you are.”

“*Hm. Really?*”

She rolls her eyes, trying to suppress a smile. They walk along in comfortable silence, for a moment,
coming to a stop in front of a two-story apartment building. She pauses with her hand on the glass door handle.

“You could stay for a bit,” she says suddenly. “It’s only, what, nine?”

Erik blinks. “Would you like me to?”

She looks up at him, and smiles. “If you want, yeah.”

So they walk together through the lobby and up to her room on the second floor, and they crash on the couch in front of a crackling fire that casts bronze shadows on Erik’s face and then there are two empty bottles of champagne resting on the polished coffee table, and he can’t stop fucking staring at the way the glow from the fireplace illuminates the curve of her lips and then they’re sitting close together, too close, and the rational part of his brain is screaming at him to stop stop stop stop—

He doesn’t. Of course he doesn’t.

They start playing a questions game—bouncing back and forth and asking each other mundane, pointless things, and then suddenly the questions get more personal, more suggestive, and Erik is buzzing from too much alcohol and not enough sleep and he blames that for everything that happens next, because before he knows what he’s doing, he stretches and grins and says, “All right, I have a question for you,” and she says, “Okay,” and his arm comes to rest around her shoulders and he’s flirting with her and she’s flirting back, and then before he even thinks about what he’s doing he’s leaning close to her and meets her eyes, crystal-clear and honest, and he flashes a deliberately crooked grin and his voice is low and his accent is heavy and slurred and he murmurs—

“Has anyone ever gone down on you before?”

She stops.

She shivers, so imperceptibly that he almost doesn’t notice.

And then she says his name in a way that makes his blood fucking sing, and it’s a sound that he would like to hear again and again and again under wildly different circumstances.

She licks her lips. “No. That’s never—no.”

He smirks and tips her chin up with a finger. “That’s a shame.”

Her eyes widen a fraction. “Erik, are you—“


And before he can think too hard about it—before he has time to come up with a very long list of logical reasons why this is a bad idea—Erik kisses her.

And—

She tastes like toothpaste, and champagne, and something warm and devastatingly familiar and her lips are warm and soft and perfect and he doesn’t think about how she’s human and he’s a mutant and he doesn’t think about anything except how her fingers curl in the fabric of his jacket and his mouth slants over hers and her lips part, easily, effortlessly, like she’d been waiting for this, for him, since the moment they met in that bar. It’s good. It’s too good, and there are a myriad of very sane, very logical reasons why it shouldn’t be, but Erik can’t bring himself to care.
He pulls away.

Their eyes meet, clashing, his are fractured shattered pieces of cerulean and sapphire and hers are lighter, prettier, beneath the slash of metallic grey shimmering along the crease of her lashes.

The next few moments are strangely intense.

She tugs at the hem of her dress—too tight and too short and too distracting, fuck—and her lip gloss is smeared around her mouth in a cloud of foggy pink and there’s a telltale flush blossoming in her cheeks that sends a jolt of arousal flaring through his body. It’s surreal. Her white-knuckled fist is still clenched around his shirt collar and his hands are still resting on her hips and neither of them move, neither of them so much as breathe for what feels like a fucking eternity, they just stare at each other for a long, sinuous moment that just lasts and lasts and lasts—

“Fuck,” he breathes, his voice hoarse and brittle and so entirely un-Erik-like that for a second he’s almost surprised. He swallows.

And then she bites her bottom lip with her teeth and her eyes flash, they go dark and heated and it hits him hard, and his cock fucking jolts in his jeans—

“Fuck,” he says again, louder this time, and then they’re both standing up and she’s leading him down the hall towards her bedroom and he kisses her, backs her up against the wall and the muscle of his thigh is pressed up between her legs, and his hands are slipping up underneath her dress, lingering right where her stocking ends and brushing against her bare skin. She moans into his mouth, and it sends a shockwave of lust running through his body, lighting his nerves on fire, and Erik grinds his hips into hers, his cock a hard thick line against her thigh. He guides her back to the bed with his hand on her hip and then he’s pushing her backwards, and she falls against the sheets and pulls herself farther up the bed on her elbows and she looks beautiful with her lips swollen and her eyes dark and her mascara smudged and he has to remind himself that she isn’t his, and she never will be, but then—

It doesn’t matter, because Erik is shrugging off his jacket and he’s leaning over her, flashing his signature crooked smirk and his hands are pushing up her dress, tugging down her panties, leaning down slowly, watching her shudder with the twisting suffocating feeling of anticipation that’s fucking devouring her, and him, and—

The first lick is tentative.

The second isn’t.

And then his tongue is swirling around her clit and her rasping helpless moan cuts through the air like a knife, and he slowly, deliberately slides two fingers inside of her, and her gaze is filled with burning, blistering heat and a strange sort of vulnerability that he doesn’t think he’s meant to notice.

Her fingers curl in his hair.

His hands come down to grip her thighs, and the way she gasps out his name makes his blood go hot and syrupy like melted caramel and then he’s hitching her right leg over the bend of his elbow and her lips part in a perfect “o” and she’s intoxicating and treacherous and beautiful with every rasp of his tongue and every helpless, hopeless rock of her hips and he curls his fingers up—

She’s fucking gorgeous when she comes.

~*~*~*~*~*~
It’s like a dream. She doesn’t leave.

They go to the harbor, take boat rides on an ocean that’s too cold to swim in, and he tells her about New York City and the impossibly high skyscrapers and the scent of gasoline and car exhaust that permeates the whole city, and she tosses the remnants of her lunch at a flock of seagulls, piece by meticulous piece, tells him about growing up in this small town and about her mother and father and all her family and Erik can’t respond to that, he can’t, but she doesn’t mind. She just smiles at him and takes his hand, runs her fingers up the flat of his wrist, the inside of his right arm. And then she pauses, traces over the crude ridges of his tattoo.

She goes still.

Erik closes his eyes.

And the string of horrible fucking numbers seared into the inside of his right arm, it itches and it burns, and he wishes, desperately, that he had fucking taken a lighter to it like he’d meant to, turned it into another meaningless scar. He’s not ashamed of it. But it reminds him how fucking temporary this is, that their entire relationship has an expiration date the moment he becomes Erik Lehnsherr again.

“Is that…” she trails off.

“Yes,” he says. His voice is strangely calm.

She’s silent for a while.

“Okay,” she says finally. “You don’t have to tell me about it if you don’t want to.”

Erik lets out a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding. His shoulders relax a little, and he wraps his arm around her waist, pressing a kiss to the top of her head. “Thank you,” he murmurs.

*~*~*~*~*~*

Two weeks later, it’s December and he’s fucking celebrating Hanukah for the first time in what feels like forever and there’s a menorah in the kitchen that they light together, and she kisses the tip of his nose when he makes fun of her Santa hat and then darts away into his tiny kitchen, and they drink eggnog out of red plastic cups and wear ridiculous holiday sweaters and fill the entire kitchen with cookies. And after she falls asleep in his bed Erik closes his eyes, and he wishes he could scoop up every single fucking thing she makes him feel and mail it halfway across the world and just let it die.

But at the same time, he doesn’t want that at all.

Because for a while, things have been normal. They spend a lot of time together and Erik gets introduced to people as her boyfriend and it sparks something possessive and territorial in his stomach that he relishes in, even though she isn’t his and she never will be. Some days he tries ferociously to convince himself that he doesn’t even want her, anyway, she’s a human and he’s a mutant and he’s better, he’s so much more powerful but when she smiles at him it just—

It makes him forget all of it.

It makes him wonder if Charles was right about humans after all.

*~*~*~*~*~*

Three days after Valentine’s day, it all goes wrong.
He wakes up a little late, and she should already be off to work, but she’s not, she’s just sitting on the couch with her arms folded and her legs crossed and she looks really fucking tired.

“What’s wrong?” he asks, rubbing his eyes.

“You’re Erik Lehnsherr,” she says, with absolutely no inflection.

Erik flinches.

And it hurts. He didn’t expect it to hurt, but the way she looks at him—fuck, she looks vulnerable and lost and confused, and it makes his heart ache, but it shouldn’t, it absolutely fucking shouldn’t—

“It was the hair, and the piercing, and the tattoo. And, I mean, I’m not one to really pay attention to the news, but I should’ve fucking known, really. And I think I did, I just didn’t want—“ her voice cracks, and she swallows, “I didn’t want to believe it. And now—“

“Now what?” Erik asks. His voice sounds cold.

“Now I’m just wondering why you didn’t hurt me,” she says. “I mean—you’re Magneto. You believe in mutant supremacy, right? So why not just kill me?”

“I don’t—“ he swallows, licks his lips, “I don’t know. You have to understand, what they’ve done to me, to people like me—“

“No!” She shot up off the couch, her fists clenched at her sides, her voice absolutely dripping with venom. “What about what you were going to do to us? To people like me and my family who haven’t hurt anybody our whole lives? What the fuck is wrong with you, to make you think that’s even remotely okay?”

Erik inhales, shakily, exhales, inhales again, and he tries to ignore the way the hard, rough edge of her voice cuts into him, because it shouldn’t hurt, it shouldn’t. This never should have happened. He wonders, distantly, if this is what heartbreak feels like—if this is what he needed, the whole time, if this is what he deserves.

“So shoot me, then,” he says through gritted teeth. “Kill me. Why are you just sitting there?”

“Stop it,” she snaps, her eyes harsh and flinty. “This is exactly what I’m talking about. Violence on top of violence on top of violence. What’s the point?”

“We were scared,” he says. “We’re still scared. So many of us have died.”

She doesn’t respond.

Erik wishes, badly, that she would say something.

But she doesn’t.

She doesn’t say anything at all.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

She comes back from work before he leaves.

“I paid the rest of the months’ rent. You’ll have time to bring your things back to your apartment,” Erik says, as she walks through the door.
“What?” she replies blankly. “What are you talking about?”

“I’m leaving.” His mouth is pressed into a hard line, and he can’t—he can’t look at her. It’s—he’s sad, and he’s angry, and he’s scared, again, and he needs to leave. He needs to run.

“How?”

Erik laughs. It’s sharp and cold and almost unnatural. “Why do you think?”

She sighs, and drops down into an armchair. She doesn’t look angry. She just looks tired, and for some reason that hurts more. “Erik, I don’t want you to leave. Just because you—"

He sneers. “Because I’m a mutant?”

“No, I was going to say a wanted criminal,” she deadpans.

“That, too. All things considered, I think you’d want me gone,” he snaps.

“Well, I don’t.”

“You should. You should be—I’m dangerous, (Name), you should be telling me to leave, you should want me to—I could hurt you,” he says. His voice cracks.

She shakes her head. “I don’t believe that. You’re not evil, Erik, you’re just—"

“Just what? Misunderstood?” He lets out a choked laugh.

“No, you’re—it’s been seven months and you’ve never hurt me, you’ve never done anything, you’re—sure, you’re a little sarcastic and cold but you’re not bad, you’re smart and funny and brave and—Yeah, I was upset that you lied to me, but—I don’t want you to leave.”

Erik drops his bag on the couch. And then he’s clenching his hands into fists over and over again and he’s trying to breathe, trying to remember how to breathe, because it’s all just too much, and he never meant for this to happen, he never meant for this girl, this fucking human girl to mean so much to him, and then he’s turning around and he’s taking five quick steps towards her and hugging her, tightly.

“I have to,” he says, his chin resting on top of her head. “I have to—I can’t stay here.”

“Are you coming back?”

“I—” he swallows. “I don’t know. Probably—probably not.”

*~*~*~*~*~*

He lied.

*~*~*~*~*~*

Erik doesn’t say goodbye. For all of his selflessness, he can’t bring himself to say it to her. He doesn’t want closure. He doesn’t want peace. He thinks of her face, her smile, how she says his name and how sometimes he had marveled at how fucking easily she’d fit beneath his arm, and he wonders if in a year from now he’d still feel that crippling tightness at the base of his throat when he thought of her.

~*~*~*~*~*~
Two years later, he returns to Bensley, and he finds her fiancé ring shopping and he casually points out one he would have been proud of her to wear.

A year later Erik sneaks into the back of the only church in the small Canadian town. He only stays for five minutes. But he catches her eyes from across the room, and he smiles, and it’s enough.

She looks stunning.

Their wedding is beautiful, and he cries.

(ALTERNATE NON-ANGSTY ENDING)

Erik Lehnsherr runs.

3/23

*Paris, France-*

*I saw the Louvre and spent a night in the Catacombs.*

*I miss you.*

*EL*

4/16

*Rome, Italy*

*Visited the Colosseum. I’m very sunburnt. Sorry I missed Valentine’s Day.*

*EL*

5/24

*Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia*

*The salt flats here reflect the sky. It’s like walking on a mirror. I took some pictures for you.*

*I miss you so fucking much.*

*EL*

6/9

*Barcelona*

*Didn’t do much, just visited some pubs and the football stadium. The food is all right.*
Westchester, New York

I’m visiting my old friends. It’s long overdue.

Thank you.

EL

8/13

Erik passes a window shop in Romania.

He sees a necklace, a medallion hanging from a thick gold chain.

There is an oval-cut gem nestled in the center, winking in the hazy light of the setting sun. It reminds him of her eyes.

He books a flight to Canada.

8/14

He pulls up by a familiar two-story apartment building in the small town of Bensley, and parks his rented car in the street. He walks inside and takes the stairs up two at a time, stops at the third door on the right.

Erik licks his lips. His hands are clammy.

This is the first time he’s seen her in nearly six months.

He rings the doorbell.

“Just one second!”

The door opens.

She’s standing there, still the same, still fucking beautiful, and the polite smile on her face fades once she sees him, gets replaced by one that’s so much more real. Her eyes light up.

Erik is smiling so hard his cheeks hurt.

“(Name),” he says. His voice wavers.

“Erik—“ She starts, and then she falls silent, and closes the space between them, and then she’s clinging to him, burying her face in his chest and his arms wrap around her waist and he’s struck again by the realization of how easily they fit together—

“I missed you so fucking much,” he murmurs, resting his chin on her head.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~
Erik Lehnsherr is still running.

But he’s not running away from this. That’s not what he’s doing.

He’s—

He’s running towards it.

Towards her.

Chapter End Notes

Not my best work, also not my smuttiest, but probably my angriest, lmao. "Goner" by twenty one pilots is the song for this fic, just to make it sadder. I'm evil. Tell me what you liked, what you didn't like, and request anything you'd like to see in the future! Thanks a ton!
Chapter Summary

Loki is sentenced to banishment from Asgard. Thor, naturally, brings his brother to the Avengers Tower.
AU, ignores Thor 2 and AOU.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

September

His name is Loki.

He’s good-looking, in an almost eerie sort of way, with high cheekbones, skin so pale it’s nearly incandescent and absolutely captivating eyes, fractured facets of emerald flecked with slivers of gold; he’s clean shaven and tall and slender and his smile is crooked and charming—disarming—when he meets your gaze from across the room.

He doesn’t immediately look away.

He stares at you. His eyes are piercing and unreadable and guarded, and his mouth—which for the past five minutes of Thor’s lecturing, has been turned down in a pronounced, sulky pout—tugs up at the corners just a little and then stretches into something like a tight-lipped, secretive grin. Your stomach twists and tangles with a sudden buzzing self-awareness and endless curiosity and then you’re struck, suddenly, with the distinctive feeling of being both the prey and the predator at the same time.

His name is Loki.

He fascinates you.

That's probably not a good thing.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

October

Tony throws a party on Halloween.

The top floors of the Tower are crammed with a mass of bodies, writhing to the throbbing beat of electric, bass-heavy pop music blaring from the surround-sound speakers, and the air is thick and heavy with sweat and smoke, hazy fumes and glaring strobe lights. It’s loud, and claustrophobic, and hot, and the pulsing pounding rhythm of the music reverberates down your spine and echoes in the hollow space in your ribs, drowns out the sound of the crowd screaming and makes your head spin wildly.
About ten minutes after midnight and you’re standing in an empty elevator, going up—you just need a breath of fresh air, a moment to get away from the chaos. You step onto the roof, and it’s littered with cigarette butts and wrappers and crumpled-up white paper Dixie cups, but it’s quiet and it’s cool, and the moon is bright and clear above your head. You sit down on one of the benches, Converse scuffing against the concrete as you wrap your sweatshirt more firmly around yourself and stare up at the sky.

You don’t go back to the party.

Eventually, the elevator doors open again. You hear the sound of footsteps, and glance over.

Loki is standing leaned against the door frame.

He’s wearing jeans and a grey long-sleeved t-shirt, his hands shoved into his pockets—he looks calm, almost serene, his skin tinged almost blueish in the faint light from the moon. He sits down next to you, close but not too close. He doesn’t say a word.

You glance at him.

He raises an eyebrow, a faint teasing smile tugging at his lips.

You shrug.

And then Loki lets out a long, slow breath, like he’s in pain, or some long-awaited release has arrived, and he stares without saying anything at all, his eyes bright and clear and intense, and it sparks something strange in your stomach, something that leaves you stock-still and flash-frozen, and then he looks up at the night sky and the first thing he ever says to you is—

“It is truly beautiful, isn’t it?”

You swallow. “Yeah,” you say. “It is.”

A ghost of a smile flits over his face, followed by a split second of weakness that you don’t think you were supposed to notice.

Downstairs, you can hear the faint hum of cheering and the opening chords to “When I Come Around” by Green Day.

“Does anyone know you’re up here?” you ask suddenly.

Loki is silent for a long moment, and then he huffs out a quiet laugh, stretching languidly. “Oh, no,” he drawls. “I doubt Thor would allow it if he did.”

“He doesn’t trust you.” It’s not a question.

“No. With good reason.” He leans forwards, resting his elbows on his knees. He doesn’t say anything for a long moment, but then he asks, “Do you?”

You blink. “What?”

“Do you trust me?”

You laugh, and glance back up at the sky. “I don’t even know you.”

“Would you like to?”
And something about his voice has changed—something barely-there, almost imperceptible, but it makes you feel like you’re being picked apart beneath a microscope, and before you can even think about what you’re doing, you’re leaning your weight back on your palms and glancing at him and saying—

“Sure.”

And Loki—

He looks over at you, his eyes unblinking and frighteningly intense and maybe just a little curious, a smile twitching at the corners of his mouth. Your pulse jumps, crackles with spider-webs of anticipation, but you don’t stop to think about why you’re reacting so strongly to him, and you don’t stop to think about why you shouldn’t be, not now, not like that, no, you just sit, and you stare, and when his elbow brushes against yours, you shiver.

And he notices.

He doesn’t speak, after that. Neither do you. You just sit there, in silence, but eventually, the sounds of the party downstairs die out and eventually you start to inch closer to the end of the roof and eventually, you’re both standing on the edge, a four foot wall of concrete the only buffer between you and the street below. And you stare down at the city, at the dots of streetlights and cars glinting—and you wonder if everything had always looked so insignificant, so small, or if it’s just that you’ve never really noticed until now, until you stood there next to the man who very nearly wiped the entire city off the map, if that’s what it took to make you realize just how temporary everything really is.

“It’s funny,” you say, breaking the silence. “Everyone thinks this will all last forever. But it’s just—standing here, it makes you realize—“

“That it won’t,” Loki finishes. He looks down at where his hands are resting on the concrete railing. “Your world had a dawn, just as it will have a dusk. Everything has its time.”

You appraise him with curious eyes. “Does that include Asgard?”

He raises an eyebrow. “Yes,” he admits hesitantly. “Though I suppose I’ll not be there to witness it.”

“That’s got something to do with why you’re here, right?”

The wind picks up. You zip up your jacket, and wrap your arms around your torso.

Loki sighs, and shoves one of his hands into his pocket. His face is eerily expressionless, and when he speaks, his voice is riddled with scorn. “Yes,” he says. ”I was— banished. Cast out to Midguard until my father’s—” he hesitates, and his eyes flash, “—until the Allfather’s death. Or, perhaps, until the end of time itself. Whichever arrives first.”

“Oh. What’s stopping you from just, you know, going back anyway?”

He scoffs. “My desire to remain living.”


Loki’s jaw clenches. His hand that lays resting on the concrete curls into a white-knuckled fist. “He’s not my father,” he grits out. “He played the part well, but even then, he’s always had his favorites. Thor has taken far more lives than I, and yet here I am.”
You nod slowly.

Loki looks out into the sky, his face stony. He doesn’t say anything.

You pick at the glossy black polish on your thumbnail, watching it flake off and flutter to the ground. “Sorry,” you say quietly.

He doesn’t respond.

~*~*~*~*~*~*

November

After Halloween night, you begin to spend more time with Loki Laufeyson.

You don’t tell anyone. It’s not that you trust him, because you don’t, not exactly, but—

You know he wouldn’t hurt you, if only because it would be stupid.

So you return to the roof the night of the Taurid meteor shower with thick-knit wool blankets and sweaters and the cobalt duvet from your bed, and you and Loki sit side by side in the pile of blankets, staring up at the sky.

He half-smirks-half-smiles at you when he thinks you’re not looking— like he has a secret, like he knows something that you don’t.

You think that it’s probably a good thing.

You sit there and you stare up at the constellations and you talk about stupid things, pointless things, and it’s fun. It’s almost too easy to relax, to pretend that the man sitting next to you isn’t a criminal, to talk and laugh and ignore the gravity that’s plagued the atmosphere of the Avengers Tower since he arrived. Loki is deceptively easy to talk to, his affect playful and sly and charming, really, and he stirs up a cocktail of emotions in the pit of your stomach that you don’t quite recognize except for the pressing, persistent desire to know him, to know more, to know why he holds himself like he’s not afraid of anything and why he looks at Thor like he’s desperate to talk to him and desperate to run away at the same time and why when he looks up at the stars he seems almost sad, but—

You just sit there.

And then Loki’s hand just barely brushes yours, and it stays, his skin cool and smooth, and he doesn’t move away—and suddenly you feel caught up, swept up, off-balance, your pulse quickening, light and erratic—

You glance at him.

He smiles, wide and mischievous and barely, barely threatening, his teeth straight and sharp and glinting in the flickering, bouncing light of the fire he had lit. And he crackles with electricity and the smell of ozone and he exudes danger, but—

You don’t move.

Overhead, the meteor shower starts.
You watch the sky together until you fall asleep.

The next morning, you wake up in your own bed, alone.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

**December**

The weather gets colder and the days get shorter and Loki—

Loki continues to be a mystery.

Four days before Christmas, Tony Stark rents out an entire ice rink for the sole purpose of teaching the entire team how to skate. Loki only comes because there would be no one to watch him, and even then he doesn’t really do anything besides stand there on the sidelines in just a long-sleeved t-shirt and jeans.

Pretty soon Nat is laughing and skating circles around Steve and Bruce as they try to keep their balance and Tony is falling over in an attempt to skate backwards, Wanda and Vision are clinging to the railings on the side for dear life and Clint is still standing in the door to the ring, trying to muster up the courage to step out onto the ice, until Loki rolls his eyes, and shoves him forward.

Clint stumbles, slips and struggles to regain his balance and falls flat.

And then Loki looks at you with an innocent expression and holds his hands up in mock defeat, and there’s a sly grin twitching at the corners of his mouth and he says, “What? You know you were thinking the same.”

And you’re just—

You’re fucking done with it.

You burst out into laughter, and everything feels light, sort of, free-floating and spinning around inside your head as you skate over to the entrance and step out, losing your balance and collapsing against him.

Loki catches you.

A moment passes, and then two. He doesn’t let go.

And then he’s turning, angling his head so he can meet your eyes and you have to swallow around your next breath, because there’s an intensity to it, to *him*, that wasn’t there before, that makes your heartbeat stutter and your pulse race and your cheeks flare with something warm and hot and sticky—

He steps back.

You lick your lips.

Loki raises an eyebrow, his expression swiftly rippling with a series of emotions too complicated to individually identify.

You don’t ask, and he doesn’t say a thing, and then all too soon it’s over. Everyone drives back to the Tower. You’re both back on the roof staring down at the city, with “Boston” by Augustana playing from your Ipod in the background, and you’re saying something about wishing you lived back in the countryside again because you miss the snow, and Loki—
He goes stock-still, like he’s contemplating something, weighing his options.

He chews on his lower lip and then he looks at you, his expression strangely serious, and he says, “I know of a place we could go.”

You blink. “What?”

He smiles, and cocks a playful eyebrow at you. “Do you trust me?”

You smother a laugh. “Should I?”

“No,” Loki says, breaking out into a full-blown grin, and you barely have time to process it, because he moves closer to you and wraps an arm around your waist and his body is long and lean and hard against your own but you don’t even have time to think about that, no, because the world is dissolving around the two of you, it’s twisting and spiraling and falling to pieces and you shut your eyes, your hands curling into the fabric of Loki’s shirt—

When you open them again, you’re not on the rooftop anymore.

You’re standing on the edge of a lake, frozen-over icy blue, surrounded by evergreens blanketed in white, and snow is falling all around you in tiny dancing flurries and there’s laughter bubbling up and bouncing around your throat, loud and shocked and disbelieving, and you look up at Loki and you stare. “What—? How did you—”

A lopsided smirk tugs at his lips. “Magic,” he murmurs.

He takes your hand, his skin cold and smooth, and he leads you out onto the ice. And then you’re spinning and laughing and Loki is smiling, smiling and smiling and smiling like you’ve never seen before, the upturn of his lips honest and cheerful and warm, for once, his eyes crinkled up at the sides, and he’s beautiful, in the blistering cold winter sunlight, the coarse black stubble on his jawline catching the light and glinting onyx and auburn and silver, the curve of his cheekbones and the sharp line of his jaw.

Loki catches you as you skate past him and he pulls you in, his arms wrapping tightly around your waist with a mischievous smirk, and his eyes are glinting with mayhem and brilliance and danger, but in the moment you just don’t care. It doesn’t matter who he is or what he’s done or what he will do, it doesn’t matter that he could hurt you, that he has hurt people before and he’ll do it again. It just matters that he’s there, and you’re there, and his touch is gentle and your breaths make little clouds of steam that mingle together in the sharp December air.

He looks down at you, his eyes reflecting almost blue in the harsh, cold light of day, slivers of seafoam and mint green flecked with gold. It’s beautiful. He’s beautiful.

Loki reaches up, hesitantly, and traces the gentle sloping curve of your cheek with his fingers, and you shiver. And then a fissure, a tiny little spider-web crack of anticipation lances through your bloodstream, and you’re reminded, suddenly, of San Francisco, the San Andreas fault line, the destruction of the earthquake that followed—and you wonder if this is what it felt like to be balancing on the cusp of something so dangerous, if this is how it started, with two halves of one whole splitting and colliding again.

His lips are getting closer.

And you realize, dimly, that you should be scared or upset or angry, because he’s Loki, because he’s supposed to be the bad guy—you should be tripping over yourself trying to get away from him, you should be running and running as far and as fast as you can.
You don’t. You stand still.

His lips brush over yours, faintly, gently, almost—almost sweetly, and your hands slide over his chest and up his shoulders to cup the nape of his neck, pulling him closer, and—

Whatever you’re doing, it’s not resisting.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

January

It’s a secret.

It’s a secret because half the team would murder Loki for it and the other half would never understand; it’s a secret because he and you are on opposite sides and it’s a secret because Thor would never allow it.

You also think it’s probably a secret because Loki is ashamed.

And as much as you wish he wouldn’t be—

You understand. Sort of.

You wonder if he realizes that he doesn’t have to be alone anymore.

You spend days on the rooftop just talking and you spend the night in his room and you watch old reruns of popular TV shows or he tries to teach you how to use magic—because, really, it’s like science, or at least he says it is—and your relationship is unorthodox and strange, but it’s also new and exciting and you don’t think you’d trade it for anything in the world.

And one day you’re sitting side by side on his bed, leaning against his pillows, and suddenly he looks at you and asks quietly, “Do you know much of what happened in New York?”

“Just what was on TV,” you reply, stretching your arms up over your head. “I wasn’t part of the team then. How come?”

Loki doesn’t speak for a long time, like he’s contemplating what to say, or how to say it. He runs his fingers down over your thigh, circling idly around your kneecap. Finally, he speaks. “I killed many, many people before I made way for the Chitauri. I intended to rule as Midguard’s rightful god.”

“Oh.” You nod. And then you hesitate. “Do you—do you regret it? Do you regret what you did?”


It’s not a surprise. You had known what the answer would be, but you needed to hear it. You swallow. Your throat is tight. “Why?”

“Had I not attempted it, I would have never been banished.” He hesitates for a moment. “And I would not have met you.”

You exhale shakily. You don’t say a word.

“I would do it again, if it meant that you would fall for me,” he continues. “I would kill a hundred thousand men, if you asked.”

You chew on your bottom lip.
You think.

And then you move your leg up and around so that you’re straddling him and you meet his gaze, green and gold and piercing, and he’s holding onto your hips like you’re his anchor to reality, like you’re tethering him to this, giving him a reason to get better, and it’s terrifying and it’s huge and it makes you realize that maybe when he said he would kill for you, he meant it.

“Why?” you ask plainly.

Loki doesn’t answer. But he leans forwards, and he kisses you like he can’t stop himself and his fingers are combing through your hair and he’s sliding his hands up under your shirt, his skin freezing, icy cold against yours, and you—

You don’t end up asking him again.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

February

Loki’s room is dark and it smells like spearmint and spun-sugar, sweet and fresh and familiar.

He opens the door and then you both stumble inside, and his hands tighten around your hips, spinning you around and backing you up against the wall as he elbows the door shut, and then he’s raining kisses along the curve of your neck down to the dip of your collarbone, nipping and tugging at the sensitive skin with his teeth, his mouth cool against your skin. It feels good. It feels right, it feels—

It feels exactly like it’s supposed to.

Loki reaches over to turn the lock on the door, and then his slender fingers are working at the buttons of his shirt, easily, effortlessly, and then it’s off, falling to the ground. You don’t mean to stare, but you do anyway.

He’s tall and slender, the muscles in his abdomen long and lithe and supple, and he’s not all that large but he’s graceful and slim and he has a wiry, whipcord strength to the lines of his muscles that makes your breath catch in your throat. There are two pale, milky-white scars on his body—one stretching over his shoulder and the other small and barely noticeable over his ribs on the right side—somehow, it’s not nearly as many as you expected. Maybe, you think, he’s just that good.

Loki hooks an arm around your waist and grins, and then he leans down to kiss you again and you run your hands down the ladder of muscle on his stomach, hesitant and awed by the way his skin ripples beneath your fingers. And then you’re backing up to the bed, kneeling down on it, and he’s still standing and you’re suddenly very aware of the bulge of his cock in his jeans.

You chew nervously on your bottom lip.

Loki glances down at you.

You splay a hand on his abdomen and then move lower, tugging at the button of his pants. “I’ve never, um,” you say nervously.

And Loki—he blinks, like he’s surprised or taken aback or something, and then his mouth opens in a small “oh” as he realizes what you intend to do and—

“Oh,” he murmurs, “Oh, darling.”
And then he leans down and he cups the back of your head and he kisses you, again, coaxes your mouth open with his tongue—he tastes like metal and toothpaste and licorice and something sweet and heady that you can’t identify as he traces the outline of your lips and kisses you hard, fast, eager—

He pulls back.

You look up at him.

His eyes glint in the light from the bedside lamp.

“You don’t have to do this, you know,” he murmurs.

“I want to,” you say. “But I haven’t ever—well.”

Loki’s eyes dart down to your lips. He looks—hungry.

“I can guide you,” he says. “If you would like.”

You nod slowly. “Okay.”

His hands lower down to his belt loops. He moves slowly, deliberately, and your stomach twists with arousal and anxiety and crushing, pounding desire.

“I only ask that you would tell me if you want to stop,” he says softly, and you nod, and then he’s sliding his jeans down, down, over his hips and all the way to the floor, and he’s stepping out of them and his thumb hooks in the waistband of his boxers—

He pulls them down, and—

You release a breath you hadn’t known you were holding.

His cock is long and thick and flushed and you stare, even if you don’t mean to, and Loki is looking down at you again, his green eyes searing and painfully intense and it sends a flash of white-hot aching desire through your bloodstream.

Hesitantly, you reach out and draw a single finger down from the tip to the base of his length. Loki hums, his eyelids fluttering closed. You wrap your fingers around him and squeeze, gently, just once.

Loki’s breath catches. He opens his eyes.

“Your tongue. Use your tongue,” he urges.

You lean forward. And then you stick your tongue out a drag it up the underside of his cock, all the way to the tip, swirling it around the head, and he groans, his mouth falling open, and it’s a fucking gorgeous sound that you want to hear again and again so you open your mouth and you relax and let him gently rock forward, pressing your tongue up against the vein that runs down his length.

“Oh… oh,” Loki gasps, his fingers winding in your hair. “Yes, darling, now—suck, just—oh, yes, like that—“

And then his hips jerk forward, almost of their own volition and the blunt head of his cock hits the back of your throat and you suck, hard, your cheeks hollowing out and your tongue slipping over and then he jolts up and your teeth scrape lightly over the sensitive head but it just spurs him on more, draws out a chocked, broken moan from the back of his throat—
“Yes, yes, keep going, just like that— ah, gods—you’re doing so well, darling, yes—“

His hips are rocking back and forth, little irregular thrusts, and then somehow the angle is different but he slides back to your throat and you swallow and swallow again, your muscles contracting around his cock, and it’s too much, it’s too much for him because he’s gasping out, “Oh—oh, yes—look at me, darling, look at me, I want to see you—“

And you look up—

Loki is staring down at you, his hair tangled and messy and a faint sheen of sweat glistening on his forehead and his eyes—his eyes are wide open and so fucking green, locked on yours, never looking away, as his jaw goes slack and a dull pink flush floods his cheeks—

His cock goes impossibly hard and jerks as he comes, and you swallow even as he rocks back into your mouth again and again with a gasp and a shudder and a hiss and then he’s collapsing beside you, breathless and dazed, pulling you into a kiss and groaning at the taste of himself. His fingers stroke your cheek, as the kiss softens, and he pulls you to his chest.

“Gods,” he breathes, staring up at the ceiling. “You’re—“

“I’m what?”


And you realize, as you start to doze off, that he’s right.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for how long it took! This will be a two-parter but I had to add the second part later on in the queue. Hope everyone who requested a Loki fic likes this one, and there will be more to come later!

Sorry that he might be a little out-of-character, there was a request for him to be non-world-domination-y so I tried to do that while keeping his character as best I could.

Next 5 In the Queue:
1. Alex Summers/Reader
2. Victor Creed/Reader
3. Gambit/Reader
4. Tony/Reader
5. Chaos 2 Loki/Reader
Safekeeping (Alex Summers)

Chapter Summary

Alex Summers x Reader, for the lovely and patient Sparrow13. Hope you like it!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

All right, so she is kind of beautiful.

Kind of.

Which does not mean that Alex Summers is admitting to anything, thank you very much. And it’s not like that’s even remotely relevant, anyways, for a number of very good, very logical reasons. For one, he has more important things to focus on, and for another, he’s not exactly the boyfriend type, what with the deadly hula hoops of doom, and all. Hell, he’s never even had to worry about things like this—girls and dating and relationships and where he might find out-of-season flowers. It’s all new and kind of pointless.

Alex wonders idly if this is what being infatuated feels like.

If it is, there are a lot of people he should probably apologize to. This is awful.

He sighs, and lets his head fall down against the wooden table with a solid thump.

Sean Cassidy looks up from his snack plate, where he had been just eating little rolls of lunch meat—and when Alex says “lunch meat”, he literally means just lunch meat. Not a sandwich, not lunch meat and crackers, just—lunch meat.

“What’s your issue, man?” Sean mumbles through a mouthful of turkey.

“Nothing,” Alex grunts, his head still lying on the table, staring at the scuff marks and weird stains. Maybe he could just stay there for the rest of his life. That sounds like a good idea.

Across the table, Sean chews and swallows, wiping his mouth on his sleeve. “Bull-shit,” he says matter-of-factly, resting his chin on his folded arms. “Something’s up. Spill, dude.”

“No,” he says dully. “Piss off.”

“Hey.” Sean frowns, holding his hands up in surrender. “No need to be rude, damn.”

There is a blissful three seconds of silence. Alex sits up, and sighs, rubbing his eyes with a groan.

“Is it a girl problem?”

He growls, and gets to his feet, pushing his way past Sean and stalking out of the kitchen.

The first words Alex manages to actually speak to her that week are about the training room. Because he’s a goddamn idiot, who’s apparently incapable of holding an actual conversation.

“You can train down here, if you want,” he says, awkwardly shuffling his feet as they both stand in the doorway of the training-room-slash-nuclear-bunker. He’d planned on training today with Charles and Hank, but they were off somewhere training the new kids, and Alex hadn’t been particularly inclined to stop them from doing so at the time. Now, though, he’s regretting that decision, because that means that she and Alex would be left down here, alone. “I mean, I don’t think there would be enough space for both of us. I’ll just, uh, wait.”

She studies him for a moment. He swallows, and crosses his arms over his abdomen, shifting his weight uncomfortably, makes a conscious effort to seem less intimidating. He knows what he looks like to people, his eyes are too cold and his face is too mean, but there’s nothing he can do about it.

“I’ll just– go upstairs,” he mutters, and turns back towards the hallway.

She grabs his arm. He tenses, and turns around, and she offers him the brightest fucking smile he’s ever seen, and his throat just– tightens. He doesn’t even mean for it to happen. It just does.

“We could share?” she offers, and Alex thinks he might be going legitimately crazy because her voice is kind and sweet and cheerful, and the only thing he could possibly ever compare it to would be a rainbow or the goddamn sun. It doesn’t even make sense. He’s losing his mind. Voices aren’t suns. What the fuck. “Or we could take turns, or something, and just make sure that everything goes okay. You know, make sure neither of us bring this whole building down, right?”

Alex coughs, and ducks his head. He’s not blushing. He is not.

“Yeah. I mean, are you sure?”

She turns back towards the training room, and pushes open the heavy doors. “Yeah, pretty sure I’m sure,” she replies easily.

Alex opens his mouth.

She walks into the room and tosses her training bag into the corner.

He closes his mouth.

“Yes. I mean, yeah.”

She starts to stretch, bending over at the waist to touch her toes, arms loose, and he tries to force himself not to stare. She’s wearing those black legging-things that Angel had owned so many frickin’ pairs of and holy fucking hell do they leave nothing to the imagination. He swallows reflexively, and clears his throat.

She straightens up, rolling her shoulders back. “Do you have any idea where Charles keeps the training mannequins?” She asks idly. “Not to mention why he has a bunch of mannequins lying around. I mean, it’s weird.”

He’s not paying attention. He should be, but he’s not. Which is–bad. Probably.

He rubs the back of his head and blinks. “Um. Yeah. I mean– it is weird. And, no, I don’t know.”

She hums, and nods distantly, scanning the room. “All right. Oh! There’s a hallway over there. Let’s check.”
She heads over to the hallway, leaving Alex standing there feeling—well. Feeling something. What exactly that something is, he had no idea.

She comes back with two mannequins tucked under her arms.

“Do you want me to…?” he asks, gesturing to them.

She shrugs. “No, I got them. I was thinking, we’ll just take turns training, and switch once we hit the mannequins, right? So that was we don’t have to worry about setting each other on fire.”


She walks to the other side of the room and sets up the two mannequins. Alex stands there for a few seconds, feeling sort of useless. And then he leaves.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

She finishes up pretty quickly, but by the time it’s his turn, there’s this weird rush of adrenaline coursing through his veins that makes him want to punch something. So Alex laces up his protective gloves and slides on his goggles and fires off six or seven rings of energy that purposely miss the mannequins before he stops to think too hard about how dangerous it is.

Because he likes this— the strain in his body, the sweat on his skin, the black and white reality of training, fighting—he can either do it or he can’t. There’s no maybes. And the simplicity has always been his favorite part. He can remember, way back when he was a kid, ten or eleven, before he had even known about his powers, spending all his time at the gym, relishing in the soreness and the strain and the way the punching bag made his knuckles bloody. He liked it. And starting fights had been easy. Winning fights had been easier. And when he got his powers he drowned it out in blood and bruises and hard right hooks and uppercuts, because no one looked twice at a teenage boy with anger issues. It was almost funny how fast it had escalated from a couple stern warnings to somebody left dead and a hard bunk in a solitary cell.

Alex is better now, though. He’s not so reckless. He’s still angry, he’s still certain he’ll always be angry, but at least now he can deal with it. At least now he’s scared of himself, and he knows exactly what he’s capable of.

So he trains and he lifts weights and he fights down the desire to just let it go, because he knows that violence comes as easy for him as breathing does. He spends his days and some of his nights at the gym, he buys a punching bag for his room in the school, he works himself to the bone most of the time, and he runs a hell of a lot.

But something’s different. He knows what’s different. It’s her. Alex isn’t good with change, and she makes him feel—

Off balance.

Which is stupid. He’s stupid.

A gleaming red ring of energy slices through the air and curves like a boomerang, cuts through both mannequins with a solid thud before dissipating. The dismembered torsos fall to the ground, and Alex leans down, resting his hands on his knees, staring at the burn-scarred floor.

~*~*~*~*~*~

Alex goes for a run every morning.
He wakes up before anyone else—he’s still hardwired from all that time in a government-sanctioned holding cell. The house is silent and there’s only faint slivers of grey-pink morning light bleeding in through the cracks in the blinds on his window, and the alarm on his bedside table hasn’t gone off yet.

He knows he won’t be able to fall back asleep.

So he sighs, and he throws on his training uniform and he laces up his running shoes and he shoves a couple of granola bars in his pocket, and then he’s out the front door and jogging down the driveway, the gravel crunching beneath his feet.

And Alex runs.

He runs, and he runs, and he runs, up the hill beside the Xavier mansion and down the path on the other side that leads over to the small lake in the woods. It’s early, maybe five or six in the morning; the sky is still grey and the banks of fog that rolled in off of the lake overnight glow pink in the first rays of the rising sun. The sparse woods are quiet, the branches barely rustling and the birds not quite awake enough to chirp, and every harsh breath that leaves his body forms a little cloud of steam that dissipates into the chilly morning air, and it’s—

It’s nice, because it’s mindless and it’s easy, every thud of his feet on the worn path is mechanical, almost robotic, he doesn’t have to think about it at all.

He turns the corner and sees the lake come into view in the distance, and—

He slows down.

Because there’s somebody standing by the lake, skipping rocks into the water, and she’s familiar and beautiful in the faint pink glow of the rising sun, and he doesn’t want his instinctive smile at finding her here to mean anything yet, doesn’t want to get ahead of himself as he slows down and walks towards her, but there’s a feeling in his stomach that might fit the definition of butterflies or nervous jitters and he has to laugh at himself for that, because honestly—

“(Name),” he calls, as casually as he can possibly manage, given the situation, shoving one hand into his pocket. He nudges the granola bars he had brought with him. Maybe he could give her one? Except—no, no, that’s fucking stupid, and he’s fucking stupid, and what the hell has come over him recently, anyways, it’s not like she’s even that big of a deal, except that when she sees him walking towards her she lights up and the way she says his name makes his throat actually fucking tighten around his next breath. Dimly, Alex realizes that he’s screwed.

“Well?” he swallows, stopping beside her. “What’re you doing up?”

She shrugs, and then flicks her wrist, skipping another rock, and Alex counts the splashes—one, two, three, four—and then he looks back at her.

“I dunno,” she replies. “I wake up early sometimes, and can’t fall back asleep, you know?”

She shrugs, and then flicks her wrist, skipping another rock, and Alex counts the splashes—one, two, three, four—and then he looks back at her.

“I dunno,” she replies. “I wake up early sometimes, and can’t fall back asleep, you know?”

Alex nods slowly. He understands. Hell, he’s been there, he is there, he had been since the moment he woke up this morning. He leans down and picks up a small grey pebble off the ground, rolling it around in his fingers.

She glances at him, and a ghost of a smile, small and secretive, flashes across her face. Maybe he’d imagined it. Or maybe he hadn’t. And then she skips another rock across the surface of the lake.

Alex studies her movements, and tries to mimic them, tossing the rock into the water. It falls with a
small thud and a splash. He blushed.

“Here, I’ll teach you,” she offers easily, smiling up at him. She presses a flat rock into his hand. “Just—you have to make the angle right, and it’s supposed to kind of—spin—here, let me—”

They waste a good hour like that, standing by the shoreline of the small lake, skipping stones across the surface as the sun rises. And it’s—it’s nice, really, it’s simple and easy and it’s safe, which in the life of Alex Summers is something that doesn’t happen that often. So when she presses another stone into his hand and then comments that they should probably go back to get breakfast, he feels almost disappointed, because he doesn’t want it to end, he doesn’t want to go back to being Alex Summers, the kid with anger issues and deadly powers, he just wants—

He just wants to be normal.

He rolls his fingers over the small pebble in his hand.

He doesn’t end up throwing it into the water.

Alex slides it into his pocket, for—

For safekeeping.

*~*~*~*~*

“We should go get breakfast somewhere.”

She says it casually when they’re walking back from the lake—Alex had taken to running every day, only because he doesn’t want to miss a fucking second of her company, and he knows that she’ll always come back to that lake and he figures it’s only a matter of time. So she’s not there always, but she’s there sometimes, which is good enough. And after Cuba, he’d take good enough and he’d be damn happy about it.

“What?” he says blankly.

“We should go drive into town. Get breakfast. There’s got to be a good restaurant around here.”

So they take one of Charles’ parents’ old cars, and they drive out and stop at an old diner and they sit in a booth together; she orders pancakes and waffles to split between them, and smiles sweetly at the elderly waitress and attempts to convince her that yes, I’m sure I don’t want any coffee, thank you very much, and for some reason Alex has to bite down on his lower lip and scrunch up his nose to stop himself from laughing. They leave with an overstuffed to-go bag, much to the staff’s pleasure, if only because the pancakes were really damn good.

So they walk back to the car, and she’s talking about how the Cerebro machine thing works and Alex is trying to pay attention, really, but he’s never been good at multitasking particularly when he’s completely absorbed in wondering whether or not she’d meant to wind their fingers together when they left the restaurant, and then she’s swinging their interlocked hands around and giving him a happy little smile and he legitimately forgets everything she’d been talking about as he struggles to remember how to do basic things like breathe and walk and not make a fool of himself please and thank you, and it—

It scares him, how fast he falls in love with her.

~*~*~*~*~*~
It’s an hour after they get back from the diner, and they’re lying back on his bed, their feet resting against his headboard, and his too-big grey jacket is wrapped around her body, and they’re singing along to some stupid pop song playing from the radio in the corner of the room, their voices echoing and crackling as they collapse with laughter.

And then the volume gets turned off after the song is over, and they just lie there for a while. Alex can’t stop smiling. And it’s _good_, and he relishes in it, because he can’t remember the last time he’d felt this _giddy._

“We got even more new students, did you hear?” she comments, stretching. “We’re supposed to make more room, so people are gonna have to double up pretty soon. Hank didn’t seem too happy about that.”

That’s an understatement. Not that Alex blames him—he understands. Sort of.

“Oh—yeah,” he replies. “He can get… angry? Irritated, I dunno, something like that. He doesn’t mean anything by it, though. It’s… that’s just what he’s like. Stubborn.”

“Okay.” She hums, and then exhales slowly, resting her chin on his shoulder and looking up at him through her lashes. His breathing falters. “What about you? What are you like?”

Alex looks down at her, and raises an eyebrow. “What?”

She shrugs. “I dunno. What are you like? If that’s who Hank is, then who are you?”

He blinks dumbly. “Oh. Well, I’m—um, I dunno. I’m just… _Alex._” He shrugs helplessly.

She grins, and rolls her eyes. “I know that. That’s not what I meant.”

Alex shifts and manages to wriggle his arm out from under her and wrap it around her shoulders. “I—I well, um, I’m… angry? Or, intense, or something, I dunno, angry sounds—bad. I used to—“ he clears his throat, “I used to get into a lot of fights. It was easy, you know? Just—winning or losing. I—that sounds—I wasn’t—“ he clenches and unclenches his jaw, snapping his eyes shut. “I don’t know.”

She’s silent for a long time.

Alex exhales slowly.

Because—

He hadn’t meant to do that. He messed up. He messed up, he shouldn’t have even thought about who he is, who he had been, because all those paths lead to bad places. He’s not a good guy. He knows that, but—

It doesn’t mean it makes it any easier to deal with.

It doesn’t mean he wanted her to know.

She sits up, and studies him for a moment.

“Oh,” she says finally, sounding contemplative and a little bit sad—but if it’s for him or because of him, he can’t tell. “I was just thinking—everyone’s so convinced that these things are permanent, you know? That who you _were_ is going to be who you _are_, and I don’t think that’s true.”

Alex sighs, and he tucks an arm behind his head, and he thinks of what to say, how to respond—
because he’s not good at this, he’s not good at *externalizing his emotions* and *talking about things* because he’s not clever and he’s not smart and he’s not charming, he’s just *Alex*, he’s apprehensive and angry and argumentative and a whole host of other stupid things that started with A (aggressive, acerbic, abnormal—oh, that one he fucking *hated*). And if you took that away, all those bad things, he’s not sure if he would recognize what was left. Because yeah, there are good things about him, but they’re shaped by the bad things, and without those—he just *doesn’t know*.

“I don’t think that’s how it works,” he says finally. “I—things like that, they don’t just go away. It all just—it all *stays*.”

She nods slowly. “Yeah. Yeah, maybe it does.”

Alex sits up.

And they look at each other for a long, long moment, but then—

But then she *smiles*.

And it’s a real smile, real and honest and he wonders what she’s thinking about, what she thinks about *him*, because he’s getting the feeling that she doesn’t see him the same way he does, that when she looks at him she can somehow, *magically*, look past all the fuck-ups and the mistakes that he’s made, she can look at him and see somebody worth saving.

Alex realizes, dimly, that there are other A words that he forgot to mention—audacious, abrupt, *automatic*—because he doesn’t think things through, *ever*, he’s not good at thinking, but he is good at *acting*, (another A word), so when she smiles at him like he’s the goddamn sun he doesn’t think, he doesn’t speak, he just—

Alex leans forward and winds his fingers through the hair at the nape of her neck and he kisses her, he wraps an arm around her waist and he kisses her, and her palms press against his chest, curl in the fabric of his shirt and she doesn’t push him away and it’s perfect, perfectly impossible and perfectly *unreal* and he barely manages to stop himself from pinching his arm because he must be fucking *dreaming*—

He kisses her.

He kisses her, and she kisses him back and he kisses her again, again, *again*, and he doesn’t want to stop, not even when he runs out of oxygen and air and time, *fuck*, because things like this aren’t supposed to be this good, but *she* is, of course she is and she always fucking will be—

He kisses her.

He kisses her, and she kisses him back, and it—

It’s *amazing*, and Alex wonders if maybe A-words aren’t so bad, after all.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

The night of their sort-of graduation from Xavier’s school, they’re sprawled across his bed in the sticky June heat with both of the windows flung wide open. It’s quiet, and it’s late, and the only sounds are that of the ancient house creaking and the discordant melody of crickets outside.

Alex sighs.

“It’s like—this is the end of something,” he mutters quietly. “You know?”
She tilts her head to look at him. “Yeah. It—yeah, I guess it is.”

He falls silent again. The silence is oddly fragile. Because yeah, this is the end, this is the end of a lot of things and a lot of those things are good things, and it’s stupid and unfair but it’s also inevitable.

He barely acknowledges the quiet rustle of sheets, but then—

She’s straddling his knees and leaning over him, blocking out the lone beam of fading sunlight filtering in from the window, and he wants to smile, he does, but there’s something swelling in his chest like a too-full balloon and it’s filling the air with every breath he takes, something inevitable and nostalgic and bitter-sweet, because he loves her, he does, and he never fucking wants this to end, not even if it has to, not even if the entire fucking world hinges on it.

He cups her face in his hands and he leans up and he kisses her, gently, softly, and her lips are warm and full and sweet, and something inside him aches, tears, wants—

Alex traces the hem of her blouse with his fingers. When he pulls it off of her, she lets him. She tugs at the button on his collar and then pulls his shirt up over his head and presses her lips to the center of his chest. It takes him one—two—three tries to open the clasp of her bra with his fingers, and then it’s off, discarded, just like his belt and then his jeans, and her skirt, and his boxers, and then she lets out a little gasp as his fingers nudge up between her thighs through one single sheer layer of damp lace and cotton. He’s a little clumsy and unsure of himself but it doesn’t matter, really, not when she’s looking at him like that and not when he’s rummaging around in the top drawer of his pine wood bedside table for a condom and not when she rocks her hips into him, gently, slowly, and it’s like an electric shock rippling all the way up his spine because he can feel her, hot and wet and—

“Oh—oh, fuck,” he gasps.

And he considers how easily he could just get lost in this—the sensations, the warmth of her body and her hands gripping his shoulders and his name on her lips, again and again, the way she says it and how it almost sounds beautiful, his hands on her skin and how she gasps and shivers when his fingers—clumsy, unpracticed, unsure—wander down to brush over her clit. He can feel it, building inside of him, the pleasure coiling in his stomach, but there’s also the realization that he doesn’t want this to be an ending, he doesn’t want this to be their ending, because he loves her and he isn’t ready to lose her or lose this and he isn’t ready for the rest of the world to matter again, not yet. And then she shudders and arches her back and clutches his shoulders and cries out, and it wrenches his own orgasm from him and the wave crests, crashes, falls down and tapers out into a fine, needlepoint edge and it’s—

It’s almost—

Sweet.

“I love you,” he says, catching her and not letting her go.

Because—

It’s an ending, yeah, it’s a new chapter or a new book or it’s just new, but that’s okay, because it’s not their ending. It’s not. It’s—

It’s a beginning.
It’s something new.
Smut was a little short on this one, sorry, guys! I tried D:
Anyway, please leave comments, requests, or criticisms, I welcome them all! Here's what the queue looks like as of 11/9:
1. Victor Creed/Reader
2. Gambit/Reader
3. Tony/Reader
4. Chaos 2 Loki/Reader
5. Bucky/Reader
Chapter Summary

A long sort-of Beauty and the Beast AU that no one asked for. Based off of Origins Victor. For Zephyr, hope you enjoy!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Victor Creed is not a good person.

He knows that.

He accepts it.

He fucking *relishes* in it.

He kills and he maims and he sells his talents out to the highest bidder and he gets an awful sort of thrill out of the chase—because that’s half the fun, isn’t it, just hunting down his prey—and when he finally catches someone and sinks his claws into their flesh he doesn’t feel a single fucking ounce of regret. There’s nothing particularly *original* about his brand of evil. He’s a cold-blooded killer. He’s an animal. That’s all there is to it.

Well, mostly.

Because in the middle of the biting cold winter something stumbles through his door—a girl, naïve and innocent, half his size and twice as reckless, and she can’t be more than what, eighteen, nineteen? Not that it matters to Victor, not that he even remotely *cares*, and that’s what makes him wonder, if there’s really a difference between an animal and a man who’s lost his humanity.

See—

Animals—they hunt their prey. They inspire fear, they chase and chase and chase and then they *take*, and it’s simple and clean and efficient.

But a man—

A man will lie and cheat and manipulate, he will *deceive*, he’ll have his prey eating out of the palm of his hand, and by the time they realize the danger, it will be too late.

No, he’d been wrong, he decides. He isn’t an animal.

He’s a man.

A very *twisted* man, but a man all the same.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

There is a legend of a beast that lives in the mountains.
You don’t believe it.

But you want to. You want to believe that there’s someone out there like you. Someone who’s—

It’s a local tale, a fable, really, passed down from generation to generation—a creature more wolf than man, slave to animal instinct and raging bloodlust, deadly and vicious and evil as if he had been touched by the devil himself. He lives alone, in a house on top of the cliffs, and sometimes—sometimes, when everything is silent and the moon hangs pearly and full in the sky, sometimes—

You can hear him howling.

But now, as you stand in front of the house on the mountaintop, you hear nothing at all. Just—silence.

The house is built of wood and flinty, jagged stone, a towering two stories sprawled across the mountaintop, and the path leading up to it is overgrown and dusted in a layer of snow. The hedges are wild and untamed and the spiked, cast-iron gate is rusted and the garden is overrun and three of the windows—two on the top floor and one on the bottom—are boarded up and broken. It looks desolate. It looks lonely, framed by towering evergreen trees and fading rays of bitter burnt-orange sunlight.

The door is weather-worn and the wood is warped, and the worn copper doorknocker is decorated with small, delicate carvings of bloomingaconite.

(Aconite. Monkshood. Wolfsbane.)

You don’t notice the irony.

You turn the doorknob.

The inside is—clean.

That should have been the first sign that something was wrong.

You don’t notice.

Instead you inspect the thick, heavy velour curtains and the leather-bound books sitting stacked on intricately carved pine shelves and you wonder, idly, what had happened to this place, how it had gotten so lost and misplaced over the years, and then so easily forgotten.

It’s dead silent. You swallow noisily and pull out your phone, flicking on the flashlight as you walk down the carpeted hallway.

There are full length mirrors and old framed oil paintings and porcelain teacup sets sitting on polished end tables, all covered in a fine layer of dust, like the occupants had just left, suddenly, in the middle of breakfast, with every intention of coming back.

You’re examining the hand-stitched family crest embroidered onto the edge of a tablecloth, running your fingers over the raised letters—Howlett—and trying to remember if you’d ever heard that name before when you hear a sound.

You go stock still. You want to move, you want to look around and head back towards the exit but something basic and instinctive in the pit of your stomach tells you not to. And then—

And then there’s something sharp pressed up against the pulsing, pounding artery at the base of your
neck and you can feel the suffocating heat of someone standing right behind you, just out of reach. Your breath catches. You think of the myth—the beast in the mountains. You shiver.

He is not real.

“Now, what’ve we got here?” he murmurs, laughs, even, his voice dark and rich and husky, as if he hasn’t had reason to use it in a long time. He sounds almost aristocratic, self-assured and smooth, the kind of voice belonging to someone rich and moderately educated.

He is not real.

He’s still holding a knife to your throat.

And as you stand there, as still as you can manage, he drags the point of the blade from your neck down to the curve of your shoulder, drawing tiny ruby red droplets of blood that smear over your skin.

You shudder.

And then there’s a pulsing, sentient vibration running through your body, something that’s alive even though it shouldn’t be, something that reaches for you the same way the tendrils of ivy creeping up the sides of the house reach for sunlight, a flashing spider-shock thrill of power and strength and the sudden cold absence of fear—

The bones in your hands disconnect. They disconnect, and they shift, and they grow.

You reach back, and you sink the spikes extending from your fingers into the soft part of the man’s stomach, and he—he laughs.

And then you stumble backwards and the shards of bone shrink back under your skin and you’re ducking an elbow that grazes your jaw, striking out blindly with a fist and gasping at the sharp crack that follows (you’re not sure what broke; your knuckles or his nose) and then it’s over in a matter of seconds because he’s got you pinned to the wall with his forearm resting heavily across your throat, his claws—god, his claws—digging into your stomach.

The last faint rays of sunlight filter in from a crack in a boarded-up window, and you see him, plainly, for the first time.

He’s enormous, and his face—his face is clear and strong and masculine, harsh planes and sharp angles, and there’s something distinctly vicious about the slant of his mouth and the tilt of his jawline and the square of his chin, something that you can’t quite put your finger on, his eyes ringed with gleaming yellow like a cat, like an animal—

“How’d you get up here, huh?” he growls, cocking his head to the side. “Tiny little thing like you? You use your claws?”

“Yes,” you manage to gasp, as his elbow presses harder against your windpipe.

“And who sent you?”

“Nobody.”

“You probably don’t wanna lie to me,” he warns, claws pressing reflexively into the soft part of your stomach, not quite breaking skin.
“Nobody! Nobody, I swear,” you say, louder this time, screwing your eyes shut and tilting your head away from him. “I live by the mountain. It’s—this house, it’s a legend. I just wanted—I wanted to see if it was true.”

The claws slowly retract away from your body. You take a deep, shuddering breath.

“Yeah, you’re tellin’ the truth,” he mutters, as the pressure against your throat disappears.

You stand there, staring at each other, for a long moment.

“Are you—can I go?” You ask quietly, your voice quivering, as he turns away.

The beast pauses. “You can try.”

You blink slowly.

“What?”

“There’s always somethin’ they leave out of the story,” he muses. “‘Bout the mountain. It was snowing when you came up here, yeah?”

“Yeah,” you answer.

“Pity.” He smirks, mocking and predatory. “Looks like you’re stuck with me, girl.”

“What?”

He shrugs one hopelessly broad shoulder with a carelessness that grates even more on your already frayed nerves. “You won’t be able to get down ‘til it all melts.”

It takes a moment to sink in, what he’s saying, what it means. And then you swallow, taste bile and anger and pressing, sickly sweet terror—

The beast laughs.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

(You believe him about the mountain. That may have been a mistake.)

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

His name is Victor Creed.

He introduces himself while he’s leading you around the house with a hand flat and firm between your shoulder blades, and he talks like he’s almost pleased that you’re forced to stay, now that he knows you’re not a threat, and you can’t quite stem the surging swell of pity at the idea of being so alone, separated from a world that wouldn’t want him, anyway.

He’s a beast.
It’s hard to remember.

He kisses the back of your hand and offers a sarcastic bow as he guides you through a heavy oak door, his laughter sharp and biting, cutting through the air like a knife. The house is massive and mazelike and utterly confusing, but Victor seems to know precisely where everything is.

(“Welcome home,” he says, standing leant against a massive mahogany cabinet, hand painted aconites curled around the lacquered onyx handle. “What’s mine is yours, ’cept the basement. That’s mine.”)

Your bedroom is in a different wing than Victor’s, a newer wing, belonging to the last people to own the house, nearly five years ago. He stops in front of a heavy oak door and says something about I’ll teach you the way around this place in the mornin’ and you have to choke back a desperate, helpless laugh at the strangeness of it all, at how utterly convoluted this entire thing is.

Victor yanks open the door, and you walk into the room without saying a word.

You don’t sleep that night.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

(You should miss your town. Strangely, you don’t. You feel just as out of place here as you did with your family. You don’t tell Victor that.)

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

In the following hours and days and weeks, you spend the time you’re not with Victor exploring the house.

It’s a cluster of randomly added corridors and rooms all connected together, some dated back to the late seventeenth century, and others, like your room, as recent as 2007.

You found the library on the seventh day, and fell in love.

The polished rosewood shelves reach from the floor to the high-arched ceiling, lined with creaking leather-bound books and old journals and memoirs dating back to the early nineteenth century, documenting generations of spoiled infants and stern-faced governesses and doting mothers and fathers and ill-treated servant boys drifting through the carpeted halls, reading books and learning dances and practicing the off-key melodies of Bach and Chopin on the creaking grand piano. You pick a dusty volume at random and sit down in a red-velvet upholstered rocking chair in one corner, and you read for about five minutes until you realize that the handwriting is indecipherable. You place the book back on the shelf and look around.

There is a family tree along one wall.

You study it, methodically counting the waning remnants of the names pasted over the faded wallpaper, each cranberry fleur-de-lis spaced evenly between gilded names against a cream colored background.
The last name is James Howlett.

Victor’s name isn’t on the tree.

You can’t help but wonder why.

~*_*_*_*_*_*_*_*

(Victor Creed is the name of the illegitimate son of the groundskeeper in 1830. You figure this out two days later. You don’t talk to Victor about it.)

*_*_*_*_*_*_*_*

Victor joins you for dinner the night before the full moon.

You’re not stupid, you know he’s not a werewolf, and you know the full moon has no effect on him, but that doesn’t stop the bitter tint of fear in your eyes as he saws at a red-raw venison steak with his knife, his elbow propped up on the table beside the flickering light of a dripping wax candle.

He grins, and the light from the flame catches on his canines, straight and sharp and not quite human.

You don’t flinch.

“Why isn’t anyone lookin’ for you?” he asks abruptly, cocking an eyebrow.

You look down at your plate and stab the prongs of your silver fork into a carrot. “What?”

He shrugs, one of his fingers lingering over the candle. He presses down for a second, and the flame leaves a small searing burn on his skin, red and raw and angry. It knits itself shut in a matter of seconds. “Nobody’s come lookin’ for you, and it’s been… hm. Nearly two weeks, now.”

You chew on your bottom lip, the pit of your stomach bubbling with annoyance, corrosive and tart. “I don’t know. I’m not like them, I guess, so people don’t really notice.”

Your fingers itch and prickle with heat, sharp shards of bone pressing up against your skin from the inside. You curl your hand into a tight fist, and ignore it.

Victor’s mouth twists into a semblance of a smile.

“’Course,” he chuckles. “Funny, isn’t it?”

“What’s funny?” you say, focused intently on spreading a sliver of butter over your bread, pretending you can’t feel his stare burning into your skull.

Victor hums quietly. “How they’ll deny stuff like that. Ignore it.”

“Abnormality?” you ask quietly, knife sinking into a slice of venison.

“No,” he says, the edges of his voice blurred and heavy with an emotion you can’t quite place. “Potential.”

You hesitate.
You look up.

And he stares at you, for a moment that lasts too long, too taut and tense and saturated with pre-storm tension, the angles of his face illuminated in the sputtering light of the candle as his tongue flicks over his teeth.

“Oh,” you say, very, very quietly. “Oh.”

*~*~*~*~*~*~*

(That is the first time anyone’s suggested that maybe your mutation is a good thing. It makes you feel —warm. It probably shouldn’t. You toss and turn all night, thinking about what he had said. Or— maybe you’re just thinking about him. You wonder if there’s a difference.)

(Victor Creed is tall and broad-shouldered with rough hands and a quick tongue, and thinking about what he could do to you makes you feel like you’re on fire.)

(The first time you come thinking about him, it’s nearly midnight. You burn with shame and don’t make a sound.)

*~*~*~*~*~*~*

Victor spends his time in one of two places—the basement or the courtyard.

You find him there one day, shirtless and slick with sweat as his bare fists slam into the trunk of a pine tree over and over again, rhythmically, mindlessly, and the grizzled bark is splintered and stained crimson with his blood. You watch him, transfixed, as the sharp clouds of his breath dissipate into the January air and the sinewy muscles in his arms and his shoulders and his torso bunch and curl and strain, thrown into dramatic shadows by the harsh winter sunlight, and you stare, your hands curled into fists and your fingernails digging little crescent marks into your palms—

Victor Creed is viciously, inhumanly beautiful.

And it—

It scares you. He scares you.

“What’re you doing?”

His question echoes across the courtyard, and his expression relaxes, almost imperceptibly.

You don’t answer.

“Aren’t you freezing?” you ask instead, the soles of your boots crunching against snow-covered cobblestones, abrasively loud in the stillness of the cold winter air.

He chuckles, and wipes his bloody knuckles on his sweatpants. “No. The cold don’t bother me.”

You bite down on the inside of your cheek as you get closer, stopping a few feet away from him. He studies you silently for a moment, his eyes blistering and intense, a cool flinty grey outlined with a
ring of yellow.

Victor glances at a straw-stuffed leather bag hanging from a pine beam in the center of the courtyard. “Anybody ever taught you how to fight?” he asks, cocking his eyebrow.

You lick your lips. “No.”

He snorts, and the slant of his posture relaxes even further. “Course not,” he says.

You shrug apologetically, the fur-trimmed hem of your cloak swirling around your feet. “Sorry.”

“I could teach you,” he offers, after a moment, a lopsided smirk stretching across his face and showing the sharp ends of his canines. “Give you somethin’ to do.”

You hesitate. And then you nod. “Okay.”

And that’s how you waste the next hour.

Victor sets you up in front of the leather punching bag, he stands off to your left side and watches you work through basic little maneuvers with frightening intensity that makes the hairs on the back of your neck raise, and then he steps in and physically guides you through some of the more confusing patterns. It’s rhythmic and mindless and easy, the repetitive sound of your fists hitting leather drowning out the dripping of melting snow.

Victor steps forward to guide you through another set.

But—

But—

Without warning, he stops, jerks you backwards so that the massive bulk of his body is pushed right up against you, but you don’t gasp, and you don’t flinch, and you don’t turn around to look at him, you don’t, and as he bends down to murmur in your ear—

You falter.

“Tell me something,” he says, his hands traveling slowly up your arms, nudging your elbows upwards. “Are you gonna beat anybody with your hands down?”

Victor pauses, like he’s waiting for a response, and then he chuckles, the sound deep and rich and reverberating through his chest. “No. Keep ‘em up, kitten,” he murmurs.

And then—

He doesn’t move away.

He doesn’t move away.

He stays, he doesn’t step back, and the heat radiating off of his body is suffocating but you don’t move either, you can’t, you stay stock still and you wonder what it would feel like if his hands would move down to your hips and the seam of your jeans, you wonder if you would like it, you wonder if he wants to, if he’s thought about it before—

You wonder, and you breathe in the smell of woodsmoke and scotch and earth, his smell, and you—

You falter.
“I—I’m a little cold,” you manage to say. “I think I’m going to go inside.”

Victor takes a deep breath, and lets it out slowly.

“Sure,” he says.

His voice is perfectly steady.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

That night, Victor Creed doesn’t sleep.

He turns the heavy iron key in the lock until it clicks, sets it on the polished mahogany nightstand, and then he collapses onto his bed and stares up at the ceiling and listens to the creak and sway of the paint-chipped window shutters outside, swollen with wood rot and melting snow. It’s calming for all of two minutes.

He sighs, and tucks an arm behind his head.

His mind wanders back to the courtyard.

Jesus, he should’ve fucked her today.

He’s pretty sure she would’ve let him.

He should’ve just—fuck, he should’ve wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her back, until she could feel how hard he was, and she would’ve let out a quiet little sound, surprise and want and longing jumbled up together, she would’ve rocked back against him all nice and innocent—

Oh, she would’ve fucking begged for it.

Victor lets his head fall back against the pillows with a vicious half grin.

His jeans feel fucking restrictive, he realizes dimly.

He tugs them off, and stares back up at the ceiling.

And then his hand starts to wander down to the edge of his boxers, and those come off, too, tossed over the side of the bed and forgotten.

He could smell how wet she was through three layers of clothing. Christ.

Victor licks his lips.

His hand wraps loosely around his cock.

“Hmm, fuck.”

He wonders, idly, as he picks up a slow, languid rhythm, what she would look like—splayed out on his bed, yeah, maybe her fingers tangled in his hair, and she’d make pretty little noises as he fucked her with his tongue— and she might even beg a little bit, plead and whimper and look up at him with big, wide eyes. Fuck, that’d be—fuck.

“Mmm. Christ.”
Victor closes his eyes.

And then she’d come, and he’d pull her onto his lap—fuck, she’s so fucking small compared to him, everybody is, but still—and her hands would splay out on his chest, warm and soft, nails digging in just a little bit. And she’d let out a pretty little moan when he kissed her, yeah, and maybe he’d be too big, she’d have to sink down on him nice and slow, and she’d be so tight it’d almost hurt and he’d have to fight with himself not to just fucking take her, and then she’d fuck herself on his cock and she’d flush all red when he told her how good she was, yeah, kitten, you’re doing so good for me, aren’t you, fuck yeah baby girl c’mon you can take it—

He fists his cock roughly, relishes in the drag of his calloused palm against the sensitive skin, groans out a muffled curse as his thumb swipes over the head—

And then he’d rub slick little circles around her clit and he’d have her shaking, fuck, and her pretty lips would be all swollen ‘cause he would’ve fucked her mouth already, she’d be riding him with the taste of his cock on her tongue, fuck fuck fuck, her hips rocking back and forth just a little bit because she wouldn’t be able to take any more, no, but he would make her take more until she was begging him to stop, so fucking pretty—oh god oh god what are you doing Victor what are you doing to me with that big—thick—hard—

He grits his teeth, throws his head back—stroke, twist, stroke—his hand tightens into a fist in the sheets—

And then she’d come, and he wouldn’t be able to fucking stop himself, no, he’d flip her over and lock his eyes on hers and fuck her like the animal he is and her eyes would go all wide and she would shudder underneath him and gasp and cry out and maybe her nails would rake down his back, leaving little red lines that would heal over in seconds, and then she’d moan his name and that—

And that—

That would be it. That would be the single fucking thing that would push him over the edge.

His thumb drags over the slit of his cock and his muscles tense up unconsciously and his back arches, fuck fuck fuck yes yes jesus fucking christ—

He comes, hard, all over his hand, and collapses breathlessly back onto the bed.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

(You no longer think of Victor Creed as a beast.)

(You should.)

*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

It’s nearly twelve at night.

You’re sitting curled up on a couch with flower-printed upholstery across from a crackling fire,
clutching a leather-bound book of French fairy tales from the mid-seventeen-hundreds, which is actually more interesting than you’d thought it would be.

And Victor—

He comes in a few minutes later and sits down beside you, nearly too close, and he punctuates the silence by topping off his crystal clear clean-cut tumbler of scotch from a bottle resting on the varnished coffee table. The sleeves of his gunmetal grey oxford are rolled carelessly up to his elbows and the first two buttons of his collar are undone.

You can feel his eyes raking over you, the heat rolling in waves off of his body, the answering coiling buzz of anticipation and longing that thrums in the pit of your stomach. There’s a feeling in the back of your mind, a subconscious instinctive sense of being on the cusp of something, an eruption or an earthquake or a deadly disaster.

You try to focus harder on your book.

Victor catches your gaze before you look away.

And he smirks, and tilts his head to the side like he has a secret, like he knows something that you don’t, tapping his fingers idly against the edge of his tumbler. His claws are retracted, you notice, his fingernails are blunt-cut and unusually clean—you don’t wonder why.

Victor glances down at the glass, and watches the amber liquid inside swirl around in slow, languid circles. His eyes flicker up to meet yours, nearly black in the bronze light of the fire.

“You ever had scotch before?” he asks, his voice low and rumbling.

You blink slowly, and close your book, turning to look at him. “I’m not old enough to drink. Not legally,” you say.

Victor chuckles. “That’s not what I’m asking,” he replies, and his voice is warm and sinuous, blurred in a way that suggests the bottle on the table is nearly empty, and you wonder how much he’s had to drink. You wonder if it even matters.

His arm moves over the back of the couch, lingers near your shoulders, too close to pass off as an accident.

You shiver.

And he notices.

“All right,” you say, shifting in your seat, crossing your legs over each other. “No, I haven’t.”

He swirls the drink around in his glass. “You want to try some?” he asks.

Victor’s eyes flicker down to watch your tongue dart over your bottom lip. “Sure,” you hear yourself say.

His arm shifts a little lower.

He presses the glass into your hand. Your fingers brush, and it sends a shiver running down your spine like water and ignites the ever-present heat pooling deep in your stomach.

You take a small sip from the tumbler and don’t meet his eyes.
The drink tastes—*bitter*, like burnt cork and smoke and leather, and it burns your throat going down. You cough, and make a face.

“You like it?” Victor asks.

“No,” you say, and you can’t help but laugh, wrinkling your nose. “Nope.”

And then—

Victor *smiles*, and it isn’t nice or comforting or even really *happy*, but his arm comes down, down, *down* around your shoulders and he studies you for a moment and then smirks when you don’t move away, and then you’re laughing and shifting closer to him and he’s *warm* and he smells like earth and smoke and cigars, and it’s familiar, even though it probably shouldn’t be.

He takes the tumbler from your hand and sets it on the table.

And he looks at you, and you look back at him, head tilted slightly to the side—he’s always been open, never really made a secret about what’s going on in his head but tonight his eyes are surprisingly unreadable in the flickering light of the fire, and it makes you hesitate.

And then he moves, slowly, he presses his palm flat against yours, calloused and warm and rough, his expression shifting into something almost *curious*, and you’re reminded yet again of just how big he is compared to you as he slides his hand up your arm to your shoulder and your neck, and then he cups your jaw, he sweeps his thumb over the cushion of your bottom lip and he looks at you and the air around you feels swollen with possibilities and the potential for chaos, the tension from the past few days and weeks and months stretching, pulling, *snapping*, as a small, self-assured smirk tugs at his mouth, and you can’t process what’s about to happen, you can’t wrap your mind around four months of spectacularly bad luck culminating into such a catastrophic disaster, but—

“You want to try something else?” Victor murmurs, and the confidence in his voice is deep and sure and unavoidable, *inescapable*, and it liquefies your muscles and melts any last scraps of uncertainty you might have been holding onto.

He doesn’t even give you a chance to respond.

He catches your chin between his index finger and thumb, tilts it up, slowly, emphasizing the fact that he isn’t forcing you to move, no, he’s not forcing you to do anything but the moment still feels inevitable as he leans close, closer, his stubble scraping over your skin and his breath sharp and hot and then—

And then his lips just barely brush over yours, faintly, briefly, and it’s not soft and it’s not gentle but it’s *slow*, his hand cupping the curve of your jaw, and your fingers curling into the collar of his shirt as his tongue traces over the outline of your lips, taunting and teasing and *testing*, testing your reaction and the way you shiver under his touch and then—

He pulls back. And he licks his lips, and his eyes are dark and focused so intensely that you shiver.

“Victor,” you say, shocked and confused and *desperate*, yes, a little, just enough that you know he can hear it, the tiny barely-there tremor in your voice—

A grin, dirty and deliberate, stretches over his mouth, exposing his canines.

“Now you’re going to tell me,” he murmurs into your ear, his voice husky, *rough*, even, it rumbles in his chest and sends a shockwave coiling down your spine as his fingers dance over the dip in your collarbone. “That you want me to do that again,” he leans down, nose pressed to your neck, “and
again—“his breath is ragged and hot against your skin, “and again.”

It’s not a question, and there’s an undercurrent of aggression to his words that shouldn’t surprise you as much as it does, it shouldn’t surprise you at all, and it shouldn’t send a rush of molten heat pooling in the pit of your stomach and have you choking back a gasp—

“Yes, please,” you whisper, and your voice is brittle and fragile and lost.

He groans lowly.

And then—

Victor kisses you again.

And his lips tug and snap and pull at yours, coaxing your mouth open, and his tongue curls around your teeth and roves over the roof of your mouth and he tastes like scotch, bitter and burnt and smoky—you think, dimly, that maybe it’s not so bad, not like this—and he curls an arm around your waist and he lifts you up into his lap like you weight nothing and still he keeps kissing you, over and over and over again, his fingers working the buttons of your blouse, his cock a thick, rigid line even through your skirt, even through his jeans—

Your blouse flutters to the ground and then he’s thumbing your nipples through one layer of lace and cotton and he’s chuckling at the way you shiver and gasp and lean into his touch, his rough hand splayed on your belly just above the hem of your skirt, his skin not warm but hot, liquefying the muscles in your abdomen and sparking an unfamiliar desperate needy ache between your thighs. And then his mouth trails down your jaw, over your neck, his teeth latching on to your skin like he wants to leave a bruise, a mark, a reminder, of what he was doing and of what you let him do and what it meant, what it will mean tomorrow and the next day and the day after—

You don’t tell him to stop.

He guides your hands to the buttons on his oxford and you don’t tell him to stop, not then and not when his shirt is tossed to the side and your eyes glance over his chest to the trail of tawny hair leading from his navel and disappearing into the waistband of his low-slung jeans.

You drag your nails lightly down his stomach and Victor growls your name, guttural and fierce, and the way he says it makes you shiver, it makes you freeze as his mouth claims yours again, harsh and unforgiving, his hands tight on your hips as he rocks up against you, the bulge of his cock in his jeans thick and heavy between your thighs. He fights with the clasp on your bra, but then it’s off, and it’s on the floor, and his hands are roving over your breasts and your waist and your hips, calloused and warm and trailing down, down, down to the zipper of your skirt. It pools around your hips—the zipper doesn’t go all the way through the cloth—and he makes an irritated noise and then he grabs it and tugs, fabric stretching and tearing farther and farther until it just—

And then—

“Shit,” Victor breathes.

He stares.

And a growl rumbles in his chest as he traces over the lace hem of the sheer satin panties clinging delicately to your hips, runs his fingers down to the front where the fabric is already soaked through, sliding easily against your skin, and his nostrils flare as his finger curls up just a little bit, makes you squirm in his lap—
“Fuck, kitten,” he murmurs. “Where did you find these?”

“They were… in my room. In the nightstand,” you say honestly, as he rubs at the spot right where the line of your panties ends, hooks a finger under the hem and chuckles when your voice starts to waver, “I needed clothes. I didn’t—I didn’t have any.”

“I can’t just rip these off,” he mumbles, his fingers edging steadily closer, sending cold-hot flares of anticipation through your entire body like holiday sparklers. “Too pretty. Wouldn’t want to mess ‘em up.”

There’s a pause, and then—

He grins. Victor grins, and he lifts you up off of his lap and he sets you down on the couch, he’s spreading your thighs and dropping to his knees and you don’t have time to ask what he’s doing, no, you barely have time to think before he’s nosing the line of your pelvis and then moving down, smirking up at you from between your legs and it occurs to you, suddenly, what he’s about to do, what’s going to happen—

He catches the seam of your panties in his teeth.

And you freeze for a moment—fuck, less than that, really—and then your breath catches hard in your throat, and you can’t breathe and you can’t move and you can’t fucking think—

Delicately—carefully—he tugs them down, past your knees and your calves and your ankles and—

He lets them fall to the floor.

And then Victor grins, dark and hot and predatory, a threat and a promise, and then he leans forward and his eyes are locked on yours, turning your blood syrupy and altogether too fucking warm, his breath ragged and hot and his beard scraping against the delicate skin on the inside of your thighs, and he’s holding your gaze and his lips are curling up at the corners—

He licks his lips.

It’s obscene and it’s vulgar and it’s obvious, what he intends to do, and maybe he wants it that way, maybe he did it on purpose, because the anticipation is almost too much to bear—

His tongue swirls a slow, agonizingly light circle around your clit.

And you gasp, and your eyes go wide and dilated and your lips part, just a little, as your breath leaves your body in one shaky gasp—

And then—

And then—

And then he’s fucking devouring you and you’re trembling and his tongue is darting in and around and rasping over your skin and you shudder and you gasp his name and maybe his teeth graze your clit or maybe they don’t, you don’t know, you don’t care, because you know with utter, crippling certainty that you are going to collapse, you are going to break and shatter and come apart into a thousand million pieces—

And then Victor looks up, and his eyes lock on yours, and he looks hungry and feral and fascinated,
by you and by the helpless hapless noises you make as his tongue drags over your skin, his hands tight on your thighs and your hands tight in his hair, and then his fingers are inside of you and they’re curling up and his mouth is like a furnace and you feel the first rush of an orgasm building up in your stomach, climbing higher and higher and—

“Victor—“

And it’s—

It’s bright and it’s powerful and your toes are curling and you choke out something that might be his name, and you’re coming down, down, down, your body strung taut and trembling—

“Fuck, kitten,” Victor growls, and his teeth sink into the inside of your thigh, tugging and pulling and sucking on your skin and you know there will be a bruise there, you know it, but it doesn’t matter, not as Victor stands up and pops open the button of his jeans, not as he kicks them off with brutal efficiency, his cock a rigid line through the cotton of his boxers, his thumb hooking in his waistband, pulling them down—

He sits down on the couch, and he looks at you, with a slow seductive impossibly perfect smirk flitting across his face.

Victor pulls you into his lap.

His skin is hot against yours, and when your hand drags hesitantly down his stomach to curl around his length he lets out a low-pitched rumbling groan that reverberates through your entire body, and then his hands are on your hips and he’s lifting you up like you weigh nothing and his cock is nudging between your legs, thick and hard and heavy.

Your nails dig lightly into his broad shoulders.

A thrill of anticipation shoots through your stomach.

Victor looks at you, and he smirks, and he lowers you down.

And—

The breath leaves your body in one shaky gasp, and the muscles in your abdomen tighten, and your thighs fucking tremble and he’s big and thick and it hurts a little bit, but mostly you’re overwhelmed by the sensation of being full and filled and—

“Fuck,” Victor grits out, letting his head fall back against the edge of the couch. “Fuck, I’ve fucking dreamed about this, kitten, you feel so good—“

His hands grip your thighs, harsh and rough and unforgiving and you make a needy, breathless sound as he lifts you up and starts to move, slowly, so fucking slowly, and the heat of his body on yours threatens to suffocate you, threatens to tear you apart from the inside, you’re gasping out a broken series of syllables that might have been his name or might not have been, might have just been you begging him to fuck you, hard and fast and yes Victor please please please—I need—I need—

“’S that what you want? You want to get fucked?” he growls, his teeth digging into your collarbone, “You gonna beg for it? Yeah, I’d love that, pretty little thing like you begging for me, c’mon—“

He digs his fingers into your skin and his hips snap upwards and he buries himself completely in you, and you gasp and shudder and dig your nails into his shoulders, his name falling from your lips
like a plea, like a prayer, which is about as far from the truth as you could get as his muscles bunch and strain and his voice gets rougher and lower and his pelvis slam into the cradle of your thighs. It’s good, and it’s good, and then it’s better, because the head of his cock is catching on something soft and electric inside of you and it makes you choke on a broken moan, makes you bury your face in the crook of his neck as he fucks you hard enough to bruise, and you’re shaking and there are soft sounds coming from the back of your throat and you are overwhelmed, your toes are curling and you don’t know if you can—

You gasp and moan and your muscles clench tight and then tighter and Victor makes a low, harsh, desperate noise and pulls you hard against his chest, and everything goes hot and white and you’re not going to—you can’t—

“Fuck,” he growls, his teeth sinking into the side of your neck, biting and kissing and sucking, and his hips are still rocking into you, again and again and again, it’s good and then it’s too good and then it’s too much, you feel it in your spine, chaotic and nearly violent, sending pulsing flashing flares of raw electric pleasure through your entire body, and then Victor’s mouth is on yours and his hips give one last stuttering rock and he comes with a groan and a hiss and a shudder—

“Shit,” he gasps, his head slumping onto your shoulder. “Christ.”

He holds onto your hips for a long time, holds onto your body for longer, and you think you feel his hands press harder into your skin, almost unnoticeably—

He clears his throat.

You don’t mention it.

*~*~*~*~*~*~*

(He never says “I love you”, but he moves all your things into the master bedroom and he sleeps with his arm wrapped around your waist.)

*~*~*~*~*~*~*

(Victor Creed lied about the mountain. You could have gone home. When he tells you, the snow has nearly melted completely.)

(You tell him that you had figured it out back in February. It had been your choice to stay.)

(It’s the first time you honestly see him smile.)

Chapter End Notes

This is LONG. like, 7k words long. I hate myself. But anyway, what's new?
I live off of comments! Please comment! Even if it is just to tell me I write too much!
Because I do!
Queue as of 11/16:
1. Gambit/Reader
2. Tony/Reader
3. Chaos 2 Loki/Reader
4. Bucky/Reader
5. Run 2 Erik/Reader
There are several things you notice when you walk into the too-big, too-bright, too-- too Las Vegas nightmare-esque casino-club hybrid in the middle of New Jersey, and the first one is that it’s really fucking loud.

The second is that it’s crowded enough that if you just slipped right back out the door, no one would notice. Probably. It’s a twenty-first birthday party for a friend of a friend-- it’s not like you’re contractually obliged to be here, there’s no reason for you to be forced to deal with the noise and the haze of cheap cologne and the stereotypical brand of elitist post-college douchebags leaning against the walls that you know are just waiting to tell you some stupid bullshit about how they’re really a Nice Guy™ beneath their shitty attitude and thinly-veiled sexism. You grimace.

Wonderful. Three seconds in and you’ve lost just about all the patience you had left.

You shed your jacket, adjust the straps of your dress and turn towards the bar, deciding you need a really stiff fucking drink. You’re not entirely sure what you’re still doing there but you’re determined to go through with it, regardless.

It’s halfway between the door and the perfectly polished counter that you realize someone is staring at you.

Oh, you think. Shit.

You go still, and register the spider-shock thrill of self awareness that trickles down your spine, raises the hairs on the back of your neck, and makes the room suddenly feel altogether far too small and far too warm. Behind you, there is distinctly male laughter, rich and smooth, followed by applause and an outburst of awed chatter and slurred sort-of giggles. You steadfastly ignore the desire to turn around. The feeling of being watched doesn’t fade, if anything, it just intensifies; it turns molasses-heavy and purposeful to the point where you’re beginning to regret making the decision to stay.

You don’t look.

Because--well, because you’re not stupid. You know how this is going to work. It’s a game, and you’ve played it before, and you’re not really in the mood tonight to get caught up by some boy with a narcissistic complex who can’t take no for an answer. And maybe you’re being a little harsh, but-- honestly, it’s a club, and it’s not notorious for attracting the best and the brightest of the male population even on a good day.
Discreetly, you scan the room for your friends-- it’s large, and densely crowded, and you know before you’re even finished looking that you’re not going to find them. You release a pent-up, long-suffering sigh, flag down the bartender, and wonder absently if the beer in the kegs behind the counter is as ridiculously expensive as the rest of the alcohol you’ve seen.

Ten minutes pass in relative peace. The feeling of being watched doesn’t fade.

You consider the merits of another shot of French vodka, and end up giving in-- god, okay, bad idea, but whatever-- swallowing it all in one go. It burns going down, scorches your throat and lights a low fire in your belly, but in your current state of mind you can’t bring yourself to care.

It’s not until you turn around that things start to matter again.

(You wonder in the dimly-lit seldom used back corners of your mind that deal with bullshit like want and desire if maybe you’d been a little quick to judge on the quality of the guys in the bar.)

There is a man, in the back of the room at the card table, and you notice him almost immediately-- take in high cheekbones and shoulder-length hair and a wide, wild grin-- and it makes you pause. It makes your heart stumble and stutter and skip a fucking beat, and it’s mostly just because of his eyes.

And god damn it, his eyes.

They’re liquid, dark and unfathomably expressive, make you think unapologetically of things like fucking in the storage closet of a seedy club or riding him in a back alley or being pushed up against the wall in a bathroom-- just generally making bad, awful, terrible spur-of-the-moment decisions based on the fact that he honestly just personifies sex. Which is--

Ridiculous. Ridiculous and stupid and totally not something you would have expected to find in a bar in goddamn fucking New Jersey.

To make matters exponentially worse, he doesn’t look away. His lips twitch, curl into a crooked, teasing sort of half smirk and it makes your stomach twist itself into tangled, messy knots and it makes you lick your lips and it makes your cheeks burn, and, okay, this is--

Unexpected. Unnecessary. Unfair, and a whole other bunch of un-s that you can’t be bothered to think of right then because the man is standing up and murmuring something to the other men at the table, he’s pushing aside his stupid little posse of seemingly entranced women and--

And he’s walking towards you. And you are going to evaporate on the spot. And--

He’s even more handsome up close.

Shit.

“Well,” He says, voice warm and rich with an accent that you can’t place. “What do we have here?”

You shift in your seat, and barely manage not to shudder, finding yourself uncharacteristically lost for words.

He tilts his head, takes your hand, presses a feather-light barely-there kiss to your knuckles-- honestly, you think, a little frantic, how is this guy even real-- and then runs his eyes down your body for a long sinuous moment that lasts for way, way too many seconds.

“And what’s your name, sweetheart?” He murmurs, lips twitching into a smirk as he gestures with two fingers for the bartender. He isn’t difficult to read. His grin is a little crooked, charming and just
barely suggestive, and he has one eyebrow cocked, like he’s in on a joke that you haven’t quite figured out yet.

He also pretty obviously wants to fuck you.

“(Name),” you reply, somehow managing to scavenge the remaining scraps of your confidence after being utterly and completely knocked on your ass. “It’s-- (Name).”

“Remy Lebeau,” he says, smiling slightly, “A pleasure, cherie.”

The bartender places two crystal-cut tumblers of vodka on the counter in front of you. Remy picks up his glass, watches the drink swirl around in circles, and tips it back. He sets it back down on the counter, and the glass clinks against the polished faux marble. You can’t help but notice how graceful he is-- his hands are steady, and his movements are deliberate, and you’re pretty sure when he weaves a playing card idly between his fingers with a nearly inhuman amount of skill that at this point he’s just showing off.

“So,” Remy murmurs, flashing a half-grin and leaning in, catching the playing card out of the air between his index and middle finger. “What’s a pretty little thing like you doin’ here? You got a date for this evenin’?”

You meet his gaze, his eyes bright and surprisingly focused, coffee-brown with flecks of green and amber. He’s awfully close. Too close. He smells like cologne, you notice, expensive and subtle and warm, like the embers of a slow-burning fire, and you know, you know, you know you would let him take you home if he wanted to.

Ten minutes earlier, that had been out of the question.

But now--

Well.

You pause, wait for the silence to stretch taut and strained, and then you lick your lips. The movement is slow, deliberate, and you feel a flicker of satisfaction as Remy’s eyes are drawn almost instantaneously to your mouth, eyes dark and dilated like it’s some base instinct that he can’t fight.

“No,” You say, deceptively innocent, as if you have no idea what you’re doing to him, what he’s doing to you, where this is all going-- “No date.”

Remy blinks, tilts his head to the side, and looks at you--until a smile stretches across his mouth, confident and sly, and something about the tilt of it makes your stomach twist with anticipation. He sets the card he had been playing with down on the table.

It’s the king of hearts.

“Good,” he says.

And the night goes on.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~*

You leave the club a little after two in the morning. And Remy--

Well.

“Can’t just let you walk back alone,” He says, grinning, “Not at night, what kinda gentleman would
I be?”

You scoff, biting back a smile. It’s late, and you’re drunk, and you feel like your brain is bouncing around in your skull, laughter bubbling up in your chest like helium or a hot air balloon or something airy that makes your chest feel light. “Oh, okay,” you tease, “You’re being a gentleman now, that’s all.”

Remy smirks.

“I’d be careful there, chérie,” He replies, catching your chin between his thumb and forefinger as you try to dart away-- and oh he’s suddenly so close, tipping your head back to meet his eyes, dark and heated in the light from the streetlamp over the sidewalk--and he could kiss you if he wanted to, you would let him. You’re certain that he knows that, too.

He doesn’t do anything. Remy just smiles, sly and secretive, and arches an eyebrow, the look he shoots you nothing less than outright teasing as he murmurs, “Wouldn’t want to start somethin’ you can’t handle.”

You roll your bottom lip between your teeth, mouth twitching into a smile. “Is that a challenge?”

“Hm.” he grins, and makes an exaggerated show of tapping his chin thoughtfully. “I dunno. You tell me, darlin’.”

“Playing games now, are we, Remy?” You retort, ducking under his arm as he tries to grab you. You decide you quite like the way his name sounds on your lips, and it’s almost too easy to go from that to thinking about how it would sound under wildly different circumstances, possibly ones concerning your hotel room and a suspicious lack of clothing--

“Oh, chérie,” Remy says, playfully patronizing, a mischievous smirk tugging at the corners of his mouth as he finally catches your wrist and spins you around. You barely manage not to trip over your heels as he pulls you flush against his chest, but you can’t bring yourself to register it, not really, not as his hands frame your hips and his mouth lingers dangerously close to the shell of your ear--“I got this awful bad habit of playing with my food,” Remy drawls, “And I gotta say, I could just eat you up.” He pauses-- you know he’s got that look on his face, a roguish half-grin that’s all teeth, “Or out, dependin’ on how this all goes down.”

You shift against him. Barely manage not to shudder. Feel a familiar heat blaze itself back to life in your abdomen--

“Remy!”

The giggle that bubbles up in the back of your throat as you squirm out of his arms is half exasperation and half kind-of-sort-of wondering-- hoping -- that this is going to lead somewhere, because the half-smirk on his lips is infuriating, and he’s infuriating, in the kind of way that makes your cheeks feel warm and your pulse thunder dangerously fast in your ears.

It’s unfair, really, what he’s doing to you.

“My bad, darlin’.” he flashes a cheeky grin and winks, voice low and raspy and downright suggestive, “Slip of the tongue.”

“Sure. Who says you’re going to-- be doing any of that?” you say, still laughing, as you raise one eyebrow and fix him with the best affronted look you can manage under the circumstances.

“Nobody,” he says, looking deceptively innocent as you stop in front of your hotel. “But, y’see, I
couldn’t help but notice you spent an awful long time staring at my mouth this evenin’, so if you wouldn’t mind explainin’ that—”

You smother a laugh, still not quite taking him seriously, “Okay, but—”

“Cause I think you owe me that much, huh?” He continues, talking over you-- and then he’s backing you up against the side of the building, his hands placed on the wall right above your shoulders, caging you in, and you let out a sound that might have been surprise that he doesn’t even seem to acknowledge. His gaze sweeps over your face, eyes dark and warm-- so warm, too warm, and your breath catches in your throat.

His voice drops lower. “Not really fair, is it, havin’ to watch you in that tiny little slip of a dress all night when all I wanted to do was just bend you over the bar counter, company be damned. Don’tcha think that’s cruel, teasin’ me like that?”

Something in the air changes, and you are suddenly very aware of him in a way you don’t think you were before.

“Remy,” you say, again, slightly breathless, but he doesn’t notice or he doesn’t care, and he leans in to close the space between you. He’s tall-- taller than you’d expected--his body is lean and strong and he’s too goddamn confident and his hand is on your hip and he’s using his thumb to rub tiny, downright fucking provocative circles against your skin and you cannot fucking think. The idea that he had possibly managed to completely short-circuit your brain in under a minute is outlandish and ridiculous and utterly, entirely true.

Fucking hell.

Remy smiles, slow and scorching, and something about the slant of his mouth makes you shiver. “Didn’t you know what you were doin’ to me, cherie? ‘Cause I think you did.” His voice is little more than a whisper now, rough and quiet, his mouth lingering just above your ear. “‘Cause I think every time you bit your lip all innocent you were just beggin’ me to kiss that pretty little mouth of yours. Christ, and I wanted to. Still do.”

You swallow thickly. “Yeah?”

Remy nods, lets out a long low groan, like he can’t seem to help himself, “Mm, yeah. Watchin’ you walk into that bar like you owned the place, and I just--” he shook his head, a downright dirty smile stretched across his face. “Damn, I wanted nothin’ more than to know how it would sound t’have such a pretty girl like you moanin’ my name. Betcha it’d sound awful sweet, you think?”

You don’t know how to respond. You don’t think you could even if you wanted to. This isn’t fair. The irony is striking, it probably would have been funny if you were in any mind to acknowledge it, but you’re not, fuck, your cheeks are flushed and your pulse is racing and the remaining tatters of your decorum are close to dissolving completely with every word that he says. There is a growing restless ache between your thighs and the way he’s looking at you, what he’s saying-- it’s not helping. The wall behind you is cold, and your skin is too hot, and the contrast feels abrasive as your dress rides up and the rough stone grazes the backs of your thighs. It’s like your senses are working overtime, trying and failing to comprehend what’s happening, trying to force your brain to work normally, to find some way to make a rational, well-informed decision about this instead of just rushing into it headfirst, but you’re not even sure if you want to.

“I saw you, y’know, the way you were lookin’ at me when you thought I wasn’t gonna notice, and you were such a damn tease with that dress and that look you had on your face and I just--” he chuckles, “Damn it all to hell, I just wanted to fuck you. And I’m not some kinda saint, you really
think I could just take that without gettin’ all kinds of worked up?”

And then--

And then.

Remy rocks his hips forwards, the outline of his cock through his jeans a hard thick line against your thigh-- and *fuck*, okay, it’s enough to snap you back to the reality that your hotel is literally *right there* and all it would take is a five second elevator ride to get to your hotel room--

“I spent the last four goddamn hours imaginin’ every way I could make you *moan*, darlin’,” he finishes, “So ‘least you could do is tell me what you’ve been thinkin’ all this time, huh?”

You swallow. He tracks the movement with his eyes, his expression nearly predatory.

“Remy.”

He pauses, tips your chin up to meet his eyes, “Yeah?”

“This is my hotel,” you say, very quietly.

“You tryin’ to invite me in?” He says, his voice little more than a whisper.

“Maybe,” you say, forcing yourself to ignore how breathless your voice sounds, “Yeah.”

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It takes less than three minutes to get from the hotel lobby to your room, a handful of seconds to find your key card and open the door, and less than a moment to slam it shut.

Remy looks over at you.

Your eyes meet-- and his are *dark*, nearly black, pupils blown wide, and the look on his face is unmistakably *sinful* and the desire to know what he would feel like and what he would *taste* like is suddenly overwhelming to the point where the remains of your common sense just fucking-- *shatter*.

He moves towards you.

Just slightly.

*Slightly.*

But it’s enough.

And then you’re pulling him by the collar into a kiss that’s messy and a little bit frantic and he’s backing you up through the doorway with one hand on your hip and the other dragging through your hair, tilting your head and coaxing your mouth open--and he tastes like ozone, like vodka and spearmint and static electricity, and it makes your head spin, makes you feel dizzy and light and uncharacteristically off-balance as he crushes your body to his. You register yourself thinking that things like this, they aren’t supposed to be this good. But of course he is, though, *of course he is*, with his stupid smirk and his constant bedroom eyes and his *cheekbones* and his insufferably attractive aura of self-assured confidence--
But you keep fucking kissing him, because he tastes good and he feels good and *fuck*, okay, his hands are roaming over your body like he wants to touch you everywhere, all at once, like he can’t make up his goddamn mind, and maybe-- maybe-- maybe you like it, maybe you like him, but it doesn’t even really matter, does it--

“Remy,” you gasp, as he nips at a sensitive spot just above your collarbone, teeth sinking in like he wants to leave a mark, a bruise, a temporary reminder of what you let him do to you-- what you wanted him to do. He chuckles in response, your back hits the wall *hard*, and he’s kissing you again with a level of aggression that really, honestly, truly shouldn’t be surprising and he’s fucking *groaning* into your mouth as you grind your hips into the bulge of his cock in his jeans and then you’re fumbling for his belt buckle, stepping out of your underwear, and everything is moving so fast that you can barely keep up with it. It should bother you, but it doesn’t. Remy hitches both of your knees up, wraps your legs around his lower back, and your dress bunches around your waist and then his cock nudges against your clit, you clutch his shoulders, nails sinking in enough to leave red crescent marks, enough to make him hiss as he rocks *up*--

And *oh god*--

“Oh,” you gasp against his mouth, and he groans and his hips snap forwards roughly and-- it *hurts*, but it’s the good kind of hurt, the kind that feels like a fire in your blood, thundering too fast and too loud and too relentless in your ears as Remy trails sloppy open-mouthed kisses down your neck, murmurs filthy things against your skin, accent heavy and slurred and fucking *perfect, god*--

“Sound so pretty, *cherie*, moanin’ for me, better than I fuckin’ imagined ,” he says, and he rocks into you *hard*, the ridge of his belt buckle digs into the sensitive inside of your thigh and you know it’s going to bruise but you just don’t *care*, it doesn’t matter, “Feels so good, darlin’, you’re so *tight*-- ah, *fuck*-- wanna know how it feels, want you to tell me, tell me how good it is--”

The dull sound of his skin hitting yours is *harsh*, dirty, and maybe you would blush if there was enough of your brain still functioning to care, but there isn’t, your mental circuits have already shorted out in favor of the cold-hot spark of pleasure coiling inside of your body and you can’t *think*, you’re not even sure that you want to think--

“*Oh*-- *god* -- Remy, I can’t--”

He’s rocking into you and it’s rough and chaotic and you can feel it in your bones, feel it in your belly and your spine, hot and blinding and catastrophic and *good*, too good, you’re certain it’s never been like this before, never been this intense and this *raw* and--

“(Name), *christ ,”* Remy’s saying, and he sounds gutted, *wrecked*, like he’s high-strung and overwhelmed and liable to snap or break or *shatter* at any moment, but he’s forcing the words out anyway. “I want you to come, want you to come for me, darlin, that’s it--”

You arch your back, sink your nails into his shoulders as he fucks you hard enough to bruise--and the angle changes, just slightly, and then it feels electric every time he rocks into you and your thighs are fucking *trembling* with the force of it, and he’s letting out a low-pitched groan that buzzes and vibrates through your skin as he starts to lose rhythm and then his thumb presses into your clit and--

*Oh, fuck.*

Your muscles tense. Tighten. *Ache.* And then a shiverwracks your body and you dig your nails into his shoulders, bite down on the tensed line of muscle at the base of his neck as hechookes out a desperate sounding groan and rocks into you once, twice, and then stills.
“Fuck,” He gasps, forehead resting against yours as he slumps forwards, hands tightening on your hips. There is a moment of silence where Remy just hold you for a while, like some sort of unspoken post-sex agreement that you’re allowed at least a couple of minutes of closeness despite the fact that this is still, essentially, nothing more than a one-night stand.

You don’t really want to think about that, though.

So, naturally, you don’t.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~*~

You wake up the next morning to Remy’s hands on your hips and his breath hot against the insides of your thighs and you’re just barely lucid enough to recognize his lips curling up at the corners into that little half smirk before everything else clicks into place.

Your pulse speeds up just a little too fast.

Remy kisses down the line of your pelvis, stubble rasping against the sensitive skin--

You exhale, breath shaky.

“Mornin’, cherie,” he murmurs, voice hoarse with sleep, but that’s not the important part, no, the important part is how his tongue flicks over your clit with just enough pressure to make you squirm, to make him laugh as he holds your hips in place--

“Oh my god-- fuck, Remy,” you moan, clutching at the sheets as his fingers paint circles over the insides of your thighs, teasing and testing and slipping inside of you, fuck, and then he flexes his wrist and your head lolls back, muscles in your neck going lax--

Remy chuckles, and looks up at you. “You like that?”

“Yeah,” you reply breathlessly, “Yeah--”

But then his mouth is on your skin again and you completely forget to think at all, because everything is hot and wet and good and you’re not even entirely sure you would be able to form a complete fucking sentence as he traces an agonizingly light circle around your clit and curls his fingers and hitches your knee over the crook in his elbow, yanks you closer in one smooth motion that makes your hips roll and your entire fucking world tilt--

You’d been right; he’s altogether too good at this.

But right now you don’t care, and it doesn’t matter, and you feel his teeth graze your clit once and then again and everything is suddenly white-hot and so, so, so fucking good--

“You sure you want to go again so soon?” Remy asks, rubbing little circles over your hip with his
You nod, still a little breathless. “Yeah.”

He grins, cocks an eyebrow and pulls you down on top of him and you let out a breathless gasp—“Good,” he chuckles, “‘Cause I don’t quite feel like leavin’ yet.”

He rolls his hips up and you tip your head back and you can’t hold back a short, shaky whimper because _fuck_-_“You-- you’re not going anywhere;” You inform him, splaying your hands against his chest.

“You?” Remy leans back against the haphazard array of plain white hotel pillows and tucks his arms behind his head, watching you with a stupid cocky smirk on his face that totally shouldn’t be attractive but still somehow _is_. “And why’s that?”

You rock forwards and then backwards, and your pace is slow but your muscles tremble anyways as his cock brushes a spot inside of you that feels like fucking _heaven_, and you lean forwards just a little more and suddenly everything is perfect, the angle and the friction and the sudden insistent pressure as Remy drags his thumb over your clit are all fucking _spectacular_--“You-- You still owe me breakfast,” you manage to retort, “I--I expect _coffee_, at least-- or--or-- _oh fuck Remy_--”

“Oh, yeah? What was that?” he chuckles, but it’s forced, slightly desperate, quickly dissolving into a muffled groan. “I think you were sayin’ somethin’, couldn’t really make out anything beyond you moanin’ my name, _chérie_, might want to repeat yourself--”

“Shut _up_,” you say, grinding down and registering the feeling of being full and stretched and _sore_, too, but it’s good, it makes your body ache and your muscles tremble with the strain of it.

“Apologies,” Remy gasps, tipping his head back as his eyes flutter closed. “ _Fuck_, _darlin’_, like that--”

“What was that?” you parrot mockingly, rocking against him, tightening your muscles just to watch him shudder. He grins, and retaliates by driving his hips up hard enough to make you gasp, to make your breathing go ragged and your vision splinter and split and _god_ it feels _so fucking perfect_--“Breakfast,” Remy grunts, hands moving to your hips, “I owe you breakfast, then, and _coffee_, and--and _god damn it, chérie_, if you keep that up I’m gonna owe you my whole damn _life_--”

“Breakfast first,” you say, laughing, and then your breath hitches as you grind down and he thrusts up and when you orgasm this time, it’s not wrenched from you like before, it’s slow and steady and _warm_ like the beginnings of a lazy crackling fire and you fancy that you can see stars and moons and entire fucking constellations when you finally, finally come--“Remy,” you manage to say, collapsing onto his chest as he finishes with a shudder and a groan. He sighs, and wraps his arms around you, and this time, this moment of intimacy, it doesn’t feel nearly as fleeting as it did the night before. It feels more permanent, somehow, more _real_, like there’s suddenly the possibility for one night to become two or three or four, weeks, months, even, because--You _like_ him. And he likes you.

And that, you think--

That’s _good_. 
Livewire (Clint Barton x Reader)

Chapter Summary

Clint Barton is not the same after New York.
Takes place after the first Avengers movie. Kinda angsty, I blame the song White Blood by Oh Wonder for fucking me up.

Chapter Notes

Daaaaamn astxrwar, back at it again with the several-month-long breaks between updates!!!
I hate myself lmao

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After New York, Clint is a mess.

He’s angry—understandably— and he lashes out at everyone, but mostly just at himself. He locks himself in his room in the newly-named Avengers tower for days at a time; he barely talks and he barely eats and he barely sleeps, and when he does he has nightmares. There is a long period that’s spent mostly just on recovery-- it’s not easy to go back to normal after having what’s essentially a demigod take control of your body and force you to try to murder your only friends. But he does get better, very slowly, at first, and then faster and faster and faster until you actually consider that he might be able to come back from this mostly in one piece.

He still pushes himself too hard. He still avoids meaningful conversations and spends most of his time alone or up on the roof of the tower, actively avoiding Natasha and Steve and how constantly, suffocatingly supportive they are, avoiding Bruce and his sad side-eyed expressions whenever he’s around, and avoiding Tony and his general lack of tactfulness.

He’s been avoiding you, too.

But it’s strange, you think, because unlike the rest of the team you’ve been excruciatingly careful not to bring up what had happened that day and to make sure that you act like everything was perfect and fine and okay even though it isn’t, because you know Clint hates being pitied, but--

He still doesn’t spend nearly as much time around you as he used to, not just as your mentor but as your friend.

At this point, you have to consider that maybe he’s just not the same.

And it’s almost-- it’s almost sad, the way he seems to be depriving himself of good things like contact and affection and the way he treats himself like he’s a liability and holds everything at an arm's length and pushes himself too hard, past the point of sane and into the territory of self-harm, like he doesn’t even care what happens to him at this point. He trains too hard and fights recklessly; every single mission ends in bruises and sometimes broken bones when he used to come out
unscathed.

Mostly, though, mostly he just seems tired.

When you finally decide to talk to him and to try to fix it, it’s a Sunday, and it’s winter, and months have passed since the events in New York. You take the elevator up to the seventy-third floor of the Avengers Tower, registering the tinny background music playing from the wall-mounted speakers but not quite listening to it. You’re too busy thinking—over thinking—considering whether or not you should actually go through with it, if maybe it would be better for you to just turn back around and leave Clint alone like he so obviously wants.

A bell dings and the doors slide open. You hardly notice.

“Seventy-third floor, Miss (Last name),” JARVIS says gently, voice echoing over the intercom. He must know why you’re there, you realize, but he doesn’t mention it.

You step out of the elevator and mumble a quiet thank you, knowing you don’t have much of a choice. You care too much about Clint to turn back now, and maybe, maybe, he needs this, a confrontation, something to snap him back to the reality that people still cared about him and that it isn’t fair for him to do this, particularly to you and Natasha who can’t do anything but watch as he falls farther into this godforsaken downwards spiral.

You walk down the long hallway, past gym rooms and kitchens and bars (several bars, of course, this had been Stark Tower and Tony is, notoriously, an alcoholic). The intricately patterned carpet is almost too clean and the lights are dim, bathing everything in an almost surreal yellow glow. You find yourself focusing on the details; the plain white wainscoting, the flawlessly painted walls—light tan color, almost taupe, you think, how boring—and the neat rows of oak doors that you pass, one by one. It’s not interesting, and at any other point in time you probably wouldn’t have cared, but right now you’re attempting to focus on literally anything other than the sickening mixture of mounting dread and apprehension collecting in your stomach at the thought of what you’re about to do. It could go so, so terribly wrong, and you know that. You just—don’t really want to linger on the possibility.

It takes so little time to get to his door that by the time you’re there you find yourself just standing still instead of opening it. The silence is heavy, it’s oppressive and it’s solid and it weighs on your shoulders, dragging you down and urging you to turn away, to stop and to play it safe and to leave him alone.

You really do care too much.

“Clint?”

No response.

“Clint,” you say again, slightly louder, “Clint, we need to—”

The door creaks when you press your fingers against it, and drifts open a few inches. It hadn’t been closed all the way, you realize, as you step inside, growing increasingly nervous with every passing moment.

Clint’s room is dim, but not quite dark, and strangely military: there are no personal items, no tokens, no photographs, only a nightstand with an alarm clock and a solitary beside lamp, a set of drawers leaning against the wall, and a half-filled hamper by the bathroom door. It’s impersonal and it’s sort of sad. It isn’t quite bare enough to be empty, but not quite full enough to be truly lived-in, either,
stuck in an in-between, a sort of limbo where everything seemed to be monochromatic and gray.

Rays of bleak winter sunlight filter hazily through the cracks in the thick, expensive-looking curtains draped over the windows, and as you move farther into the room, you can see Clint sitting on the edge of the bed in the corner, pulling on his uniform, movements weary and robotic.

“Hi,” you say, lamely, because it’s the best thing you can come up with.

Clint makes a noise of acknowledgement and looks up at you. His eyes seem strangely expressive, but his face is blank, and his body language is tense, and you feel yourself exhale without actually meaning to, and your breath catches a little at the intensity of the moment. The air is taut, and it feels like a confrontation already, even though you’ve hardly said a word.

You swallow, and your throat feels strangely tight. Suddenly, it occurs to you that you’ve never been in his room before and despite how empty and impersonal it seems, something about you being there is still-- odd.

“We need to talk,” you hear yourself say, and your voice is a lot quieter than you’d hoped it would be.

Clint stands up and inhales— a sharp, hollow sound, like he’s in pain— and as he moves, you notice the dark purple tinge of recent bruises across his forearms, disappearing under the sleeves of his plain white t-shirt.

“For fuck’s sake, Clint,” you snap, moving forward to stop him from moving, and suddenly you’re standing close and your hands are braced against his arms and he’s looking up at you like you’ve lost your mind and the moment seems to be incredibly, impossibly tense in ways that you can’t begin to describe even if you wanted to. “You’re hurt.”

“S not bad,” he grunts, sounding tired. “C’mon, kid, get out of the way.”

“No,” you retort, a little more aggressively than you intended to, and annoyance flashes across Clint’s face, sharp and cold. “That’s exactly what I wanted to talk about. You’re pushing yourself too hard.”

Clint is silent for a long moment. You watch as the tense line of muscle in his shoulders stretches and rolls beneath the thin cotton of his nightshirt, see the lines on his face as his eyes screw shut as his breath leaves his body sharply, hissing out through gritted teeth. His expression softens the longer he looks at you, until it’s something almost fond. You’re well aware that your mentor has a soft spot for you, and you’re not above exploiting it if it means he won’t go off and get himself killed.

“I’m fine,” he insists again, but his voice lacks most of its earlier conviction.

“You’re being stupid,” you retort. “Stay here. I can look at what’s happened, see if anything’s broken. There’s nothing to do today, anyway, so don’t try to pull that bullshit on me.”

He hesitates. A smile tugs at your lips, victorious and maybe a little proud.

“Stay here,” you say again, your voice softer, this time. “Let me run a bath for you. You need to heal. You’re not going to be any good to anyone if you’re dead.”

Clint seems to be considering it, until he scowls and rolls his eyes. “Nat put you up to this, didn’t she? Jesus, told her I was fine already—”
“Nat didn’t say anything to me,” you interrupt, pushing him back down when he tries to stand up. “I’m fucking worried about you, and you owe me this much, so sit the fuck down.”

He blinks, and chuckles a little, the sound rough and hoarse, like he hasn’t had a reason to do so in a long time. “Okay. Okay, yeah, kid, okay. Fine,” he says, putting his hands up in mock-surrender. “You’re crazy.”

“Oh, yeah, sure,” you snap back, mostly sarcastic. “I’m the crazy one. You look like you’ve been through a blender. An *industrial* blender.”

“Hey,” Clint responds mock-indignantly as you move into the bathroom. “I’m looking pretty good, all things considered.”

You want to smile at that, and you do, as you turn on the faucet on the giant faux-marble tub in the bathroom. He almost sounded like himself-- almost-- and you can almost pretend that it’s before New York and that things are normal and everything is still fine. You’ve missed it, how it was before, and as much as you hate to admit it you’ve missed Clint, too, because beyond just being your mentor he’s always been your friend and when he shut himself off it hurt, even if you pretended it didn’t.

He isn’t the same, not exactly, but you don’t care. He’s still there. That’s all that really matters.

The sound of water running echoes around the tiled walls, and you shut off the faucet, watching the water settle and curls of steam rise from its glassy surface.

“Thanks.” Clint’s voice is low and quiet from where he had appeared in the doorway, and you tense in surprise as his hand finds your shoulder and squeezes gently. “I probably needed this.”

“Probably? Yeah, okay, sure,” you respond, standing up and glancing at him-- he’s smiling, if only a little, but it’s enough.

“Don’t know what I’d do without you,” he confesses, and you can feel the weight of his approval as it settles in your stomach and spreads through your body, pleasantly warm, and your chest swells with something almost like pride. Mentally, you tell herself to keep it together. You’re both tired, you reason, and not thinking clearly, as he stands there, motionless, arm still slung halfway around your shoulder. You can feel precisely where his fingers press into your arm, five pinpoints of heat against your skin, and the silence and the air between your bodies feels suddenly strange. It has never been like this with him. It’s tense-- no, you think, it’s something else. Something you can’t-- or won’t-- identify.

The silver-lined mirror above the sink is foggy and the bathroom is too warm and you find yourself staring at the walls, looking anywhere but at him--

You turn to leave.

“Stay,” Clint asks hoarsely. When you look at him, he hesitates, struggles to find words, but he looks calm, and you don’t really have a reason not to trust him. “Could use the company.”

“All right,” you answer, complying easily.

You sit down crosslegged on the floor beside the tub with your back to the wall, dutifully avert your gaze as your mentor slowly undresses, and stare hard at the detailed tiling that lines the floor. It’s not as if you haven’t seen him like this before. Clint doesn’t really hold any sort of importance to what he looks like, doesn’t care much for decency at all, and you know perfectly well what he looks like; broad chest, wide shoulders, strong arms, the hard muscles of his abdomen hatched with scars. It’s different now, though, it’s more intimate, somehow becoming a line of sorts that you dared not to cross, equal parts afraid and curious of what lay on the other side.

You don’t look.
Clint lowers himself into the tub gingerly, tips his head back as his body adjusts to the water and sighs, rumbling and low. “Oh, yeah, that’s better,” he groans. “Much better.”

It’s strange sound, you think, like some long-awaited release has arrived. The bathroom slowly begins to fill with steam from the tub until the air is heavy with it, warm and slightly damp against the bare skin of your forearms. The two of you sit in a sort of silence that should be comfortable but isn’t—not really. Something is different. When Clint shifts in the tub the defined line of his shoulders is suddenly plainly visible, and you can see each muscle outlined in the light from the bay window, can see droplets of water clinging to the smooth expanse of his skin, and you find yourself glancing away, licking your lips, hesitating--

“So,” he says, suddenly breaking the silence, and as you turn to look at him your expression darkens as you see the host of new bruises across his chest, all in different stages of healing, some dark, vivid purple and others just a yellowish hue. Clint notices you staring, and grimaces. “I-- uh-- I owe you an apology, I think.”

“No shit,” you say, but your voice is soft, and there’s no real venom to it.

Clint looks at you, and you can see the exact moment he realizes you aren’t angry, because his face changes and brightens and suddenly he looks almost happy.

“Yeah,” he whispers, and dips his head. “Yeah.”
You smile a little, lips pressed together, and feel affection as it swells in your stomach again, almost like butterflies, almost, not quite, as you stand to grab a washcloth from the countertop--
And when you turn back, Clint is watching you, eyes strangely bright and expression almost hopeful, and it makes you feel warm and flushed all over, the sensation not uncomfortable, just-- strange. When you reach his side and he holds out his hand for the cloth there’s a split, fractured second in which you’re not sure you actually make a decision or if you just act entirely on impulse, but either way, it doesn’t matter.

You reach out to touch.

Clint exhales, surprised, but doesn’t move away.

And--
His skin beneath your fingers is warm, and smooth, and when you drag the washcloth across his shoulders and scrub down his upper back, he leans forwards and grants you access and makes a sound almost like a groan. It’s-- fascinating, his reaction to you, equal parts thrilling and terrifying as you move across his chest, down over the ridged muscles of his abdomen. His hands grip the side of the tub for a second, knuckles white, before relaxing again, and you pause. “Am I hurting you?” You whisper, unsure as to why you feel the need to be so quiet.

“No,” he answers, voice equally as soft. Clint sighs, tips his head back to look at you. “‘S just-- it’s been a long time since--” he cuts off suddenly, swallows, the movement jerky and stilted, and you find yourself watching the bob of his throat almost like it’s happening in slow motion. You know exactly what he had been about to say out loud, and that knowledge very nearly makes you blush as you realize that the entire situation between you had changed in a matter of seconds.

“Clint,” you start, searching for a response but ultimately coming up with nothing. “Um. Yeah.” He licks his lips, shakes his head, mumbles something under his breath before laughing. “Shit. Sorry, I didn’t--”

“It’s fine,” you say. “It’s-- fine.”
Your exhale is shaky, your body is tense, you’re acutely aware of the older man in a way you weren’t before, a way you hadn’t considered and hadn’t allowed yourself to consider--
You don’t stop touching him.
Clint seems surprised, at first, as you move up to his shoulders and his chest and down, down, down
across his abdomen, and you can’t help but think about what lies beneath the sudsy water, what his body might look like— you picture hard muscles, smooth skin, a few scars, maybe, and a trail of dark, wiry hair leading down to—

You screw your eyes shut, force away the image of him, struggle to keep your breathing even and your demeanor relaxed and your face unreadable.

The minutes drag on, slowly, seconds slipping away one after another, and you find yourself favoring the use of your bare hands over the washcloth, mesmerised in the way Clint leans into every touch and savors it in a way no one has ever done before, like he’s afraid it could disappear at any moment. He’s lonely, you reason, struggling to find an excuse for his behavior, for why he hasn’t told you to stop, why it hasn’t occurred to him that you had taken this too far.

The thought occurs to you that maybe, maybe he already knows this shouldn’t be happening, and maybe he’s letting it happen anyway.

“(Name),” he murmurs, as you work away the knot at the base of his neck. The intimacy of the situation is quiet and soft and almost small, something gentle and nearly surreal that you never thought would happen, and makes something warm spark in your body, spreading through your veins until you can feel it in every inch of your body right down to your bones.

“Yeah?” you respond quietly— you’ve given up on the pretense of the washcloth completely, and you let yourself touch him without any excuse, feeling the rippling muscles of his back and shoulders as they tense beneath your fingers. It’s breathtakingly personal compared to the detachedness of your day-to-day life, a stark contrast against the anonymity and objective disinterest you’re used to. Clint’s eyes are closed and you can see his chest rise and fall in time with his soft breathing, and a part of you wants to hold onto this moment for a long time, for forever, keep it framed up and tucked away and eternal.

“Water’s getting cold,” Clint murmurs, scrubbing a hand down the side of his jaw; his stubble glints blond in the warm morning sunlight streaming in from the bay window. When he moves to stand, the water sloshes and spills over the edge, running down the side of the tub in rivulets and filling the small dips in the floor between tiles. You see his hand reach for a towel and catch a glimpse of his navel and the strong muscles in his thighs before remembering you should be looking anywhere but there. Your mouth is suddenly dry and you find yourself struggling to remember how to focus on anything except his body, powerful and ruthless and strong even after years. It’s never shaken your like this before— you’ve seen him half-naked and you’ve seen him shirtless and in the time both of you have worked together a number of questionable boundaries have been crossed, but none of it had so much as phased you.

This, however—

This is different.

Clint wraps the towel loosely around his waist. The moments it takes to go back to the bedroom seem to stretch on for far too long, and when he crosses the threshold he sighs, the sound shallow and low— like he’s been waiting too much and for too long and he’s finally given in— before turning and closing the space between you in two quick steps.

He doesn’t kiss you— no, that would be too much to ask for— but he takes your face in his hands and meets your gaze, and his palms are warm and rough and his eyes are strangely expressive and everything about this feels soft and intimate in a way you’ve never experienced before.

“I’m sorry,” he blurs out, and something about it is painful and almost sad. He groans and exhales, shoulders slumping, and suddenly he just looks exhausted. “I fucked up.”

“I know,” you say, very quietly. “You’re stupid. You tend to do that.”

Clint grimaces. “Yep. Got me there.”

His hands are still cupping your face and his body is still close to yours and he doesn’t make any attempt to move away and neither do you— no, instead you lean into his hand, and you look at him and you try to convey in your expression everything that either of you would never, ever say out
loud. The friction and the stress of the situation rises until it’s nearly palpable, as if you could just reach out in front of you and touch the solid, impenetrable wall that had formed between you.

And the tension--

It stretches, and stretches, and stretches, until it can’t anymore, until the only remaining option is for it to shatter.

He tilts his head down, slowly, giving you all the time in the world to stop or move away or do any number of rational things, but you don’t. You move up to meet him, and when Clint kisses you, it feels inevitable. Like it was always meant to happen and like it was only a matter of time, like every single thing that had happened in your life had been for the sole reason of bringing you to this moment, right here and right now--

He kisses you, and you melt.

His lips are soft and gentle and kind and his hands when they come to rest on your hips are rough and hot even through your clothes. The intensity of what is happening takes a second to register and when it does you feel like you’ve forgotten how to breathe, like somehow you’d become incapable of doing something you’ve done since birth, and your first instinct is to urge him closer, closer, until your bodies are pressed together and you can feel the water droplets on his skin seeping into your t-shirt.

If it were anyone else, you would care.

One of his hands cups your jaw and the other finds the small of your back, crushing you to him, your body arching up against his-- it’s needy and desperate and imperfect, like he’s searching for some sort of human closeness, something he’s denied himself that he’s finally indulging in, a vice and a weakness that he’s given up trying to fix. But the reason for it isn’t something you care about, not then and not there and certainly not when you feel the press of his cock against your abdomen, hot and hard and thick, and you can’t remember ever wanting something so badly before, not ever, not even when you were a teenager and all of this was new and exciting. Because it’s different, now, with Clint, with how certain he is and the ease in which he pulls you apart, piece by gratifying piece- - this isn’t the clumsy fumbling of a first time, no, this is something deeper and stronger and better. He makes you feel wanted, his kisses are reverent and his hands roam over every inch of your body like he can’t decide what he wants, like he needs to touch you everywhere, all at once, like he’s drunk on the sensation of it all.

Clint backs you up towards the bed, pulls back and looks at you and searches for something to say, ultimately coming up with nothing-- but it doesn’t end up mattering as you strain up to kiss him again, tentatively running your tongue over the outline of his lips, gaining confidence as he curses and curls an arm around your waist, your combined body heat suffocating and heady.

“You say the word, and I’ll stop,” he breathes, digging his fingers into your hip, and you think that maybe a part of you wants to tell him no, wants this to be over before it gains any more traction because the end result can’t possibly be pretty-- but a bigger part of you wants to want this and need this and not care about the consequences. “Tell me you want me to stop.”

You look at him blankly, breathlessly, lips red and kiss-stung and thoughts fuzzy, bursting and fading like radio static, distant and unimportant.

“Tell me you want me to stop,” Clint repeats, and it’s almost a growl, almost, as his fingers travel down, tugging at the button of your jeans, as you shiver and leans into his hand. You want his hand to move down, you want him to touch you and feel how badly you want him but he doesn’t fucking move-- “Tell me, c’mon, that’s an order.”
You hesitate at that, remember painfully your relationship as mentor and student and realize this is exactly the opposite of what you should be doing--
“Clint,” You sigh shakily, arching against his hand, deliberately making eye contact and holding it for one, two, three painful seconds--
“Tell me to stop,” he whispers, conviction gone.
“No,” you breathe.

And he just fucking breaks, falls apart and crumbles and caves with a groan, rumbling and low, as he bites at your bottom lip and scrapes his tongue over your teeth and unbuttons your jeans, fingers fumbling with the zipper like he can’t wait even a second longer--

You kick your jeans to the floor and yank your shirt up off over your head and then Clint pulls you close again and trails hungry, open-mouthed kisses across your collarbones, like he can’t get enough of you like this, bare and exposed for him. He sucks a bruise into the base of your neck and pulls your body flush against his until his cock is trapped between your bodies, pressed against your abdomen, and it's big, god, hard and thick, and you find yourself moaning into the next kiss a little helplessly.

“You’re so fucking gorgeous,” he mumbles between kisses, and your hands splay on his bare chest, broad and muscular from years and years of archery, scarred and bruised and yours, he’s yours, he always was, how had you not noticed until now--

You easily unclip your bra and Clint urges you back onto the bed, hooks his fingers in your underwear and pulls them down slowly, breath catching as they slide down over your thighs, quickly discarded onto the floor as he spreads your legs wide and situates himself between them and god his breath is swirling hot against the insides of your thighs and he’s staring at you with such fucking reverence that you can actually feel yourself blush.

“Gonna make you come for me, (Name),” he murmurs, and you can’t stop yourself from shivering at the promise.

“Yes,” you whisper, “Fuck, Clint, please.”

He starts with kisses, gentle and sweet, works his way up from your knee to the inside of your thigh and sucks a bruise into the skin there, soothing it over with his tongue before starting over again on the other side-- and every time his mouth touches your skin it feels like fire, like some sort of bittersweet torture as he gets closer and closer and then stops just to start again--

When he finally delves in with his mouth and licks a long, wet stripe up your slit it’s sudden and unexpected and so, so fucking good, your hands tangle in his hair and you can’t help the little half-gasp-half-moan that slips from your mouth at the contact.

“Shit,” Clint groans, and you can see him reaching down to stroke his cock, expression hungry, ravenous, even, and then you see nothing because your eyes screw shut and your head tips back as he pushes two fingers inside of you and runs the tip of his tongue up and around and over your clit until your body actually trembles from it, and the scratch of his stubble against the sensitive parts of your thighs clashing deliciously with the sudden cold-hot ache of pleasure in your abdomen. He fucks you open with his fingers and your answering moan is shattered and helpless and completely involuntary-- your fingers twist in his hair and he makes a sound almost like a growl, almost, but not quite, and then he tugs you closer and his mouth presses a little firmer, tongue teasing over your clit and fingers curling up until they brush a spot that makes your thighs tremble and your voice falter and why is he so fucking good at this, god, it isn’t fair--

When you come, you come hard, your body tenses and your breath catches and dissolves into a
choked-off moan, and it feels bittersweet, a sort of pleasure-pain, as he continues to touch you and tease you until you’re trembling from the aftershocks.

“Fuck,” Clint says, finally, moving up until his body is over yours, balanced on his forearms. “Fuck, I want-- (Name), let me--”

You can hardly focus, everything sounds soft and distant and far away, but when Clint speaks there’s a level of desperation in his voice and a level of longing that you don’t think you’ve ever heard before from him, something that makes him seem more human, more real, more vulnerable, and before you know what you’re doing you’re pushing him onto his back with your knees on either side of his hips and you’re leaning down to kiss him, his cock is nudging up between your thighs and-- and--

“You sure?” Clint asks, a little breathless.

You bite your bottom lip and roll it between your teeth and nod, quickly, just once, and it’s more than enough.

When he pushes in, he does it slowly-- gently-- and you let out a quiet, fragile moan, muscles clenching around him as he eases you down until your body is finally, finally flush against his.

Clint gasps. The sound is quiet, like it’s wrenched from him against his will as his eyes flutter shut and jaw goes slack. Your eyes flicker over him, bare and exposed beneath you-- his chest is muscular and his shoulders are broad and sturdy and his eyes when you finally meet his gaze are bright and warm, the look on his face a mixture of desire and a sort of affection that you don’t really want to put a name to, not then and not there--

And then the trance is broken, and Clint rolls his hips up and you let out a short, shaky, involuntary whimper and a choked-out curse as you start to move, using his body as leverage, pace slow and muscles trembling. It’s sweet, the closeness of your bodies and the way your breaths mingle together and the way that he holds you as you move and how he watches you like you’re the most beautiful thing he’s ever seen-- It’s intimate and it’s intense and it’s not just a lust-fueled one night stand, no, there’s something else there, something more, a sort of tension that neither of you had mentioned up until this point.

Clint pulls you down for a kiss, rough and a little desperate, and then you grind down and he thrusts his hips up just a little, like he can’t help himself, and you answer with a shallow moan because the angle is good and the friction is good and you feel like you’re getting lost in it--

“So sorry,” He apologizes breathlessly, and you want to laugh at that, at how afraid he is of hurting you, but it’s hard to do when his cock brushes something wonderful inside of you and you find yourself moaning instead. “Slower?”

“No,” you manage. “No. That’s-- oh-- ” he rocks up, and your breath hitches as you tip your head back, “That’s good, feels good-- fuck, Clint, like that--”

“Jesus, (Name),” Clint groans, lips catching on your own as he leans up and pulls you into a slow, filthy kiss with teeth and tongue, and you find yourself moaning into his mouth and leaning forward to chase him when he pulls back to speak. He looks at you for a second, like you’re ethereal, like he can’t believe that you’re even real, and your breathing is shallow and his is rough and slow and remarkably controlled considering the current circumstances, but you’re not entirely sure that you’re able to comprehend anything enough to care.

Clint leans back and pulls you down with him, tangles his fingers in your hair and drags you into a kiss, and then he presses his forehead to yours and he grabs your hips, tugs you down and thrusts up and the sound of skin hitting skin is dull and filthy in the surrounding silence, it echoes around the walls of the too-small bedroom and mingles with the sounds of your moans and his ragged breathing,
and maybe you’d be embarrassed if there was anything left of you to care--
You gasp out a moan, nails digging into his shoulders, rocking back and then forward in time with
the rhythm of his hips, shuddering as he fucks you-- it seems like he’s relishing in it, in the sheer
force of it all and the sounds that you make and the way that your breathing hitches and dissolves
into fractured, splintered moans every time he moves underneath you. It’s filthy and it’s rough and
it’s so good it’s almost painful, and when his thumb presses into your clit you make a sound
somewhere between a moan and a cry, desperate and strung-out and so entirely unlike your normal
self, always put-together, always certain and sure and strong but for some reason Clint has managed
to take you apart so easily that it would be scary if it didn’t feel so, so good--

It feels like you’re falling to pieces. Like he’s pulling out bits of you that you didn’t even know were
there.

Clint shudders, groans, sinks his teeth into your collarbone and soothes the mark with his tongue as
his hips snap up harder, faster, rhythm faltering and movements becoming sharp and discoordinated,
and something about it is making you feel nearly electric. His cock is buried so deeply inside of you
and you can feel your entire body aching for it, it’s raw and it’s uninhibited and it’s perfect and you
press your face into the crook of his neck as he fucks you hard enough to leave bruises and there are
soft, helpless noises coming from your mouth and you are suddenly overwhelmed and you don’t--
you can’t--

You moan and cry out and your muscles clench tight and then tighter and you’re so fucking close to
coming, the sensation curling in your abdomen, mounting like a wave as Clint chokes out a
desperate, harsh sound and pulls you to his chest. He’s whispering curses and praises and needs and
senseless things that seem to blend together until it’s just your name, over and over, and he’s still
moving, he’s still rocking into you again and again and again--

It’s too much. It’s like you’re stuck on a plateau, going nowhere, not getting closer to finishing even
as every thrust sends pulsing flares of pleasure curling up your spine. You feel spent, boneless and
flushed and hypersensitive in his arms, and you can hear him still murmuring, voice rough and low
and slightly desperate and it takes all of your willpower to focus long enough to comprehend what
he’s saying--

It’s low, and it’s breathless, and it’s bittersweet and terrible and beautiful and perfect--

_I love you._

And you feel wrecked.

Your orgasm is wrenched from you, powerful and all-consuming and you suddenly feel vulnerable
in a way you’ve never felt before, weak and defenseless. You find yourself wanting him and needing
him and saying it back.

_I love you. I love you. I love you._

Back and forth until the words sound strange and meaningless, until it’s nothing but a desperate keen
from you and a moan from him, and then his hips give one last stuttering rock and he finishes with a
gasp and a hiss and a shudder--

There is a long moment afterwards where nothing happens, where only sound in the room is the both
of your breathing, ragged and shallow, and Clint’s head tips back against the pillows and the silence
is bittersweet, affectionate but still a little uncertain.

Neither of you knew what to do next, you realize. Neither of you knew what to make of what had
just happened, whether it even had any real meaning at all.
He makes eye contact with you, his expression strangely open-- you get the feeling that this is Clint, the real Clint, not the killer and the assassin and the legend, but the man, because whatever barriers he’s constantly walled behind seem to have disappeared. It’s the most vulnerable you’ve ever seen him.

You exhale, the sound soft and gentle, feel your muscles tremble as you move off of him, feel the wet slickness between your thighs, feel the beginnings of bruises on your hips, but you can’t bring yourself to care. When you try to move off of the bed to go get cleaned up, he stops you with an arm across your chest and pulls you down beside him until your head is resting on his shoulder and his body is flush against your own. His breathing has slowed down. The lust is gone, dissipated into the air as soon as it was over, and what remains in its place is affection, and tenderness, and something else that neither of you are really ready to identify yet.

“Did you mean it?” you say, trying to ignore how childishly hopeful you feel. “What you said.”

Clint swallows, and kisses the top of your head. “Yeah,” he admits, chuckling a little. “It wasn’t fucking obvious? For, like, weeks.”

You sigh, and press your face into the crook of his neck. “No, you dumbass, because you’ve been avoiding me for like, weeks.”

Clint’s laughter fades. “Sorry.”

You move a little so that you can see his face, and when you kiss him, it’s almost-- fragile. Because he’s still not the same, and he’s still struggling and he’s still broken in a lot of places, and because damage can’t really be cured by good sex, even though you wish it could be.

“I love you,” Clint says, when you pull back, expression strangely soft. “No fucking clue why my dumb ass didn’t tell you sooner.”

“I love you too,” you whisper.

He’s not the same. But he’ll get better, though, he will, and for the first time in a long time, you actually believe it.

Chapter End Notes

As always, leave requests and comments because I love hearing about myself!!! jk i just like hearing that I did a good job because it makes me want to write more!!! love u guys for putting up with my dumb shit and hope this is to your liking!
The first time Tony Stark sees her it’s because she’s serving him a court notice.

And that–

It should be enough for him to be instantly turned off. Courts– they aren’t really his thing. Courts where he’s under scrutiny are even less of his thing.

But she–

She’s his thing. Or, you know, his type. Or, whatever, the semantics don’t really matter– her legs look fucking gorgeous in those heels and he registers his eyes lingering for one, two, three seconds too long before his gaze moves up, to her waist and her hips and her chest and her face–

“Hooo, boy,” he whistles, just softly that the rest of the legal team can’t hear him– he’d take a court appearance over a sexual harassment lawsuit any day of the week.

She’s young, he notices, and she’s pretty– he takes in bright eyes and warm features and a pencil skirt that he wishes was a little shorter, maybe left a little less to the imagination, and god she has a mouth he really actually kind of wants to do things to or do things with and he registers a voice in the back of his head whispering that maybe this isn’t the best time–

“You are hereby ordered to appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m,” says one of the stuffy guys that he hadn’t honestly been paying much attention to. His poor-fitting, sad excuse for a three-piece suit looks kinda like he pulled it out of a thrift shop, or, alternatively, a dumpster. Tony doesn’t know which is worse. An unfamiliar emotion churns in his stomach– pity, maybe. Is that even a thing?

He shrugs, and clicks his tongue disapprovingly. “Shame, I had plans.”

The man grimaces as he turns towards the door. “Not anymore, you don’t.”

Tony brushes it off, turns his attention back to the young woman– he rationalizes that she could be post-college, twenty-four-ish, maybe older if he’s lucky, and it’s not technically weird, not unless he makes it weird. “I assume you’ll be there? Not that I’m, you know, interested, or anything. Asking for a friend,” He says, feigning an obviously fake level of carelessness.

She blinks, slowly, like his words take a moment to register, and her pretty mouth opens, closes, opens again–

“I– yes?”
And her voice—

It’s *sweet*, soft and gentle, and he’s hit with the sudden desire to know what it would sound like saying his name, if it would sound just as pretty as that, if maybe it would sound *better*—

He flashes a shamelessly flirtatious grin. “Then it’s a date. Wear something nice for me, will you?”

She rolls her eyes and blushes as she leaves, and maybe his eyes linger on the curve of her ass as she walks through the door, maybe it’s less ‘lingering’ and more flat-out *staring* and maybe he’s really kind of an asshole, but that’s not the point.

The point is that the first time Tony Stark sees her it’s because she’s serving him a fucking *court notice*. The point is, that’s even enough to completely, actually, *royally* screw him over.

(Shes does have a *really* great ass.)

~*_~*_~*_~*_~*_~*

Her name is (Name).

She graduated from some super-university two years early, cinched her law degree from an up-state postgraduate school in New York, has a rich father and a dead mother and, apparently, a *lot* of connections seeing as she’s already a government lackey a little more than a year after passing the BAR exam.

Yes, okay, he googled her.

And yeah— she’s *definitely* his type.

He sees her at the Senate the next day standing with the same two men who had so *rudely* accosted him with the subpoena the day before, and makes a beeline for her through the swarm of reporters hovering around him like some subspecies of horribly dressed camera-wielding *vultures*. It’s not any different this time than it’s ever been— he’s dealt with this his whole life, knows they’re just waiting for him to slip up or fuck up or make some sort of irreparable mistake so that they can plaster it all over the next day’s news. Tony realizes, dimly, that he should probably— *possibly*— be at least a little careful about how he does this.

(Alternatively, he could just keep it in his pants, but—well. Like that’s going to happen.)

Barely ten feet away, she looks up from her cell phone—

Their eyes meet.

Tony fights back a victorious grin.

“(Name)” He says, pushing aside a particularly stubborn reporter for some cheap grocery-store-checkout-rack gossip rag, and closing the space between them. “What a coincidence! And *nice skirt*, by the way. Sexy.”

Her eyes widen a fraction of an inch— like she hadn’t actually expected him to approach her, or something, as if he hadn’t spent most of their last conversation making his intentions *perfectly* clear— and then she flushes, and bites her lip, as his gaze rakes up her body far too slowly for it to be even a little bit professional.

Her skirt is shorter. Her blazer is more flattering, outlines the curves of her waist and her hips— she
totally dressed up for him, maybe just subconsciously, but Tony feels his chest swell with a sort of self-assured smugness anyway.

“Good morning, Mr. Stark,” she says– and her smile is uncertain and her eyes are wide and she’s sweet, god, how fucking weird is that? He can’t remember the last time he’d wanted someone who was sweet– he goes for sexy and wild and confident but never sweet, never shy, and that train of thought would probably knock him slightly off balance if he were anyone else.

But he’s not.

He’s Tony Stark. He’s a multi million-dollar playboy who routinely ends up in bed with every single one of the *Victoria’s Secret* calendar models just for fun.

He’s fine.

“Um, no,” he says, scrunching up his nose. “Today– not good. But,” Cue a devastating wink– “I have to say, it’s **significantly** better now that you’re here.”

She blushes. Honestly, truly, really blushes. Like, the whole nine yards– she ducks her head and stares down at her shoes and bites her lip and jesus, okay, he is not falling for that whole good-girl act except that holy shit, yes he totally is.

“Mr. Stark,” she says uncertainly–

“Ah-ah,” he corrects her, leaning closer with the barest flicker of a grin. “Tony.”

“Tony,” she repeats shyly, like she’s testing it out, the sound slow and sweet and totally something he would be willing to hear again under wildly different circumstances. “Do you– I mean, should you really be–”

“Should I really be what? Fraternizing with the enemy?” He responds, face a perfect mask of innocence. “Y’know, in my defense,” he taps his chin thoughtfully, “It’s a little hard not. You’re just too darn fraternizable.” He pauses. “Actually, that might not be a word.”

She giggles at that, and sways closer to him, offers him a small, nervous but still genuine smile. His first thought is that she looks even prettier like that and the second is a feeling of smugness in knowing that it was something he caused, which, okay, is not a thought he wants to examine too closely, like, ever. He’s not interested in stuff like connecting with the people he plans on sleeping with. Therein lies the beauty of it, that one night stands are just that– one night. That’s all he wants and it’s all he’s ever wanted, and that doesn’t change just because this particular girl is smart and attractive and innocent in a way that leaves him equal parts both interested and personally affronted by the fact that she still isn’t falling over herself trying to get into his pants.

“So,” Tony says conversationally, “I kind of have to ask– is it weird that I think you’re **ridiculously** cute? Because I feel like it’s weird. I mean, you’re prosecuting me.”

She tilts her head up to look at him through her lashes– shyly, he thinks, as if she’s not quite sure why he’s still talking to her– and bites down on her bottom lip to stifle a nearly breathless laugh that hits Tony unnecessarily hard between the ribs. “I don’t think this is going to help your defense, sir,” she says.

“Oh, really?” He takes a step closer and cocks an eyebrow– he would say it isn’t a challenge, except it is, and he wants her to see that and he wants her to take him up on it and he wants her, mostly, which is dumb, because he’s Tony Stark and he’s notorious for having literally thousands of girls to pick from. This shouldn’t be any different.
She looks back at him like she’s debating whether or not to take his advances seriously.

“Really, Mr. Stark– you’re going to ruin your reputation,” she says, smothering a slightly exasperated laugh, expression not-quite-serious– because, honestly, it’s not like the little reputation he has left is even worth anything to begin with, and she knows it. Hell, everybody knows it. The last time he had been the center of this much attention he hadn’t had any clothes on, and that’s the kind of thing that sort of speaks for itself.

“First rule of business, dear;” he says, purposely letting their shoulders brush as the surrounding crowd of reporters and stern-faced men in really ugly suits begins to push past them and stream through the lavish double doors into the courtroom, “You’ve got to be willing to make sacrifices. Take risks.” he winks, waggles his eyebrows, flashes a sharp, suggestive grin– “And, trust me, I’m more than willing to take a few with you.”

She smiles a little, looks uncertain as a blush creeps across her cheekbones, and he watches the flicker of doubt shadow her features and solidify into something firmly resolute– she still doesn’t get it, he thinks, a little disbelievingly.

“Right,” she says slowly, with an exasperated shake of her head and small, secret smile. “Have a nice day, Mr. Stark.”

Tony cocks an eyebrow and whistles softly– and as she turns to the arching marble-framed doors to the courtroom, he recognizes a feeling in his chest sort of like a shaken-up can of coke or a live wire or something he wants to chase and chase and chase, a bomb ticking off the final agonizing seconds before the inevitable destruction of literally everything he’s ever believed in, everything he’s ever held to be true–

Three–

(Objecively, he knows this is a bad idea.)

Two–

(He’s never cared about what’s good for him.)

One.

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

The court case goes exactly as expected, which is to say, Tony doesn’t take any of it seriously and aggravates everyone on purpose.

He may not need the attention and he may not have anything to prove to the faceless cesspool of morons that make up the prosecution team, but he likes to win, and he likes to brag about winning, and he knows by now that the easiest way to do so is to just not give a shit about any of it.

“Look, I’m no expert…”

“In prostitution? Of course not. You’re a senator. Come on.”

He’s so busy congratulating himself for how perfectly executed his response was that he nearly doesn’t see the girl sitting across the room– it’s her, it’s (Name), of course – and almost misses how she hides her smile behind her hand.

When Tony looks at her, she pretends she wasn’t laughing.

He pretends he didn’t even notice in the first place.
So they’re even.

And that’s the end of it.

Kind of.

Okay, it isn’t, not really, not if he’s being honest, but he feels like there’s an important distinction that needs to be made— He honestly would have just let it go. Really. So what, one girl out of hundreds isn’t tripping over herself to sleep with him— it’s a statistical anomaly, a ridiculous one at that, and it doesn’t matter.

The case gets dismissed, as expected, and Tony goes home to his cars and machinery and hard rock and engine grease and tries to forget about her but he just—

Doesn’t. Or— can’t.

Both are bad. More specifically, both are bad for him, bad for business and bad for his health and most of all bad for his perfectly balanced public persona that he’s literally spent years cultivating.

Because Tony— he’s supposed to be good at the whole no-strings-attached thing. He’s had his name featured in the blind gossip column of nearly every trash celebrity drama magazine on the market more than once, and is completely used to having his weekend exploits dissected and denounced in sordid detail to the point where he has perfected the ability of just not caring.

Because he doesn’t care.

He doesn’t.

He just wants to. He wants to care about her.

Kind of.

Yeah.

He’s fucked.

Two days later, everything pretty much goes to shit.

He’s in Monaco for some sort of publicity stunt, inning third in a racecar tournament despite never competing in his life and as he walks back into the lobby followed by a trail of overly enthusiastic reporters hanging onto his every word and an ego roughly twice the size it had been when he woke up that morning. And—

And the first thing he sees is her, standing to the side of the doorway, and then he sees Justin-fucking-Hammer leaning against the wall adjacent to her with his hands awkwardly shoved into the pockets of his suit jacket like exactly the kind of wannabe-famous idiot rich-kid that he is, and he’s talking to her— he’s hitting on her with a really kind of embarrassing lack of charisma, which, okay—

That’s not cool.

The day Tony Stark lets this moron pick up a girl that he had his eye on first is the day that he gets lowered into his goddamn grave.

He already admits that he likes to be one step ahead and one step above the people around him, and maybe that’s a teensy bit of a character flaw, but it doesn’t matter, and it’s not entirely his fault and if you think about it, really, he’s doing the world a favor by saving her from the likes of this dumbass—
“(Name)!” He says, sliding up beside her and feeling an unmitigated burst of complete and utter glee at how Hammer immediately falters and stumbles and choke on whatever bullshit was coming out of his mouth. “Just who I’ve been looking for.”

She looks less surprised about seeing him and more just surprised that he actively sought her out. He’s not sure if that’s a good thing or– well.

Not.

Anyway–

“Mr. Stark,” she says, smiling, “It’s nice to–”

“Tony!” Hammer interrupts, with a smile-slash-grimace that looks actually, physically painful and manages to do him exactly zero favors in the looks department. “Tony. Hey! Pal! How you doing? This is– This is, uh, this is great, Tony, this is–” His smile falters, “You two know each other?”

“Yes. Definitely,” He responds, forcing as much of the sentiment ‘fuck off, I saw her first’ into the words as he possibly can before turning his attention on to her. “So–been meaning to ask you, what’re you up to later? Next weekend, maybe, got anything special?”

She raises an eyebrow, bites back a breathless sort of half giggle and a disbelieving smile and looks at him like she cannot actually believe he just asked her that. “I–I might,” she answers, confused, and god damn it, he thinks, it was almost getting somewhere.

“Uh, yeah.” he replies, with an exaggeratedly apologetic wince. “About that. Gonna have to say– Cancel it.”

“Yes. Definitely,” He responds, forcing as much of the sentiment ‘fuck off, I saw her first’ into the words as he possibly can before turning his attention on to her. “So–been meaning to ask you, what’re you up to later? Next weekend, maybe, got anything special?”

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“Uh, yeah.” he replies, with an exaggeratedly apologetic wince. “About that. Gonna have to say– Cancel it.”

“Actually,” Hammer butts in, smile strained and taut and holy fuck Tony actually kind of wants to punch him square in his annoyingly large teeth, could he be more of a fucking nuisance- “I was hoping you’d be free for a little dinner party. Huh? (Name)? Me, you, a couple of, uh– people from today, you know, a casual thing–”

Yeah, okay, no.
Tony sucks a sharp breath in through his nose, and grimaces, managing an expression that’s just about equal parts pity and condescension. “Ooh. Yikes. See, that’s not really going to work out,” he says, doing his best to sound apologetic despite the fact that he isn’t anywhere close.

“Oh, yeah, you– you sure, Tony?” Hammer shifts on his feet, and shoves his hands into his pockets with an awkward laugh. “I mean, (Name) here was just telling me that she was free this weekend, so, uh–”

He barely manages not to roll his eyes. “Yeah. Actually. She’s not. False alarm,” he quips, before he has much time to think about it, to actually formulate a response and account for all of the possible outcomes and he gets the feeling that maybe he should have, because she’s looking at him with an expression that’s mostly indignant but also a little bit awed, as if she’s not sure which one she should be feeling in the situation–which, he thinks, sums the entire thing up pretty well.

He meets her gaze. Raises his eyebrows. Gives her “the look”, which he usually reserves for especially annoying reporters, because it’s a good tactic in avoiding bad publicity as it tends to make ninety percent of women melt where they’re standing–

And it works. Sort of.

Of course it works, he’s established this already, that he is Tony Stark and he’s not just good at this game, he’s the best.
She frowns, and she looks away, and she crosses her arms across her chest as if that somehow negates the red blush quickly spreading across her cheeks but Tony notices anyway, which is good, and Hammer notices, which is even better. His responding laugh is uncomfortable and his shoulders are hunched and his smile is quickly fading and Tony knows that he’s won, even if Hammer doesn’t want to admit it yet, and even though it’s petty and sort of vindictive he can’t help the twitch of a victorious grin at the corners of his lips.

(Actually, he can help it, but he doesn’t want to and he doesn’t even care enough to try, so— it’s pretty much the same thing, right?)

“Mr. Stark.”

“Yes?” he responds, with a sly sort of half smirk. (Name) locks eyes with him again, her gaze exasperated and actually kind of angry, which, okay, what? He went out of his way to stop her from being practically fucking abducted by the billionaire version of a gremlin and he doesn’t even get a thank you or a kiss or a quickie in the bathroom out of the whole thing. Which is not to say that his only goal was to get laid, except, yeah, it kind of was.

He’s failing, he realizes.

Kind of fantastically.

It’s like his entire life just wanted to punch him in the dick today.

Hammer— who had been standing awkwardly to the side throughout this entire exchange of frankly undeniable sexual tension— mumbles a shitty half-audible excuse and fucks off back to his little clique of men in poorly-fitted suits and high-end call girls who are doing a very shitty job of looking like they weren’t paid to be there. Tony allows himself about half a second to notice and feel vaguely gleeful over the whole thing before—

“Mr. Stark, you can’t just do that,” she says as soon as he’s out of earshot, tone accusatory, and he registers that she’s pretty fucking hot when she’s angry which he’s guessing isn’t really what she’s aiming for— so maybe he should keep that to himself.

“Uh, yeah, except, I just did,” he says, walking towards the small marble side-hallway-thing that leads to the parking lot where his car is waiting, knowing that she’ll follow— and she does. “Are you mad at me? I feel like you’re mad at me.”

The crisp sound of her footsteps vanishes.

Score.

He grins and he turns to face her and he takes in the fact that she looks utterly and completely stunned and for a moment Tony wonders why, why this had been so fucking difficult and why he even cares so much and why he’s even doing this and for a moment Tony considers actually thinking about this and maybe not going through with such an utterly ridiculous bid for her attention—
But ultimately he doesn’t. He doesn’t think and he doesn’t consider and he doesn’t care. He just does what he wants.

“What?”

“This weekend,” he says, shrugging. “Y’know. The party. The whole reason you couldn’t go to Hammer’s dinner- thing. Which, by the way, I don’t know why you even considered in the first place. I mean, just saying, he’s kind of lame and I–personally–think that you could do so much better–”

“Mr. Stark,” she interrupts, and then she stares at him for a minute, blatantly astonished, before actually saying anything. “Are you– are you asking me on a date?”

“Ooh, tricky question.” He clicks his tongue. “Well, Ms. (Last Name)…” he steps closer and she bites her lip and he feels something familiar buzz to life in the hollow space between his ribs, something like the hum of a sports car engine in the tiny sliver of a second before the flags are down and the race begins–“That depends.”

“On what?”

“On whether or not you’ll say yes.”

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

“Sir, you’re aware there are no parties planned for this weekend?”

“Yeah, I know that, J, all right? Just– Plan one. Do something. It’s important.”

JARVIS is silent for a suspiciously long moment. “Right away, sir.”

Tony grunts, grips the screwdriver between his teeth and bats away Dummy’s shitty attempts at competent circuitry work with one hand while attempting to keep the half-completed arm of his mark 14 suit steady. “And– can you– Just run a diagnostics scan, this is the third time this happened– Fuck– Fuck! Damn it. I swear to god, I’ll dismantle you. I’ll soak your motherboard, I’ll dump you in a scrap heap. Don’t touch that.”

“Having difficulties, sir?” JARVIS asks, tone playfully teasing, and Tony fucking knows that whatever’s coming out of his mouth next isn’t something that he’s going to want to hear. “It seems like you’ve become distracted.”

“Yeah, well, I’m not.” And that’s (mostly) true.

(Five minutes later, his second test of the mark 14 suit blows up rather spectacularly in a miniature mushroom-cloud of red and gold paint flakes and completely mangled circuitry. He hasn’t failed this bad since high school.)

(“Fuck,” he says, loudly, to no one in particular.)

~*~*~*~*~*~*~

The party– surprisingly– is a lot easier to plan than Tony had expected.

That’s mostly because he manages to get Pepper to do most of it, in exchange for not donating the entirety of his 20-year art collection to the Boy Scouts of America and also giving her a week of paid
vacation which maybe wasn’t the best idea in the long run, because he’s hardly even half of a functioning adult without her, but– whatever.

The biggest issue was getting a competent DJ considering he’d only planned the party-thing like– a week in advance, which apparently isn’t enough of a forewarning.

The other problem–

The yacht– it’s been in storage since fucking 2011. It takes a grand total of three thousand dollars to get it cleaned and set up– which is both absolutely nothing in comparison to his never-ending bank account and entirely too much to be paying for a boat that’s only been used a grand total of four times. Everything pretty much works out, though, which leaves him with nearly a week to just sit around and do nothing, which is where the problem lies, because, believe it or not–

He’s not very good at that.

He considers getting (Name)’s phone number by not-so-covertly hacking into the NSA which, okay, isn’t nearly as creepy as it sounds because of– of reasons. Lots of reasons. The fact that he’s Tony Stark and he can do what he wants is almost all of them. He’s smart, and he’s resourceful, and he is not patient and honestly you can’t expect him to just sit there waiting for six days to talk to her.

But–

He doesn’t end up actually doing it.

Because that would be needy and weird and it would make him look a whole lot more invested than he actually is. It’s– complicated, this thing, and it’s not supposed to be. Robotics are complicated. His suits are complicated. Sex– isn’t.

He considers calling the entire thing off and he considers that this– that getting involved with her, that she in general might’ve been a total fucking mistake and he considers a lot of things, most of them a lot more rational than anything he’s done in the past two weeks–

But ultimately, in a completely un-Tony-like move, he does nothing.

He just–

Waits.

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So--

It happens like this.

There are four fully stocked open bars, several kegs of stupidly expensive beer from some ridiculous microbrewery in fucking Tennessee and shelves of unopened French vodka dredged up from the bottom of his storage cellar that probably cost more than literally everyone there. And then, because Tony’s a sucker for the college-frat-party aesthetic, there’s the tables of 25 cent jello shots and freezer pops and six-packs of Bud Lite, pitchers of half-frozen strawberry margaritas and one lone bottle of single-malt scotch that he had already opened despite Pepper passive-aggressively scowling in his direction.

In his defense, it’s part of his Genius Plan, which mostly consists of being wasted by the time (Name) shows up for the sake of plausible deniability in the very likely event that he does something
really fucking stupid.

Usually Tony doesn’t care about whether or not he does stupid things.

He’s not planning on looking too closely at why that has changed.

Anyway.

The party starts at seven. The government-approved city standard fireworks are set to go off at ten-thirty, and the super-cool handcrafted Iron Man fireworks of dubious and possibly illegal origin go off an hour later. There’s only one tiny hitch in Tony’s frankly amazing plan, that being--

She doesn’t actually show up.

It’s nine thirty, it’s gotten dark enough that the strobe lights and the stupid little glo-stick necklaces everyone’s wearing are literally the only things he can see, the music is loud and the bass is heavy and rhythmic and echoes in the space between his ribs and she literally didn’t even fucking show up.

What the fuck.

He’s standing by one of the open bars considering the merits of one of the stupidly expensive bottles of French vodka, trying not to seem like he’s pining or just generally being dejected and self-pitying because he isn’t, when--

There’s feminine laughter, and he registers someone being shoved towards him, warm, soft skin brushing against his exposed forearms and he very skillfully manages to not get alcohol poured all down the front of his really fucking expensive personally-tailored Westwood.

“Tony,” (Name) says, flustered and flushed and definitely a little bit drunk. “Hi.”

He stares, for a second, maybe a little longer than that, struggles to find something to say that’s slightly more appropriate than the thoughts in his head right now, because she’s wearing this fucking ridiculous sleeveless dress with an impossibly low neckline and it’s sexy and perfect and he finds himself wasting a couple of seconds dumbly admiring how attractive she looks and thinking about how he actually really wants to fuck her which, okay, not the time--

“(Name)!” he says, flashing a signature grin, “Glad you could make it.”

She hesitates before smiling back, and her grip tightens almost imperceptibly around her dented red Solo cup, an unidentifiable mixed drink sloshing and swirling around a meager collection of half-melted ice cubes.

And--

She’s wearing lipstick. It’s shiny and glossy and red, and he wants to kiss her but also kind of wants to see it smeared all over his cock because he’s, like, completely ridiculous. There’s a lot of things he wants to say and more things he probably shouldn’t say but mostly Tony’s just fucking concerned about the fact that he’s dangerously close to being at a disadvantage with how gorgeous she looks and the fact that his BAC is on the absolute wrong side of the decimal point--

“You look-- wow,” he says, a little blankly and a lot stupidly and Jesus Christ, he thinks, he really needs to get a fucking hold of himself, god, it’s not like this is the first time he’s ever seen a pretty girl in his life.

“Was that a compliment?” she says, a smile playing at her lips, small and secretive.
“Oh, it definitely is,” Tony replies suggestively, finally getting over whatever the fuck had made him act like a goddamn teenager less than a minute ago. Except-- his heartbeat is a little fast, he thinks, skipping and stalling in time with the throbbing bass rhythm of the music, and he feels strangely off balance. It can’t be healthy, he thinks. Maybe he’s getting sick. “The fireworks are about to start,” he explains, and offers her his hand, and in a rush of what he can only attribute to poor impulse control and copious amounts of alcohol, says, “Care to join me?”

She doesn’t immediately respond-- she’s so sure, he thinks, so cautious, prim and proper and responsible and so painfully difficult to corrupt, regardless of how hard he tries, and instead of turning him off it just makes him want to work harder. Tony isn’t used to this, to the chase, he’s used to women falling over him at every available opportunity and the thought of catching the only one who doesn’t is-- intoxicating.

She takes his hand, surprisingly confident.

The speakers are playing some pop song, tinny and upbeat, but the rhythm is slower. Tony pulls her in close and hooks an arm around her waist and quirks one eyebrow, a look that she smiles shyly at as he leads her around the perimeter of the ship, towards the front of the boat.

“Ever launched a firework before?” He asks, watching with a mischievous sort of half-smirk as her face flickers with a series of rapidly changing emotions-- confusion melts into shock and realization and then finally into disbelief.

“You can’t be serious,” she says.

“Oh yes I can,” he retorts, trying not to smile.

“I’m not launching a firework,” she insists, finally becoming more comfortable-- she’s laughing, tugging herself away from him with a giggle and an incredulous shake of her head. “No. Nope. Can’t do it--” She breaks off into a soft squeak of surprise as Tony tugs her backwards, until her back is flush against his chest, his mouth lingering dangerously close to her ear.

And, shit, he’s got fucking butterflies. Is that even a thing? Something that actually happens to real, living people?

But it doesn’t matter, he thinks, and he doesn’t care, because he’s leaning down and smirking and she’s tipping her head back to look at him and laughing like he’s absolutely fucking insane, which, to be honest, he probably is, and it’s kind of hard to focus on anything else.

“Do you think you can do this?” he asks, resting his chin on her shoulder, hands spreading slowly over her hips. She doesn’t tell him to stop.

“No,” she says, “I absolutely do not.”

“Great,” Tony answers, finally allowing himself to smile as he presses a small, circular device into her hand. “Press that.”

And, of course, she complies.

There’s a second where nothing happens, and then she shrieks in surprise as the components of the mark-14 suit (just the arm, mind you) come practically flying from a window up on the top deck, securing themselves into place around her forearm with a click of metal and fiberglass.

“What-- Tony!” she says, elated but also somewhat terrified, which, okay, he thinks, that’s probably fair, it’s a lot to process.
“It’s safe, I promise,” he says, and it’s not entirely a lie-- the arm is safe, everything else is still stuck in that phase where it’s sort-of-but-not-really working. He blames her for that, by the way, because for the past few weeks she’s been literally the greatest distraction in his life and he can’t think of a time when he’s ever thought about somebody that much. “Easy to use. Just point and shoot.”

She looks at him-- blankly, he thinks, she looks at him blankly, like she has no fucking idea what he’s doing, but to be honest neither does he. And then she giggles a little and leans back against him and allows him to guide her arm up, to show her how to take aim, other hand splayed protectively over the curve of her hip, and her ass is pressed up against his hips and jesus this entire situation should not be turning him on--

Except it totally fucking is.

“Ready?” he murmurs against her ear, fingers digging almost imperceptibly into her skin as she shivers at his voice and accidentally presses back against his really embarrassing semi and, fuck, come on, not fair--

“No,” she breathes, “No, no, no, I’m not--”

Naturally, he doesn’t listen.

The ensuing explosion is deafening.

It takes a second for the rocket to propel itself into the air, and when the film of acrid black smoke has cleared it’s erupting into beautiful arrays of red and gold in the sky above their heads, the music has dimmed and the guests are awestruck, which, of course, they should be, because it took Tony four fucking days to put together.

“Oh my god,” (Name) is saying, when he stops patting himself on the back for designing something so fucking awesome-- and then he notices that her face is buried in his chest and she’s laughing and that the glow from the fireworks makes her skin look almost amber, smooth and soft and stupidly poetic, and he can actually feel his expression softening and he has a thought about how he doesn’t usually do this, he doesn’t usually chase girls or want them or anything like this but for some reason none of that actually matters. She looks up at him and he looks down at her and there’s a beat, a pause, a fraction of a second that passes in which time the lingering pieces of his common sense dissolve into what remains of his brain, mostly alcohol and lust-induced idiocy by this point, and--

“You’re ridiculous,” she says, a little breathily, and by the time he realizes he should have kissed her, the moment has already passed.

“I am,” he agrees.

And the night goes on.

From that point, it consists mostly of Tony wondering what the fuck he’s wound up getting himself into. He’s pretty drunk, and she’s-- well, she’s getting there, and the longer he stays in her company the more he finds himself staring at her mouth and her hips and the ridiculously low neckline of her dress and, okay, he admits that perving on girls isn’t a new low for him by any means, but it’s not just that. If he just wanted to fuck her that would be one thing, but he doesn’t, jesus, he wants to fuck her and kiss her and touch her and then he also wants to take her out to a fancy dinner afterwards and that-- that--

That’s dangerous territory.

That’s, like, relationship territory, and Tony Stark is not a relationship person. Tony Stark does not
want to be a relationship person.

He forces himself not to think about it. He dances and drinks and laughs and becomes increasingly suggestive in his advances towards (Name) and becomes increasingly irritated as she continues to brush him off— he’s already figured out that there’s a mutual attraction, why the fuck must it be so difficult?

Anyway— the rest of the events are unimportant, mostly consisting of him flirting and her not fucking getting it and his ego growing considerably more wounded and his libido growing considerably more restless until eventually—

Eventually he loses track of her in the crowd and then it’s nearly two in the morning and the party begins to wind down. The boat docks and people leave or they just wind up passed out somewhere in one of the rooms; the ballroom is a mess and the bars are trashed and Tony laments that despite all of this, he didn’t even get laid.

In a surprising stroke of luck, he finds her on the balcony by the master suite, sitting with her feet dangling over the edge and staring down at the water, a dark inky black, refracting broken slivers of light from the moon and the ship lanterns into a dizzying pattern of silver.

“Hey,” Tony says, resting his arms on the railing beside her. “Lost you back there.”

She pushes herself down off of the railing and smiles at him. “Yeah, sorry. It got kind of loud, and I’m not-- well, I’m not usually a party person.”

Tony quirks an eyebrow in a no-shit-sherlock sort of expression, and she blushes, ducking her head.

“It’s late,” she mentions absentmindedly, fiddling with the red sheen of polish on her thumbnail, watching as it flakes off piece by piece.

“Hm,” he agrees. “It is.”

Instead of actually attempting small talk which, while being good at it, he finds incredibly boring, he moves so that his arms are on either side of her body, effectively caging her in, smirks, and says quietly, “So. I’ve got to ask you a question, sweetheart. Just one, before you go.”

She backs up against the railing, and Tony is nearly swept away, because she’s such pretty little thing, he thinks, with pink, pouty lips and wide eyes and smooth, soft skin and jesus what wouldn’t he give to make her his? He’s given his patience and his time and his money and his fucking ego and still, still, she’s always one step in front of him, always just out of reach, and it’s infuriating and awful and exciting in a way that he’s never felt before.
She’s such a fucking mystery. What she does to him is a mystery.

“Close your eyes,” he repeats softly.

“I-- okay?” she agrees, following his instruction, and bites her lip, rolls it between her teeth, expression curious.

A moment passes, and Tony thinks about how stereotypical this is, that this would happen on a boat in the middle of the night with the moon hanging pearly and full in the sky and making her look almost ethereal, it’s like some sort of Titanic bullshit-- obviously before the whole death via iceberg part-- and it’s funny.

It’s funny that it happens this way because out of everyone in the world, he’s the last person to deserve a picturesque happy ending. With all that he’s done, the people he’s scorned and the businesses he’s crushed and the women he’s used and tossed away like nothing-- he doesn’t deserve this. He doesn’t expect it to work out. Doesn’t want it to, if he’s being truthful, because despite his outward demeanor there’s a lot of self hatred there, beyond the egotistical narcissism there’s a loathing for himself and for the person he’s become.

Every one of those thoughts flickers through his head in a fraction of a moment. He considers that on a scale from one to ten on the good person scale, he’s like, a two, at best.

Tony is aware of this and aware of all of it but it doesn’t stop him from moving forward, closer, almost trancelike in the way that he lets one of his hands cup her jaw, guiding her chin up, thumb smoothing over her cheek, and staring transfixed at how mesmerized she is by the action.

Nothing, he knows, no morality and no self loathing and no idea of whether or not he deserves it could possibly have stopped him from kissing her.

And because he is Tony Stark and because he is lucky and probably also because she’s just as drunk as he is, she lets him, moves closer when he urges her to, trembling hands flitting across his chest like she’s unsure of what, exactly, she should be doing--

Finally, he thinks. Finally.

She tastes like raspberry schnapps and she smells delicious and she’s soft and pliant and warm and jesus Tony’s never been one for kissing, he’s always preferred to just get straight to it, skip the foreplay and the buildup and get it over with but with her, god, he could do this forever.

She pulls back, and it takes literally all of his willpower to not actually whine out loud, because, fuck, come on--

“What are you doing?” she says blankly, and he fully expects her to push him away, but she doesn’t.

“Kissing you,” he answers. “I thought it was pretty obvious, actually.”

She blinks as the words register. There is a flush spreading across her cheeks, red and rosy, and there’s a lot of things Tony wants to do, none of them even remotely resembling a good idea, and he can see her hesitate, see the rational part of her warring with the part that wants more.

“Oh, come on,” Tony murmurs--teases, really, as he tips her chin up with his fingers, “Come on, baby. Don’t be like that. Take a risk.”

Her lips part at the nickname and her exhale is shaky and slow and jesus she looks so vulnerable and if he were a better person he’d probably stop right there, but he isn’t. He isn’t a better person-- he’s
hardly even a good one.

“Tony, we shouldn’t—” she starts, and her voice is nothing more than a whisper at this point, because he’s already leaning down and she’s already moving up to meet him like it’s instinct, like it isn’t even a conscious decision, it’s just her body’s reaction to him.

The second kiss is somehow, impossibly, even better than the first.

It starts soft, gentle, with his hand cupping her jaw and her arms wrapped around his shoulders, but it deteriorates quickly, and Tony blames the alcohol and Tony blames his lack of impulse control and Tony blames himself because she’s so pretty and he’s never been good at denying himself what he wants. In a matter of seconds he has his hands on her ass and he’s pulling her closer, his tongue pushes into her mouth and scrapes over her teeth with a level of possessiveness that shouldn’t really be a surprise, not at this point-- and she makes a sound almost like a moan, hesitant and disbelieving, hands coming up to clutch at his suit jacket as she leans up into it. It’s filthy and it’s good, better than the countless models and reporters and businesswomen he’s brought into his bed, electric and intoxicating and new in a way that he can’t quite name because Tony can’t even remember a time where he actually wanted something this badly before.

“That’s it, sweetheart,” he breathes, breaking the kiss to pull her closer, chuckling a little as she pushes up on her toes to chase him, seeking more, inhibitions finally fucking gone after days and weeks and months of him trying. He pushes her back towards the door to the master suite, and she lets him, too caught up in his attention to be aware of their surroundings, not paying attention as he somehow manages to unlock the door while still, still kissing her--

“What are you--” she starts, but her words dissolve into a breathless sort of gasp under the pressure of his mouth against her collarbone, sucking in a dark bruise, a mark that would last for days, proof that she had been his even just for a little while--

“What am I doing?” Tony finishes for her, kicking the door shut. “You tell me.”

He sheds his suit jacket, and watches her carefully with one eyebrow raised, acutely aware of the rush of thoughts that must be thundering through her head because-- well, because he’s Tony Stark, obviously, and that means that this entire situation ends up one-hundred-percent more complicated than it needs to be.

She watches him, and Tony feels a flicker of pride at the way her eyes focus for a second too long at his exposed forearms and at the way his chest fills out his plain white oxford-- still got it, he thinks, a little arrogantly.

“For one, you’re-- significantly older than me,” She says, and her smile is bewildered and her tone is disbelieving and everything about her says this shouldn’t happen and this won’t happen except--

Except she’s moving closer. Slowly. Like she’s not even aware of it.


And, wow, it’s incredibly hard to remain casual about that topic when his dick is telling him pretty insistently how fucking hot that would be.

She blinks, opens her mouth, and then closes it again, but doesn’t say anything.

And Tony realizes, maybe a second too late, that she’s totally blushing.

Jesus christ. Jesus fucking Christ he absolutely shouldn’t keep going like this but honestly what a
perfect opportunity--

“Oh. Oh, so that’s it, then,” he says, despite the remaining scraps of his common sense telling him to just shut the fuck up. He steps in closer, and his voice drops low, sultry, teasing and testing and waiting for her to inevitably tell him to stop. “That’s why you won’t sleep with me. That’s your dirty little secret, huh, princess? That’s what you want?”

She bites her lip and worries it between her teeth and says, “Tony--”

“Ah-ah,” Tony responds, a smirk twitching at his lips, acutely aware at how far he’s pushing his luck, but come on, seriously, it’s not like he could pass up the chance. It feels like a fever dream, fantastic and fucking impossible as she stares up at him, and the next two words make her shiver in a wonderfully delicious way--

“Say it.”

“I’m not going to call you Daddy,” she says, and he thinks it’s probably supposed to sound sarcastic and maybe a little defiant but mostly it just sounds breathless.

“You so sure about that?” he quips back, trying to ignore just how fucking restrictive his pants feel now, because this should absolutely not be turning him on as much as it is but fuck, jesus, he’s always had a weakness for pretty girls and even more of a weakness for pretty girls who also happen to be kinky as fuck and wow, it’s like she knows exactly how to press all the buttons he didn’t even know he had--

She steps towards him, and Tony can’t help but remember how dismissive she’d been of his advances up until this point and he can’t help but victoriously compare that to how she is now, with her eyes wide and cheeks flushed and lips kiss-bruised, looking incredibly, intoxicatingly needy. When he spins her around slowly and skims his fingers over the zipper of her dress he can hear her breath catch as she leans into his touch, and when he presses a kiss to the back of her neck and actually begins to pull it down she squirms and makes a sound almost like a whine.

“You want to get that dress off?” he asks, pulling her back until she’s flush against his chest. She sighs when Tony speaks, and nods, almost imperceptibly-- and he’s aching for her, god, he grinds the length of his cock up against her backside, lets her feel what she’s done to him and the sound that she makes is beautiful, a choked-off gasp that dissolves into his name.

“Strip,” he whispers, mouth lingering by her ear, “C’mon, make it snappy. You’re testing my patience here, princess.”

She spins around to face him, and before she has a chance to respond-- before she has a chance to do anything, really-- Tony pulls her into another kiss, nearly smiling at how easily she melts into it, any sort of protest she had dying on her tongue. It’s a low blow, he knows, but he really can’t help it and he really wants to touch her and taste her and fuck her, he wants to see her come and make her come with an urgency he’s never really felt before and if he has to wait one more fucking minute he might actually die.

“Take it off,” he says, trailing sloppy kisses down over her neck, sinking his teeth into her collarbone just to hear her moan-- and when she pulls away he’s almost disappointed until the fucking dress starts sliding off of her body, revealing the smooth skin of her stomach and the curve of her ribs and the softness of her breasts--

Yeah, he’s not going to actively admit it to anyone, but his breath catches.
He notoriously doesn’t have the patience to sit and wait, so he closes the distance between them and impatiently tugs the dress the rest of the way off, not really caring about the sound of fabric ripping because she’s standing there in just her underwear and Jesus he’s not sure he’s ever seen something so gorgeous.

“Fuck,” he groans, not entirely sure if he meant to say it out loud or not, and then he’s loosening his tie and fumbling with the buttons on his oxford, discarding it in a bundle of white cotton and closing the space between them with a newfound desperation.

She meets him halfway and the kiss is chaotic and messy, with teeth and tongue and the crushing weight of his desire, and she gasps into his mouth as his hands move up between her thighs almost against his own volition, his fingertips skim across the front of her panties and they’re lace oh shit and she’s so fucking wet that Tony almost groans out loud.

“Mmm, you have no idea what you’re doing to me, sweetheart,” he says, and his voice doesn’t sound nearly as self-assured as it usually does, no, it’s stilted and strangled and maybe even a little desperate, and he’s acutely aware of her shallow breathing and the soaked fabric of her underwear and how tightly his other hand is gripping her thigh, pressing in bruises with his fingers-

“I think I have some idea,” she retorts, and he backs her up against the wall as he moves his hand, slowly, so slowly that she has all the time in the world to stop him or to move back or to tell him no. She doesn’t, and his hand slides into her underwear and she shivers and makes a sound almost like a whimper when his fingers brush across her skin, she rocks into his touch and digs her nails into his arm hard enough to leave little crescent-shaped indents and, fuck, at this point he’s almost painfully hard. The muffled noises she makes when he touches her are beautiful and she’s clinging to his shoulders with her face pressed against his neck as he rubs light, slick circles around her clit.

“Oh,” she gasps, “Oh.”

“Yeah?” Tony asks, breathless and grinning, “Yeah? Like that?”

When she doesn’t respond he moves his fingers a little faster, applies a little more pressure, and she just fucking melts in his hands with a gasp and a pleased moan as Tony finds her mouth again, the kiss messy and slightly frantic. She’s so fucking wet, he marvels, as he shifts his hand down, just a little, and she mumbles a complaint at the loss of contact.

“Tony, c’mon,” she breathes, not quite pleading, but close enough to make him sigh at the sound of his name, so soft and gentle and perfect--

“Oh, what was that?” He whispers back, mimicking innocence as he runs his fingers down over her slit, pressing gently, testing just how far she’s willing to go, and she rocks her hips forward a little at the pressure and his breath just fucking falters, shit shit shit, he groans and pushes one finger inside of her and the sound she makes in response is something he wants to hear over and over again forever--

“Stop teasing,” she mumbles, and her voice kind of caves a little as he starts to fuck her with his fingers, her mouth falls open and she lets out a shaky, breathless moan because obviously Tony is good at this but he’s also good enough to know how to make sure that she won’t come, not yet, not from just this-- because it’s a game, to see which of them will give in first, and it sure as hell won’t be him.

“So do you want something, princess?” he asks, acutely aware of the sound of her breathing, shallow and ragged, and the sound of his, surprisingly slow considering how much effort it’s taking him just to hold on to what remains of his self control. “Better speak up.”
“Please, Tony,” she complains, louder, this time, rocking into his hand and looking up at him with a painfully needy expression and it takes all of his willpower to stop himself from fucking her right then and there--

“You know what I want to hear. What’s the magic word?”

“Oh-- *Fuck you*,” she says, realizing what he’s getting at, and Tony presses his thumb into her clit just to hear her words lose all of their conviction, and he chuckles at how easily he can sway her--

“Kinda already planning on it,” he responds, voice low, and she shivers and she gives in, she ducks her head and makes a whiny sort of noise in the back of her throat that quickly dissolves into a moan as he curls his fingers just right, brushing a spot inside of her that makes her shudder, and then she’s looking up at him beneath her lashes and biting her bottom lip and whispering--

“C’mon, Daddy, *please*.”

And he’d like to think that he doesn’t fucking shatter at the words, but--

Yeah, he does.

“*Mmm,*” he hums, grinning, “Smart girl.”

And then he stops touching her, and he yanks down her skirt and her panties, and he tosses them aside with a level of roughness he didn’t know he was actually capable of. He’s not sure what he’s doing yet, he’s not exactly sure what he wants to do besides make her come for him over and over and *over,* jesus, and before he really even has time to think about it he pushes her back on the bed.

She makes a sound almost like a gasp and the he’s kneeling down and spreading her thighs wide fucking open, he’s staring at her cunt and thinking *jesus christ* because he wants to know what she *tastes* like and he wants to make her fucking *scream* for him and this is new, he’s never actually cared this much before about someone else’s pleasure--

“Tony,” she mumbles, as he positions himself between her legs, breath ghosting hot across the insides of her thighs, and she’s squirming aimlessly, like she’s not quite sure whether she wants to move away or get closer, and he can tell that she’s deliciously close to giving in to him, begging him to make good on all of his promises.

He can’t fucking wait any longer, though.

“Hey, c’mon, look at me, baby,” he coaxes, and she does, makes eye contact for a second before he grins and delves in with his mouth against her cunt and *fuck* he tastes salt and skin and she makes a beautiful sort of choked out *moan* as he licks a long, wet stripe up her slit--

“That’s it, princess,” he whispers as she moans and he pushes two fingers inside of her and runs his tongue up and around and over her clit until her hands reach down to tighten in his hair and she gasps out *Daddy oh god please*-- and the sound of her begging for him hits him hard, makes his cock twitch and makes him painfully aware of his own arousal--

“Yeah, baby, look at you go,” he chuckles, curling his fingers up as she rocks against his hand and her answering moan is shattered and helpless and before he’s entirely aware of what he’s doing he takes his other hand and clumsily unbuckles his belt and runs his palm down over the length of his cock and oh god he’s painfully fucking hard and he just wants to make her *come.*

Her hands tighten in his hair and he fucks her open with his fingers and his tongue, his chin is sticky and his eyes are dark and his words are slurred and filthy as he hitches her leg over his shoulder and
pulls her closer. “So beautiful, princess,” he murmurs, “Mmm, wish you could see yourself, see how wet you are for me, you’re practically begging for it.”

“Daddy,” she keens, breathlessly and brokenly as he drags the tip of his tongue over her clit and watches her shiver and feels the muscles in her thighs tense, and when he looks up he sees her with her head tipped back and her eyes screwed shut and, god, she just looks so fucking ruined like this with her purity gone, and that probably shouldn’t turn him on as much as it does.

When she comes, it’s beautiful.

Her lips part and her breath catches and dissolves into a moan and her hands tighten in his hair so hard that it sends a prickling sensation of almost-pain slinking down his spine that makes him shiver and groan as he touches her until her body is trembling and pliant from the aftershocks. It feels like a fucking dream because he can taste her on his tongue and he can feel her body under his hands and it has to be unreal because going down on a girl has never turned him on this much in his entire life--

Tony stands up and he stares at the mess he’s made of her, at the way she shivers deliciously at his heavy-lidded gaze and his cocky grin as he works open his belt, tugs it through the loops on his dress pants with a rasp of leather. It falls to the floor, and the sound of the metal buckle clinking is strangely loud in the waiting silence of the room.

She stares at the bulge in his pants and bites her lip, sitting up on the bed to fix him with a nearly pleading look, breathing still fast and shallow and face flushed from the aftershocks of her orgasm--

“What, do you want something?” He says, feigning innocence.

She leans forward, up to touch him, and he stops her with a grin and a hand on her arm.

“Ah-ah. Tell me. Tell me what you want, princess,” he teases, tipping her chin up with his fingers and his smile is sly and possessive, his pants slung low on his hips as she watches him with a neediness that stretches his patience to the very limit until it takes all of his energy to stop himself from fucking her.

“Please,” she mumbles, looking up at him with a sort of beautifully transfixed expression, “I want you.”

“You want me to do what? Say it, c’mon.”

She shakes her head and bites her lip.

“Daddy,” she says instead, purposefully drawing out the word, self-satisfied at the way his expression shatters and his breath catches and of course she knows exactly which buttons to push to fucking ruin him and if Tony hadn’t been mostly lost in how badly he just wants to fuck her he might have been a little irritated at how easily she gets to him.

Tony curses lowly under his breath and rids himself of his pants, kicking them to the floor in quick, efficient movements, and moves back onto the bed, kneels in front of her and takes hold of her hips and angles them up--

“Please, Daddy,” she urges again, slightly louder.


He’s running a hand down her ribcage, touch soft and soothing, but it’s just making her more restless
and it’s leaving her squirming underneath him and arching her hips up, the head of his cock bumping and sliding deliciously against her slit and Tony inhales, exhales, digs his fingers into her hips--

He pushes in slowly, and fuck, his body aches and trembles from the strain of trying to hold himself back because she’s 
tight and wet and warm and he’s been waiting for so fucking long and the feeling of it all is incredible in a way that sex usually isn’t, at least not for him.

When he bottoms out, she shivers, warm and flushed all over, looks up at him like she needs to be grounded or needs something to keep herself from being completely overwhelmed by the sensation of being full and filled and 
stretched.

“How does that feel, princess?” He asks, voice breathless and a little hoarse as he presses an open-mouthed kiss to her neck, feels her pulse flutter beneath his lips as he rocks his hips forwards just a little, testing, and she tightens around him in the most delicious way and the moan she releases is wonderfully helpless and whatever remaining scraps of decorum he had left just fucking dissolve. He thrusts into her a little harder and she shudders and the sound she makes is so fucking broken and needy and perfect that he can barely think, much less formulate an actual response to the way that she stretches up to meet every gentle rock of his hips or the feeling of her as she squirms on his cock or the suffocating heat of where their bodies are joined--

“Fuck,” he pants, the word really nothing more than a hiss between his gritted teeth.

“Faster,” she begs senselessly, and Tony chuckles, the sound low and rich and a little stilted as he presses his mouth to her collarbone, but he keeps his pace controlled and painfully slow, eager to see just how desperate she’ll become.

“Mmm, sorry, gonna have to say ‘no’ to that,” he whispers, leaning down to kiss her, and he can feel how wet she is and he can hear the soft slick sounds of skin on skin that betray how much she wants him and it’s filthy and it’s obscene and he’s loving every fucking second of it--

She whines a little desperately when he stops moving to tilt her hips up farther but then the angle changes, and he’s even deeper inside of her and the look on her face is a deliciously pretty mixture of embarrassment and pleasure as she lets out an involuntary moan, shaky and mindless.

“You’re doing so good,” he groans, struggling to hold on to whatever part of him is keeping him from just fucking her senseless. “Jesus, wish you could see yourself, princess.”

She flushes at the praise and digs trembling fingers into his shoulders and moans, “Daddy, please, more, come on please--”

And, shit, Tony nearly gasps at her neediness, because she’s begging and it’s so pretty, he thinks, something he wants to hear over and over and over again, a constant litany of please Daddy feels so good, want more more more, faster, please, need it, Daddy, need you--

It’s a beautiful sound, and he’s done denying his girl what she wants.

And when Tony begins to fuck her in earnest she chokes on a broken, shattered moan, whimpered in time with his thrusts, and the rest of the world seems to become a faint, colorless hum in the background, her attention focused solely on him and the feeling of his cock inside of her as she moves her hips to meet his and as he sucks a bruise into her skin, just high enough on her neck to be a problem the next morning.

“Daddy,” she gasps, nails sinking into his shoulders and back arching and breaths catching in time with his thrusts, until she can barely form a coherent sentence or even fucking speak and instead of
slowing down he moves one of his hands to her clit, rubs small, light circles with his thumb knowing
that the pleasure is quickly becoming too much but god does he want to see her come for him again--

“Look at you,” Tony is saying, not quite sure she’s coherent enough to respond. He doesn’t think
she’s even processing much at all but she still shivers at his words, flushes at the praise, “Fuck, baby,
fuck, it’s like you were fucking made for this, weren’t you, made for taking my cock, you’re so
fucking good for me, princess--”

“Tony,” she gasps, as his hips snap forwards harder, until the sound of skin against skin is filthy and
loud in the surrounding silence and he begins to lose track of how long she’s been crying out for
him--

She tenses around him with a fragile, broken moan when she comes, goes boneless and pliant
underneath him as her body trembles with the force of it and even though she shudders and lets out
little breathy “ah”s with every thrust she never once tells him to stop as he fucks her faster, harder--

There’s something about seeing her like this, seeing her willing to let herself be used solely for his
own pleasure, even as she gasps and shudders and shakes with the aftershocks of her orgasm,
overstimulated and hypersensitive-- there’s something about it, fuck, something good, and soon
Tony’s rhythm is faltering and becoming erratic and he’s not going to last much longer, he realizes
distantly.

He grits his teeth, mumbles half a choked-out curse, digs his fingers into her skin and then his hips
stutter and falter and he barely has enough remaining brain function to remember to fucking pull out-
-

“Shit,” he gasps, as his orgasm is practically torn from him, intense and all-consuming and so, so
good. “Fuck.”

There is a long moment where nothing happens, and Tony wonders if this is what a scene change
feels like in a movie because everything seems to go white for a while and when it fades back in he’s
lying there with his hand over his eyes and his other arm slung over her shoulders. Her body is still
shaky and his breathing is still rough and something about the mood of the surrounding silence
makes him aware of the fact that she is probably regretting everything that had just happened.

Strangely enough, the realization makes his stomach turn.
Eventually she moves, trying to pull up and away from him without actually making any eye contact
or saying anything at all. Tony, of course, isn’t about to let that happen, and gently pulls her back to
his side.

She fixes him with an odd look.

He clears his throat.
“So, uh,” he starts, faking nonchalance, “Not entirely sure if the whole ‘asking you to dinner’ part is
supposed to come before or after the ‘incredibly kinky sex’ part.”

There is a long, tense pause--
And her answering laugh is equal parts pleased and disbelieving.

“Before, Tony. It’s-- that’s supposed to come before.”

He shrugs, trying to hide the grin that’s slowly creeping over his face. “Sorry about that. I got
distracted. How about dinner Sunday?”
She rolls her eyes, and she laughs, again, this time even more incredulously; Tony just barely manages to open his mouth and is just about to explain that, yes, he has an abysmal relationship track record and yes, he would understand if she didn’t want to settle for that and no, that would not under any circumstances stop him from sending her incredibly extravagant gifts in an attempt to win her over, when--

Well.

She kisses him.

Just once.

The veritable speech he had been preparing dies in the back of his throat.

“I’m going to take that as a yes to dinner, then,” he says, and his smile this time is just as self-assured and just as egotistical and just as confident, but it’s also something else.

His answering smile, this time, is _happy_.

I'm playing fast and loose with the events of "Logan" so most of this is pretty inaccurate. Took the basic premise and turned it into a fix-it fic slash road trip romance because the ending of that godfuckingdamn movie made me want to cry and I couldn't leave the love of my life like that.

Also keep in mind that I have no fucking idea how cars work so anything in this oneshot is just guesswork.

Enjoy.

It becomes his next mission, after Laura. Saving kids like her. Bringing them up across the border. And of course it’s easier said than done, but Logan feels like he owes it to them. It’s partially his fault their lives have gone to hell, anyway.

That’s how he meets (Name). She’s a mutant, the first natural-born one he’d seen in years— not strong, though, not with all the shit Transigen has been fucking dumping into the food and the water supply— and her entire telekinesis thing had brought a horde of those asshole Reavers crawling out of whatever hellhole they’d been stowed away in to track her down.

He picks her up in a bar somewhere east of Phoenix, Arizona.

And--

The first thing he really registers about her is that she’s fucking pretty.

He notices her in fragments— she’s attractive in that sort of innocent way, with wide, wide eyes and dark lashes and a soft pink mouth and a bright smile, cutoff denim shorts exposing just a little more skin than actually necessary, enough that it makes him swallow around a sudden tightness in his throat.

He ignores it, focuses hard on doing what he came here to do, manages to get her out of there and into his truck without incident. Somehow she ropes him into small talk on the drive, though, and that— that’s where everything just ends up going to shit.

He tells her he’s like her— a mutant— explains where they’re going and why. Up through Michigan, to Canada, he tells her, because the Reavers will be expecting them to try to get through North Dakota again, and he’d rather be safe than dead. A solemn silence follows, which she breaks by making an odd sort of happy noise at whatever music is playing through his shitty speakers, and forcing him to crank up the radio for a song he’s never heard before. She tells him that she loves the song with a smile that’s pleasantly genuine. He says all he likes is alcohol and cigars and for some reason she finds that funny.

She asks him how old he is— “Old enough,” he says, avoiding the question— and then they lapse into a short silence.
“I’ll be nineteen soon,” she mentions as he’s crossing the state lines into New Mexico, an unimportant remark made in passing, and Logan feels his throat tighten inexplicably.

He glances over at her, mumbles some intelligible reply, rakes a too-hot gaze up her legs and over the front of her half-unbuttoned flannel shirt and registers that his palms are sweaty and his mouth is dry and that his stomach is sinking--

*She’s barely even legal*, he thinks, hopelessly resigned to how much he already knows he doesn’t fucking care.

---

They get to the safe house just fine, and Logan breathes a heavy sigh of relief when they pull into the winding dirt driveway at nearly two in the morning-- the hardest part of this is over. His connection will be over within the week to take her up to where the rest of the kids are, and that’ll be it.

Which is just fucking great, and leaves him with the responsibility of bringing her up to Canada himself.

It’s fine, he tells himself, as he pushes open the heavy oak door to the safehouse and realizes it’s only got two rooms.

*Fine.*

There are separate beds, at least.

It’s not fine.

He finds out almost immediately that she sleeps in nothing but a t-shirt and underwear. That first day is hell-- it’s like she’s actively *trying* to kill him; she runs around the house they’re forced to share in the tiniest goddamn shorts he’s ever seen and seems to own a fucking million of those tight, low-cut tank tops. And it’s not just that-- she’s a *good kid*, too, which just makes it worse.

She’s cheerful. She’s smart and a little sarcastic and ridiculously positive, but she’s also *focused*. Nothing he does goes over her head. At first Logan spends half his time being ridiculously fucking *careful* about what he says and how he says it just to make sure he doesn’t accidentally scare her away, because he knows he can be frightening. He’s *killed* people before.

Three days in he becomes convinced that the girl honestly doesn’t care. Nothing he does ever phases her.

It’s nice.

She’s clever, and brave, and unfailingly, *stupidly* kind.

It’s fucking *weird*.

On the last day, he wakes up to her fucking making him *breakfast* at seven in the morning like it’s a normal thing for her to do.

“It’s sort of a thank you, for, you know,” she mumbles through a mouthful of blueberry pancakes, “For saving my life.”
“Mm,” Logan responds, trying not to stare-- because her nightshirt is incredibly fucking see-through and he might be two-hundred-something years old but he’s still a man, and--

Fuck.

It’s fine.

(It’s not fine.)

“You could say thank you,” she whines through his silence, pretty obviously not meaning it.

“Thanks,” Logan replies, more gruffly than he intended. He pours cheap convenience-store syrup over the pancakes and focuses harder than necessary on cutting the stack into neat, even pieces. She bites her bottom lip. He does not look.

“So,” she says, looking up at him through her lashes thoughtfully. “I-- what are we going to do? I mean, we can’t-- how long are we staying here?”

He licks his lips. Swallows. Drops his fork down on his plate and clears his throat with a cough that’s a little too rattling to be healthy, and says,

“Not long.”

She doesn’t say anything.

It surprises him, how easily she accepts the answer. To be honest, it’s nice, because he really didn’t feel like arguing, but a part of him wonders about her family and her friends and if there will be anyone to miss her-- if Transigen fucking left anyone alive to miss her. The answer, if he had to guess, is no. She’s alone. She’s probably already been through her fair share of hell, but she still sings as she does the dishes, swaying gently to the tinny sound of some acoustic pop song as it filters in from the cheap radio he keeps on the kitchen window sill. He finds himself in awe of how incredibly fucking happy she still manages to be.

Logan leans back in his chair and he sips at his coffee and he watches her as she stares almost pensively out the bay window above the sink, her face illuminated in the warmth of the morning sunlight.

It’s nice, he thinks. It’s normal.

It doesn’t stay that way. Things like this usually don’t.

They clear out two days later. Logan leaves two hundred dollars crammed in the space between the front step and the doorframe for his contact who had set up the safehouse-- if he isn’t already dead-- and loads the remaining food and supplies into the back of his beat-down pickup truck.

“What the fuck,” she says, looking half-dead in the passenger seat-- and it’s not really a question, so Logan doesn’t bother to really answer.

“Seat belt.”

“What the fuck,” she repeats, louder, voice taking on a whiny sort of edge that should really piss him
off more than it does. He’s already got a soft spot for her, apparently. Jesus Christ.

Logan grits his teeth.

“What?” he responds, deadpan.

“Wh-- you dragged me out of bed at five in the fucking morning,” she says, kicking her feet up on the dashboard with a yawn.

Logan growls, and swats at her kneecaps with the folded-up, coffee-stained road map he’d swiped from one of those shady-looking rest stops by the highway. “Get ‘em off,” he snaps.

She flashes him a rude look, and in a move entirely indicative of how young she actually is, sticks her fucking tongue out at him, a flash of red against the white of her teeth.

And Logan--

Logan laughs. He laughs, the sound abrupt and kind of stilted, like he isn’t used to doing it, like there hasn’t been a reason for him to in what feels like years.

Which is probably true.

Fuck, he thinks.

The girl-- she’s still looking at him, flatly unimpressed. Waiting for an answer, or an explanation, or something.

“We had to leave early,” Logan says, risking a side-glance over at her as he maneuvers out of the dirt driveway. “Makes sure we won’t be followed.”

She stares at him for a moment longer, and then heaves a sigh, leaning back against the leather-upholstered seat.

“I forgot about that,” she eventually offers. It’s kind of an apology.

He responds with a noncommittal grunt, reaching over to turn the radio up.

Soon enough they find the main road, and start heading northwest on a mostly-empty highway. The sky is still dark. The only light comes from the streetlamps, glinting off of the tinted windows in eerie, fleeting patterns as he drives past them, one by one.

“You’re not forgiven, though,” she says eventually, lips twitching up into a semblance of a smile. “I don’t get up before ten.”

Logan rolls his eyes. He wants to say something dismissive. Something rude, something to shut down whatever semblance of a friendship they’ve established.

Before he can muster up the courage to say anything she’s rolling down the windows and sliding on a pair of fucking sunglasses even though it’s like, five-thirty in the fucking morning, and turning up the radio as far as it will go. In the distance, the sun finally slips past the horizon line, and the light takes on this warm, ethereal sort of tone, highlighting the planes of her face in a way that makes Logan think about-- things. Stupid things.

She’s pretty in a way that she shouldn’t be.

Whatever Logan was about to say dries up and disappears somewhere below his adam’s apple.
He looks at her.

His reflection stares back at him from the mirrored lenses of her knockoff Ray Bans.

“I can’t see shit,” she says, and, again, he finds himself laughing.

The first night, he manages to find a place for them to sleep: a motel about a half mile from the highway, nestled between a tiny gas station and a greasy, stereotypical “All-American” burger joint.

And it’s shitty.

Logan walks into their room and feels like he’s been blasted back to the fucking 1980s-- between the weirdly overused floral patterns fading on the bedspread and the honest-to-god shag carpet, it’s like he’s stumbled into a time capsule.

“Ew,” the girl says, inspecting an odd stain on the chintz armchair by the coffee table. “Ew.”

Logan scans the room. One bed. No couches, just chairs. The girl notices him silently studying the furniture and immediately sees the problem.

Her solution surprises him.

“We can share,” she says nonchalantly, “Just don’t snore.”

Logan opens his mouth, but doesn’t actually say anything. He closes it.

Right.

And that goes about as well as expected-- which is to say they go to bed a respectable distance away from each other, and Logan manages to fall asleep without thinking too much about the practically half-naked girl next to him.

Except-

He wakes up on his side, hip digging uncomfortably into the box spring set beneath the paper-thin mattress, and finds her tucked into the empty space left by his body.

Right, he thinks, again, not really awake, and to be honest, uncertain as to whether or not he’s even conscious.

She shifts. Yawns, breath ghosting hotly against his bare chest. Makes absolutely no effort to move away, not even a little, and Logan feels something that’s almost panic begin to simmer in his abdomen, dissolving any of his remaining sleepiness and leaving him awake and painfully aware.

So he does the logical thing, which is to try to disentangle himself as quietly as possible, before realizing he’s already pressed up against the wall and that there is absolutely nowhere to go.

Fuck, Logan thinks, with the appropriate amount of irritation.

At least he hasn’t popped a boner.
He shifts uncomfortably.

_Fuck, fuck, fuck._

Physical closeness-- he refuses to call it _intimacy_, because it isn’t-- has never bothered him before. His truck is small and road trips are long and at this point he should be used to the inevitability of being forced to share a bed with someone.

It would help, he thinks, if that someone were less attractive and less available and less _exactly his type_. Logan still isn’t sure if he even _has_ a type, but if he did, she’d be it.

(He’s _so_ screwed.)

She yawns, again, and then uses Logan’s body as leverage to push herself away from him towards the end of the bed. And Logan-- he stays perfectly fucking _still_ and forces himself to ignore the heat of her palms against his lower abdomen.

“Morning,” she mumbles, sitting up and kicking her legs over the side of the bed. She stretches, and her nightshirt rides up, up, _up_, exposes the curve of her spine as her back arches. The sun streams in from the nearby window and kind of fucking _surrounds_ her, makes her look like some sort of goddamn angel, or something else equally as stupid.

Logan answers her with a noncommittal grunt and buries his face back in one of the lumpy pillows, _legitimately praying_ for strength.

Getting up doesn’t help anything. They eat off-brand cereal for breakfast and he does his best to not talk. Later, she showers while he brushes his teeth, because they need to get on the road as soon as possible and sometimes that means awkward shit happens. He discovers there’s a sliding door to the bath, and it’s that bullshit _frosted glass_, not really see-through but not _solid_, either. It takes a ridiculous amount of effort to keep himself from watching-- he can’t really see anything, nothing defined, anyway, but there’s the outline of her body through the condensation collecting on the glass, and it’s enough to make focusing on anything else _difficult_.

Jesus Christ.

It occurs to him, after they’ve checked out and after he’s thrown their bags in the back seat of his pickup, that ignoring her should be a lot easier than it’s ending up to be.

It isn’t.

They stop at the tiny convenience store next to the motel before leaving, to stock up on food.

“And gas,” he adds, staring at the meter, hovering just above ‘empty’.

She goes in to pay and Logan fills up the tank, fingers drumming absentmindedly against the dusty side of the car. He glances into the shop through the dirty glass window and his eyes fix on her almost immediately. She’s smiling and handing a twenty to the cashier-- a young guy, about her age, who looks like he has no fucking idea how to react to so much genuine _happiness_ being directed at him.

His immediate response is a startlingly aggressive rush of irritation towards the cashier, followed immediately by irritation at _himself_.

He used to be _immune_ to this sort of shit, he thinks, shoving the gas nozzle back into its cradle.
By the end of their sixth day on the road, they’re somewhere in Illinois and Logan is suffering.

The AC is out and his engine is overheated and he’s overheated and about two minutes away from what feels like a goddamn heat stroke. He’s not sure if he can even have those, but he is sure that he’s about to find out.

They might have enough time to stop for repairs and still be ahead of the people following them. But Logan isn’t going to risk it. He doesn’t want to fight. He’s tired, and there’s always another way, even if that means running.

He tells her they’re going to start driving at night, and her response is understandably negative. It still doesn’t stop him from pulling the truck out of the little bed-and-breakfast they’d ended up in and getting back on the road as soon as the sun sets. She complains for a solid two hours before she starts to fall asleep, drifting in and out of consciousness in the passenger seat.

They’re driving through a long stretch of wilting, sun-dried fields when it happens.

“Wh-- fireworks?” She says, opening her eyes just as the first one explodes into a shimmer of red and white above the car.

Logan grunts in affirmative. “‘S the Fourth of July,” he says. “I think.”

She sits up straight in her seat, absentmindedly rubbing the spot on her neck where the seatbelt had bitten into her skin, and fixes him with an imploring look that he can barely see in his peripheral vision.

“No,” he says, already knowing what she’s going to ask.

“But I want to watch the fireworks. Just half an hour,” she answers, somewhat convincingly. “I’ll watch from the truck bed. You can be an asshole and just sit in the car.”

Logan manages to hold his own for about five entire minutes.

“Goddamnit,” he grumbles. She grins.

(In hindsight, giving in to her was a horrible, horrible idea.)

He takes his shitty, beat-up pickup truck and parks it down off the road in one of the fields, half-hidden from the road by a giant weathered sign that reads Land For Sale in peeling black paint, and she climbs into the back truck while he stares at the steering wheel and contemplates what he’s even fucking doing to himself at this point.

He gets out of the car.

She’s lying on her back in the bed of the truck, arms tucked behind her head. The suspension creaks perilously as Logan moves to sit beside her. The sky is clear and the stars are bright and the moon is glowing and full. A firework shoots up into the sky in a trail of golden smoke and explodes with a dull crack across the dark expanse of the horizon. Logan doesn’t care. He’s been alive long enough that any sense of wonder he had for them has just-- dissipated.
Above them, fireworks continue to go off, flickering through the sky in bursts of bright, effervescent color.

Logan looks at her as she watches them. He thinks about the happy smile she’d given him when he’d agreed to this bullshit. He thinks about the corresponding warmth that had blossomed slowly in his chest somewhere between his ribs, and wonders, not for the first time, when everything had gotten so fucked.

They’re in a shitty roadside bar in Michigan and she’s kicking his ass at pool when he realizes he has a fucking problem.

They’ve been camped out for the last hour and a half, commandeering the pool table in the back corner of the bar surrounded by half-drunk wannabe-rednecks in sleeveless flannels and fourty-year-old men with beer bellies who pretty obviously peaked in high school. Logan’s had enough scotch to actually start feeling it, which has been getting easier and easier to accomplish as his fucking healing factor shuts down, or whatever, but that’s not what really matters. The buzzing inside of his head isn’t entirely because of the alcohol, anyway.

The girl-- (Name)-- is bent over the pool table lining up a shot, and his eyes make a slow sweep up her body almost without thinking about it, lingering over her legs and her ass and the slow sinuous curve of her spine and--

“I am… the best, ” she announces, pausing to make sure she’s succeeded in sinking the eight ball before gloating, “That’s two to one, against somebody who’s spent, what, twenty years doing nothing but bar hopping--”

Logan swallows, mouth feeling particularly dry, and finishes off the rest of his scotch.

“Shut up ,” he says, not really meaning it.

Their arms brush. Distantly, he can hear the low-pitched rumble of his own laughter. She’s saying something about a rematch and he can’t fucking say no to her because they’ve got time to kill and this is infinitely better than being stuck in another shitty motel room.

She’s moving around the table, collecting the pool balls to rack for their next match when somebody approaches her from the bar.

In hindsight, Logan should have fucking expected this. It’s a dive bar and half the men here are scum and the other half are just plain stupid, and she’s young, and attractive, easily the prettiest girl in the damn place-- it shouldn’t be all that surprising that somebody else would notice that.

The guy-- he’s tall. Reedy. Messy, dull hair and a shitty beard that’s patchy and frankly pathetic, like he made it through half of puberty before his body just fucking-- gave up. He’s got sweat-stains on his faded Michigan University t-shirt and tobacco-stained teeth and Logan knows, logically, that she isn’t even remotely fucking interested, but--

That’s not what matters.

What matters is that this piece of shit had seen him, and her, and assumed that any sort of bullshit he planned on pulling would be perfectly okay, because there was no way that the two of them could
ever be together, no, the guy hadn’t even bothered to fully look at Logan before dismissing him entirely.

And--

That makes him angry, even though he knows he’s got no right to be.

He comes up behind her. Curls his arm around her waist. He feels her stiffen and then relax into his side in less than a second, and a part of him wants to believe that the reaction is instinctive, natural, like she hadn’t even made the conscious decision to do it.

Logan grits his teeth and glares veritable daggers at the dirtbag leaning over her, and his anger must be palpable because the guy’s cocky, predatory smile withers and dies and he’s holding up his hands and walking away before Logan even has a chance to say anything to him.

She doesn’t move away. Instead, she leans into him, and lets out a heavy sigh of relief. “Thanks,” she murmurs, reaching down to squeeze his hand. Logan stiffens-- even that little amount of contact is enough to make his pulse beat faster, stronger, louder.

“We should get out of here,” he says, voice low and slightly gravelly. The events that had just unfolded-- they don’t feel real. Like he’s outside himself watching everything unfold through a telescope a million miles away. What the fuck is he doing?

He swallows.

The look she gives him is soft, and Logan wonders if she realizes what’s happening, if she even gets it, gets the nights in the hotels and the hours together driving and the fireworks and the fucking bar fight he’d been willing to start for her, gets what it all means when the incidents are lined up like that, one after another--

“Yeah,” she answers. “We should go.”

They wind up in another hotel with two six-packs of Logan’s favorite beer, and everything feels-- off. Wrong. The silence is thick and there’s a thread of tension between them that hadn’t been there before.

Logan realizes he’s singlehandedly destroying the first good thing he’s had in forty years.

Fuck.

He has a plan. Get to Canada, get her somewhere safe, and then leave.

That doesn’t happen.
The truck finally gives out in a tiny town called Paradise, on the very edge of Lake Huron.

It would be funny, he thinks, almost like fate, if he even believed in that sort of thing.

“Engine’s all overheated,” the mechanic explains, poking at a half-melted length of rubber piping. “See this? Coolant’s supposed to go through here, but it’s all fucked.”

Logan grits his teeth and crosses his arms and digs his nails into his palms with an unnecessary amount of violence. “Can you fix it?”

The mechanic runs grease-stained fingers through his hair and nods. “Yeah, I mean, next week, not, you know, today.”

He babbles on about the shop missing the parts or some other bullshit, because apparently they don’t get much business in fucking-nowhere, Michigan-- big surprise-- and then he directs Logan and the girl to a small hotel by the shoreline that’s mostly empty, where they’ll apparently have to stay until the parts come in on Monday.

He checks in at the front desk and gets the keys from a sweet old lady who asks too many questions. Their room is small, and overly-decorated, with ocean-themed throw pillows scattered across a matching set of armchairs and a handful of seashell windchimes hanging out by the screened-in porch. It’s a nice place, better than where they’d been forced to stay before, but Logan doesn’t care. He just throws his bags onto a quilted starfish-patterned bedspread and collapses on top of it with a long, drawn-out sigh.

The girl is standing in the doorway, watching him.

“You okay?” she asks softly.

Logan grunts in affirmative and closes his eyes. He hears footsteps, steady and quiet against the plush carpet, and then a hand brushes across his forehead and it’s fucking ridiculous how quickly his pulse stutters and how sharp his sudden intake of breath sounds in his ears.

“No fever,” she says.

“’s just the adamantium,” he grunts, except it isn’t.

She looks at him, and it’s suddenly so easy-- too easy-- for him to be angry. Irritated that when he looks back at her he can’t get a read on her, or her mood, or her intentions, can’t quite tell what she’s thinking.

He sits up, suddenly feeling suffocated. He’s tired of this-- tired of fighting her and himself and tired of never being sure whether he’s winning or losing or just wasting time. Nothing makes sense anymore. It feels like he’s been knocked off-balance, like for some reason his center of gravity has shifted just enough to make his world spin around him and the only fucking thing he’s certain of anymore is his own denial. He’s never been good at confronting his emotions.

Logan stands up.

“I’m going out,” he says, tone clipped and short.

She doesn’t stop him.

Logan didn’t really expect her to.
She finds him a little over an hour later. It’s dusk—the sun has slipped down over the horizon, but there’s still just enough lingering light to give everything a soft, surreal sort of glow.

Logan’s clothes and shoes are stacked in a sandy heap up on the shoreline and he’s waded into the lake up to his waist, watching the fractured patterns of silver moonlight flicker over the surface, dizzyingly bright against the dark water.

“Hey.”

He says nothing. Her gaze moves slowly over the planes of his upper body—the scars and the burn marks and the bullet holes that never really healed right—and the expression on her face is something he only distantly recognizes. Their eyes meet, and she searches his face, studying him, and Logan can see the precise moment when she realizes, pieces together his evasion tactics and his silence and his jealousy and his perpetual anger—

Her expression softens.

She pulls her tank top up over her head in one slow, languid movement. Discards her shorts. Wades into the lake until she’s standing beside him, gentle waves lapping at her stomach. She skims her hands over the water, gently, lightly, never quite breaking the surface, and Logan watches with a sharp sort of intensity.

The tension feels different, tonight. It’s softer, but it’s also become that much harder to avoid.

“You don’t know what you’re doing,” he says in a gravelly whisper, before he can even think of stopping himself. His laugh is half bewildered and half angry, because he’s always, always angry. “You never fuckin’ know what you’re doing.”

She moves towards him. There’s the soft, lingering glide of her bare, wet skin against his as she traces the lines of the puckered, waxy scar he’d gotten on his left arm when he saved her life, and there’s the miniscule amount of space between them, hot and thick like the air inside of his shitty truck had been for the week since the AC blew out. None of this is new, not really, but it still feels different, this time.

“If I—” she pauses, swallows, and her pupils are dilated and nearly eclipsing her irises and Logan feels a sudden tightness in his gut, feels heat, feels anticipation and longing and a lot of fucking things, really, things he probably shouldn’t be feeling but feels anyway.

“If I asked you to kiss me, would you do it?”

He stares at her.

(He hadn’t been expecting that. He should’ve, though. She’s never been one for subtlety.)

The effect it has on him is instant. It’s like being doused in cold water. The fire pooling in his stomach fizzles and dies and is abruptly replaced by the thousands of reasons why he can’t and shouldn’t and won’t. It isn’t fair. He can’t just come waltzing into her fucking life and take a space that she should be saving for somebody else. For anyone else, really, for somebody who’s safer and kinder and better than him.
“(Name),” he warns, sharply. Abruptly.

End of conversation.

It isn’t really the end of it, though. She’s too fucking stubborn.

“Logan,” she retorts, moving closer. She reaches out to touch him again and he grabs her wrists before she can and fuck, he thinks, she’s looking at him like she already knows how he’ll react to everything that she’s saying and everything that she’s doing and he can’t help but wonder what the hell he’s managed to get himself into.

“Don’t be stupid,” he says, hoarsely.

She doesn’t say anything. He can hear the gentle sound of the waves lapping up against them, the strange silence of the surrounding shoreline, can feel his own heartbeat perilously, traitorously loud inside his ribcage.

She’s waiting for him, he realizes. He’s waiting for him.

“Fuck,” he says.

He lets go of her wrists, registers her hands against his bare chest, warm and soft, and then he’s reaching out, cupping her face, tipping her chin up.

She moves up to meet him.

He kisses her slowly. Gently. His hands are shaking and she has her arms wrapped loosely around his neck and her body is pressed against his like it belongs there.

It’s easy. It’s so fucking easy. Weeks of constant tension dissolve like mist in the sunlight.

She’s the one who ends it.

“I’m going back to the hotel room,” she whispers, breath warm where his neck meets his shoulder. “Come with me?”

He breathes out, exhale shallow and shaky, but his eyes are steady on hers. Focused.

By the time they get back to the hotel, it’s dark, but that doesn’t matter.

The door closes with a soft click of rubber insulation against wood, and Logan looks at her, really looks at her, eyes roaming over her legs and her hips and her chest and her mouth, all the places he hadn’t allowed himself to notice until now.

The distance between them closes much more easily, much more quickly, this time.

“Never thought we’d do this,” he murmurs, and then corrects himself, “Never thought you’d want me to.”

Her laugh is soft. Disbelieving. She meets his eyes and leans up towards him and whispers, “That’s because you’re stupid”, and the words dissolve into his mouth as she kisses him-- or maybe he kisses her, or maybe a little of both. It doesn’t matter, anyway, and Logan doesn’t care.

He frames her face with his hands and slants his mouth over hers and deepens the kiss, his tongue parting her lips and pushing in and scraping over her teeth, across the roof of her mouth-- she tastes exactly how he imagined, exactly how he’d dreamed she would, sweet like chapstick and
strawberries and so fucking perfect that for a moment he’s left wondering if this is even real. His hand is moving down from her face to the curve of her waist, fingers digging in, and he’s urging her closer until her body is pressed up so close to his that he can feel her heartbeat against his chest, the rapid rise-and-fall of her breathing as he keeps kissing her. Her hand wraps around the back of his neck and her teeth scrape over his bottom lip, half-smiling against his mouth when he makes a sound almost like a growl and kneads her hips, yanking her closer, moving one hand up under her half-damp tank top. Her skin is soft and warm under his calloused hands and fuck when he drags his thumb across her nipple through the sheer fabric of her bra she makes a noise like a sigh, or maybe a moan, shallow and soft, and rakes her nails down his arms--

It’s still not good enough.

He wants to touch her everywhere.

Logan yanks her tank top off, fabric clinging stubbornly to her still-wet skin, and then he fumbles with the clasp of her bra for a moment before discarding that, too. She’s beautiful, and he had known that, but it’s not the same-- not when it’s like this, when he can so easily reach out and touch, and maybe he stares for a second or more than a second--

“Jesus,” he whispers, a little more frantic than intended, and almost immediately his mouth descends over the soft column of her throat and then down to her collarbones, her breasts, kissing every inch of skin he can reach with a sort of reverence he hadn’t known he was capable of. She leans into the feeling of his mouth, gasps out his name in a breathless, needy way that hits him hard, makes his cock ache in the rough confines of his boxers as he sucks a bruise into her skin where her shoulder meets her neck-- half because he wants to and half because it’s proof that this is real.

In the back of his mind, he thinks of all the ways he could talk himself out of this, all the countless reasons why he shouldn’t let this get any worse or any more permanent, but he finds that he doesn’t care. She kisses him and he tugs her closer, a low groan vibrating somewhere in his throat at how effortlessly her body fits against his.

She’s the one who pulls him towards the bed.

“Come on, Logan,” she says, and it’s probably supposed to sound teasing, sarcastic, defiant, even, but mostly it just sounds breathless. There’s a bruise blossoming on her neck and her mouth is swollen and red, and Logan stops and stares and the only thing he can think is I did that, I did that to her, I kissed her--

“Fuck,” he bites out, the noise low and unsurprisingly aggressive.

He hears the rustle of the comforter against the mattress as she moves onto it, and he follows, wrenches his shirt up over his head and tosses it to the floor and then easily pushes her legs apart to take the space between them. Her nails dig into his shoulders, not enough to really hurt, and she drags him down into another kiss, the movement of her mouth against his mirroring the slow, languid roll of her hips--

“Get your clothes off, c’mon,” he mutters, half pleading, biting her bottom lip just hard enough to make her gasp against his mouth and relishing in how she reacts to him, honest and real in a way he hadn’t expected.

Her shorts are off before he even has time to think about what he’s doing, and then her underwear, too, joining his shirt in a messy, haphazard pile of clothing on the floor, and he’s looking at her and she’s staring right back and the sudden rush of vulnerability he feels is almost enough to make him wonder if this was a mistake. It’s fucking stupid, he thinks, because he’s still got half his goddamn
clothes on, why does he feel so exposed?

But--

Still.

His breathing is ragged. His pulse is thundering. The air is thick with something that feels like static electricity, sharp and heavy, like in the moments before a storm. His eyes rake up her body almost of their own volition, taking in the swell of her breasts and the curve of her stomach and then trailing down, down--

“Logan,” she mutters, squirming under the heat of his gaze, and any hint of defiance is gone at this point, replaced by pent-up, repressed longing, and it suddenly clicks that this entire fucking thing had never been one-sided. It had never just been him, she had watched and waited and wanted him too, and--

“(Name),” he rasps, not sure if he had even meant to say it out loud, and then he’s undoing his belt and fumbling with the button on his jeans, discarding his clothes in a bundle and closing the space between them with a newfound desperation.

She leans up and meets him halfway, and the kiss is frantic and messy and perfect. His weight pins her down to the bed and his desire is all-consuming, white-hot in the pit of his stomach as she rocks up against him, the friction making him groan. It’s the first time in a long time that he’s wanted something this badly, and the feeling of her bare skin is like a fucking drug. His hand slips down her stomach, moves in between her thighs, and she’s wet, fuck, his fingers are slick against her skin and when he touches her she choques out a soft, trembling moan, and he realizes distantly that he’s so fucking hard it hurts--

“Logan,” she whispers, a little desperately, rocking her hips up into his hand, looking for friction, and his breath just fucking falters, shit, the arm supporting his weight on the bed is trembling and he can’t think of anything he wants more in this moment than her.

“Jesus,” he groans, pressing a finger inside of her and curling it up, and her answering moan is needy and helpless and when he starts to fuck her with his fingers she fucking melts underneath him in the best way--

“Stop fucking-- teasing,” she says, trying to sound irritated but failing miserably as her voice wavers and dissolves into a moan.

Logan exhales shakily. He stops touching her.

They’re both aware of it, he knows, his cock pressed up against the inside of her thigh, hot and hard and insistent, and then she rocks her hips up against him and he groans, the sound frantic, desperate, dragging her into a kiss--

He thrusts into her in one fluid motion.

“Ah-- fuck,” he groans, against her open, waiting mouth, eyes closed and face tense and the muscles in his arms and upper back strung taut, tense with the effort of holding himself still.

There’s a moment of silence-- a moment of stillness-- that’s strangely intimate, warm and familiar and right, his breathing ragged and unsteady against her neck as he struggles to hold on to the quickly-fading remains of his self-control.

Logan moves slowly.
Her answering moan is soft and the warmth of their combined body heat is heady and suffocating--sweat beads on his forehead and her breath ghosts hot across his collarbones as he moves and as she rolls her hips up to meet him. His forehead is pressed against hers and their noses are bumping as he kisses her, open-mouthed and messy, catching her gasp and his answering groan as she tightens around him, hot and wet and perfect. The way she drags her palms down his chest and across the wide expanse of his shoulders is desperate, almost like she’s looking for something to hold on to as he thrusts in a little harder, watches, seemingly entranced, as his cock moves, in down to the base until their hips are pressed together and then back again.

“Logan,” she moans, biting into the tight, sinewy curve of his shoulder just enough to make him groan, and make his rhythm stutter, and make his hips snap forward hard, and whatever he was going to say in response is replaced with a desperate, needy growl at the way she moans with the rock of his body. A shiver trembles down her spine, liquid and involuntary, and he can feel the way her muscles tighten around his cock, can hear the creaking of the bedsprings and the sharp, ragged sounds of his own breathing and nothing else really seems to matter except what’s happening right then. He doesn’t care about the past, or the future, or anything except the way she melts when he kisses her and how she arches her hips to meet his and moans into his mouth at the feeling, simultaneously overwhelmed and wanting more--

He snaps his hips forwards and he watches her tremble, watches her mouth part for a gasp and how she never stops looking at him, not even for a second. Her eyes are bright, clear and warm, and Logan wonders if she’s always looked at him like that, if maybe he just never noticed.

“I-- fuck, fuck, I’m--” she gasps, tripping over the words, a little desperate and a lot frantic as she grinds up against him, one hand tangled in his hair and the other somewhere on the expanse of his shoulder, reaching for purchase, something to hold on to--

He’s acutely aware of her body pressed up against his own, slick with sweat and incredibly fucking warm, her face buried in his shoulder and her breath hot against his skin and her body soft and pliant and perfect underneath him. Everything about this is driving him fucking crazy and he’s wanted it for so long that it’s hard to focus, that everything else is a colorless, meaningless blur in the background and all he can see is her, back arching and muscles tensing and calling out his name as she comes.

And it’s fucking beautiful, and perfect, and exactly how he imagined while also being so much better. She trembles and tightens around him in the most delicious way and the moan she releases is wonderfully helpless and whatever remaining scraps of decorum he had left just fucking dissolve. His thrusts become erratic, his rhythm falters and he realizes, distantly, that he’s not going to last much longer as she rocks against him until he can barely think straight.

“(Name),” he mutters, and chokes out a curse, buries his face in her shoulder and relishes in it, in the closeness and the shared body heat and the feeling of being here, with her, like this, until his body falters and his weight comes down onto his forearms and his orgasm is wrenched through him like a fucking revelation.

And then it’s over.

He doesn’t move for a long moment. She doesn’t make him. Nothing seems to matter anymore except the warmth of where their bodies are still joined, the sound of their combined breathing, and the ache of the emotions they had unleashed on one another. It’s a brief moment of peace for him, and he thinks she must feel the same.

“You can get off of me now,” she complains, softly. Breathlessly. Logan huffs out a laugh, deep and warm, and moves away. He hesitates, only for a second, before pulling her to his bare chest with his hand curled over her hip.
The silence isn’t as suffocating as he’d expected. It’s almost-- comfortable.

“Dumbass,” she says. There’s an honest sort of affection in her voice, as she throws an arm over his chest and buries her face in the crook of his neck.

“Shut up,” he mumbles, sleepy and sated and not really meaning it at all.

He goes up to Canada. Brings her back to a house he hasn’t been to in years, nestled comfortably in the mountains under the shade of a forest of pine trees. The last time he was here, he was still mostly human; no adamantium. Just bone. The house is empty, but he still owns it, technically.

The first thing she asks him after getting unpacked is if he’s going to stay. He expected the question, but answering it is still hard, the word catching somewhere in his throat just below his voice box.

“Yeah,” he whispers. “Yeah, I think so.”
Sucker Punch (Steve Rogers x Reader)

Chapter Summary

I'M A DISASTER!!!! it's been almost a year i haven't forgotten about you guys anyways!!! welcome back to hell!!! steve rogers deserves happiness especially after i had to watch infinity war last year and ESPECIALLY with endgame coming up!!! also excuse the iffy characterization-- i was rewatching all the movies and the way he's characterized kinda changes movie to movie so i took like... avengers 1 and ca:TWS and sorta just molded them into a socially conscious, awkward but not THAT awkward steve. blame marvel for not having solid character voices :c

It’s probably worth prefacing this entire catastrophe by saying Steve Rogers is a fucking feminist.

A really, obnoxiously radical feminist. So that’s not what this whole disaster is about.

Like-- there’s the surface stuff, right, just the basic I'm-not-a-dick-to-women-because-I-have-morals stuff, but it’s more than that. He’s an advocate for equal pay and he speaks out against rape culture and toxic masculinity and knows the nuances of harmful gender stereotypes literally inside and out. He’s loud about it. He’s a poster boy for at least three different equality movements, he makes a regular habit of getting into extremely volatile arguments with Stark over his shitty objectification of every girl who can fog up a mirror, and he completely disregarded the vague threats to his public image or whatever to personally attend the Women’s March in January despite the supposed “bad press”.

He’s still fucking old, though. And, yeah, it was a little odd coming out of cold storage and realizing literally everything had changed, it took him a while to get used to fast food and shopping malls and color television and just New York in general, but--

It was remarkably easy to adjust to a generation that at least somewhat believed in gender equality.

So, knowing that--

He cannot fucking believe himself.

Basically what happens is he gets home to the small apartment he shares with (Name) and he sees her going out in a crop top and those stupid high-waisted shorts and a ridiculously fucking red lipstick and he just--

He says it before he even has a chance to think.

“ You’re going out dressed like that?”

She turns to him with a vaguely hurt expression masked by anger and slowly, slowly raises one eyebrow.

“What?”
And--

Yeah.

It’s not like he’s trying to control her or anything, and he’s a firm believer in people being able to wear whatever the hell they want, so it’s not that either. It’s a lot of things, but it sure the fuck isn’t sexism. It isn’t. If it was, that would be easier, he thinks, because there’s a fucking cure for that, right?

What it actually is--

It’s just that they’ve been living together for the last six months and while he was initially convinced he’d get used to her walking around in a towel after her showers and working out in their living room in a sports bra and ridiculously tiny shorts and sleeping in nothing but an oversized t-shirt, the truth is that it’s actually been a literal fucking century since he’d last slept with anyone and she’s beautiful and it messes him up. If that isn’t bad enough, there’s more, because it’s not just that he thinks she’s pretty, because that would be too easy. He has her coffee order memorized. He knows what fucking ice cream to buy her at the supermarket when she’s in a shitty mood, knows her favorite restaurant, knows exactly what she loves and hates about eighty to eighty-five percent of the TV shows available on netflix. Sometimes he’ll say something that she thinks is funny (which is often) and she’ll huff out a breathless half-second of laughter and smile at him and all he can think is that she’s like the fucking sun.

It’s a little more than just an attraction, is what he’s saying. He’s fucking jealous, is what he’s saying.

Which is his fault. Entirely. Steve knows this. She’s, what, twenty? And he’s obviously old enough and mature enough and good enough to know better.

He totally isn’t, though.

So (Name) goes around doing whatever the hell it is kids do these days and Steve sits at home in his room and tries desperately to convince himself that he’s not ridiculously, terribly attracted to her.

And it works, for a little while, but then it doesn’t.

(Before)

Steve’s back in his newly-repaired apartment after the fiasco that was the battle of New York for less than two weeks when a girl he’s never met before shows up at his doorstep with a neatly-packed suitcase and two overstuffed carry-on bags. When he opens the door he spends several long seconds kind of just staring at her and wondering whether or not he’s hallucinating. She pushes past him through the doorway without waiting for him to snap out of it.

She basically admits straight up that she’s there as a favor to Fury to keep an eye on him-- in exchange for paying the crazy fucking inflated rent on his apartment, he’s been assigned what basically amounts to a babysitter, she explains, looking at least slightly apologetic. She’s there to get
him back on his feet in a world that’s changed so much in the time he’d been gone, make sure he lives up to standard now that he’s operating once again under the keen and frankly invasive eye of the general public. It’s not like he can argue with any of it, or turn her away, because SHIELD’s paying his fucking rent, so he just resolves to roll with it to the best of his ability. It should be insulting— he’s a grown man, after all— but it really isn’t. It should be something that he examines in any amount of detail, but he doesn’t. For reasons.

The information takes a while to process. Expectedly. When everything starts making sense and stops feeling like some sort of bizarre fever dream, Steve realizes he doesn’t even know her name.

“Hi,” he says, a little blankly, as she tosses her bags onto what he figures isn’t technically the guest bedroom anymore. “I- uh. Should introduce myself. I’m Steve. Steve Rogers.”

She turns to him and fixes him with a strangely searching look. “I know who you are,” she says, cocking her head to the side like she’s in on some joke that he doesn’t understand.

(Shed managed to get the wireless working within ten minutes of being there. There’s probably a lot of things about her that he doesn’t understand.)

“I’m (Name),” she replies, after a minute, turning back to where she’d been unpacking her suitcase, arranging clothes and books and DVDs into neat piles on the quilted bedspread. “How much do you know about Star Wars?”

Steve blinks. Opens his mouth like he’s going to say something but doesn’t, mostly because he doesn’t know what to say. People-- they don’t talk to him like this, not anymore. Like he’s normal. It’s either hero worship or they’re walking on eggshells around him, except for Tony, in which case he’s basically just treated like a commodity or a particularly fascinating zoo animal which-- isn’t better.

“Absolutely nothing,” he answers, baffled.

The grin she shoots him this time is secretive and vaguely conspiratory.

“Awesome.”

Steve would be lying if he said it wasn’t easier with her around.

She fits into his life-- or, she fits into the modern-day caricature of the life he barely has-- so perfectly that it seems, for a moment, as though she’s meant to be there. The change is immediate-- is bafflingly, confoundingly easy-- and he finds that he likes it.

Think of me as, like, basically a guide dog, she had said over breakfast the next morning, words coming out slurred through a yawn. He hadn’t known what the fuck she was talking about, obviously, and when he’d said as much, her laughter had been immediate, sunshine-bright and infectious. He found himself laughing, too, even if he wasn’t quite sure what she found so funny.

So, yeah.
He likes this. Likes her.

And a part of him-- a small, logical, cold part of him-- recognizes this for what it is; a sudden, senseless, stupid attachment to the only person who’d treated him like a human being with normal human emotions since he’d been pulled out of the ice.

He decides, in the face of losing the only anchor to this new, strange world that he’s been able to find, that he’ll deal with that later.

So--

The first thing she does is make him a list.

Music, movies, food, history-- everything. The first week she’s with him is spent almost exclusively in front of the television to the point where he actually has to beg her to let him leave the house-- not because the movies are boring, he quickly explains, not wanting to hurt her feelings and having thoroughly enjoyed Jurassic Park, but because his muscles were literally going to atrophy if he didn’t get some form of exercise.

So they go to the grocery store.

Which--

Wasn’t exactly what he had in mind.

Whole Foods, as it turns out, is an adventure in of itself-- so is the task of avoiding any untoward attention because, as (Name) so gleefully informs him, he’s famous. And she-- isn’t.

“Lucky,” he says, grabbing a package of chocolate cookies off of the shelf and examining them-- the weirdest thing out of all of this was the abundance of so much plastic, he decides, setting the box carefully back where he’d found it.

“I wouldn’t necessarily call it luck,” she quips, tossing a bag of pretzels into her cart. “I keep a low profile for a reason.”

Steve tries to focus on something other than the fact that his head is spinning and fails miserably. There are three different brands of identical boxes of dried tropical fruit taking up a large portion of one of the shelves and that, in of itself is completely fucking mindblowing.

“You doing okay, Rogers?” She asks.

“What the hell does non-GMO mean?” he asks, gesturing helplessly.

Her nose twitches. Her mouth quirks.

She bursts out laughing, and all Steve can do is stand there, bemused, and wonder how one person can physically radiate so much genuine happiness.

“This,” she says, gesturing at him with whatever grocery item she happened to have in hand, “This is why we were doing the movies first. Trying to ease you into it, you know? Can’t have your heart giving out from shock.”

Steve grins, a little sheepish, and runs his fingers through his hair. “Yeah, well. I didn’t think it would be--” he starts, and then finds himself falling silent, not quite sure how to put words to the feeling lodged somewhere at the base of his throat, pressed against his voice box-- because it’s not
nostalgia, not quite. It’s certainly not a longing for the past, where people died a lot more often and war was everywhere, always, and most of the population couldn’t even fucking vote, because the present is better in so many ways, but--

But Bucky, he thinks, and Peggy, and the Howling Commandos, and the life that he’d had and fought for and loved, as imperfect as it was--

It’s gone. Everything’s gone.

He comes back to reality when the girl smacks him on the side of the head with a bag of-- some frozen vegetable. Peas?

“Earth to Cap,” she says, when he finds his way back to the present, “Are you still with me?” And when he looks down at her she’s got this crooked little smile tugging at the corners of her mouth and it hits him hard because that’s the same smile Bucky used to give him, months and years and decades ago. Cocky, sharp and quick, like he was just a few steps ahead of Steve, always. That same smile-- it suits her, he decides.

Maybe everything’s not gone, then, he thinks. Just-- different.

“Yeah,” he says, finding himself smiling back at her without making the conscious decision to do so. “I’m here.”

There’s a marked, tangible difference in his mood after that-- if he can notice it, with his documented inability to process his own emotions, he would bet good money that she notices it, too. He relaxes. Lets some invisible, unidentifiable guard down. He stops worrying about all of it-- about what he’s missed and what he has to learn and what other people might think of him now that everything’s so different-- and he just lets himself enjoy being alive.

They buy enormous slices of pizza from the food court and eat them in a booth side-by-side watching Brooklyn 99 on her Iphone, and she giggles when he smears tomato sauce across his mouth and he snorts as he watches Andy Samberg make a dick out of himself on full-color, crystal-clear modern television, and--

It’s nice.

It’s new.

He could get used to this.

When they get back to the apartment, they have enormous reusable grocery bags stuffed full of every type of food imaginable, plus two half-melted Slurpees-- basically ice and syrup, he learns-- that leak condensation onto the rug and the yellowed linoleum kitchen floor.

“Okay, so now we have to figure out where to put it all,” (Name) says, hopping up onto the countertop.

“That might be tough. Limited cabinet space.”

She raises an eyebrow. Her mouth is stained blue from the syrup and he’d be lying if he said he hadn’t noticed. “Yeah? You up for it, Cap?”

Steve chuckles. “Sure thing.”
Two weeks pass without incident. No calls from SHIELD, no ominous voicemails from Natasha, no barrage of unread 3 AM text messages from a drunk and bored Stark.

Predictably, that doesn’t last.

He’s at the gym at 5:30 in the morning when Fury finds him.

(Name) had teased him about it, the fact that he goes to bed at 10 and wakes up at 5—*that’s so fucking early,* she’d whined, sitting on the countertop clutching her third cup of coffee, still half-asleep even though it was nearly noon. Steve had raised an eyebrow and muttered something about *kids these days* and felt so illogically proud of himself at the way she giggled at him, swinging her legs back-and-forth from her spot on the counter.

It’s a habit he hadn’t been able to shake, though—something he likes even more, now, because it’s the closest he’ll get to ever really feeling alone in a city as big and as crowded as New York. It was like this before, always moving, the sprawling stretch of urban landscape buzzing with energy, even at night, and as the size of the city doubled, tripled, quadrupled, so did that frantic sense of *movement,* a need to keep pressing forward, always always always--

It gets so bad that Steve can barely breathe, sometimes. It reminds him of before the serum when his lungs wouldn’t work quite right and the air would feel like poison, grating against his windpipe. It’s not as bad in the early morning, in the moments where only a fraction of the population is awake, and sometimes he can close his eyes and imagine that he’s back home—really home.

“Brooklyn’s changed,” Steve says quietly, *wistfully,* aware that Fury is standing in the doorway— it has to be him, nobody else would be so quiet— and not bothering to turn to check. His senses are good enough that he doesn’t need to. In front of him, the tired, faded leather punching bag sways back and forth from where it’s chained up to the ceiling-- Steve lets his eyes focus on the letters sewn into the fabric, faded and bleached away as they are from years and years of use. *Fogwell’s gym*— he can’t remember if it had existed before he left New York the first time. Can’t remember a lot about what was there before, to be honest. It all blends together so seamlessly, the memories blurry through a fog of nostalgia.

He takes a swing at the punching bag, just one, putting barely any weight behind it and watching it lurch back as far as it can go, the rusty chains creaking precariously with the strain.

“Not much of a challenge, is it?” Fury says, injecting a level of nonchalance into his speech that makes Steve bristle at just how *fake* it sounds, the words coming out stilted and wary.

*Don’t talk to me like I’m fucking crazy,* he wants to say. “That’s not the point,” he says instead, picking at the gauze around his knuckles. He’s not sure why he bothered to even wrap his hands in the first place. It’s not like he’d end up getting hurt. “I just need something to do.”

Fury moves closer, into his peripheral— the man even stands like he’s in the military, Steve thinks wryly, with his hands clasped behind his back and his shoulders straight like he’s not afraid of anything. There’s a flip side to that-- he’s always on edge, always *tense,* it’s visible in the way he holds himself, in the way he moves, in the paranoia tick-tick-ticking at the muscles in his jaw.

Steve recognizes it. He feels it too, sometimes.

“You’re just going through the motions, then,” Fury says— and it’s not a question. Every word is measured, careful, like there’s some implicit meaning behind each and every one of them.
“Why does talking to you always feel like a test?” Steve replies instead of answering, mouth twitching into a frown.

Fury steps closer. Steve unwraps the gauze from his fingers, resolutely not looking at him.

“How are you and (Name) getting along?” he asks lightly, cocking an eyebrow.

The sudden change of subject would have baffled him, if it were anybody else. With Fury, though—there’s an undercurrent to what he’s saying, a reason for everything, and he gets the real message without him having to say it out loud.

This is the test.

“Fine,” Steve answers, moving around Fury and towards the bench in the corner, tucking the neatly-rolled gauze bandage back into the outer pocket of his gym bag. “But you could have asked her that.”

He’s annoyed, he realizes suddenly, and he knows why-- he’s forgotten, apparently, that she’s basically a glorified listening device disguised as a clever, funny, too-smart-too-nice-too-pretty twenty-something that pretends to be his friend. She’s in Fury’s pocket, and even though she’d been upfront with him about that since the very beginning, it hadn’t really registered.

(Except, he thinks, it had registered, and he’d refused to deal with it, and now life was coming back to fuck him up for being a fucking idiot.)

“But I’m asking you,” Fury says, expression insistently searching. Steve says nothing, nothing, nothing, lets the silence drag on until he finally caves and offers at least a little bit of an explanation.

“She likes you,” he admits, with a casual almost-shrug. “She’s not exactly inclined to be completely honest with me. Told me to, uh-- leave you the fuck alone, if i’m remembering correctly.”

Steve blinks. He opens his mouth to say something but can’t find the words, doesn’t even know what he would have said in the first place, because he had been expecting--

Well.

Not that.

He drops his gym bag back down onto the bench with a full-body sigh and something that could have been a huff of laughter. “Yeah, that sounds like her,” he says. “She’s-- she’s okay. I like her.”

Fury gives him that look-- an analyzing, almost dissecting stare, like he’s trying to see through him, into the very core of him, picking him apart like a lab specimen beneath the lens of a high-powered microscope.

“Things don’t change, Captain,” he says, finally, cryptic as fucking always. “People change. The game-- the bells and whistles, all that shit stays the same.”

Steve grinds his teeth, inhales sharply through his nose, and grits out, “What the fuck does that mean?”

Fury, for his part, doesn’t react other than to fix him with a benign, empty smile. “Brooklyn hasn’t changed a bit. You have, and that might not be a bad thing.”

Steve-- doesn’t fucking know what to say to that, at all, so he just says nothing. He hoists up his gym
bag again and leverages it over his shoulder and brushes past Fury, towards the door, his earlier frustration replaced with a hollow sort of confusion.

“I didn’t send her to spy on you,” Fury calls after him, even though he makes no attempt to stop him from leaving. “She thought you might need a friend. I trusted her on that. Don’t prove me wrong.” That-- as simple and small and insignificant as it is-- that’s enough to break through the carefully-constructed wall of indifference he’s built up, and he stops, brought to a standstill for all of a fraction of a second. His mouth quirks up at the corners, and maybe it’s not a smile, not completely, but it’s-- close.

She likes you.

(Steve refuses to examine why that even matters to him at all.)

When he gets back to the apartment, she’s awake, standing in a too-big t-shirt and gym shorts next to the coffee machine. The day’s newspaper is spread out on the faux-marble kitchen island-- there’s a grainy, black-and-white photo of the two of them from the day at the food court spread across page five, gossip-column style. She’s seen it, obviously, but when she turns to him, clutching a stupid little Captain America mug that she’d bought as a joke in both hands, there’s no perceptible difference in her body language.

“Morning,” she greets, voice raspy, heavy and thick with sleep.

“I saw Fury today,” Steve says, in lieu of a greeting.

Her reaction is both immediate and inconspicuous; the slightest shift in posture, a twitch of the mouth betraying her sudden alertness, fingers curling just a little tighter around the handle of her coffee mug.

People forget, he muses to himself, that before he was big and strong and respected, that his saving grace was that he was smarter than the general population. When he was just Steve Rogers, nothing else, he was clever. Still is, really, but most people-- people like Stark, people like Banner, like Fury, sometimes, too-- they don’t see that. They just see Captain America, somebody whose only defining skill is following orders.

People forget, more importantly, that Steve Rogers and Captain America are not the same person.

When the girl looks at him, really looks at him, Steve gets the feeling that maybe she might be able to tell the difference.

“To be honest,” she says carefully, “I’m surprised he’s left you alone this long.”

Steve moves around the kitchen island, closer to her. “You said you work for him.” He doesn’t explicitly ask the question, no, but it still lingers in the air, the implication heavy and thick like steam, like city smog.

She understands, of course, and her eyes flash just a little as she looks up at him, a flickering, brief rush of some unidentifiable emotion. “I’m not S.H.I.E.L.D.,” she says, pausing for a second like
she’s gathering her thoughts. “I’m-- well, I am, but not like you. I’m not a soldier, I don’t even have a permit to carry, I’m just--”

“Damage control,” he supplies, folding his arms.

“No,” she replies, a frown tugging at the corners of her mouth. “I’m--” She sighs, then, and sets the mug down on the counter with a soft click of ceramic against stone tile. The silence is soft, uncertain, before she speaks again. “I’m not a spy, is what I’m saying. I’m like-- I’m just here to make sure you’re okay.”

Steve shakes his head. “So Fury thinks I’m a basket case, then,” he says, anger bleeding into the words, making his tone curt and sharper than he’d intended.

“No,” she says, again, and he’s almost surprised by the amount of conviction in her voice, though he probably shouldn’t have been. “Fury wanted to put somebody across the hall and not tell you shit while they watched your every move. I just-- you’re a human being, like fucking anybody else, and you’ve just come to fucking eighty years in the future and you’re probably lost and probably confused and you-- and I thought--”

She looks at him, then, looks through him, and it feels like she sees past the bulky shell of what he’s become and into his core, where he’s still small and scrawny and not sure of anything.

“I thought you probably just needed a friend,” she says, voice suddenly too soft. It’s a perfect, uncanny echo of what Fury had told him earlier, and that’s enough to cement his belief. She gives a small, helpless shrug, and Steve-- Steve can feel the anxiety melt off of him, can feel it evaporate, and suddenly he’s wondering why he was so worried in the first place.

His gut is usually right about things-- especially right about people-- but he had to be sure.

“Fury said the same thing,” he admits, quietly, “About you; he said you wanted me to have a friend.”

She fixes him with a frustrated glare, which, he thinks, he probably deserves at least a little bit.

“And you didn’t believe him? I bought you fucking pizza, Rogers, honestly-- and it was with my own money, too, what else could I--”

“Would you have? Believed him, I mean?”

The silence is sudden, and when she opens her mouth to answer him there’s a hesitancy to it-- to her-- that he guesses isn’t normal for her. He isn’t sure, though. It’s not like he knows her, not that well, to be analyzing her actions the way he is.

(He wants to, though, wants to know her, wants to figure her out, but he won’t say that out loud. Ever.)

“No,” she says, after a while, “No, I probably wouldn’t have.”

Steve doesn’t say anything, just lets the words hang there in the odd, abrupt awkwardness that permeates the kitchen-- an awkwardness that they’d somehow missed, sidestepped completely, since the moment she’d set foot in the apartment. She turns away, towards her rapidly-cooling cup of coffee, and Steve swallows around a pang of something that might be fear somewhere in his throat, considering that maybe he and his petulant, ex-military paranoia had fucked something up, caused some invisible, irreparable damage to the tentative friendship he’d sort of come to rely on.

“So,” he says, softly, and his words are molasses-thick and sticking to his mouth like he’s nineteen
again, gangly and awkward, playing catch-up to Bucky and his incredible ability to charm everybody he meets. He isn’t good at this. “I’ve never been to the Empire State Building.”

And it’s--

It’s a stupid thing to say, and he knows it’s stupid, just like he knows it’s not an apology, not really, not officially, but--

It is, in a way, and the atmosphere immediately depolarizes, and when she turns to him she isn’t smiling, but her eyes are bright again.

“Well, I have,” she drawls, drumming her nails against the countertop. She takes a sip of her coffee, eyeing him over the rim of the cup-- and it’s a challenge, he realizes, the way that she’s looking at him.

He can do that, Steve thinks. He can handle a challenge.

“Do you want to show me, then, or should I go by myself?” he says, trying his very very best to keep a smile from stretching across his face, shy and self-deprecating and just the tiniest bit awkward. He isn’t good at this, by any means, but he’s trying, which should count for something.

“I guess,” she replies, like he’s just ruined her entire day, like even talking to him is a chore, but when she turns around from dumping the rest of her coffee into the sink, she’s smiling, too.

It was a lie.

He’s been to the Empire State Building before-- he fucking grew up in Brooklyn, of course he’s been.

He wonders if she could tell.

He wonders why he even lied in the first place.

He wonders a lot of things, actually, standing up there in the cold, dizzy with altitude sickness, staring out at the expanse of the city sprawled beneath them, expanding out for miles and miles in either direction, past where he could see, past where the skyline and the horizon dissolve together into an unidentifiable blur.

It’s windy, that day, and Steve runs a good few degrees warmer than the average human, and it’s this distant, slightly clinical perspective that he uses to rationalize the way that she leans into him, away from the edge of the viewing platform, shoulders tucked into themselves like she’s trying to make herself smaller.

“It’s beautiful,” she says wistfully.

Steve looks at her. She’s shivering slightly from the chill, washed-out in the bright white spring sunlight, the wind swirling her hair up and around her face like a halo.

“Yeah,” he says absently. “Yeah, it is.”
It’s kind of a downwards-spiral from there.

They go to the Met and to Ellis Island and to the Central Park Zoo, and he purposely avoids telling her that he’s already seen half of the sights in New York just because he really, genuinely enjoys doing things like this. He likes having a friend again. The media attention is suffocating, at first, but he quickly gets used to seeing their faces plastered across drugstore magazines and stops being phased by the rumors circulating about them, and eventually the drama dies down.

They’re not together. It’s not like that. It’s simultaneously much simpler and much more complicated. She always finds his jokes funny and he always finds her competitive streak endearing and they operate as if they’re two parts of a whole, different but still the same in all the ways that matter. It was what Fury wanted, he rationalizes— for them to be a team.

It doesn’t make things any easier.

(It actually kind of makes it worse.)

“I’m surprised you two have been getting along for this long.”

Fury finds him for the second time in the little coffee shop beneath their shared apartment, while (Name) is conveniently off doing something else; it had been an orchestrated, completely non-accidental series of events, and Steve knows this, but he’s decided to pretend it doesn’t bother him.

“You’re not exactly the friendly type, Rogers,” Fury remarks, voice taking on a prodding, vaguely cynical tone.

She’s in his pocket, he reminds himself, and she’s my friend because she needs to be.

Thinking of it like that, from a tactical, emotionless standpoint-- is almost enough to stop him from feeling sick at the reminder.

“Yeah,” Steve answers, stalling, sipping carefully at his too-hot cinnamon swirl latte.

He hadn’t been quite sure what to get the first time he’d came here, had found himself staring at the menu and feeling helplessly overwhelmed-- because, honestly, it’s just coffee, why did it have to be so complicated-- and it had been (Name) who had swooped in to his proverbial rescue. If Steve were being honest, he hadn’t really cared for it, not before, but there was something about the way she’d looked at him, her expression expectant and vaguely hopeful-- something that made him want to like it, want to like everything that she liked, for no reason other than the fact that she liked it.

Which-- yeah, okay, it’s stupid, but it’s harmless. He’s always been a people-pleaser, and he just wants a friend, and--

And he’s absolutely a bullshit fucking liar, and he knows that.

Fury raises an eyebrow at him over the tiny little french-style patio table they’re seated at. He has the newspaper in front of him, lifted up just enough to cover the bottom half of his face from view. It’s
like he’s waiting for Steve to say something, and for the life of him he can’t even begin to fathom what that might be.

The silence drags on, awkward and oppressive.

“Look.” Fury’s voice takes on an exasperated edge. “I’m trusting you. I’m giving you the benefit of the doubt, so I’m going to need you to cut me a little slack, here. Give me something to work with.”

Steve frowns. He sips at his coffee, staring at the syrup-stained patio table, measuring his next words carefully. “I’m fine,” he says, after a minute. “I just--”

“Just what?”

Whatever he’s thinking-- whatever he’s feeling, right then, is complicated, murky, something he can’t really even begin to articulate to himself; much less to Fury, who’s fixed him with that stare again. He considers, for a second, that he might want to measure his next words carefully, before realizing that it hardly matters, anyway; he has nothing to say.

“I don’t know,” he says, because it’s the truth, and then softly, helplessly, because he can’t for the life of him think of anything else to fill the silence and because Fury’s leveraging him with that one-eye-brow-raised look like he’s expecting something deeper, something more-- “I like her.”

Steve has said that already. Steve knows that he’s said that already. There is a reason he’d told Fury in the very beginning that out of all the shitty ideas he’d come up with to help him cope that therapy or anything involving him spilling his guts to anyone on any sort of regular or semi-regular basis wouldn’t work. Steve isn’t really all that in touch with his own emotions on a good day, never mind a day when he’s being stared down by, at best, a shaky acquaintance, who is currently trying to decide whether he belongs in a court-ordered group treatment program or in a literal, honest-to-god psychiatric hospital.

Fury isn’t really a shrink, not in that sense, but Steve assumes the feeling must be the same.

Oddly enough, for once since he’d arrived Fury isn’t looking at him like he’s waiting for him to elaborate. No, instead he adopts an expression that seems almost curious, as if Steve had just told him something incredibly interesting, maybe even important. Which-- it wasn’t. He hadn’t.

“What?” he blurts out, immediately wincing at the amount of vague, not-quite-undirected irritation lacing the word.

“Nothing.” Fury sets the newspaper down. His mouth, now visible, is quirked up at both corners; a shrewd, contemplative semblance of a smile. “I told you. I haven’t known you to make friends easily.”

Steve bites down on the inside of his cheek, and doesn’t answer. He wonders, not for the first time, if there's something to this that he's missing. Some-- ulterior motive. Some neatly-kept secret that both Fury and (Name) must be in on, something to explain the way Fury’s looking at him, like he knows something about him that Steve, for whatever reason, isn’t aware of.

Whatever it is-- he can't crack it.

Steve takes the final sip of his coffee, and crumples the empty cup in his hand.
“Look. I know you don’t have any clue what modern music is, but if I see another fucking vinyl record in this apartment, I’m going to lose my mind,” (Name) says, grinning a little wildly. “Everyone else might think you’re a hipster, Mr. Captain America, but I know the truth-- you’re fucking old.”

They’re sprawled across Steve’s neatly-made four-poster-- he couldn’t quite shake the military training, apparently--with both the windows flung open in the sticky June heat and the overhead ceiling fan squeaking as it turns round-and-round above them. The AC is broken. Unfamiliar music plays from a bulky, out-of-date CD player precariously balanced on his dresser.

“Please tell me you know this song,” she says, poking him in the side hard enough to make him jolt and squirm away from her, much to her pleasure. (It had taken her about three days since moving in to find out that he’s ticklish, and Steve’s regretted letting her get away with that particular piece of information ever since.)

Steve squints his eyes, watching the blades of the fan above them spin until he’s nearly dizzy from it. Distantly he registers the opening piano notes, and the sharp cutting through the fog of the room-- it’s familiar, yes, but not enough that he immediately recognizes it.

“Oh!” he says suddenly. “Piano Man. You’ve played me this before, right?”

“Yeah. Billy Joel,” she says. “The better side of ’70s music, if all Stark’s AC/DC shit isn't your style.”

Steve huffs out a laugh, staring up at the ceiling. "It's really not."

She sits up on her elbows and looks over at him, smiling like what he’s just said was actually funny, and Steve feels the muscles in his chest sort of tighten or something because the strap of her tank top is sliding down her arm and her skin is glossy in the humid, oppressive summer air and it’s making it hard for him to focus on much else. She makes some scathing remark that he doesn’t really pay attention to— something about how much of a hipster he’d become, with his newfound music knowledge and genuine interest in cashmere sweaters and Steve, not being able to deny any of it, grins sheepishly.

She collapses back onto the bed beside him as the chorus of the song swells through his bedroom, and she starts to sing the lyrics, loud and mostly off-key, voice catching and cracking as she laughs-- her tone is strange, difficult to interpret, but when she looks at him she’s grinning and her expression is playful.

Steve finds himself echoing her, at the parts he knows, not entirely willing to admit that he’s actually kind of proud of himself for being able to remember the words at all. He hadn't had a reason or even any real desire to sing, not since he came out of the ice, hadn't had any real desire to pursue anything other than the next mission, hadn't been encouraged by Fury or Stark or really anyone to be anything more than a walking, talking poster boy-- and to do something like this feels like an act of defiance. His voice, when he hears it, is soft, scratchy, not quite used to being used, but it still feels good-- like he's releasing some pressure inside of himself that had built up without his knowledge, and he feels a sort of weightlessness come with it. Not happiness, he doesn't think, not quite, but-- close. So, so close.

She keeps singing long past the point where he fades out, loud and happy and so at ease with herself and with everything that Steve thinks he’d be content just sitting there and watching her forever, half immobilized by laughter, eyes glinting in the lone beam of sunlight creeping through the blinds.
The song ends, eventually, because it has to, and when it does she pushes herself up off the bed and moves towards the CD player. She has her back turned towards him, thumbing through the stack of burned CDs-- none of which, she had gleefully informed him, had she acquired legally.

"All right," she announces, sliding one into the player and skipping into somewhere in the middle of the playlist. "Throwback."

The CD skips once, twice, slurring the first few notes of the song together into a sort of grating blur of noise before really starting to play. It's a piano melody, like the last song, but it's less intricate, more pop-music-y, if that's even, like, a measurable thing--

Steve blinks, lurching upwards into a sitting position. "I know this song."

She raises an eyebrow at him. "You do?"

"Elvis. Can't Help Falling in Love. " he shrugs, idly scratching at the back of his head. "I was on Youtube. Listening to some of the old music they used to play at those dances Buck used to drag me to." He smiles, mostly to himself, looking down at the floor. "It was in one of the playlists. It sort of-- it reminds me of before."

There's a short, intimate silence, interrupted only by the soft crooning of lyrics in the background. When Steve looks up, (Name) is studying him with a strange expression on her face-- not pity, no, but a sort of empathetic sadness that she usually tries to hide whenever the conversation takes a turn like this. The look lasts for a handful of seconds, before she flips her hair over her shoulder and puts one hand on her hip and says, mostly disbelieving, "He took you to-- what? Rogers, you know how to dance?"

That--

Isn't where he'd expected the conversation to go.

"Um-- I--" he starts, and then stops, shrugging as nonchalantly as he can manage despite what he can only assume is a furious blush spreading rapidly across his face. "I mean, I can, but I never really-- I'm not--"

"Not what?"

"Not-- yknow-- good at it."

She looks at him, expression flatly disbelieving.

"Listen," he says, grinning and good-natured, the words spilling out before he really has the time or even the inclination to examine the repercussions of what he's about to say. "I can show you, if you don't believe me."

"I most definitely do not believe you," she says, striding forward with a little crooked half-smile and an odd brightness in her eyes that he's never seen before and oh, he thinks, bordering on frantic as she closes the distance between them, he really, really, really hadn't given this any amount of forethought at all. She's suddenly standing very close to him-- closer than she's ever been on purpose, he thinks, closer than anybody's been in a while, months, at least--

He swallows around a sudden burst of nervous energy and reminds himself sternly that he's Captain fucking America, he's fought Nazis and HYDRA soldiers and been in countless situations that fit the description of literally life or death and that this, of all things, didn't even technically qualify as something he should be allowed to worry about. He can teach his friend how to dance. This is fine.
He's fine.

"Okay." Steve clears his throat. "Okay," he says again, trying to at least sound like he knows what he's doing. Because he does. Technically. "Give me your hand."

She does. It's softer, smaller in his own, and he wonders for a second if she feels this same sort of tenseness that's wracking his body right now, a buzzing energy thrumming through his veins and heightening his senses and skyrocketing his blood pressure, god--

"And, um," he continues, voice dropping into a much lower, much softer register. "Your other hand on my shoulder."

That brings her somehow even closer to him, and Steve wonders somewhere in the still-functional part of his brain if she can hear his heartbeat thump-thump-thumping against his ribs or the way his breathing has suddenly, inexplicably turned unsteady and shallow, like he's been sucker-punched and had the breath knocked right out of him. Somewhere in the back of his mind he realizes that the song must have started over, but then again, he can't be entirely sure-- he's not good at multitasking even when he isn't feeling a weird combination of off-balance and kind of feverish, and he's feeling very much both of those things right now.

He hadn't been kidding when he said he wasn't actually good at this, as he starts to lead, movements slow and slightly off-beat-- In fact, he thought he had made that pretty much perfectly clear, but she still snickers when he bumps his hip against the unreasonably sharp corner of his bedside table.

"Don't laugh at me," he says, relaxing, trying to force any amount of sternness into the words and coming up short. "I'm doing my best here."

That doesn't seem to help, really, just makes her dissolve into another fit of giggles, has her leaning into him as he leads them in tight, stilted steps around the cramped space between his bed and the wall.

"I've seen you fight, though," she says, still laughing as he tries and fails to have any amount of dexterity. "You're-- I wouldn't say graceful, because that's, like, definitely a stretch, but you're not this bad--"

"I'm sorry, d'you think ballroom dancing is the same as getting into a fist-fight? Because one of them is definitely easier than the other."

"Yeah, I can tell."

He grins, pinching her side gently, enough to make her giggle and jolt away from it. "Now you know why I couldn't get a date," he quips, feeling vaguely giddy at the sight of her answering smile.

Steve spins them around the bedroom, twirling her beneath his arm a little haphazardly; it doesn't matter at this point if he's any good at this, because they're having fun. In a spur of bravery dips her over his knee like Bucky had taught him to nearly a century ago-- and God, he'd be proud if he could see him now, he thinks, chuckling at the way she lets out a breathless squeak and clings to his upper bicep in an effort to maintain her balance.

"Rogers," she gasps, affronted. "I'm going to fall."

"No, you won't," he replies, with what must be a truly, pathetically dorky grin spreading across his face as he pulls her back upright, hand settled more comfortably against the curve of her waist. "I've got you."
She smiles again, and this smile isn't really like anything he's ever seen from her before. It's softer, gentler, intimate in a way that he figures wasn't entirely intentional. Something about it makes him feel almost the same way he used to when he was a teenager, trying to talk to girls, still gangly and awkward-- but she isn't like any of the girls he's ever known, Steve thinks. She's nothing like anyone. And he's certainly nothing like he was back then, and even the familiar pressure at the back of his throat that might have been some sort of emotion or might just be his rapidly-beating heart has changed from what it used to be, shifted into something less like teen insecurity, something sweeter and softer--

Somewhere in the background, Elvis is still crooning, the lyrics fading in and out of his realm of awareness. It feels like a fever dream, kind of. Not quite real.

He thinks, unbidden, of what Fury had said-- things don't change, Captain, people change-- and he thinks about how he's changed, and how he's changed for the better, and then, as he's looking at her, a lot of things suddenly start to make sense. He thinks about the day in the coffee shop. He thinks about how he'd told Fury, offhand, three tiny, insignificant words-- I like her-- and he thinks about how Fury had looked at him like he'd just confessed something important, meaningful in a way that he hadn't really been able to understand just yet.

I like her.

Oh, he thinks, the thought oddly devoid of any real emotion, followed by, I'm an idiot.

(Name) is still looking at him, watching him have this sort of-- epiphany-slash-crisis, her expression terrifyingly open, the remnants of her earlier laughter still tugging at the corners of her mouth and her cheeks flushed from the oppressive, sticky summer heat. She'd worn makeup earlier that day, and had made a half-hearted attempt to take it off; there's faint black-purple smudges of mascara beneath her eyes, and she looks the same as she always does. She looks beautiful. And the way that Steve must be looking at her-- the way that he's always looked at her-- isn't the way that friends look at each other, he realizes.

God, he wants to kiss her.

He's taken aback, actually, by the sheer intensity of how much he wants to kiss her, because he doesn't think he's ever felt like this before. Has he? He wouldn't know, anyways-- he's not good at this. Having emotions. Wanting things.

He doesn't kiss her. Not then, as they sway back and forth across the small scuffed area of hardwood floor in the tiny corner of his bedroom, because that would ruin something, Steve can tell, his intuition is screaming that it would drive some sort of irreparable wedge into their current relationship which is fine just the way it is, thank you.

But he still wonders, in spite of himself, as the song comes to an end, the final notes tapering off into silence-- he wonders what it would feel like to just lean in, lean down, drag his thumb across the line of her jaw and tilt her head up, he wonders how soft her lips would be and what she would taste like and--

Oh, God, Steve thinks, nerves alight with a tremulous combination of indecision and longing, I'm going to fucking kiss her, aren't I?

The song ends, the last note ringing out, and then the song skips back to the beginning again and the CD player makes the most annoying noise he's ever heard--
And then it doesn't really matter what he was going to do, anyway.

"Fuck," (Name) says. She moves towards the dresser, and Steve takes a deep, shaky breath while she's facing away from him. His mouth is curiously dry. His heart feels like it's fluttering. Skipping. Under any other circumstance, he would usually see that as a cause for concern.

She pulls the CD out of the player, wiping the glossy sides down with the edge of her tank top. "Fucking piece of shit."

Steve opens his mouth to say something, but comes up short. It's not like there isn't an abundance of things he could say, but he figures at this point it's wiser to just stay silent.

I'm an idiot, he thinks, again, this time with feeling.

"Okay," (Name) says, thumbing through the stack of CDs again. "90's music bops, no question. Sound good?"

Steve sits down at the edge of his bed, outwardly calm despite the frantic lurch of confusion-- of icy, crippling uncertainty-- tugging at his stomach.

"Yeah," he croaks, voice raspy and cracking enough that he has to clear his throat and start over. "Yeah. Sounds good."

Fuck.

---

(Now)

So--

It's worth prefacing this entire catastrophe by saying Steve Rogers is a fucking feminist.

It's also probably worth prefacing this entire catastrophe by establishing that, prior to only a few days ago, Steve had been blissfully unaware of the fact that he had-- what the fuck did people say now?-- caught feelings. Or whatever. So it's not like he was trying to be a dick, or trying to be controlling, or like, judgmental at all, but--

But nothing, he reminds himself sternly, because regardless of intent, it was still rude. And bad. And--

"Fuck," he says, out loud, finding himself completely unequipped to deal with the situation.

He needs to apologize. Probably. He should have as soon as she got home, if he's being honest with himself, but he didn't, he just kept sitting there at the edge of his bed, staring out the smudged glass of the window against the far wall until the sliver of sky visible through the buildings turned dark.

Steve's avoiding this. He's avoiding her. He's trying, a little desperately, to talk himself out of the suicide mission that his conscience seems to be hell-bent on, but he's--

Not succeeding.

Steve takes a deep breath. He kicks himself, again, for being such a fucking dumbass in the first
place, and then before he can lose the nerve he crosses the hallway to her room and knocks on the door.

A beat passes, and then two, and Steve shifts his weight from one foot to the other, runs his tongue over his teeth, cracks the knuckles on his left hand one-by-one in an attempt to relieve some of the tension in his body. He's nervous, restless, and it's almost a relief when she finally opens the door, her expression shifting from affronted to indignant to just.. confused, which he thinks is a fairly accurate summary of the situation at hand.

A muscle in her jaw twitches. "Rogers," she deadpans. "What?"

She's changed out of the crop top and into a large, formless, heather-gray t-shirt that comes down to just midway down her thigh, covers everything but the very edge of her shorts; she's taken her makeup off, too, but her mouth is still stained red from the lipstick. It had looked good on her. Everything looks good on her, and he's also pretty sure that nothing would look good on her, too--

He clears his throat.

"I, um," he starts, voice quiet. "I'm sorry, about-- today. What I said. I was being an asshole."

She doesn't say anything to that, but-- and maybe he's imagining it-- her expression seems to soften, just a little. Wordlessly, she turns on her heel and moves back into the darkness of her bedroom, leaving the door open behind her. Steve decides to interpret this as an invitation as opposed to any other alternative where she might actually just be retreating from his idiocy, and follows her.

He's been in the guest bedroom a handful of times, but not often enough that it's a familiar space to him. She's command-stripped a string of dollar store christmas lights onto the wall above her bed, the soft fairy-tale glow twinkling out across the ceiling. The cheap set of dresser drawers are locked halfway-open and bursting with clothes, the vanity is scattered with makeup samples, a fairly impressive array of skincare products and one unopened pack of phone chargers, tucked into the space between a half-used candle and an old jewelry box. It's messy, but not gross- messy, just kind of-- chaotic.

(Name) sits down at the edge of her bed. It's not made-- because apparently that's not something people do in this day and age anymore, Steve thinks, with the barest traces of a smile-- but the sheets and blankets are sort of all pushed-up at the foot of the bed, out of the way. She folds her legs up underneath herself and fixes him with a flat, unreadable stare.

"Were you on a date?" he blurts out, and then winces, following it immediately with, "Sorry. You don't-- you don't have to tell me that, I didn't mean-- it's none of my business."

She, to her credit, doesn't flip out. She just sort of sits there, blinks, looks at him for a long moment before replying, "Is that what this is about?"

"I'm sorry," he says, again, because if he doesn't finish saying what he needs to say now, he'll never say it, and he knows this, he'll lose the courage and it'll just stay buried underneath his skin like a perpetually-growing bruise, and he'd keep doing stupid, obnoxious shit in the name of his underdeveloped feelings, and she-- doesn't deserve that.

"I didn't-- I just needed to apologize," he says, staring kind of too-hard at the smudge of pink nail-polish on the edge of the dresser-top, the sheen bright and faintly glittery against the faded, dull pinewood. "I wasn't trying to be-- to be mean, or controlling, or anything like that, I just--"

His mouth is moving faster than his brain is.
This is going to go downhill very quickly, he realizes.

"I just really like you," he confesses, "I really like you a lot. And I didn't even realize until a few days ago but, you know, today, I was jealous, I think, which-- It's not an excuse, and I know that, and I'm still sorry, but I thought I should tell you, at least--"

"Rogers--"

"Either way, though, what I said was completely out of line, it doesn't matter how I feel about-- about you, or about anything, really, because that was still really shitty of me, and I know that--"

"Rogers--"

"And if you wanted to tell Fury that this isn't working out I'm not gonna be mad, of course not, I mean-- you're allowed, you don't have to-- to deal with me being, you know, attracted to you at all, because that's not your job, and I get it, and--"

"Could you shut the fuck up for a second--"

"I just don't want you to think that I'm trying to force you into a situation that's going to be uncomfortable for you, you know? I didn't-- you're not-- my feelings aren't your responsibility and I didn't want you to think that I was just gonna-- I don't know, take it out on you or whatever for turning me down-- If i was to ask, though, which I'm not." He flushes, words coming to a stuttering, stumbling halt. "I'm not asking you out. That's not-- that's not what this is."

The silence that follows lasts for a very long time. Too long. If this were still the 1940s, or if she was anybody else, when she takes a step forward he might have actually been a little bit afraid that she might slap him.

(He's not.)

(He is, a little bit, in the part of his brain that still tries to reconcile the Peggy he remembers with the person who'd shot a fully loaded gun at his head. He's terrifyingly bad with women, apparently.)

She doesn't do anything, though. She just sort of looks at him, and shakes her head, and then says, "Steve, I like you a lot, all right, but-- you don't have to be such a good person literally all the fucking time."

And--

He's about three seconds away from formulating a response to that, which would probably be something along the hopelessly confused lines of what does that even mean, because being a good person is usually a good thing, when he realizes that she used his name. His actual name. It's the first time she's ever called him Steve, instead of Rogers, or Captain, if she really wants to get under his skin.

Steve figures it's that combination that distracts him enough to not really notice what's happening, not until--

Well.

Their eyes catch, for a split second-- she's much closer to him than he'd thought she was-- and when she moves, she moves slowly, reaches for his wrist and tugs him towards her, the flat of her palm traveling up his forearm. She's never touched him like this before, not with this kind of intent; there had been fleeting moments before this where their hands had brushed or she'd leaned into him for a
fluttering half-second, but nothing this deliberate.

*What the fuck is going on?* He thinks, followed by: *Am I dreaming?*

I"You're allowed to want things," she says, and he wonders half-heartedly if she really expects him to remember or even understand half of the bullshit philosophical stuff she's currently waxing to him, because he really, really can't, not when she's so close, not when his stomach feels like it's tying itself into literal, physical knots. "You know that, right?"

"Like what?" he says, not quite understanding what she's trying to say. That's nothing new, though. "Anything."

Steve swallows, hoping that he's interpreting this correctly.

"Okay,' he says, trying to ignore how desperately hoarse his voice sounds. "I want--"

He wants a lot of things, he realizes; he wants a lot of things, to a lot of different degrees, but what he wants right this immediate moment is mostly just--

"I want you to kiss me," he whispers, feeling way, way, way less stupid than he probably should. "Am I allowed to want that?"

It's not really a confession to her, because he gets the feeling that she already knew, but it's still better, he thinks, to have finally said it out loud.

"Yes, Steve, you're allowed to want that," she says, vaguely exasperated, the corners of her mouth twitching into an almost-smile, and then--

And then she kisses him, and his brain shuts off. Short-circuits. Grinds to a screeching, shuddering halt, the world narrowing down with a pinpoint precision until the only thing that he's really aware of is her, everything else in the background fading out into a monotonous blur.

He pulls back. He makes a sound-- a soft, shaky exhale of a breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding.

"You like me?" he says, bewildered.

She blinks. Opens her mouth, but says nothing for a long moment. "Are you dumb?"

"Apparently," he replies, and then he kisses her again. Just to be sure, he tells himself, just to be certain-- and she huffs out what might have been a laugh against his cheek and pulls him closer by the collar of his shirt, presses her lips a little more firmly to his. And this-- this is fine, he tells himself, he can get used to this, the way he can't quite hide a full-body shiver at the feeling of her nails dragging lightly against his scalp, the soft sound he murmurs into her mouth when she twists her fingers into his hair--

The thing is, he can't really remember the last time he's been this close to somebody-- let alone a girl- but it's not like anything's changed, it's not like he doesn't still know how everything works, it's not like he's forgotten how to do this. He has one arm around her waist, pulling her as close as she'll let him, has one hand cupping the curve of her jaw, the pad of his thumb sweeping across the curve of her cheekbone, and when he bites down on her bottom lip she makes this sound that he wouldn't mind hearing over and over and over again, forever.

He still knows what he's doing, is the point-- he still knows how to kiss a girl like it's the last thing
he'll ever get the chance to do. Steve kisses her and she seems to melt from it, her body curving and melding against the hard lines of his own like she was fucking made to be there.

"Okay," she says, breathless. "Is this all you want, then? It's not the 40s, the whole abstinence-until-marriage deal isn't really a thing anymore--"

The answering chuckle that rumbles out from the base of his throat is warm and self-assured in a way that he'd almost forgotten he was capable of. He has his mouth on her neck now, right above her collarbone, and the scrape of his teeth against the skin there makes her pulse skip and speed up enough that he can feel it, her heartbeat pounding in her throat like a bass drum as whatever she'd been saying dissolves into a hitched intake of breath.

"Wasn't really a thing back then, either, sweetheart," he replies, "Dunno how much you know about it, but-- the Army wasn't exactly known to be the height of wholesome catholic upbringing--"

"Do not give me a history lesson," she retorts, and then she's got her hand up underneath his shirt, cool and soft against his stomach, thumbing over his belt buckle and whatever snarky bullshit he'd been saying dies in the back of his throat. Fuck, he's hard. He hadn't been paying attention to it, had been too focused on her and on processing the fact that his thirst-crush-thing (or whatever it's called now) also apparently liked him in any capacity, but--

Jesus Christ.

Steve kisses her again, harder this time, with more intent, urges her backwards until the edge of the bed hits the backs of her knees and instead of, like, taking any amount of time to discuss how, exactly, the semantics of this interaction were going to occur, he just-- lifts her up off the ground. She makes a sound halfway between a gasp and a shriek, arms locking around his neck and her legs around his waist and her expression, when he bothers to stop kissing her long enough to look, is torn halfway between indignation and something that he immediately recognizes as arousal, only because he knows it's echoed in his own expression, too.

"I'm going to fall," she says, a breathless, halfhearted reiteration of what she'd said the night they'd danced together.

"No, you won't," Steve replies, the words coming out low and syrupy-sweet. "I've got you, sweetheart. I could keep you like this the whole night, if that's what you want-- it's not hard."

He watches her swallow around her next words with a cheeky sort of satisfaction.

"Awful big talk there, Cap," she says, but there's no weight behind it, not as she maneuvers herself around in his arms to slip her shirt off over her head and brings him into another kiss, this one faster, rougher, needier, the warmth of her bare skin bleeding in through the thin cotton fabric of his t-shirt.

He sets her down on the bed, moves away just long enough to yank his own shirt up and off, discarding it somewhere on the floor along with the mess of sheets and blankets he'd knocked to the ground. The way she's looking at him, kneeling above her, fumbling with the belt on his shorts-- it's nothing like any girl's ever looked at him before. She sees through him-- sees past him-- wants more, he reasons, than just his body or the ability to say that she'd slept with Captain America.

That's good.

He trusts that. Trusts her, more importantly.

Her shorts come off, tossed somewhere to the left of him, and Steve takes a minute to just-- look at her, pupils blown out all wide and dark, the dim, pale glow from the string of christmas lights above
her bed illuminating the gentle curves of her body, making her look softer. Gentler. Like she belongs on some sort of pinup magazine, like when he was in the Army.

"You're beautiful," he whispers, making sure to kiss her before she has a chance to tell him to shut up. He takes the open space between her legs, resting his weight on his forearms on either side of her head; his dick is pressed right up against the inside of her thigh and she lets out this little trembling sigh at the pressure, angling her hips up more, trying to center the friction--

"Steve," she whispers, shaky and breathless, nails digging into his biceps almost enough to hurt, ten tiny pinpricks of bittersweet pressure. His breathing is ragged. The muscles in his arms and his back are tight, taut, with anticipation, and when he actually finally moves it makes her gasp and shiver as his cock slides inside--

"Fuck," he grits out, pressing an open-mouthed kiss to the base of her throat, and when he moves she moves with him, arches up into his body, rocks against the gentle rhythm of his thrusts. He drops his head onto her shoulder and she presses her nose into the crook of his neck, says something against his sweat-slick skin that might have been his name, might have just been her panting oh my god as she drags her nails down the tense, rippling muscles of his back--

She tightens around him, and Steve groans, the sound ragged and ripped from somewhere in the back of his throat. He holds his weight on one forearm, trails one hand down to where their bodies are joined, runs the pad of his thumb over her clit and is rewarded with an almost immediately with her mouth parting around a breathless, needy moan.

"Yeah?" he whispers, mostly breathless, partially in awe, "You close?"

She nods, wordless, dragging him into a kiss-- this one is different than the others, more desperate, with teeth and tongue and an acute, frantic sense of longing, and he kisses her back with that same passion, any sound he makes dissolving into her open, waiting mouth--

"Steve," she gasps, head falling back onto the pillows and her mouth falling open, just a little, just enough to let out a breathy, wordless moan--

And then she comes, and Steve makes sure that he gets to see her, then and she's beautiful just like he knew she would be, and she's tight and hot and wet around his cock and his own orgasm is wrenched from him so powerfully that his head swims and all of his coherent thoughts go fuzzy and white like radio static--

"Steve," she says again, softer-- when his brain refocuses, her arms are still around him. She doesn't seem to have any intention of letting go, either.

And he's--

He's fine with that, to be honest.

Fury finds him the next week, alone.

"She trusts you to go grocery shopping on your own now, does she?"
Steve looks up from where he's inspecting the labels of two identical-looking brands of gelato. To be completely fair, he'd gotten at least a third of the way down the list before getting fucking lost, which is better than last time, so he figures that counts for something.

"How are you?" Fury says, walking closer.

Steve shrugs. He drops one of the cartons of gelato into the cart-- 50/50 chance it's the right one, he tells himself. "I'm--" he starts, and then pauses. Considers it, for a second, before replying-- the words are odd to say out loud. Even now.

"I'm happy."

Maybe he's imagining it, but out of the corner of his eye it almost looks like Fury is smiling, up until he drops a thick manilla folder directly on top of his shopping list. Steve stares at it, watching what little happiness he'd been able to covet dissolve-- disintegrate-- at the sight of the thick black print across the top.

SHIELD AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

"I have a mission for you."
Knee Socks (Victor Creed)

Chapter Summary

Inspired by the Arctic Monkeys song of the same name. Mutant!Reader is deeply attracted to Victor while Victor is staying at the X-mansion, even though she shouldn't be. Shenanigans ensue.

Logan Howlett’s truck is a piece of shit. It’s rusted to the point where any sort of crash would crumple the frame like tin foil, the paint is chipped and the muffler is broken and the speakers only play music out of one side. After spending forty-seven almost completely consecutive hours curled up in the shabby passenger’s seat, you’re pretty certain you could identify that fucking monster from hell by sound alone.

Needless to say, you haven’t slept since Logan picked you up in a gas station in Louisiana, and as the truck bounces and jolts down the gravel road towards Xavier’s School, the only thing you’re thinking about is actually being able to have a real bed again.

The silence between you as the car hurtles far too quickly down the winding driveway is thick and borderline uncomfortable, but you don’t bother trying to breach it. Logan will speak if he thinks he needs to, but besides that he doesn’t expect much. The engine groans beneath the combined weight of the car and its two passengers as the truck slows to a stop in front of the mansion, and Logan grunts, shoving the door open.

“Got your stuff?” He asks gruffly, breaking the silence into two clean halves.

“Yeah,” you nod, hefting a worn-out gray duffel over one shoulder. The two of you walk together towards the looming double doors of the mansion, quite possibly the strangest picture—two disheveled, dirty, visibly below-middle-class strangers underneath the polished arches of the front porch. It makes you that much more aware of how bizarrely out of place you are, with your t-shirt and jeans and worn-out converse, and it’s a thought that you make sure to squash immediately.

This is— for better or for worse— your home now.

Logan doesn’t pause to ring the doorbell or knock when you reach the stoop; he just pushes the door open with a level of familiarity that makes the situation that much more strange. There’s a rush of cool air when the door opens, and then you’re staring out at the immaculately-kept common room. The floors are dark hardwood, waxed and shiny enough to reflect your face back at you in the places they aren’t covered by intricate tasseled rugs, the rows of enormous, neatly-lined windows are shrouded in thick curtains, parted slightly to allow sunlight to stream into the room, giving everything a sort of brightness. There’s collection of armchairs arranged neatly around a fireplace in one corner, an array of overstuffed bookcases against the far wall and a balcony overhead, looking over it all. You can see how it leads down a hallway lined with doors that you assume are dorms, shrouded in warm lamplight to accommodate for the lack of windows towards the core of the sprawling house.

“You’ll be safe here,” Logan is saying, although you’re not entirely focused on him, still mostly absorbed in taking in his surroundings. He strides through the common room without paying much mind to any of it—he’s been here before, then, you decide for certain, as he takes the stairs up to the second floor two at a time.
“Thank you,” you say, the words floating in the air after him; Logan doesn’t turn around to acknowledge it, and you mostly expected that. Before you can decide whether or not to follow him, he’s already disappeared from view into the maze of plush-carpeted hallways.

Suddenly, you feel very much alone.

You stand there, awkwardly, running your nails running up and down the waxy layer of laminate on the wooden banister just to give your body something to do, an immediate outlet for the inhumanly high levels of nervous energy thrumming through your bloodstream like an electrical current.

You can’t pinpoint the exact moment that you realize you’re no longer alone. The feeling—the sensation of being watched or examined or otherwise—comes on gradually, slinks into your peripheral like a slow spreading fire, something that is frustratingly intangible, impossible to articulate—

Somewhere from behind and below the staircase, a door creaks on its hinges, and you make eye contact with someone who decidedly is not Logan. You can’t see much, the space shrouded in shadow cast by the staircase looming over it, but there is a face and an outline of a body that fills the doorway and a pair of piercing, unnervingly bright eyes whose color you could not name if your life depended on it. The kind of eyes that somehow manage to be both hard to look at and hard to look away from at the same time, inhumanly mesmerizing, gleaming and almost reflective in the dark.

“Victor.”

That’s Logan’s voice, you realize, drifting from somewhere above you on the balcony, though you still can’t quite tear yourself away, can’t seem to find the willpower to locate his voice, still staring at the eyes in the darkness with a morbid sort of curiosity.

The man moves into the light, then—his face is suddenly cast in the warm, bronze-tinted glow of the candles mounted into the engraved metal sconces lining the walls, and suddenly you are very glad for your perpetual silence due to the fact that you suddenly find yourself choking on air.

The man, Victor, is definitely related to Logan in some capacity— you can tell that much by the way that he holds himself, can see the similarities in their faces, in the matching slant of their noses and the mirrored patterns of their almost-identical beards, but—

But he’s different, in ways that matter. He’s taller. Bigger. He fills the breadth of the doorway, shoulders bulky and broad, makes Logan, with all of his muscle, look visibly wiry by comparison. Victor moves with a level of dexterity—of precision—that’s strikingly feline; where Logan is brash with his violence, keeps his anger readable in the tightness of his posture and the tick-tick-tick of the muscle in his jaw, Victor is calm. It’s not comforting in the slightest, rather, it feels much like being up close with a lion, or a tiger, some big cat streamlined for the sole purpose of capturing prey.

Logan says something that you aren’t paying attention to, and Victor smiles—a slow, slick imitation of a smile, exposing canines far far far too sharp to be really, completely human—and something twists low in your stomach, something that must be fear.

Something that should be fear.

(Something that isn’t, even remotely, fear.)

So Logan introduces you, gruffly and reluctantly—this is my half-brother, Victor—and the two of you exchange a perfunctory set of greetings and when he steps closer to you, two things happen at once: Logan’s entire body tenses, and something erupts in your chest, warm and slow-spreading like
molasses as he leans surreptitiously against the edge of the staircase. You feel suddenly alight with nervous energy, so much so that Logan can probably tell.

“We’re leaving,” Logan says, words choppy and curt, “We have things to do.”

Victor says nothing at that, just grins, and you get the feeling he was trying to piss Logan off on purpose.

This time, when Logan starts up the staircase, he brings you with him-- you only look back once, towards the top, peering over the banister to see that Victor was already gone, disappearing silently back into the inner workings of the mansion.

“Steer clear of him,” Logan grunts, offhand, when he deems the two of you to be out of earshot. He has one hand on your back, like he’s-- protecting you from something.

“Okay,” you say, amicable and quiet. “I will.”

There’s no reason for you to lie, and no reason for Logan to believe that you’re lying-- but you are.

You really, really are.

The dorms are-- nice. Your room-- and that’s still an odd sentence, still a strange concept to wrap your tired head around, the fact that you get your own room, a space that belongs to you-- is spacious. It’s warm, nestled neatly between the identical dorms flanking it on each side. The carpet is soft, if somewhat outdated, and so is most of the furniture; a fraying chintz armchair sits nestled up beneath the lone window in the room, a scarred and paint-stained mahogany desk beside it, a mismatched chest of drawers leaned against the far wall opposite a plain box-spring mattress.

Everything has a sort of warmth to it, almost a hand-me-down feeling, as if you’re not the first person to belong here, and certainly not the last.

That’s comforting, at least-- to know that you’re not alone anymore. No longer an outcast, not when you’re surrounded with other outcasts, anyways. A reminder of that is pasted above your door in gold foil, the heavy block letters peeling away from the wall at the edges-- Xavier’s School For Gifted Youngsters.

You would meet Professor Xavier tomorrow, Logan had told you, but until then you need to settle in, change out of your two-day-old-clothes, put something in your body that isn’t stale granola bars or gas-station-brand trail mix or fucking unholy amounts of Coca-Cola products.

You need to sleep, mostly.

The fading rays of sunlight slinking in through the streaked, dusty windowpane are amber and thick as the sun disappears below the horizon line. You aren’t tired, even though by all means you should be; regardless you force yourself to strip down to your underwear, discarding a pair of jeans liberally caked in mud and a dirty flannel shirt. You shower quickly, forcing your lead-heavy limbs through the movements with a mechanical, detached efficiency. Ten minutes later and you’re dressed in the clothes found inside the dresser drawers-- a pair of sweats and a t-shirt that’s several sizes too big-- and tucked under a neatly-folded grey coverlet.

You stare, unseeing, at the ceiling, before deciding that it’s altogether far too hot for a blanket, and kicking the coverlet down to a messy pile at the foot of the bed. It’s silent except for the occasional muted sound of something far-off in the house; an echo of what might be an office chair scraping against the hardwood, or a voice muttering indistinctly somewhere above you. Your heartbeat is steady and your breathing is even and you’re tired, fuck, you’re exhausted, but--
But the mattress below you isn’t yours-- it’s too soft, the pillow is too lumpy, everything from the duvet cover to the pillowcase to the sheets below it are inexplicably wrong. It smells like empty-room, a place that hasn’t been lived-in for ages and a place that, most importantly, isn’t home.

You sit up, swinging your legs over the side of the bed; the hardwood floor is cool underneath your feet as you make your way towards the door, wandering out into the hallway in some aimless direction. The mansion is a maze of identical maroon-carpeted halls and identical mahogany doors leading to god-knows-where, so you stick close to what you remember from your arrival that morning; the kitchen is down the stairs by the main lobby, and you find yourself there, feet silent against the tiled floors. The light overhead flickers once, twice, three times, before shuddering to life and flooding the room with white light. You squint into the sudden brightness, moving towards the row of cabinets in order to find something to put in your stomach, in hopes that will be enough to let you sleep. There’s an assortment of teas laid out in a plain wicker basket next to the microwave, and you ponder the merits of ingesting anything with any amount of caffeine in it at 1:30 at night before deciding it didn’t really matter at this point.

You’re careful to open the cupboards quietly, pulling down a powder-blue mug without so much as a clink of ceramic and filling it with tap water. You stick the mug in the microwave and set it for a minute and thirty seconds without so much as the faintest idea as to whether that would make the water hot enough to brew tea with-- who the fuck makes tea in the fucking microwave, really? But it’s far too late to be taking out a kettle, and of course they didn’t have a fucking Keurig, because why would they, living in some 18th century mansion with candles and gas lamps and shit like a bunch of fucking savages--

“Couldn’t sleep?”

You’re leaning against the stove, which lies below the microwave, clutching the handles of the oven and silently fuming when you hear the voice. You spin around, trying your very best to look less alarmed than you feel, still holding the sachet of chamomile tea in one hand.

“Victor.” The word-- the name-- comes out choppy and startled and choked-off, and you’d like to think it’s just because he had frightened you, but that’s--

Well.

Not the whole truth.

He leans impassively against the doorway to the kitchen, arms folded; your eyes flicker down over his chest, the ridges of his abdomen, the v-shape of his hips disappearing into a pair of low-slung jeans; in the white light of the kitchen his skin is strangely pale, like marble, like some sort of walking statue, which is--

Distracting.

Harder to not stare at, if you’re being completely honest, because you’re quickly realizing that he's that exact kind of person that's just so fucking attractive that you can't even really bring yourself to make eye contact with him half the time, have to look at him out of the corners of your eyes like you're staring at the fucking sun--

He raises an eyebrow, and you realize with a start that you never actually answered his question.

“I, um--” He moves towards you, around the kitchen island, and something about the fluidity of it is striking-- for someone as big as he is, he moves with an intimidating amount of grace. Your words feel like molasses, all jumbled-up and stuck to the roof of your mouth, and pulling them apart into
something vaguely resembling a sentence is like pulling teeth. “I thought something to drink might--
might help me relax.”

Victor makes a noise in acknowledgement, cracking open the fridge door and pulling out a can of
what you assume is the same brand of shitty beer that Logan drinks. The door falls closed again with
a soft click of rubber insulation, and for a second the rumbling of the microwave is the only sound
that fills the room.

Then--

He moves towards you, you can see that much in your peripheral vision, and your whole body tenses
like somebody's fed an electric current through it. You hold yourself still and try to think of literally
anything other than the fact that the distance between your respective bodies is closing very, very
quickly, and that your immediate reaction to that fact isn't at all what it should be--

"You're goin' to wake up the whole house," he says, voice impassive, reaching past you to open the
microwave before the timer ticks down to zero. There's a lingering second where his bare shoulder
presses against you-- accidentally, you remind yourself, it's an accident-- and when you finally
remember to breathe everything smells like pine wood and amber and something dark and earthy that
you don't really have the words for. He reaches to grab the mug at the same time you do, and your
fingers brush, and you know, internally, that you must be flushed and stammering and very visibly
off balance--

If he notices-- which he must, you figure, he has to notice, he's not stupid-- Victor doesn't say
anything. He hands the mug to you, and when you catch his gaze for a split second, he seems almost
amused, his eyes flashing dark.

He cracks open the can of beer in his hand, the sound sharp and abrupt in the surrounding silence.
When he turns to leave, you're equal parts relieved and-- well, not quite disappointed, but something
similar.

As he leaves the kitchen, he turns to you, offhand. "Sleep tight," he says, voice low, a noticeably
teasing undercurrent to the words. He flashes you a grin-- it's not even a grin, really, he just bares his
teeth, a look that under any circumstance would probably be terrifying, but isn't. Not in the way it's
supposed to be, you think, gut twisting in response with some warm, liquid feeling that you're not
particularly interested in defining.

"I'll try," you force yourself to say.

Fuck.

It would be remarkably easy to avoid Victor Creed.

It would be, meaning, if you would bother to try.

It's not hard, is what you're saying, to lie or to make up some excuse, no matter how flimsy, to avoid
being in a room with him. Half of your time is spent around Logan, anyways, and he already seems
entirely too keen on keeping you as far away from Victor as possible, so it's not like it would be
difficult to enlist his help in avoiding his older brother. Because that's what you should do. You don't
know Victor Creed, you certainly don't trust him, and by all counts you should actively be staying as
far away from him as possible.

You don't, though, is the thing.

The training room is a futuristic fortress of sorts, nestled deep within the belly of the mansion; it's artificially bright, illuminated by a series of industrial-size warehouse light fixtures that hang from the ceiling. The walls are thick concrete, insulated and covered with a layer of scorch-marked steel. It's vast. Expansive. Meant for the purpose of testing out powers without causing damage.

You're down there late in the afternoon-- but, honestly, it could be twilight by now, the room has no windows and hard to tell-- and two boys who'd sort of taken you under their wing, Scott and Alex Summers, are trying-- failing-- to teach you how to use your powers to shoot fireballs. It's hot-- humid-- and the hair at the base of your neck is sticking to your skin with sweat.

"You've got it," Alex says encourageingly.

At the same time his brother Scott folds his arms and taps his foot against the concrete floor and says, "Maybe we should take a break."

Alex frowns at that, the expression pulling his distinctly boy-band-ish features into a dark, moody scowl. "She's doing fine, Scott," he says, voice taking on that telltale edge that means him and his brother are about to start bickering, which-- okay, no, you don't want to deal with that.

"He didn't say I wasn't doing fine," you say, cutting in between them, "Just that a break might be good. It's almost time to get dinner, anyway, so..."

Alex's expression softens, and he gives you a look that's vaguely pitying and kind of uncertain, like he's not sure whether or not he's supposed to lie to you and pretend that your frankly horrendous attempts at hitting a target were anything other than just, like, unforgivably bad.

It's fine. Where Alex has his aggression and Scott has his experience, what you have is enough good will and sportsmanship for the three of you combined. Scott says something to Alex that you don't pick up and Alex bites back a reply that's irritated and a little hostile-- you block out their ensuing bickering, their argument continuing out into the hall that connects the training room to the rest of the house, as they head back upstairs to find dinner.

And suddenly, you are alone.

You take a deep breath-- the air smells singed, burnt, and there are portions of the concrete that are seared and smoking from your failed attempts at directing fireballs at the targets lining the wall at the end of the room. You fling one more burst of flame at the far side of the room, not really bothering to put any energy into it, the fire fizzling out into nothing halfway through it's trajectory.

"Your form is shitty."

The rasp of Victor's voice is familiar, dark and rich and echoing out into the chamber of the room from somewhere in the doorway. To your credit, you don't immediately spin around to face him, even though you very much want to and even though you're very much aware of him lingering somewhere in your periphery, the smell of pine trees and amber invading your senses, making everything else seem fuzzy and far-away and hard to focus on, to grasp clearly--
"Hi," you say, internally pleased that your voice is sturdy and clear. "Thanks for the advice."

He snickers at the undercurrent of sarcasm in your words, and then he moves towards you. "Your posture's horrible, first of all," he says, gravelly and low, a smirk twitching across his mouth. "Since you wanna go being a smartass."

Your heart lurches in your ribs as he steps closer, a slow, delicious burn spreading out from your chest across the rest of your body, leaving your skin raw and hot and electric. He takes another step, and that brings him too close, brings him past the realm of socially acceptable, close enough that you can feel the heat radiating off of his body. There's tawny stubble along the blunt planes of his jaw and his face is arrestingly masculine in the harsh overhead light, dangerous in a way that you don't really have the words to describe, deep-set eyes and thick brows and sharp, jagged cheekbones-- he's handsome and terrifying and it's a mixture that shouldn't, under any circumstances, make you feel like this.

You swallow, uncertain, and his eyes track the movement.

"You have to bring your hands up," he says-- murmurs-- voice deceptively soft for a man of his size, his hand moving up to your shoulder, pressing your arm closer to your body, centering it. You move the way he's guiding you to, right foot sliding against the dusty, dirt-tracked concrete, bringing you closer to him, sheltered under the bulk of his body.

"Like that?" you reply, breathless.

Victor closes the last bit of distance, until your back is almost flush against his chest, his expression unreadable. He towers over you, easily more than six feet tall and surely twice your strength, and it makes you feel small and defenseless in comparison. The slow slide of his hand as he moves it from your shoulder to your elbow is torturous, makes your stomach churn with a warmth that you don't want to label just because you know exactly what it is, a heat that burns low in your belly at the feeling of his calloused hand against your bare skin.

"Higher," he says, nudging your elbow up, and you wonder if you're imagining the new quality to his voice, a rough strain to it that wasn't there before. You remember the night in the kitchen, what he looked like, the chiseled planes of his chest and his abdomen, a dark thatch of hair disappearing beneath the jut of his belt. Right now, the palm around your arm is huge, wraps neatly around you, and you find yourself wondering, unbidden, about how it would feel to have his hands in other places, spreading your thighs open, maybe, callouses scraping up against the sensitive skin there--

You shift your weight from one foot to another, flushing hotly. If Victor notices your sudden energy, he doesn't say anything about it. He must notice, though, because his other hand moves to your hip-- it's so warm even through the fabric of your jeans-- and he applies just a little pressure, shifting your stance slightly. You want him, you realize, that's what this feeling is, an overwhelming longing for him to touch you more than this, you want him here and you don't care about how risky or how terrible an idea it might be--

He could do whatever he wanted to you, you think distantly, and you'd let him.

"(Name)? Are you still down there?"

That's Alex's voice, you recognize distantly, echoing down the stairwell, and Victor steps back away from you in one smooth motion, leaving the air cool and empty where the heat of his body once was. At the same time, you're spinning back around to face him, you're scanning his face for some immeasurably tiny crack in his composure, some explanation in his closed-off, emotionless expression, and you find oddly that you can't meet his eyes, your gaze drawn almost hypnotically to
the knowing slant of his mouth--

He turns to leave just as Alex comes barreling down into the room.

"Dinner's upstairs," he says, flushed and grinning. "Scott's a dick, sorry about before--"

You wave him off absently, watching the line of Victor's shoulders as he disappears back up the stairs. When he's gone, and while Alex stands at the foot of those same stairs, looking at you quizzically, you fling one last fireball across the room.

It hits the target. You're too high-strung to recognize Alex's triumphant whoop of laughter, can only think of the warmth where Victor's hands had been, rough and steady--

It doesn't feel like a fantasy anymore.

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Victor goes out of his way to get under your skin, after that.

He seems to be everywhere, always, perpetually there at the very edges of your vision. He leans in too close to talk to you when there are others around, voice low and bordering on predatory, finds excuses to press his hand against the small of your back or sling his arm over the back of your shoulders, watches you, always, with a stare that's dark and hot and impossible to look at directly.

It's torture.

He goes out of his way to get under your skin and the worst part of it is that it works.

When it comes to a head-- as most of these type of things often do-- it's nighttime, and you're wandering the halls of the mansion the way you often do when you can't sleep. It's an accident, really, an unintentional, purely coincidental series of events that leads you past the balcony and down the gently sloping main staircase towards the front of the house-- towards where you know Victor stays.

It's not an accident, though, not really-- a part of you is hoping to find him, hoping for something to take the edge off of the constant tension hovering in the back of your mind like a dark, omnipresent fog. Something to take the edge off.

You round the staircase, dragging your nails along the banister like you did that first day, and you nearly run directly into him, stopping just inches short of crashing full-speed into the hard lines of his body. You bite back a gasp at the scare, having come very close to him, maybe just as close as you'd been the day that he'd found you in the training hall. Suddenly, for reasons that you can't put a finger on or really describe in any detail, your heart starts to beat a little faster, like it knows before your brain does that something between the two of you has changed.

Victor steadies you with his hands on your forearms, and the press of his skin feels like a brand. "Careful," he says, voice little more than a whisper, followed by, "Couldn't sleep?"

The teasing edge to his voice is back, sly and almost cruel, and it makes you shiver, the words a strange repetition of the night in the kitchen.

"No," you say, the words coming out soft, "I couldn't."

Victor looks at you for a handful of seconds that seem to stretch out into minutes, into hours--
"Neither can I," he says, and it's almost an invitation.

He turns, wordlessly, disappearing back into the shadows, out of the light, and you boldly decide to take the invitation to follow him through the doorway tucked beneath the staircase, the nervous energy thrumming through your body outweighing the voice in your head that's telling you that you're making a stupid decision.

You don't actually care, is the thing.

Victor's room is small and military-style; there's a queen-sized bed tucked up in the corner, comforter neatly made, there's a collection of dark-stained wooden furniture scattered across the room— a nightstand and a vanity and a dresser— a leather couch and a TV mounted against the far wall. He sits down on the couch, clicks the remote to turn the TV on, bathing the room in the soft glow of whatever show is playing on the screen.

Your stomach churns as you walk forwards, daring to take the spot that he had left next to him. He doesn't look up, doesn't acknowledge you much at all, really, eyes focused on the shifting block of color that is the TV and expression infuriatingly inscrutable. The silence, suddenly, is pressing, and you feel like you're drowning in it, heavy and thick in the confines of the room.

"I never thanked you," you say, trying to fill the quiet, thinking about the time in the training room. "For teaching me--"

At that moment, Victor slings his arm across the back of the couch, not really around you, per say, but close enough that you can feel the fabric of his shirtsleeve brushing against the back of your neck, and the words die in your throat, cut off mid-sentence.

"For, um, teaching me how to fight," you continue, internally wincing at the soft, shaky quality to your voice. "It really did help, and I--"

And then he shifts, just slightly, no more than an inch, really, but it's enough to press his leg against your thigh with enough weight that it couldn't possibly be an accident. Could it?

"And I never got to thank you," you finish lamely.

There's a sudden buzz of energy ricocheting through your body, an awareness of him that sets your nerves alight, sends an unidentifiable tremor of want thrumming through your abdomen that rocks the already-shaky foundations of your denial. All you can think about is the low thrum of longing somewhere in your belly, consistent and ever-present in the back of your mind as you look at Victor, the hard lines of his chest and his hands and his mouth--

Victor laughs under his breath, low and soft and rumbling somewhere in his throat, and you are suddenly aware of how loud your pulse is thundering in your ears, certain that he must be aware, too.

"Something distracting you, sweetheart?" he says.

Whatever your answer is gets cut off when his arm comes down around your shoulders completely, the pressure enough to make your stomach feel like it's in knots. He's still not looking at you, eyes focused on the muted television, mouth twitching at a smile that isn't really happy or nice or good at all. You suddenly find yourself wondering what it would be like-- what it would feel like-- if he were to kiss you, how his stubble would scrape across your skin, how rough his hands would be, and these are not new fantasies but they feel incredibly, insidiously dangerous right now--

He clicks off the television, and when he turns to face you it's so slow that it's nearly torturous, you're
watching the self-satisfied smirk twitch to life on his mouth because you can’t, you can’t look him in the eye.

"I can see the way you look at me," he says, voice low, almost a growl, and you don’t know whether you’re supposed to be ashamed of the fact or not. Victor moves towards you and it feels like the beginning of every shameful midnight fantasy you’ve ever had, his hand on your thigh and his fingers spreading across your skin, hot and huge and rough in comparison, and when he moves his arm down from your shoulders to around your waist and lifts you up and into his lap you make a noise in the back of your throat that might be a whine, high pitched and needy--

"No smartass comments now, huh?" He says, and his grin is ferocious, hungry, and you register thinking oh god he’s gonna eat me alive followed immediately by please do holy shit--

And then he kisses you and it’s exactly what you thought it would be and better.

The kiss is messy. It’s messy and it’s slow and it’s almost cruelly sexual, his tongue is parting your lips and pushing in and the press of his mouth to your smaller one is filthy in the sense that it makes the muscles in your abdomen tighten and tense and liquefy with want, and then his hand moves to the curve of your waist and he’s digging his fingers in and holding you there as his tongue curls over your teeth--

For a moment, you don’t know what to do; you’re pliant in his arms, as Victor kisses you, light-headed and trembling and overwhelmed by the touch, the taste, the feeling of it. You can’t say anything, in the brief seconds when his mouth isn’t slanted over yours, you can’t bring yourself to form words or even make a sound, deliciously off-balance and uncertain as he grabs your hips and wrenches you forwards until your chest is flush against his, digging his fingers in hard enough to bruise and then harder, until your lips part under his in a silent, breathy gasp. The arm around your waist has you so close to him that when you move you can feel the press of his cock in between your legs, hard and hot through the thick fabric of his jeans and all you can think is how bad you want this-- it-- him--

"You gonna let me fuck you tonight?" Victor whispers, blunt and rough, thumb toying with the elastic waistband of the shorts you’d worn to bed, fingers slipping down and across the sheer lace of your underwear, the sudden friction enough to have your breath coming out in a shaky exhale as you rock into his hand.

"Please," you whisper, and it’s not really an answer but it is.

Victor chuckles, the sound like molasses or single-malt scotch or something equally as smooth, and then he hooks his arm around your waist and lifts you up off his lap, stands with you in his arms like you weigh nothing--

He sets you down on the couch, spreads your legs and takes the space between them, and when he kisses you again the clash of your mouths is rough, nearly violent, his teeth digging and biting at your bottom lip hard enough to draw a fretful moan out from somewhere in the back of your throat. He moves his hand again, past your shorts and past your underwear and the noise you make is almost embarrassing, caught somewhere below your voice box as his fingers work their way down--

"You’re so wet," he growls, and there’s that same cruelly teasing edge to his voice that he always has and something about hearing it now, hearing it like this, makes your breath catch and your muscles quiver and makes your skin flush and burn with something that should be shame but definitely isn’t. Victor’s fingers move so slow that it’s almost torturous and then he rubs a tight, slick little circle around your clit and the friction is enough to wring an desperate sort of moan out from somewhere in your chest, your breaths coming out hot and shaky in the space between your bodies.
"Please," you whisper, again, not really sure what you're even asking for.

Victor leans back, sits up, and tugs your pants and underwear down and off with one quick motion, runs his hands up the insides of your thighs and when he stops to work at the clasp of his belt you feel the loss so intensely that you whine, the sound impatient and needy.

"Relax, sweetheart," he says, a soft purr over the rasp of his belt as he pulls it through the belt loops. "I'm gonna take care of you."

Victor leans down and kisses you again, this time with intent, with the curl of his tongue across the outline of your lips and deeper into your mouth, catching and silencing your answering gasp at the feeling. It's steady, this kiss, determined, the slow slick slide of mouths and teeth and tongues betraying his own mounting desire, and you find yourself moving below him, arching your hips up in search of friction. The coarse fabric of his shirt and his jeans scratches over the sensitive skin of thighs and your stomach where your shirt is rucked up but you don't care, can't be bothered to give the feeling more than a passing acknowledgement.

He leans down over you and you're suddenly struck by how much larger he is, his weight draped across your body and pinning you back into the couch. Victor is everywhere, his warm, calloused hands rough against the sensitive insides of your thighs, spreading them wide, his tongue in your mouth and his scent filling your senses, drowning out everything else until all you can think about as Victor pushes his jeans down to his knees is this is real this is finally happening--

His mouth moves down to your neck and he bites, hard enough that you arch up into it and hard enough that you know it will bruise, leave a mark, stained purple and red and obvious when you wake up tomorrow, but you can't bring yourself to care about that right now. You're thinking about the insistent, hot pressure of his cock against the inside of your thigh and you're thinking about the way he's spreading your legs open, hitching one across his lower back, and you're thinking about the press of his mouth to your temple and your combined breaths coming sharp and fast and you're thinking about--

"Oh."

"Fuck," he grits out, he pushes inside and your nails dig into his back hard enough that on anybody else it would probably draw blood. "Fuck."

And his cock is big inside of you, so big, jesus fucking christ, you feel full and stretched and overwhelmed and it almost hurts, the way he's rocking into you, feels like too much and not enough at the same time--

"Victor," you gasp out, the word barely making it past your lips before he's kissing you again, sliding his tongue through your mouth with a level of aggression that isn't at all surprising. He starts to move, and even in the murky darkness of the room you can see the slow sinuous curve of his spine and his shoulders as your body rides the repercussions, and it feels like you're having a fucking out of body experience with every rock of his hips against yours. Your hands move up and across the muscular expanse of his chest, looking for something to hold on to, something to anchor you to reality in the humid, burning heat of his bedroom-- it feels like nothing else exists, like the world has narrowed down to you and to him and to the slow, hard slide of his cock into you, over and over again until you can't focus on anything else.

Victor groans, the noise rough and sugar-sweet against your mouth, and arousal sparks through your blood like a poison, thrumming low against your skin as you run a hand down between your bodies to rub across your clit-- and fuck, you're so close already, this is so much better than the fumbling first-times with the type of people you're supposed to want, this is thrilling and dangerous and good--
He digs his fingers into your hips hard enough to leave bruises in the shape of his hands and groans through his gritted teeth with every stroke, hips slamming into the cradle of your thighs hard enough to ache, hard enough to wring desperate, totally involuntary noises out from some unidentifiable place in the back of your throat as he fucks you.

You can register the creeping edge of your orgasm hovering somewhere in the edges of your awareness, approaching quickly, but it's still almost embarrassing how fast it hits-- and it's like a revelation in the most unholy of ways, a sudden burst of white-hot pleasure that has your vision shorting out and your muscles tensing and your brain grinding to a halt. Victor fucks you through it, isn't slow or gentle or kind about it at all and you had known that going into this, had fantasized about this exact scenario-- the bite of his fingers digging into your skin and the pressure of his hipbones on the insides of your thighs and stifling, surrounding heat of the bedroom are all too much, you're overstimulated and struggling to form thoughts and it's all so good so much too much--

You can tell he's close as he loses rhythm, his breathing going ragged and uneven, and then his hips stutter and his breath catches and he rocks into you one last time with a groan and a shudder and something that might have been your name but probably wasn't.

This moment-- the moment afterwards-- is long and strangely personal. You press your mouth to a spot just above Victor's temple; it's not a kiss, not really, but it's close enough, and how he responds is nothing at all like how you expected--he tilts his head down and pulls you into a kiss instead, his huff of what you assume must be laughter disappearing into your mouth.

"Stay the night and I'll give you something to wake up to," he all but growls against your lips, and the shiver the words elicit from you should be criminal.

You shouldn't say yes, but--

Well.

You've never been good at denying yourself.

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