Sleeper

by Queenspuppet

Summary

“To be honest, Miss Lewis, you don’t scare me much,” he snapped in his Captain’s tone. After the words were out, and her cheeks had paled and his had surely flushed, he realized those were his first words to her. They were on her skin.

And they were such a lie.

Notes

The warning of graphic depictions of violence does not apply to this chapter. While this story certainly has dark themes (kidnapping, references to trauma, manipulation) it avoids any depictions of them, and generally glazes over them. If that changes in any future chapter, I’ll adjust warnings and tags.

Super quick notes on the Soulmate Verse: People receive marks on their body's of their...
soulmate's first words to them, and have a compulsion to seal that connection with a touch. It's possible to have multiple soulmates.

Let me know if you have anymore questions about how I'm using the soulmate trope.

I own nada!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Later Steve would wonder if Hydra knew exactly how long it would take for he and Bucky to let their guards down. Was the timing part of the intended suffering, or just lucky happenstance?

“It’s addressed to both of you.” Stark was in his suit, braced and ready in the lobby of the upstate facility. Technically the label read Captain America and The Asset.

"Dropped off in the yard by temporary portal,” Natasha said. She looked calm, but she kept her eyes fixed on the red bow topping the metal container, roughly the size of a car trunk. Steve had enough experience with her to know when ‘calm’ was a mask that hid ‘deciding between fight or flight.’

“No one but Hydra knows I’m here, Rogers.”

Steve tried not to wince at Bucky’s tone, and the absence of any fond nicknames. They’d made a lot of progress in the past few months but high stress situations were not the former Winter Soldier’s strong suit.

“Whatever’s in there ain’t gonna be pretty,” Bucky added.

“I wish you’d let Stark invent some kind of scan before we open this thing,” Sam muttered.

“I can detect a life sign-“ Vision said, a touch defensively.

“That’s what we’re worried about, right?” Clint said in a quiet aside to Sam, whose shrug and nod melded somewhere together into uncertainty.

“We would risk their-“ Vision tried again.

“We know the risks, sonny boy,” Stark said, awkwardly patting Vision on the shoulder.

“At least we have the odds,” Steve said, mustering up his show time voice. He didn’t really care that every Avenger but Thor was assembled for what looked like the unwrapping of a gift. If this was from Hydra, there was certainly nothing good to be found.

Tony charged the repulsor in his left hand before breaching the few yards of space away from the
box that they’d all been hovering in, tearing away the ribbon, unfastening the latch, and hauling back the lid of the container.

For a moment, adrenaline made every sound into white noise. Steve took a breath and the stifling silence turned into static coming from Tony’s comm.

No. Not static.

Soft laughter.

“You were wrong, Jack Frost,” Tony said, looking back at Bucky. “She’s very pretty.”

They all stepped forward at once, peering over the edge of the box. Steve felt his chest clampl tight at the sight of the girl curled on the floor of the container. She was wearing a thin ice blue shift, like a hospital gown, that looked dirty and thread bare. Thick brown twists of her hair twined down her side and full, pink, pouting lips parted in quiet breaths.

“I don’t know her,” Bucky said, leaning to Steve, voice tilted in question. He had a hard time being sure of the who’s and when’s and other ‘wh’s of his past.

“Miss Darcy Lewis,” Vision supplied.

“Jane Foster’s intern,” Natasha added.

“Taser girl?” Sam asked. Thor was very fond of the story.

“Never met her,” Steve said. His hands were clenching on his shield strap, resisting the urge to lift her from the box and… what? Touch her, his brain supplied.

“Stevie, she’s got your-“

The ‘Stevie’ was a shock in itself but the rest was cut off by the sudden, waking scream of the girl.

She scrambled backwards, trying to press further into the corners. Her blue eyes widen and fix on Iron Man.

“Oh god, no. You have to - I’m so sorry-“ her gaze flicks to Natasha. “Keep me away from-“ She stutters and her eyes land on Steve.

“Don’t touch me!” She shouts.
Steve’s mouth falls open, his voice tears in his throat. He hadn’t even realized he was reaching out to her, trying to seal the Soulmark bond. Stevie, she’s got your words. That was Bucky’s warning. He can read much more than “honest, Miss Lewis” but he can see his handwriting pooling in the soft white skin of her clavicle.

“Christ, Steve,” Bucky breathes. He’d been teasing Steve about their third’s reaction to him since he’d first seen them. You never were so good with the dames, huh punk?

“I don’t know what they did,” She says, staring up at Bucky who grips desperately at the back of Steve’s uniform. Her swimming pool eyes fill with tears and she turns back to Natasha. “I don’t know what they did to me. I’m a trap, I think.”

Of course she was. Because if Hydra had gotten their paws on the soulmate of the Winter Soldier and Captain America, and hadn’t killed her outright, then they’d found a way to use her against them.

And yet Steve knew, just knew, that if it weren’t for the ingrained urge to keep Bucky safe, he’d be in that box doing whatever he could to reassure Darcy Lewis that she was safe. That he’d keep her safe. He was glad Bucky had a hold on him because he felt like he still might, if he could only catch a breath.

“She’s going easy on her,” Bucky said, marveled really, watching through the false mirror as Natasha delicately question Darcy Lewis. Steve, secretly, agreed. Natasha was intimidating as she picked apart a sandwich, she was downright pants wetting during an interrogation.

“You’re thinking about Natasha pumping the people we know are shitbags for information,” Clint said, leaning against the wall. He had a comm in his ear, and was flipping through a stack of files in his room, feeding Natasha prompts under his breath. “This is Natasha ascertaining whether or not we are dealing with a very artful shitbag, or just a traumatized twenty-something girl. If the girl is the former, Natasha will catch it. If she’s not, then no one needs to feel bad for making things any worse for her than they already are.”

“When did you discover you were the soulmate of Steve Rogers and James Barnes?” Natasha asked. Her voice was soft, not friendly but not suspicious. Factual and gently impersonal.
“I didn’t, I mean, it was when Hydra started questioning me, and one of them was like ‘This twit is supposed to be perfect for Captain America and the fucking Winter Soldier?’” Clint snorted in the background at her impression of a Hydra agent. “I guess. I mean, I suppose that’s when I found out but-” she rolled her eyes.

“But?” Natasha prompted.

“Um, but… well when I realized what he meant, and that they were serious I just…you know, figured they were all bunch of idiots cause…” she swirled her index finger in the direction of the doorway. “All of that, does not need any of this.” She swirled her finger at herself. She blushed a little at her sudden animation and then settled back in her chair.

“Don’t sell yourself short,” Natasha said.

“Are they gal-palling right now?” Tony asked from their side of the glass. “Seriously?”

“Tash’s an artist,” Clint said.

“I am short,” Darcy said, a smile, wicked little smile growing out of the corner of her mouth. “I am super short. And they are super hot.”

“I’m short,” Natasha said.

“Yeah and you know like a billion ways to kill me. You could kill me and then walk away and I wouldn’t even realize I was dead till a few hours later. You could have already done it.”

“I actually did that once,” Natasha mused.

Darcy gaped and paled for a moment before swallowing. “I’m either about to pee myself or propose to you, but I just need a minute.”

The observation room fell apart in sudden laughter, Sam and Tony fist bumping and turning to Steve and Bucky, before falling quiet again. The soulmates stood separately but identical, arms crossed over their chests, pained twists marring their smiles, heads tilted down. Steve understood the other’s enjoyment of this, he really did. Darcy Lewis was charmingly self-effacing, endearingly indomitable, and utterly herself even in a situation as dire as this. She remained, however, a threat. If not to his immediate person, then definitely to his mental well being. It was not comfortable to be so close to someone so significant to the very fiber of your make up, and not acknowledge that connection. Steve needed her, but at this moment he needed her very far away.

“This isn’t going anywhere,” Steve said.
“We’re waiting for Thor to arrive with Jane Foster,” Clint said. “Foster is the only one of us with intimate knowledge of Lewis. She’s our best assurance that the girl in that room is the Darcy Lewis she claims to be.”

In the next room Natasha was continuing the soft questioning, flitting between what Darcy remembered from her kidnapping, over the course of her capture, and what she knew about Steve and Bucky.

“Not much,” Darcy said. “Lots about the early political tool propaganda era Captain America, cause it featured in my thesis writing, but pretty much nothing recent. A few stories from Thor about S-” she paused, “Captain America.”

She couldn’t say his name. He wanted to hear her say it.

“I’m going in,” he said, before he could think it through.

“Punk,” Bucky breathed, turning to him. But nothing followed.

“It’s not an awful idea,” Clint said, very reluctantly, and Steve was out the door and into the hall before he could finish the thought.

Darcy startled in her chair as Steve, well, burst if he was going to be honest about it, into the room. Natasha raised an eyebrow and stood calmly.

“Should you be in here?” Darcy asks, leaning back in her chair, her eyes full and nervous. She looked to Natasha, and it irked him.

“To be honest, Miss Lewis, you don’t scare me much,” he snapped in his Captain’s tone. After the words were out, and her cheeks had paled and his had surely flushed, he realized those were his first words to her. They were on her skin.

And they were such a lie.

“Damnit Punk,” Bucky growled.

“God he’s just…the worst at this, right?” Tony asked.
“I’ll leave you to it, then” Natasha said, nailing Steve to the wall with her look. The door shutting behind the other woman made Darcy jump in her chair.

Steve was holding his breath as Darcy fiddled with her fingernails on the table top, trying to dig out old dirt.

Why had he insisted on coming in here, again?

“Okay so I get that you’re the mountain, and I’m the molehill, here,” Darcy said finally, looking up and meeting his stare. “But is no one really worried that I’m going to, I dunno, like suddenly flip my personality and attack you or anything?”

“The physi-scan gave us your muscle-“ Steve started, relief rushing out at being able to deliver facts.

“Oh god, yeah I’m gonna stop you there,” Darcy said, holding up a hand. “I have no muscles, you have all of them, noted.”

Steve sat at the table and had to scoot back a few inches so his long legs wouldn’t tangle with hers.

“Miss Lewis I hope you understand what we’re trying to accomplish with this interview,” Steve said. Ugh, why was he being such a bully?

“I don’t like it when you call me that,” Darcy said. Her hand brushed her collar bone, adding quietly, “I thought I would, but I don’t.”

He wanted to tell her that he didn’t like it when she called him Captain America.

Luckily the door opened revealing Thor, already glowering. For a moment Steve worried for Darcy then he realized where exactly Thor’s ire was aimed at.

“Captain Rogers,” he greeted in a rumble.

“Thor,” Steve answered.

“Hey, Thor.” Darcy’s expression was somewhere between tearful relief, and that of a child who had just been caught misbehaving by their parent.

“Greetings, Darcy,” Thor said gently, setting one large hand over Darcy’s shoulder as he filled the room with his presence. “Now tell me what you did upon our first meeting.”
Darcy’s eyebrows raised and she glanced at Steve for a moment, before back to Thor. “I felled you with my lightning stick?” They were the exact words Thor had used telling the story to Steve, although with significantly less enthusiasm. Darcy shrugged and then frowned. “But you’ve told everyone that story, I think. So I’m not sure it’s what—” Darcy choked on her words as she glanced Steve. “I don’t think that’s what they meant by a test.”

“I know,” said Thor in his kindly courtier voice. “But I wanted to remind you of your bravery.”

Darcy blinked rapidly up at the prince. “Thanks, buddy,” she said in a small voice.

Thor proceeded to prop up the wall with a steady, warning gaze boring into Steve.

He took a deep breath and prepared to continue with the assigned questioning Natasha had left on the table when a small, energized woman, made up of plaid, oversized boots, and a mass of shiny brown hair burst into the room.

“Okay Darcy Lewis, I’m going to be straight with you, so please forgive me.”

“Miss Foster,” Steve started. Why the hell hadn’t he left this to Natasha? This was getting woefully out of hand.

“Who was your first masturbatory fantasy?” Jane spit out.

Darcy turned bright red so fast Steve thought for a moment it might be Hydra breaking through. But then she cried out, “Janey, no!”

“Miss Foster, I’m not sure that’s entirely—” Okay, so even Steve was blushing a little at this point. And he was also struggling with the realization that he really did not want to know about his soulmate’s first fumbling feelings for some green boy from her youth.

“Don’t patronize me, Captain America,” Jane sneered. “I know this girl better than any SHIELD file and I know that she is literally an open book about any trivial thing. If Hydra had simply asked she would have shared every menial detail about her life. She might have done it just to annoy them, but this she would never have admitted to, no matter what. Especially given the circumstances.”

“I hate you,” Darcy squeaked.

Steve wondered if she was getting enough oxygen. She was starting to turn purple.

“Spit it out, Lewis!” Jane shouted in the girl’s face, bracing her hands against the arms of Darcy’s chair.
It was not, Steve thought, the most finesse in an interrogation he had seen.

But it was effective.

“BUCKY BARNES, KID COMMANDO,” Darcy shrieked, her hands flying up to cover her eyes. “From the cartoon,” she mewled, and then proceeded to let out a sound akin to a dying animal.

Thor chuckled for the briefest second, before being promptly and most likely ineffectually, punched in the stomach by his ‘sweet Lady Jane.’

“That’s my Darcy,” Jane said, proudly wrapping her arm over the mortified girl’s shoulders.

“You better hope I’m not a programmed super-assassin, Foster, because you are so on my shitlist,” Darcy growled, still behind her hands.

Jane smiled fondly down.

Natasha cleared her throat in the doorway and Steve, coward that he was now beginning to see himself as, gratefully handed the room back to her. It had not made things clearer to sit across from Darcy Lewis and treat her as a suspect. It had made things infinitely murkier, and the pain in his chest spread out into his bones. He hovered in the hall for a moment to catch his breath, and scrub his twisted expression off his face. When he lowered his hands, Bucky was there, leaning against the wall, face still and inscrutable. For a the briefest, light hearted second, Steve wished he’d been in the room with Bucky as Darcy had shouted out his name.

“They made a cartoon?” Bucky said finally. There wasn’t a single twitch in his cheeks, but Steve could practically feel the smile.

“Kids show,” Steve said. “I watched an episode once…You were pretty cute.”

God. Why did he say that?

Bucky huffed, laughed maybe, and for a fleeting second, grinned.

Then the ache settled back in.

“We’ve been waiting for her for so long, punk,” Bucky whispered. “And they took her too.”

“I know,” Steve said, stepping up against Bucky, not embracing but just embracing the nearness. “Let’s just focus on why they gave her back.”
The Asset couldn’t sleep, and when the Asset couldn’t sleep, Bucky made sure not to. Just in case, he told Steve gently, as if it was a silly precaution. A little harmless paranoia to go along with his freight of other issues. He knew the Asset was more than capable of taking over in the unconscious state.

Bucky didn’t lie to himself and pretend he didn’t know exactly where he was headed in his nighttime wanderings. And Natasha didn’t do him the disservice of pretending to be surprised to see him in the monitor room of Darcy’s cell.

“Who gave her music?” he asked. The song was plaintive, and not unpleasantly old fashioned. Not the blues he would have used to hold a girl close in a dance hall, but the mountain tunes Corporal John Parker used to sing at night on the front … Too long ago, Barnes. Bucky cut off the reminiscing.

“I did,” Natasha said.

Oh my sparrow it's too late
Your body limp beneath my feet
Your dusty eyes cold as clay
You didn't hear my warning.

It was a woman’s voice, strong and crying, like a bird of prey. He thought Steve might like it, he always was the folksier of their pair. For a moment, he suffered the burningly beautiful image of Steve and this girl, curled up together on the couch in their wing, waiting for him. Damn it, there was even a little firelight.

“Why?”

“It’s in her file,” Natasha said, materializing a manilla folder with Darcy Lewis’s picture clipped to the front. “She makes little soundtracks for everything that goes on in her life. Eclectic taste. I found a clean device for her, thought it might help.”

“Help?” Jesus, what was with him? He wasn’t normally a chatty Cathy like Stark, but he could do better than this.

“Yes, Barnes, help,” Natasha repeated, slowly, with that articulated Soviet eyebrow. “You know, with being kidnapped by Hydra, losing chunks of her memory, knowing that she’s been manipulated against her soulmates - the two people she’s been waiting her entire life to meet - but not knowing how, or when her ticking time bomb will blow.”

“Okay, yes, Natasha. Thank you,” he ground out.
“You asked,” she said coolly.

Bucky crossed his arms and settled into a chair, kicking his legs up to rest on the counter.

“Clint is due to watch in a few hours,” Natasha said.

“Fine,” he answered. “I’m staying.”

“Then I’m going to sleep,” she said, and left the room.

Darcy Lewis’s file sat on the chair next to his.

His fingers itched.

The room through the window was dark but Bucky could make out her silhouette against the wall, the reclining S of her waist and hips. Narrowing his eyes he could see her tremors, but it wasn’t until one song faded into the next that he could hear her sobs. Soft and muffled by her fists, hiccuping and cracking, they were the stubborn sounds of a woe that had probably seen it’s crescendo not long before Bucky arrived.

He imagined leaving the observation room to join her, to lift her up into his hold, wipe her cheeks with the sleeve he wore over his prosthetic, cradle her into sleep.

He picked up the file.
In a Tony Stark facility it was pretty likely that there was a staff-wide bet taking place, and the Avengers themselves were no exception. The wagers stood thusly: A. Which Avenger (aside from Thor and His Lady Jane who had already made their stance perfectly clear) would express trust in Darcy Lewis first? B. Which soulmate would seal the connection with touch first? C. Which super soldier would give in to the hypnotic call of Darcy Lewis’s epic rack first, as in bone her? Tony’s words, obviously.

For the first, the money lay pretty evenly between Sam Wilson, Wanda Maximoff, and Vision. The second leaned heavily in Steve’s favor and the third almost entirely in Bucky’s.

“Would you even know what to do with those sweater puppies?” Tony had asked Steve.

He had a few ideas.

If Steve had put money in the pot it would have gone with the majority in all cases, his first bet being placed on Sam. Wanda wasn’t able to break through the fog of memory loss in Darcy’s mind beyond finding the evidence of frequent chemical sedations and she seemed wary of the other girl’s recent connection to Hydra. And Vision had never expressed trust, so much as an agreement of principles. Besides, Sam had agreed to trust Bucky back when it wasn’t clear who he was still trying to kill. And he had a soft spot for pretty women.

It was a good thing Steve didn’t place bets.
“I trust her,” Natasha said, standing outside Darcy’s cell door. Guarding Darcy’s cell door, Steve thought, based on her expression.

“You trust the Hydra plant?” Tony asked. “Gee, imagine that.”

“No Soviet jokes, Tony,” Clint said, flicking the taller man in the back of the head.

“It’s been two weeks,” Natasha continued. “We’ve found no triggers, nothing out of order on a single one of the almost one hundred medical tests we’ve subjected her to, she’s clean. Whatever Hydra has planned for her, she has no knowledge of it and, I believe, no active or unconscious part to play. I’m not telling you to trust her,” Natasha gazed evenly at Steve and Bucky as she spoke, “But I do and I want her to stay in my suite. I can handle her, and Friday can monitor her.”

Tony open his mouth, presumably to keep complaining but was cut off.

“Fine.” Everyone but Bucky looked to Steve as he continued, “She doesn’t go anywhere Friday can’t monitor her.”

“Fine,” Natasha said.

“Did you put money on this?” Tony asked her. “Did anyone put money on Natasha?”

“I did,” Clint said. “Pay up.”

Natasha ignored Tony’s squint of suspicion and opened the door. Darcy was inside, sitting on her narrow bed and staring up at the ceiling. She was dressed in black leggings and wearing an oversized sweatshirt with a large white lightning bolt down the center. She scrambled up off the bed, her cheeks coloring at the view of the group outside her door. She stumbled back a few steps and for a moment Steve could read the fear on her face before she squared her shoulders.
“Who gave you that?” Tony snapped, pointing at her top.

“Thor,” Darcy said, hesitating like she was afraid of getting the Thunder God in trouble.

“Lame,” Tony said. “I’ll get you an Iron Man one.”

“Okay?” Darcy said, looking to Natasha.

“Come on, roomie,” Natasha said with a small smile. “I’m moving you into my suite.”

“Seriously?” Darcy’s face lit up so bright that Steve felt like braining himself with his own shield. She put on a coy smile and asked, “Do you have Netflix?”

“I find that question insulting,” Tony said.

“Do you like Ethiopian?” Natasha asked as Darcy tiptoed forward, like they were about to shut the door in her face.

“Are you kidding? I like food. Period,” Darcy said, finally making it out the door and taking Natasha’s offered arm. As the two women walked away down the hall Steve heard Darcy whisper, “When you opened the door I was pretty sure you guys came to finish me off.”

Steve made a choking sound, and Darcy’s head twitched, before restraining herself from looking back at him.


The relationship between Natasha and Darcy escalated quickly. When Natasha wasn’t needed in training, she was with Darcy in the suite she had previously barely set foot in since the move to the new facility. After a week Bucky realized he barely saw Natasha any more, and Thor and Clint weren’t much better. After three weeks, even Tony noticed.
“Where the hell is everyone?” Tony asked as Steve and Bucky entered the common area for dinner. “It’s family dinner night. I bought take out.”

Sam, Wanda and Vision all sat obediently at the table, eating their complimentary soul food.

“How should we know?” Steve grumbled, wrestling Tony for one of the bags.

“Uhh, I think they’re in Nat and Darcy’s,” Sam mumbled before popping in a few bites of fried okra. “Jane and Thor and Clint have dinner with them some nights.”

“Well where the hell did they order in from?” Tony grumbled, settling into his chair and trying to lift his feet up to the table before Wanda froze him and put them squarely back on the floor.

“Darcy cooks,” Wanda said, helping herself to her fourth chicken wing.

“And they eat it?” Tony wrinkled his nose. Tony cracked a lot of remarks about Darcy’s presumed homicidal subconscious but Bucky suspected he was already a little soft for the girl. Trading barbs was like delivering praise for Tony.

“She’s really good,” Sam said.

Steve nudged Bucky, prompting him to eat, but was ignored.

“Tash shared some leftover paprikash and… Darcy made me a ripoff version of the Starbucks cranberry bliss bars when I mentioned missing them in the summer,” Sam continued.

“Well,” Tony spluttered for a minute. “Why doesn’t she just join us then? I want treats too.”

“I believe Miss Lewis does not wish to unsettle the Captain and Sergeant Barnes,” Vision offered.

Tony grumbled under his breath for a bit before looking at Bucky’s untouched plate.
“Eat your damn vegetables, Barnes,” Tony said.

Bucky sighed, but picked up his fork.

Within a few days the common room floor had a steadily rotating collection of food from Natasha’s kitchen, and Thor and Clint had returned to the group dinners. Natasha and Jane were still firmly not present. Whatever qualms the others had against eating Darcy’s cooking vanished at the smell of her roast warming in the oven after a particularly grueling, rainy day of training.

“We’ve got to figure something out,” Bucky whispered to Steve as they stood over the counter in the middle of the night, two months after Darcy’s arrival, eating the last quarter of the triple berry chiffon cake with cream cheese frosting that had been left for the team.

“I know,” Steve said. But he had no idea where to start.

“I’m not leaving her,” Natasha said to Steve.

“It’s an Assemble, Tash,” Steve barked back. “It’s not a suggestion. We’ve got less than fifteen minutes to get to the city, now get on the Quinjet!”

“I refuse to leave her undefended against Hydra,” Natasha snapped back.

“The facility has security!”

“You know as well as I do that they would get shredded.”

“Punk, we’re leaving,” Bucky snarled, pulling Steve onto the aircraft.

“I can’t believe her!” Steve shouted as the wheels pulled up.
The rest of the team was far enough in the unit that they probably couldn’t hear Captain America cursing one of his team members over the roar of the wind and engine.

“She thinks Hydra is planning on taking Darcy back,” Bucky said. “To toy with us.”

Steve frowned and scrubbed a hand over his face. When he looked back at Bucky he could see the struggle on his soulmate’s face. “Do you think that she’s right?”

“I don’t know,” Bucky answered easily. “But if she is and we’re just…”

“Just what, Buck?”

“Avoiding her,” Bucky said, and it was so quiet Steve was reading his lips more than anything.

“We don’t know that,” Steve said. But he could feel it in his gut, that urge to just accept Darcy, to protect her from what Hydra had done, what they might do.

“I know.” Bucky’s face was grim. He looked as though he already made the choice, to reject their third and protect himself and Steve. Steve suspected he was the only person on base who knew how badly Bucky wanted to love Darcy. How tenuous his self-restraint could really be when it came to showing affection.

“Focus on the mission,” Steve said. On the way to stomp out an alien attack was not the time to be having this struggle of conscience.

Bucky nodded and they moved together to the others to organize strategy.

“Jesus, did you seriously stay home to play paintball?” Tony asked, stifling his laughter at the sight of Darcy in a jumpsuit, literally dripping with paint, and spotless Natasha resting their now unloaded weapons against the common room doorway. Tony gave up fighting off his laughter. “Lewis, you
would have been safer on the field with us.”

“I take it I was not missed,” Natasha asked Steve, her mouth with that tiny quirk that said ‘Told you, so, dickhead.’

“It was not quite the emergency we were lead to expect,” Steve admitted, trying to catch Darcy’s eye. He just wanted to smile at her, just once. With this ‘attack’ on New York turning out to be more of a slightly aggressive bit of tourism from another planet, he’d had plenty of time to mull over Bucky’s words. But Darcy hadn’t made eye contact with him since they’d been alone in her cell that first day.

“Holy shit, Tash, she got you.” Clint said, leaning over her shoulder and lifting up a lock of hair to reveal a brilliant pink paint stain.

“Yeah, she’s pretty good, right?” Natasha said.

“Oh my god, you’ve got to be joking me,” Darcy said with a roll of her eyes. “I am covered in Sherwin-William’s entire stock.”

“It only takes one,” Natasha said.

“Yeah and not even a Chitauri space whale takes this many,” Darcy argued, stretching out her arms and flicking paint off them. A few drops of vivid green landed on the star on Steve’s uniformed chest. “Oooops,” Darcy whispered. She looked up at Steve, who went totally stupid and forgot to smile, and then narrowed her eyes. “Goes with your radioactive sludge,” she said, gesturing to her hairline.

Steve reached up to his own and retrieved a glob of…whatever it was they’d been fighting.

“Come on Stevie, let’s go wash up,” Bucky said quietly from behind, pushing him forward and out of the common room.

“Yeah go be ridiculously hot together,” Darcy muttered under her breath as she passed them in the opposite direction. “In the shower.”
“Wet,” Clint said snickering.

Steve could hear Natasha’s answering smack against Clint’s head.


Steve did not mean to end up alone, in the common kitchen, with Darcy. They had passed another month with hardly any interaction and while he could feel her presence in the building like an orbit, the pull was less painful with less exposure.

“Oh.” The little exclamation was what made him look up from the open fridge, looking for scraps of the chili from the night before. Darcy hovered at the counter, arms laden with groceries and implements. Was that a rolling pin?

“Hey,” Steve said. He took a step back from the fridge. Good punk, Bucky’s voice rang in his head, let her corner you.

“Hi. Sorry, Friday said the kitchen was free,” Darcy said, backing up herself.

“No! It is, I’m just…” Steve looked back to the fridge where they could both clearly see he had started peeling back the foil covered dishes on the shelves.

“Scavenging?” Darcy suggested with a smirk.

Damn that mouth.

“I’ll be out of your hair in a minute,” Steve said, hiding his smile.

“No rush,” she said. He could hear her behind him, shuffling and arranging.
He pulled two spoons out of a drawer and the container of chili off the shelf and prepared to sneak away.

“Don’t think I won’t judge you for heating that up in the microwave,” Darcy said, not looking up from her recipe book. “Put it in a pan and do it right.”

He thought he might like to bat her lightly on the head with the rolling pin, just a little bit unconscious, so he could run away. Or maybe curl his entire body around hers like a human tortoise shell. One of the two. He found a pan and accepted the wooden spoon she held over her shoulder before sliding into place next to her at the stove top. She was organizing dry and wet ingredients next to him and somehow managing to be so distracting that she had to pause in her preparations to reach over and turn the burner on for him.

He might as well have set the cold pan of soup against his cheeks, they were getting so warm.

“What are you making?”

“Pies,” Darcy said. She was mixing ingredients by sight, like his Ma used to do. A couple splashes of vinegar into water, that went into the fridge to chill. Flour and a little salt and sugar into the food processor.

“What kind of pies?” He was a masochist.

“Did you have a request?” There was a hesitancy in her voice, clearly afraid of how he might perceive the question. She rushed over it, “Clint and Sam are going to the farmer’s market for me in a bit. I told them to grab whatever looked best but I could…”

She was chewing at her lip, chopping frozen butter into cubes. He wanted to press at the full bottom lip with his thumb, suck it gently into his mouth, and bite. He cleared his throat and shifted in place.

“We didn’t get much fruit growing up. Ma used to make Mock Apple with-”

“Crackers,” Darcy said. “Yeah I tried that once, but I made it too soggy. I’m better with real apples, but I could try.”
“I think the pie is better with real apples, to be honest,” Steve said and she snorted behind the curtain of her hair. His fingers itched to tuck it behind her ear so he could see her face again. Microwaved soup was harmless, why was he torturing himself? “Once, at Camp Lehigh, before the serum, one of the guys had a pie sent to him by his girl. Chess pie. It was so rich it made me sick. But it was worth it.” Steve looked up from stirring the chili to see Darcy smiling at him, that dangerous gleam in her eye that she got with Natasha.

“I have several chess recipes,” she said.

“Bucky’s got a weakness for chocolate,” Steve said with out thinking.

He tensed over the pan and he could see Darcy freeze, knife poised to crack off another chunk of butter. He tried to think of something to add, something that would erase that moment where he acknowledged their connection but his brain was already stuck on the idea of her with them. Of being happy.

“Do you know what I think?” Darcy asked in a whisper.

He turned to her and she set her knife down and looked up to him.

“I don’t think I’m permanent,” Darcy said. His throat went dry. “I don’t think I’m your soulmate because I’m meant to complete you and Bucky. At this point your relationship is kind of…”

“Epic?” Steve suggested. It was what Tony always said.

Darcy smirked, but she looked sad. “I was going to say shitty. You don’t touch each other.” She held up her hand to keep him from interrupting. “You don’t touch each other like lovers. Even like friends. Just as two people in proximity. And I… I know some - not all obviously - of what he’s been going through since he’s come back. It’s hard to feel like you belong to yourself let alone anyone else after Hydra. So maybe I’m not your third. Maybe my being here is your bridge back to each other. Hydra can think what they want about me.” She swallowed. “They can do what they want with me. And it won’t be the blow they thought it would, because I’m not what they thought I was. I’m okay with that.”

Steve thought he might be sick, but what he said was, “Bucky’s words.”
“He hasn’t said them.” There was only the faintest note of bitterness in her tone and she took a breath to erase it before continuing. “And he doesn’t have to. It might be better if he doesn’t. We still don’t know why I’m here.”

Bucky had seen his words in her medical file. She’d been born with both their words, although they had been faint and strangely cold on her skin. It was her trips to the doctor when Bucky’s words would clear on her skin for weeks or months at a time, before turning icy again that must have alerted Hydra to her significance. They timed perfectly with his time off ice. And Bucky had fessed up to seeing them and recited them for Steve after the mini-mission in New York and the result had been such a painful hope that Steve couldn’t stand to look at Darcy after.

Darcy stretched to her tip toes and pulled two bowls out of a cupboard, setting them down near Steve and his now bubbling soup. Like she hadn’t just said she was comfortable with the idea of dying for nothing. Like she hadn’t just told him that the desperate urge he had to hold her, and care for her, and make her a fixture in his day wasn’t really there. He wanted so badly to be Bucky in that moment. To give her those words and to hell with everything else.

“You’re wrong,” he said finally, the words making it out of his throat garbled and barely audible. It was the most he could do. It was probably too much.

Darcy stayed staring at the counter as he filled the bowls and left the kitchen, holding her breath.

Steve didn’t tell Bucky about the conversation. He wasn’t sure what Bucky would do, if he would help him break the stalemate with Darcy and claim her as theirs, or if he would agree with her. He wasn’t sure which would be best.

Bucky loved the chocolate chess pie, and hoarded half for himself with the playful threat of stabbings to anyone who tried steal it.

And that night, when Steve broke down into tears begging without being able to say the words, Bucky held him. Kissed him. Touched him and arched against him. Slept next to him. Like lovers.

The sobs were coming a conference room. Bucky could feel the stir of the Soldier in the back of his mind at the broken notes. He took a breath when they were followed by gentling murmurs. He edged in closer until he could make out Natasha’s voice.
“Shhh, sestrichka. It’s just the house arrest. I’ll arrange for us to have a day out and you’ll feel better,” Natasha cooed. Bucky knew every tone of voice and this was Natasha when she lied for herself, instead of for the other person.

Darcy’s answering cries were broken wails and thick gulps for air. Bucky wanted to crush something. Natasha soothed with little phrases and soft hushing sounds. He could hear her gentle brushes through Darcy’s hair, down her back, and the girl’s slow gathering of control.

“This isn’t about getting a longer leash, Tash,” Darcy finally gasped out before another bout of sucking breaths. “I want this to be over.”

Her tone raised every hair on Bucky’s neck and arms.

“I refuse,” Natasha said, suddenly hard.

“Then I’ll ask-”

“Darcy Lewis, there isn’t a soul in this whole complex who would let you serve as bait for those sadists,” Natasha hissed. “Everyone here loves you.”

“They-”


Darcy sobs burst anew. “I can’t, I can’t…I don’t want this-”

Natasha shushed again, gently, muffling Darcy’s wracking cries and moans in her arms.

Bucky was decided before he even knew for sure what that decision was. He was in the conference room and Natasha was doing her best to kill him on sight without removing the shattered girl from her embrace. Darcy hiccuped when she saw him and leaned back but he was beyond being offended that he had scared her, or gentling his expression. He’d been holding on to his words, sitting on
them, repeating them in his head like a chant, not knowing if he would ever have a safe opportunity to say them. But he was destroying her by keeping them.

“Give her to me,” Bucky said to Natasha, in accidental Russian, batting her arms away.

Then he lifted Darcy out of the woman’s hold and against his chest, pressing their cheeks together. Natasha was standing, reaching for a weapon before pausing as he and Darcy sighed in unison. Her arms twined over his shoulders as the rest of her eased against him.

If he was a compass needle then Steve was due North, always the direction he would follow. But now Darcy was home. She was where he wanted, needed, to lead. She was a hearth for Steve’s fire and the soft warm place to sleep in the structure Steve had built for him. Everything else was in the murkiness outside of that and he just… he was going to stay inside and soak this up for awhile.

“You belong with us. We’ll figure the rest out,” he said to her.

Darcy shook in his arms, some mix of tears and laughter.

______________________________________________

“Captain Rogers,” Friday called over the speakers in the gym and Steve sagged gratefully against the punching bag, sucking in air. “Sergeant Barnes requests your presence in the common room when you have a free moment.”

The common room was not a place Bucky often chose to spend time, especially not without Steve, but Friday hadn’t said that it was urgent and Bucky’s own phrasing was gentle. Still… the curiosity. Steve packed away his gear and used the gym showers to rinse off before redressing and setting off to find Bucky. He was not expecting what he found. He knew it was an inevitability, sooner coming than he might have been ready for, but he thought he and Bucky might have had a conversation about it first. Still…

“This looks nice,” Steve said after a few minutes of watching Darcy and Bucky together on the couch. Someone on the television was singing tunelessly, and Darcy’s eyes were red and puffy from crying. But Bucky had his arm wrapped around her shoulders and held her close against him, and her head was resting against his neck and she was smiling faintly at the screen, and his thumb was brushing against the skin of her arm below her t-shirt sleeve, and yes. Steve was ready for this.
Darcy looked up and squirmed for a moment when she realized he was there, but Bucky just squeezed her closer till she relaxed again. Bucky raised his eyebrow at him and Steve wasn’t sure if he thought Steve was under-exaggerating with the term ‘nice’ or if he was asking what he was waiting for. And what was he waiting for, anyways? Even if Darcy had proven herself to be a Hydra threat, Steve would still have accepted what was coming, because Bucky was there waiting for him.

“Hey Steve,” Darcy said and he couldn’t help but grin a little.

“We’re watching puppets,” Bucky said.

“The Muppets,” Darcy corrected. “It’s an old variety show that my parents had on a VHS tape when I was a kid. It’s my comfort television.”

“Okay,” Steve said, and walked over to join them on the couch. They really were puppets, Steve saw. Singing and dancing puppets. Sure. Why not? He turned his hand palm up and sat it between Darcy and himself. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Darcy staring at him, and Bucky staring at her.

“Are you sure?” Darcy whispered.

“Yes,” Steve said easily. She deserved more than that though so he turned to meet her gaze. “I was never sure about shutting you out. I’m so sorry, Darcy.”

Darcy smiled sadly and then slipped her hand into his.

He felt like he was melting. Like the sun was burning off the last chill of the icy sleep he’d had for decades. Darcy sighed next to him. He tried pulling her arm closer to him, hoping the rest of her would follow.

“Nope,” Bucky said, watching the television and squeezing her against him again.

Darcy smiled and patted her lap so Steve stretched out along the couch and rested his head on her thigh, and their joined hands on his chest.
Hydra could just suck it.

Chapter End Notes

HOLY BARF BATMAN!! YOU GUYS!! WHAT? I was not expecting that beautiful reception (like, seriously, you guys brought champagne and flowers and hired a good band not a crappy DJ who made us do the electric slide for three hours) and it was amazing and was like ROCKET FUEL for writing this chapter. You have no idea how great that felt. I know that there are going to be two more sections. I am 75% sure that there will be a fifth. And if there is a sixth it will be epilogueish unless I get backed up in what I have planned. (I thought this and the next chapter would be combined at one point but there was a lot more feelings to get through than I expected.) The next chapter will be shmexxy. And by shmexxy I mean with the sex. After that it’ll be fluffy and plotty because despite how it may seem now, Hydra is not done with Darcy but obviously neither are Steve and Bucky.

Feel free to leave me more rocket fuel!
Chapter Notes

This chapter? Yeah… it got away from me. And the rating went up. If smut isn’t your thing you’re gonna wanna skip that whole giant section in the middle.

“How’s it hanging, Dead Man?” Darcy asked as Agent Suit and Tie walked into the facility commons like he’d been invited. She was perched on the counter with her legs swinging, munching on her personal junk food crack, Chicago Mix popcorn.

“Miss Lewis.” Phil Coulson stopped a few feet away and stared at the stand off in front of him.

Natasha and Steve, two of his favorite people in the world, were bristling at each other in the center of the room, like a pair of feral cats. Steve had his arms crossed over his puffed up chest and Natasha’s hands were twitching for a weapon.

“What are they fighting over?” Coulson asked Darcy.

“I had her first,” Natasha snarled up at Steve.

“Me,” Darcy said, grinning.

“She’s our soulmate,” Steve growled. “You can’t hoard her from us.”

“God, you are clearly an only child. Did no one teach you to share?” Natasha asked.

The night of their first touches Darcy woke up in a super soldier sleeping bag, her entire body bracketed between Steve and Bucky. Their arms crossed over her and around each other and Steve’s face was pressed against her forehead while Bucky’s was nuzzled into her braid. She hadn’t remembered much past eating the takeout Indian food they’d gotten for dinner - and wow, Tony had been a brat about her replacing his generous dining presentations but he was even more of one when he found out that she was taking a night off of cooking. But her soulmate’s hadn’t been reasonable when it came to the idea of surrendering their Darcy Sandwich position on the couch for another
home-cooked meal, so she supposed that when she’d fallen asleep after dinner they’d taken it upon themselves to move her…into their bed. And despite the heat of being nestled between two super human furnaces, Darcy had been pretty cozy and had gone right back to sleep.

And then awoke a few hours later, disoriented and in her own bed, to the sound of fists banging on Natasha’s suite door. Boy. Steve and Bucky had been pissed when they realized that Natasha had snuck into their room and retrieved Darcy from between them. Darcy had been crazy impressed.

Tony had called the week since World War Serum, and it was a constant battle of wills over where and with whom Darcy was spending time. Because, yes, it was amazing to be able to touch and even just happily spend time with Steve or Bucky. But Tash and Jane, who occasionally involved herself in the kerfuffles if they made their way into her lab, were her ladyloves. And she was not going to drop them like a bad prom dress just because she and Steve and Bucky had all collectively decided to take their heads of their asses. She’d have gladly gotten “Well at least tell me you have a valid driver’s license” and “This will not be easy, but I have read your file and you will withstand it” tattooed on her skin in obnoxious pink block letters if Jane and Natasha had needed the assurance. Mostly it was Steve and Bucky that needed a little affectionate coddling. To be honest, so did Darcy, which meant that it was usually her gents that were winning the skirmishes. Natasha was definitely losing her patience.

“They at it again?” Bucky asked, sidling up to Darcy and immediately wrapping himself around her side. Honestly, for somebody who had a stare that could wither a country field, Bucky Barnes was a cuddly barnacle. She batted his hand away from her popcorn as he nudged his head in Coulson’s direction and murmured, “Do we like him?”

Darcy shrugged, and hand fed Bucky a few pieces, her body thrumming as his tongue darted out to lick at the powdered cheese on her fingertips. “He’s okay.” She was pretty sure she could be a spysassin too, with how even she managed to keep her tone. “Also, that’s rich coming from the guy who insisted on sparring with Tash for three hours just because she wouldn’t let you hold me in your lap during an intell meeting.”

“No reason for it,” Bucky grumbled, nuzzling into her neck.

She wanted to flick Bucky on the nose. He was being a tease, always working her up and then backing off and citing ‘gentlemanly behavior’ and ‘wanting to show her respect.’ She wanted him to show her his pecs. And his butt. And, you know, etcetera.

“Someone should break them up before she hurts his feelings,” Darcy said, trying to distract him from his Darcy Smellathon.
She also suspected that Bucky was just as sensitive as Steve when it came to facing the months they’d spent avoiding her - avoiding each other, she’d corrected, because she was certainly a part of that - but Steve’s guilty face just shredded Darcy. She preferred basking in their current glow rather than dwelling on their combined stubbornness. Sometimes she could still feel that sick quease of waiting for Hydra to drop the other shoe but in the past week those fears had been dulled by the pleasant anchoring feeling of being with Steve and Bucky.

“What do you even need her sleeping in your suite for, anyways?” Steve huffed.

“Uh oh.” Darcy blushed.

Bucky pulled back, face alert and smirk in place, glancing between her and Natasha, eyebrows wagging. Darcy rolled her eyes as Natasha tilted her head coyly and smiled at Steve. He turned pink.

“Don’t tease him,” Darcy catcalled before clarifying, “Natasha is a covert cuddler.”

Both Steve and Natasha straightened upon glancing over to Darcy and finally noticing Coulson.

“Phil,” Natasha said. Her face was inscrutable but you didn’t get the Black Widow on a first name basis with you just by keeping a professional relationship. Darcy knew she was genuinely happy to see her mentor.

“Agent Coulson,” Steve said with a respectful nod. Darcy and Bucky shared an amused glance as Coulson blushed a little. “You came with news?”

Coulson nodded once and then looked to Darcy. “Miss Lewis, perhaps you would enjoy catching up with my team? Skye and Fitz Simmons are out on the lawn.”

“Darcy can be wherever she damn pleases,” Bucky growled.

Darcy grinned at Bucky and nuzzled her nose against his temple. Retaliation.

“Phil, any one of us wouldn’t hesitate to share the information with Darcy, so let her judge whether
or not she wants to stay,” Natasha suggested.

Bucky didn’t look especially impressed with her diplomacy, but mostly he was busy petting back Darcy’s hair and brushing her cheek with his thumb. Steve was trying to shift himself in their direction without anyone noticing. It wasn’t working and Coulson was modestly attempting to avert his eyes as he cleared his throat.

“My team found the facility where Hydra held Miss Lewis. We would like to make a visit tomorrow. We believe it is still occupied.” The words were efficient and the tone was apologetic and this time as Steve made his way to his soulmate’s side he didn’t try and be sneaky about it.

“I’m okay,” Darcy said, which was of course a lie. But Bucky had stiffened and moved to shield her and Steve was doing that thing where he arched himself over her - he actually called it ‘tortoise-shelling’ a couple days before during a post-snuggle wind down, because cuddling Steve had a three act structure. And Natasha was giving her a Sad Vogue expression like she knew that Darcy was now suddenly nauseous, breathless, and shivery, which she totally was.

“We’ll…” Steve hesitated, trying to silently communicate with Bucky who was busy staring intently into Darcy’s gaze as she held her breath and tried very hard not to tear up.

“You’ll go,” Darcy said, nodding at Bucky who was grimacing and clearly warring with himself over contradicting Darcy, which he had yet to do all week. “You’ll go, and burn that place to the ground. You want to,” she said looking up to Steve. “And you should. They deserve every thorn in their side we can give them.”

“Darcy,” Steve murmured, his hand falling into hers and leaving her with that gentle push at her back, like a wind brushing her towards him. “If you need us…”

Bucky leaned forward and set his cheek against hers and the answering weight settled all her nerves. “Then where we want to be is with you.”

“I know,” Darcy said, kissing each of their cheeks. “And I would want to go if I didn’t think it would give me a panic attack and a case of hives. Also, I would probably set myself on fire accidentally instead of them. So I’ll sit this one out and Natasha will,” Darcy peeked between muscles at the redhead who nodded immediately. “Tash will stay with me, and keep me updated.”

“We have some more details to go over,” Coulson said, and by ‘some’ everyone understood him to
mean ‘a fuckload.’

“Which is my cue to go find Skye and the DNA duo,” Darcy said, gently nudging the pair back so she could jump down from the counter.

“Where will we find you later?” Steve asked.

“Why don’t you stay with the boys tonight?” Natasha suggested to Darcy.

Darcy shrugged and smiled at the bright look in Bucky’s eyes and Steve’s pink cheeks.

“But no hanky panky,” Natasha added drily.

Darcy scoffed as she left the room. “Lame, Tash. They don’t need your help in cock-blocking me.”

Bucky guffawed. “It’s called respect, doll.”

“I call it a dry spell,” Darcy grumbled under her breath. But she could hear their snorts from behind her. Super hearing to go with their super restraint.

It was fine, she’d be glad later to have them just surrounding her with their bulk and blocking the rest of the world out. They could discuss any further physical developments after this mission. For now, she needed to find Fitz Simmons. They had business to discuss.

Steve and Bucky sat side by side on the Quinjet home, not touching. And Steve knew, he completely understood, Hydra missions were harder on Bucky than the run of the mill alien muck ups. And this one had been… the context of Darcy paired with the restraints, the cages, the needles and wires and tubes, and the countless numbers of ‘biological contaminants’ as Coulson’s scientists had referred to them… Well it made him want to curl up in a hole somewhere. The difference was, he wanted to take Darcy and Bucky with him. Since coming back from the Winter Soldier Bucky liked to be alone
in his retreats. Steve wanted to respect that. He really did. But sometimes he just needed someone with him in this.

It was the middle of the night as they landed, and Steve was glad to find that their welcoming committee consisted only of Natasha. Without Maria Hill there, they would be free to catch a few hours rest before the debrief. Thank god Clint hadn’t called ahead.

“I left Darcy in your suite,” Natasha greeted him, watching impassively as Bucky stiffened and passed them.

“He’ll be okay,” Steve said, surprised at the hoarse tone of his voice. It’d been a hard few days, he reminded himself. And he hadn’t slept through any of it.

“I know he will,” Natasha said, blinking. “What about you?”

“I’ll be…” Would he be fine? He didn’t feel sure of that in the moment.

“Go to Darcy,” Natasha instructed. “She’s a wreck too.”

That shot right down his spine. “Why? What happened?”

Natasha shrugged. “Her soulmate’s had to go to the site of the worst six months of her life, and she couldn’t follow them, and she couldn’t know when they would come back. She just needs to see you safe.”

“Right,” Steve said, already passing Natasha. Seeing Darcy safe now seemed a lot more important than worry about Bucky who he knew would come around within a day or two at most. He jogged back to his quarters and Friday swung the door open for him as he reached it, sucking in a breath as he entered.

Darcy was spread out on the couch, fast asleep, in one of his white t-shirts with the throw blanket barely covering her bare legs. The door clicked shut behind him as he walked over, planning on lifting her up and carrying her to bed so he could hold her. She stirred and sat up breathless as his gloved hand brushed her leg. Her eyes were wide and he could hear her rapid rabbit’s heart beat.
“Hey, darling, it’s just me,” he murmured, kneeling on the floor in front of her. “It’s just me.”

“Steve,” Darcy sighed in a sleepy scratch, a smile blooming for a moment before she looked past his shoulder and her brow furrowed. “Bucky?”

“He’s fine,” Steve said, rubbing her calf with the bare tips of his fingers and reveling in the feel of her skin. “He just…”

“He has a hard time after missions,” Darcy supplied, nodding loosely.

She was so lovely, pale with sleep and her lips bitten pink. He knew he should take her to the bed and tuck her in next to him but he just… needed.

Darcy’s breath caught as Steve surged up against her, his hands cupping at her face and his mouth pressing against hers firm and solid. And for a moment he just had to hope that she wouldn’t be offended by his sudden assault, and then her lips were sliding against his, and her fingers were digging into his dirty hair, and her legs were falling open and folding him between them. After that every decent plan he’d had to be patient and take things slowly went to hell.

Steve slid his hands down her back, thumbs scooping against the lower curve of her breast, before following the path down to her hips and pulling them forward to press against his where his cock was suddenly hard and aching. Darcy groaned into his mouth and she tasted like curry and something sweet and herbal, so he licked his tongue in to find more flavors and rolled his hips against hers. She shuddered and her legs knotted at the small of his back. He raised a hand back to her neck to touch his words and took the opportunity when her head fell back to catch gasping breaths to lick and bite his way down to the dark outline and lave it with his tongue.

“Oh, Steve,” Darcy moaned, rutting her hips back against him, shuddering again as the answering groan vibrated against the skin of her neck. “Please,” she gasped.

“Anything.” Steve whispered. “Tell me what you want.” He pulled her hips farther forward until he could pin them between his and the edge of the cushion, rolling steadily, trying not to press and bruise her. With his newly freed hand he slid it up under her - his - t-shirt and cupped her breast in his hand.

“This. This.” Darcy whimpered as his thumb flicked at her nipple. “More. I’m so close.”
That little admission went straight to his head, or maybe his cock, because he lost any finesse and could only buck against her in response. He felt simultaneously frantic and wholly settled in his skin with Darcy’s body grasping around him and the beautiful crying bird notes of pleasure ringing against his ear. Her body trembled and seized against him as she shouted his name against a litany of curses and pleads, before turning limp in his arms.

He finished his assault on his words, which were sometimes a source of pride and other times a very sore reminder of where they started, and leaned back to take in Darcy’s soft expression. She brushed her thumb against his lip, gathering a little extra spit and smiled.

“You didn’t come, did you?” She asked softly.

He shook his head and was about to tell her that he hadn’t needed to, just wanted to see her happy, to see he could make her happy.

But before he could she said, “Good. I want to feel you inside of me.”

He froze. He had no idea how someone could make such a suggestion sound so simple and innocent, but it sent a shock right down his spine and straight into his still very attentive erection.

“Darcy,” he said, but it came out as a growl.

“Is that okay?” Darcy asked. Then she lifted his shirt up over her head and left it draped over the back of the couch.

“Yes,” he said. He tried to clear his throat to get rid of some of the gravel but it was useless. “There’s just something I need to do first.”

He suckled on the previously neglected breast, working kisses over the arch before lapping at the nipple. As Darcy started to gently flex her hips against him again, a teasing reminder, he hooked his thumbs into the front of her panties and drew them down her legs.

“I don’t want to get the couch messy,” she admitted and then squealed as he cupped his hands under the cheeks of her ass and lifted her right off the cushion, before turning and settling her gently down on the coffee table. Yes, the height was perfect if he sat on the floor. “What are you-? Steve! You don’t have to do that, I just came.”
Steve was busy putting her legs over his shoulders and scooting her forward so that his nose pressed into her belly button. He mumbled against her skin.

“Did you just say, ‘Bucky would kill me?’” Darcy laughed and then moaned and leaned back on her hands as Steve slouched and nodded, his nose brushing against her clit. “Jesus. They don’t mention this as part of the package of 1940’s chivalry…oh fuck!”

Steve pressed kisses against her folds, open mouthed with flicks of tongue, and massaged her thighs on his shoulders, keeping her loose limbed and relaxed. Darcy sighed and shivered and with every few licks against her clit her hips would stutter forward like she was trying to keep herself from riding his face, and hey, there was an idea!

“You can push,” Steve said, only moving back far enough to keep from muffling the words completely. Darcy’s arms shook and she let herself fall back to her elbows. “I like it.” Just to prove he meant it, he buried his face against her skin, lapping and nuzzling. Darcy shouted in response and her hips thrust back wildly, but he just pressed in, his mouth open against her and his tongue working at her opening.

“Oh my god, oh my god,” she chanted.

He kept one hand clamped around her thigh, keeping her from squeezing his neck, and used the other to slowly press a finger in. She was slick and weeping and so ready and he wasn’t average in size anymore so he wormed another in to twist and scissor. He was murmuring praises into her flesh, pausing every so often to suck and nibble her clit between his lips. Darcy was almost completely flat on the table, her head hanging over the edge and her hair brushing the carpet.

“Fuck, Steve, please,” she begged.

He twisted his fingers, palm up, and curled them, and her hips lifted in the air like a magic trick, as he pressed his tongue flat and worked her clit against her pubic bone. The resulting flutter and then sudden clamp on his fingers, so tight it almost hurt, was a beautiful reward. Almost as good as the picture Darcy made, body melting over the edges of the table, breasts heaving into the air. He was tempted to lick her clean, but knew that all the slippery wetness would help her in a few minutes.

Steve sat up to his knees and lifted Darcy from the table. She flopped into his arms giggling and drunk on sensation and he laughed as she wiped at his face with his cowl.
“Captain,” she purred. “You have a dirty mouth.”

“I beg to differ. You were the one cussing up a storm,” he pecked at her nose so she would know he was teasing and got up from the floor to carry her to bed.

Darcy looked to the bed as they entered and then back at Steve. “Do you think he’ll mind?”

“He’ll be jealous, but not angry,” Steve admitted. “He’ll be annoyed with me for not planning it out. We wanted to do something special. Dinner or something.”

Darcy wrinkled her nose, “This is better. I’d have been nervous through the whole date. I like spur of the moment.” Darcy kicked her legs out of his arms to land standing on the bed. She set her hands on her hips and stared down at a grinning Steve. “How the hell do I get you out of that get-up?”

“Better let me do it,” Steve said. There were an impossible number of latches and zippers and he was aching too much to be patient and show her.

Darcy shrugged and reclined on the bed, bending her knees and spreading her legs wide so Steve could watch her brush her fingers over herself. He narrowed his eyes as she skirted her fingers gently across the skin of her pussy.

“Was I too rough?”

She shook her head vigorously, and then licked her lips as he pulled the torso of the suit away. “No, but I’d like to be a little sore by morning.”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he said, stopping at the buckle of his pants.

She rolled her eyes. “I don’t want you to either, but if I’m not walking a little funny tomorrow then we aren’t doing it right.” Steve tried not to laugh and failed. He peeled down the legs of the suit and Darcy whistled. “God. How are you not walking funny?”
“Thanks, sweetie,” Steve quipped, stroking himself and smirking as Darcy sat up straighter and stared.

“Where do you keep the super condoms?”

Steve showed her, and then exhibited saintly patience as she introduced herself to his dick - honest to God, said hello and everything - kissed it’s head, and rolled on the condom.

“Lay down,” she said, gazing up at him through her lashes. Her voice was breathy again, he didn’t know how she did that, flipped from flat and teasing to throaty and wanting at the drop of a pin. “You’ve done all the work so far and I have very specific things in mind for what comes next.”

He thought she meant in regards to the foreplay, so he went ahead and laid down in the center of the bed. She did not mean the foreplay. There was no foreplay. Just a swing of her leg over his hip and then the abrupt settling of herself on to his cock, baring down two inches straight off.

“Jesus Christ, Darcy!” Steve thumped his head back against the wall, and dug his fingers into the mattress, resisting the urge to thrust up further.

Darcy cant her hips back and then bounced her way down, Steve swear-praying all the way to the very base. Darcy wiggled and her ass brushed against his balls and he grit his teeth so hard he thought he might break a molar.

“Mmmm,” Darcy hummed, twirling her hips a little and making him cross-eyed. “Tight fit.”

“Darcy,” Steve snapped. She was evil. She was absolutely sadistic. She felt better than anything he could think of, aside from maybe a tie with the feeling of Bucky buried balls deep with his hand on his cock but this was… an entirely different side of things, no pun intended.

“Give me your hands,” Darcy said, holding her own out, air born. “I’ll need leverage.”

Steve took a deep breath and wondered if he shouldn’t call ‘Uncle’ and ask for missionary before loosening his grip on the sheets and offering up his hands. She grabbed on and immediately began to work herself over on his lap. His mouth hung open in a constant succession of panting breaths, watching her breasts bounce, her eyes fixed on his face as she hiccuped and moaned. He fucking gave up. He bucked his hips, encouraged by her enthusiastic exclamation, and continued as she rode
through her own orgasm and straight onto chasing another.

“You feel so good,” Darcy moaned, losing her rhythm and moving wildly. She fell forward and slapped her palms against his chest. “Fuck me.”

Steve grabbed her hips and took liberties with her body he never would have imagined in all his 100 years. No, that was a lie, but he never imagined he actually would do them. She made him lose his damn mind. When she fell over the edge again, collapsing completely against him, he finally flipped their places, wrapping her legs around his waist, and essentially rutted until his balls seized and a shock settled straight through his hips and he shouted out a dozen inappropriate and downright rude compliments to Darcy. She sucked at the pulse of his neck and let out a little ‘oof’ as he collapsed.

“I’ll move,” Steve mumbled once he could feel his face again. “In a minute.”

“No rush,” Darcy said, patting his back. “Just don’t forget about the condom.”

He didn’t, and he also grabbed a warm washcloth to clean them both up a bit. Darcy was barely awake, which was a reminder that he had woken her up from a perfectly good sleep and proceeded to act like a complete animal.

“I can hear you beating yourself up from here,” Darcy called to him, partly muffled by a pillow, when he went back to the bathroom to rinse and get them both glasses of water. “Just come back to the bed and spoon me and I promise not to tell Bucky that you dry humped me on the couch first.”

Steve surprised himself with a loud laugh and shook off the mood that’d been trying to settle in. She was his girl, and she was happy. Bucky would be happy soon too. Everything was okay right now. He went back to the bed and pulled the covers up over them both.

“Good sex makes me snore,” Darcy said, pressing up against his side and tucking a pillow under his armpit for herself. “Deal with it.”

Steve smiled and then thought her words over and frowned. “Have a lot of experience with that?”

Darcy snorted. “Be grateful.”
Yeah. Okay. Fair enough.

“I just want you both to know that I would be a lot more upset about this if I didn’t have money riding on Steve being the first of the two of us to sleep with you.”

Darcy had a really hard time seeing in the morning. Her eyes were just a lot less invested in the process then - well, no, she wasn’t very invested in waking up generally either. So it took her a minute of rubbing crust out of her eyes and then fumbling for her glasses before remembering she’d left them by the couch…with her shirt…and her panties.

“Hey, Bucky.”

God. Steve’s voice in the morning. It did things to her. Excellent things.

Darcy blinked a few more time until Bucky was in soft focus, standing over them at Steve’s side of the bed. She was pretty sure he was smirking. Actually, it was Bucky, so she was positive.

“How much money?” Darcy asked.

“Vacation to a warm place where I can wake up to the sight of you naked every morning money.”

Darcy smiled, even though she couldn’t help thinking that she probably wouldn’t get to take a vacation until they settled her Hydra situation. And wasn’t that a shame.

“I’m not much for pajamas,” she said instead. “Are you going to get in this bed?”

“If I do, we won’t be leaving for a while. Also, I forgot that I wanted to crack a joke about Steve showing up for the wrong debriefing.”
Steve huffed next to her, and rubbed a hand over his face.

“Lame,” Darcy said to Bucky. “And I happen to have the day off. So you should definitely take your clothes off and join us.”

“Stevie, quit looking at her like a piece of meat.”

“I’m not!” Steve protested at the same time that she said, “You’re the one who told him he has to eat a girl out first.”

Bucky rounded the bed to her side and sat down on the mattress next to her, pulling the sheet back to her waist and taking the opportunity to study every inch of her available. “How’d he do?” he asked, with casual interest.

“Best I ever had,” she said honestly, humming in pleasure as Steve kissed below her ear at the praise.

“That so?” Bucky said, sounding simultaneously delighted and like he thought he could do better.

”You got any tricks up that metal arm?” Darcy asked and her whole body lit up at the answering sound of plates shifting and a soft whirring of an engine.

“I’m going to let Bucky catch up,” Steve said, smugly magnanimous. He sat up and kissed Darcy’s pout. “I’ll make breakfast,” he said, which softened the blow and then he grinned at Bucky. “You’re going to need it, pal.”

Bucky laughed but by the time Steve declared the food ready, and hadn’t he taken his sweet time going about it, Bucky was limp on the mattress and insisted he needed to be hand fed.

“Wimp,” Darcy said, which was rich coming from the girl who’d been face down on the mattress - screaming encouragements - for the past twenty minutes.

Steve took pity on them both and brought in breakfast in bed. And then they had a few more things in bed too.
No offense to Bucky, he will totally get his smutty time to shine. I just honestly could not deal with this chapter being over 5,000 words while still getting through less than half of what I had planned for it. I blame super soldier stamina. Like, geez Steve, we were supposed to get to the big Hydra reveal. I hereby make no further claims as to the number of coming chapters. Be assured that I know where this is going, I’m just underestimating how big the scenes actually are. Hope you enjoyed!
Just an enormous big epic thank you to everyone who has been so nice and encouraging for this story. You are all doing so much good in my life, you don’t even know. Now… please don’t hate me after this chapter. It was a bear to write, and probably choppy, but I needed us to get moving!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Darcy woke to wet pecks across her cheekbone to her ear and down her neck.

“Wake up, Doll.” Bucky hummed into her collarbone. “It’s after ten.”

“Not an object,” Darcy grumbled, keeping her eyes closed tight. “And don’t act like Natasha hasn’t already given you that lecture.”

She could feel his silent laughter huffing against her skin shuffling against the bed where his hands were braced at her sides.

“Pretty lady,” he tried again, nuzzling her cheek. The bed shifted as he sat back and brushed a palm across her forehead. “Hey, you’re feelin’ a little warm. You comin’ down with something?”

“Probably just a summer cold,” Darcy said, shrugging under the blankets and trying to roll over before realizing she was pinned by Bucky sitting on the covers.

“Mmm, well you’re lucky to have two super immune soulmates,” Bucky said, leaning down for a lingering kiss that made Darcy’s toes curl. She’d gotten plenty of attention from her men in the past couple weeks, but it didn’t make their touches any less powerful. Bucky leaned back and tilted his head to the side to examine her. “Will you go see the med staff for me anyways? Just want my girl feeling her best.”

“Sure,” Darcy chirped, because wasn’t that convenient?

Bucky grinned softly at her, and Darcy’s stomach turned a little.

“Aren’t you supposed to be in training?” she asked.

“Yeah, well, my team lead has a soft spot for my girlfriend so he didn’t mind me skipping out for a bit to see her.”

“What a pushover.”

“Are you going to get out of that bed or am I going to have to get in?”

“Is that a real question?”

Steve probably would be a little annoyed when Bucky swaggered back freshly fucked and smirking, but they could make it up to him later.
“Hey punk, where’s Darcy?”

Steve looked up from where he was sitting and sketching on the couch to see Bucky standing in the doorway with his arms crossed. He wondered how Bucky could tell from there that Darcy was missing from their suite.

“With Natasha,” he answered.

“I thought the plan was to get her to spend more time here, not less.”

Steve resisted the urge to shrug and go back to his pen and paper. Bucky wasn’t pouting, like Steve had when Darcy had announced her plans to spend the evening with her friend, he was grimacing with a furrowed brow.

“You know Natasha,” Steve said.

Bucky huffed and shook his head, but made his way into the kitchen to search for leftovers.

“What?” Steve pressed.

“Nothing,” Bucky grumbled.

Now it was Steve’s turn to be annoyed, but Bucky caught him mid eye roll. “Bucky, just…what is it?”

Bucky braced his arms against the counter and for a moment Steve forgot what they were talking about because…damn was he a lucky bastard. But then he caught Bucky’s glare at the counter so he shoved his sketch aside and got up to join Bucky. He leaned back against the counter and tilted his head, trying to intercept his lover’s staring contest with the marble.

“What is it?” he asked again, gentling his tone.

“Darcy,” Bucky ground out before releasing his held breath and sagging towards Steve. “You don’t think she’s being…cagy?”

“I considered it,” Steve admitted. He’d caught her a few times, looking like she was holding herself back from saying something. And he’d caught himself a few times wondering why she would disappear into the lab with Jane or Natasha’s suite when he and Bucky were both free.

Bucky looked up with that raised eyebrow. Did he get that from Natasha, or was it the other way around?

“I just have to remind myself that she’s allowed to be a little cagy, because yeah, we’re all really happy to have moved on from where we were a month ago, but you know…it’s still a lot to deal with.” Steve shrugged. “Hydra had her for months, then we had her on house arrest, and none of us know yet why any of this happened…”

“Yeah, yeah, okay,” Bucky mumbled. His face was half shuttered, and Steve knew he was thinking of his own time with Hydra so he lifted his hand to dip his fingers into the hair at the back of Bucky’s neck where he liked a little scratching - sometimes a little pulling too.
“We love her,” Bucky said, but he sounded a little like the Soldier, gruff and monotone.

“We do,” Steve answered gently.

“We’ll keep her safe.”

“We will.” Steve was surprised with how hard those words were to say.

In another week the tide had turned and Darcy was in her soldiers hair every second, touching, teasing, sometimes just silently watching with a soft and contented gaze. Steve found it very distracting, but he could put up no more than the gesture of a protest at having Darcy watching from the sidelines of training. For the most part Steve soaked up the attention like a cat in the sun. Bucky felt more on edge than ever and did his best to take the nervous energy out in a productive way.

He held her hands pinned carefully over her head with his flesh hand, while the prosthetic braced her ass up as he slapped his hips against hers in the shower. Her open mouth was catching water droplets as she garbled out cries and moans, hiccupsing with every thrust. Her heels dug into his back, sliding over his back every so often.

“Jesus, Buck,” Steve gasped at his side as Bucky’s sudden change in angle had Darcy edging up and down against the wall. “Don’t-“

Stevie, he thought, had the tendency to underestimate their girl sometimes.

“Don’t stop!” Darcy shouted over Steve who fell back, his own hand fisted around his cock as he kissed and nipped at Bucky’s shoulder. Her head fell forward as her body seized and trembled, her nails racking down his back. He forced himself to ignore the lure of her pleasure and push her through another orgasm.

“You getting tired there, Lewis?” he asked, because her cries started to catch and her head fall back to the wall with her lashes fluttering.

“Never,” she said, but her voice was breathier than he really expected.

Bucky got so used to feeling that inkling of something nasty coming around the corner, that by the time another two weeks passed, he’d started to forget why his shoulders were tight and his teeth clenched at night no matter how close he held Darcy and Steve to him. Darcy’s attention had leveled out in their favor and Natasha was being surprisingly sporting about it. She spent her nights in their suite, cooked with Natasha in the morning, and fiddled around in Jane’s lab during the afternoons while he and Steve ran drills. Natasha was missing today’s drill and he was looking forward to needling her about it. Darcy probably wouldn’t let him enforce a Darcy’s-time-tax on Natasha missing training, but he thought it might be worth seeing their expressions if he tried.
But when Natasha did show up he realized with a sudden stab of anxiety in his chest that there was nothing to tease about.

“Steve,” he snapped across the field, running over to the grim woman. “Darcy?”

“She collapsed in the lab,” Natasha said when Steve had run within hearing distance.

“Stark,” Bucky growled. Stark was usually to blame when something went foul in the labs.

“No,” Natasha said firmly. “We think it was a seizure. Come.”

Bucky had forgotten what dread felt like. Like his skin suddenly fit wrong, like he’d eaten weights for breakfast, like there was no ground to walk on.

“Seizure?” Steve shouted as the three of them ran off the field to the medical wing. “Does she have a history?”

“No,” Natasha answered. “But Darcy’s been sick on and off a lot recently and I… I think she’s been keeping this under wraps for awhile.”

“You know more than you’re saying,” Bucky growled.

“I suspect more,” Natasha clarified. “She’s awake now, so you can ask her yourself.”

Steve and Bucky skidded down the halls until Natasha stopped outside one the familiar examining rooms that Sam was always bullying them into after missions. Darcy was inside, reclining with her eyes closed as Jane sat with her tear covered face turned away. Helen Cho stood at Darcy’s side, pulling a vial of blood from the pale girl’s arm. Bucky winced at the sight. As pretty and kind as Cho was, she still gave him chills in those medical scrubs and he hated seeing her hovering over Darcy like that.

“I’ll come back with the results,” Cho said quietly.

Darcy blinked her eyes open, glancing at the three people filling the doorway and taking a deep breath. “Thanks, doc.”

Jane got up from her chair without looking at Darcy and started to follow the doctor out.

“Janie?”

“I want to see for myself,” Jane said, her gruff words softened by their watery tone. But she didn’t look back at Darcy and she wouldn’t meet Bucky’s eyes as she squeezed her way out between him and Steve.

Darcy shifted on the bed smiled sadly at the group still waiting in the door. “You coming in?”

Steve nudged Bucky with his shoulder as he hurried over to her side and Bucky followed, his feet dragging like dead weight.

“I’m going to join Jane and Cho. You can catch me up later.” Natasha’s stare at Darcy was significant enough to make Darcy look down at her hands with a flush in her cheeks.

“Deal,” Darcy called on Natasha’s way out.

Steve didn’t hesitate once their were alone to pull Darcy into his arms and bury his face in her hair, but Bucky watched as Darcy’s hands shook as she lifted them to his back.
“Sweetheart,” Steve breathed, darting back for a moment to press a kiss to her forehead. “Are you alright?”

“I’m okay,” Darcy said. “It was a paroxy- it wasn’t a big seizure. Just a little thing with some fainting.”

Steve huffed and leaned back to stare at their girl who flicked her wide eyed gaze between them and nibbled on her lips. Bucky couldn’t decide whether he wanted to make this easier for her or harder so he just folded his arms over his chest and hovered at the foot of the bed, safely out of reach and in the perfect position to study.

“Does Cho have any idea what caused it?” Steve was trying to keep the hard, authoritarian edge out of his voice. Or maybe he was trying to use a little of it to get Darcy to cough up her secrets.

“Yeah,” Darcy said, and her eyes started filling up. “And I do too.”

Steve was petting back her hair, his look all soft and patient and Bucky just… he felt like he was going to start chipping apart.

“Come on, doll,” he urged, his hands falling to her ankles, soothing at her skin without realizing.

Darcy looked back at him and he could see her steeling herself. “I’ve known for awhile what Hydra did to me… before we all-” She huffed and covered her face a moment with her hands, but they were still shaking and Steve took them to rub between his own. She sagged and continued. “We hadn’t touched yet. I was getting regular tests from Cho because none of us knew yet and…” She took another breath and sat up straight. “Hydra planted mistakes in my cellular structure. Small ones, specially coded. I don’t know all the words for it but…”

“But no one else was in danger,” Bucky supplied.

Darcy nodded, tears rolling over her cheeks. “They didn’t want me to hurt you. Not physically. And after I knew that I couldn’t, and then you said your words I just… I wanted to feel this between us”-

“I don’t understand,” Steve said and he was staring at Bucky.

Poor Stevie. He wouldn’t take this well.

“I’m dying,” Darcy said, lifting a hand up to nudge his face back to her. “My cells are mutating and the mistakes keep replicating. I’m losing motor functions, and respiratory-”

“No,” Steve whispered. He was swaying a little, back and away from Darcy.

“Cho’s been tracking their progress,” Darcy continued. “And she’s been looking for a way to isolate the bad cells but right now their scattered all through my body, rather than clustered like a cancer. I’m so sorry.”

“Darcy, no!”

Bucky looked down to where his hands were still gently cupping Darcy’s ankles as Steve shouted.

“I’m sorry I was selfish and let you both in,” Darcy said in a flooded voice.

“Oh my god.” Steve stumbled back from the bed, his gaze swinging around the room wildly. He’d gone as pale as Darcy and he kept looking to Bucky, like he was waiting for better news. “Oh my
“Hey, punk,” Bucky said, leaving Darcy at the bed to go take Steve by the shoulders and whisper in his ear. “Hang on right, now. She’s needs us.”

Steve was nodding but Bucky could see that the words hadn’t sunk in yet. They would and maybe it would be better if he let it all out where Darcy wouldn’t have to watch. She was bent over sobbing and it was sound Bucky promised himself he wouldn’t hear again. Steve’s nods began to roll until they weren’t nods any more, just stubborn shakes of the head and he ran out of the room. Bucky took a deep breath before turning back to the bed. He lifted Darcy off the mattress and settled himself on it with her in his arms. She leeched onto him, crying into his skin and he took deep breaths, releasing them slowly, until she started following them and her body relaxed.

“I’m glad you gave us some time with you,” Bucky admitted and Darcy froze in his arms. “We needed that, and I don’t regret it. I regret the time we spent away from you.”

“Cho isn’t the only doctor looking for an alternative,” Darcy mumbled and he hated how small and defeated she sounded. “She sent samples to Betty Ross and-”

“Good,” Bucky said. “Because right now all Steve and I can do is take care of you and make you comfortable. Do they know how long…?” Those words at least, he could not say.

“Another six months at least but… it could get really bad before the end.”

Bucky wiped his own tears against her hair and hoped she wouldn’t feel them.

“Steve?” she asked.

“He’s busy blaming himself. He’ll work himself up for awhile, then he’ll come back after it’s out of his system. Hydra was smart and they gave us a battle we can’t fight for you.”

“It’s not his fault.”

No. It wasn’t. Bucky wanted to hate the words on her skin that marked her as theirs and had caused all of this but there was nothing about the feel or scent or look or taste of her that he could regret. He couldn’t honestly say that he wished she wasn’t a part of him.

“I thought it would be me,” Bucky whispered. “I never thought Hydra sent you to have you kill us or manipulate us. I assumed I would be the one. That there would be a trigger we never found and it would make me hurt you. And then Steve would…”

“Fuck Hydra,” Darcy sighed.

Steve joined them later in bed, saying nothing just pressing Darcy between himself and Bucky and littering her skin in open mouthed sighs and careful kisses.

Hydra left word on their secure servers the next morning.

WE HAVE THE ANTIDOTE. NEGOTIATIONS FORTHCOMING.
A nurse in the med bay was submitted for interrogation, and when she admitted to passing the news of Darcy’s collapse to Hydra… Well, it was time to clean house again, declared Stark.

Steve announced he was prepared to turn himself in and Bucky’s physical response was only topped in violence by Darcy’s verbal one.

“Negotiations with Hydra do not follow the textbook definition of the word, Steve,” Natasha snapped. It was the end of a day of hair ripping and arguing and circling conversations. Hydra had only sent the one communication and Stark was going nuts trying to figure out the how of that one.

“This is Darcy,” Steve pressed.

Bucky had taken Darcy back to their suite not long ago when she’d started to look too pale with bright spots of anger in her cheeks. He’d given Steve an hour of leeway time to talk with Natasha before they all knew Darcy would insist on being a part of the discussions again.

“I know that,” Natasha said, and he believed the offense in her expression was genuine. “But it could be Bucky Hydra wants in exchange. There’s nothing they want that you can give them to make this situation better. They want to destroy you. Think, Rogers, I know you’re better than this. Strategy.”

Steve sighed and collapsed against the conference table. “They won’t have the antidote ready to hand over. It’ll be a chase.”

“Yes. Probably some archaic puzzle with mythological references.” Natasha said with a sneer, adding, “They like those.”

Steve scrubbed at his face before looking across the table. “Be honest. What do you think we should do?”

“Ignore them,” Natasha said with painful quickness. And before he could Captain America her for that statement she added, with a fallen expression, “What I would like to do is tear down every Hydra hotspot, base, and meeting place until we find some shred of information that could help Darcy. But they are always ahead of us. We need to think in a new direction.”

Despite Hydra’s promise - threat? - no word arrived. Days went by where Darcy was healthy and irritated by Steve and Bucky’s coddling. And then the next morning she would sleep till noon and take piggy back rides around the facility because her legs wobbled. One morning Bucky watched with a sense of hopelessness as Darcy struggled to sip and swallow her own coffee, dribbling it down to her shirt. She laughed, but it was tinged with a nervous hysteria as she asked him to find her a straw.

“Things will only get worse if I can’t have my coffee,” she said, her words slurring slightly.
Coulson and his team came to the base on Steve’s request, since he wanted to be ready as soon as Hydra sent their terms. Darcy and Skye seemed to be distantly related if their attitudes towards imminent danger were anything to go by.

“Girl, please, you need to work on your arch, I’m starving over here.”

Darcy and Skye sat on opposite sides of the couch with a cartoon on in the background, Skye launching popcorn kernels into the air in Darcy’s direction as her arms lay limply in her lap. There was a lot of popcorn on the floor and working its way into the depths of the couch as far as Bucky could tell but Darcy was laughing as one hit her on the cheek and fell to the floor.

Darcy saw his approach out of the corner of her eye and turned to smile at him. “Hey. I’m having a bad arm day.”

And here he’d thought she just liked the way he washed her hair when she had him helping that morning.

“Honey, you want me to make you a sandwich?” Bucky asked, leaning down to peck at Darcy’s cheek, and rubbing the cheddar powder off with his thumb.

Darcy’s eyes widened for a moment before both women broke into giggles. “Yes,” Darcy said finally. “And later I will explain why that is the best thing you have ever said.”

Bucky shrugged. Darcy could be especially obtuse while Skye was around. He made his way into the kitchen and set to work.

“I do not recommend you throwing her bites of it though,” Skye said, rising off the couch. “She’s lousy at catching things with her mouth.”

“For Friday, will you take pictures of Bucky feeding me my sandwich?” Darcy asked. “I feel like it’s going to be super cute.”

“I will save them permanently to the server,” Friday intoned.

“That’s going to be barf worthy cute,” Skye said with a nod. “I think I’ll skipping the viewing party and go conference with Fitz Simmons. Catch ya later, Darce.”

Darcy waited until Skye had left the room before bellowing, “Woman! Where’s my sandwich?!”

Darcy was having a good day, physically. All her parts were working. So well that she’d gotten the jump on her menfolk that morning in bed, and got them worked up before they could remember that they’d been trying to go easy on her. If she was walking a little funny it was totally unrelated to Hydra today.

Everything else was going to shit though.

Hydra had sent them a letter. Had sent Captain America and the Winter Soldier the letter, to be specific. To be more specific, it was a note, or maybe an invitation. Tomorrow’s date and a set of coordinates. No, Come alone or else. No, We are going to trade Bucky for the antidote.
“That is the trap-iest trap that’s ever been laid,” Tony had said succinctly, for once.

Darcy agreed.

Steve and Bucky were keeping tightlipped on how they would respond and Darcy suspected that they were planning on leaving while she was asleep.

Jokes on them, she thought.

 Except the joke was on her too, because she wasn’t sure her plan was so ready. And failure would really suck because no matter what Steve and Bucky were going to be pissed. But the alternatives weren’t much better.

So Darcy made dinner, just for her and her soulmates, and waited for her cue.

Steve wrapped his arms around her shoulders as Bucky set the table and she plated up the pasta and fancy pants salad she prepared - which was a shame, she’d have to try the recipes again later.

“Everything’s going to be alright, Darcy,” Steve said gently against her cheek. He could probably hear her rapid beating heart.

“I’m holding you to that,” Darcy said, eyes flicking to her phone. “Now go sit down. We’re ready.”

I’m not ready, she thought, but it’s time.

And thankfully her phone chimed as Steve and Bucky both sat down.

**Message from Skye**

_I’m in._

Darcy pulled the dart gun out from the oven drawer and checked the cartridges. She had spent weeks debating this next part. Who to shoot first? She left the three plates on the counter.

They weren’t looking when she came around the corner, which made it a little easier to raise her shaking arm - she would pretend the shaking was Hydra’s fault.

“I’m sorry,” she said, and fired at Bucky just as his eyes turned to look warmly at her. She aimed at Steve and fired quickly, worried that his reflexes might win out over his shock. They did not.

She left her soulmates slumping in their seats, slippery sounds that might have been attempts at her name fading into sleep. Jemma would be so proud to know her tranquilizer worked.

Chapter End Notes

GAAAAAAAAHHHHHH. I hope this was okay. I am, probably obviously, unbeta’d and not always super patient when it comes to revising things rather than posting them. And yeah. I probably could have kept going into what’s coming next. But this was such a great (evil) chapter ending and I promise not to leave cliff hangers again.

Anecdote: So I named this story Sleeper and for about a minute it was because Darcy
was asleep when she arrived in the box. And then for another minute it was because everyone would assume she was a sleeper agent. And then I was like OH NO IT’S THE CELL DAMAGE THAT’S SLEEPING. And then I patted myself on the back a little.
Darcy and Skye were watching Adventure Time, because it is GREAT.
Thanks again to every comment, kudos, bookmark, and silent reader. I heart you all.
Captain America, Why Haven't You Returned Our Calls? Sincerely, Hydra

Chapter Notes

This chapter is a little short but it answers the situation I left you in with the cliffhanger. It also, for better or worse, settles the matter of whether this story is more Camp Angst or Camp Fluff. Hope no one is too disappointed, cause I love you guys.

Sidenote: I am not a scientist.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Steve hadn’t felt like this since before the serum, when he and Bucky were still kids in Brooklyn and got their hands on a bottle of moonshine to share between them. His mouth was coated in sour felt and his head felt like a wet sand bag. He rolled it to the side and saw Bucky sagged against their dining table, blinking slowly.

“Darcy,” Steve rasped, trying to shake off the heaviness in his limbs.

“She with Hydra?” Bucky mumbled. Steve wasn’t sure if Bucky was asking if Darcy was working with Hydra, or had turned herself in. Either option was enough to make Steve want to hurl.

That was when he saw the two clean glasses of water on the table.

And he just knew that it was an apology. Sorry for drugging you.

It took a few tries to get his arm to wake up enough to get a good grip on the water glass but he drank it down and it felt like he was flushing the garbage right out of his brain. He lifted Bucky up from where he was still slouched against the table and helped him swallow down the glass of water. Not waiting for it to kick, Steve lifted Bucky out of the chair and dragged him stumbling to their suite door.

“Friday, locate Darcy Lewis.”

“Darcy Lewis is not on the base, Captain,” Friday announced. “She has not been on facility grounds since before my system was hacked.”

“Is anyone else missing?” Bucky growled.

“I- do not currently have access to that information.”

“We’ll take that as a yes, Friday,” Steve said as Bucky lifted himself and they both jogged down the hall. “And you might want to report all this to Stark.”

“I have done so, Captain. It is now relevant for me to inform you that Agent Romanova has recently awoken from the same sedation as yourself. She is making her way down to lobby security.”

“Thanks, Friday,” Steve said out of reflex.

Jarvis before he was Vision would have responded with an equally reflexive response but Friday remained silent. Tony said she was still ‘learning.’
Natasha looked the most undone Steve had ever seen her, hair mussed and eyes narrowed and studying every inch of the lobby. Her body movements were static and unorganized and she was stubbornly keeping her body turned away from Clint who had a rapidly bruising - well, everything, but mostly - face.

“Did she- did she shoot you?” Natasha asked, a flicker of pride coloring the gray distress in her face.

“Where the hell is she, Barton?” Steve asked.

Clint shrugged and Natasha shook her head, “He doesn’t even know. Didn’t make her tell him.”

“You told me to trust her,” Clint said, his nose plugged with bloodstained tissues.

“She wanted to give herself back up to Hydra,” Natasha snarled.

“I thought that was awhile ago,” Clint mused innocently.

Steve was half tempted to let Bucky take a few swings at Clint but thankfully they were distracted.

“She’s not with Hydra.”

Jane Foster stood dwarfed by the enormous glass doorway and shadowed by the sun.

“Come outside.”

Jane had barely made it to the walkway before they had caught up with her but she didn’t pause in her pace even as Bucky ran ahead to try and block her.

“What do you know?” he asked, his tone almost metallic in it’s coldness.

“Darcy has been working with Coulson’s scientists and Skye since before you three sealed the bond. I don’t know the specifics because Darcy only left me a note, handwritten - low tech is about as sneaky as it gets in this super computer complex.” Jane took a breath and shook herself off of the rant. “They have a plan, not for taking on Hydra, but for taking on the cell damage Hydra designed. She’s not on facility grounds. She’s above it.” Then Jane pointed up into the sky where Coulson’s plane was hovering just in front of the cloud line.

“Do you have the note?” Steve asked.

Jane pulled a folded slip of note paper out of her shirt pocket and passed it to him. “You’re welcome to read it, but it’s coded like she would code my notes for me. I think what you’re looking for is at the end. Where she says that they’ll land when they know it’s safe for everyone.” Jane’s lips pressed thin after speaking.

“How do we get it down?” Bucky asked, glaring up at the sky.

“There’s no way to retrieve it remotely and there’s nothing we can do from here that’s safe,” Natasha supplied immediately.

“I’m going to kill her,” Steve muttered. “I’m going to put a damn tracker in her, and an ankle monitor, and then I’m going to handcuff her to me for the rest of her life, and then I’m going to kill her.”

“Who the hell is that?” Bucky snapped, watching a sporty red car pull up the drive.

It was Coulson and Agent May looking harried and irritated.
“Where’s my plane?” Coulson asked.

And that’s about the least polite he’s ever been in front of me, Steve thought.

“Where have you been?” Natasha parried back sharply. “Your team took Darcy into the air for an experiment.” Bucky winced and turned away from the plane and the crowd they were gathering as she continued catching up her former superior in a toxic tone.

“Skye gave us a false lead for intel gathering on Darcy’s condition,” Agent May answered drily. “She sent us to a wild geese farm.”

Clint tried and failed to stifle his snort of amusement.

“What exactly about this do you find so funny,” Steve snapped.

Clint narrowed his eyes into that sniper focus and for a moment Steve wasn’t sure he actually wanted to know, but then Sam was running out of the front of facility towards them shouting.

“They’ve just sent word. They’re coming down.”

And sure enough the plane was making a careful circuit in the sky, preparing to land.

“You might want to park your car somewhere else, man,” Sam added to Coulson as everyone continued to stare up.

“Right, everyone in,” Steve ordered. “I want them clear to land wherever they can.”

That the plane, when it landed fifteen minutes later, landed closer to the medical entrance than it did the front, was not reassuring. Less so was the sight of Darcy being wheeled out on a stretcher, legs and arm’s strapped down as she writhed. Steve was skidding to halt, having run through the facility to meet them, as the two little scientists and Skye were running past him with the stretcher. Darcy’s skin was damp with sweat and vibrating between a sickly green paleness and a hot and bright flush of red.

“What’s happening?” Bucky barked.

The scientists began rattling off chemical responses and numbers and letters all blended together.

“What the hell does that mean?” Steve asked, he and Bucky running along to keep up.

Darcy’s eyes opened for a moment, unseeing and a brilliant ice blue, before slamming them shut again.

“She’s having a reaction!” Skye said.

And wasn’t that spectacularly unhelpful.

Cho and her team joined them at the stretcher, attaching monitors and wires and trying to hook Darcy up for fluids, until there were so many people around the girl that Steve and Bucky were squeezed out.

“Stevie, I can’t—” Bucky gasped, turning into him. Steve took Bucky’s hand, the one he’d taken in greeting when they’d met as soulmates, and clung.
Darcy had stabilized within fifteen minutes of being brought in, although she remained asleep and to Bucky’s discomfort, strapped down.

The truth came out thusly: She had given her samples to Fitz and Simmons upon meeting them. She and Skye together had invented the idea that some variation of the super serum might be enough to correct the mistakes forming in her cells. Simmons’s recipe, translated through Skye, had been ‘a teaspoon of a traditional serum derivative, the best replication of the one that made Captain America, a pinch of Terrigen Mist that made Inhumans for an accelerant and, like, just a little sprinkle of Extremis, you know, in case.’ Bucky thought they were lucky Darcy hadn’t just exploded on the spot. There was no word yet on whether or not the ‘Lewis Serum’ had done it’s job, and less word on what else it might have done.

When faced with the choice of ripping into the three members of Coulson’s team, or sitting in a quiet vigil at Darcy’s side, Bucky had chosen the latter. Steve had opted for the former for all five minutes before he realized that Natasha was feeling especially vicious after having been sedated by her partner and he just wasn’t in the mood to play Captain America anyways. Darcy’s breathing was easy and even and made them both feel marginally less frantic and ready to break something.

“What do we do?” Steve asked.

“What do you mean?”

“If she’s okay, or … or if she’s not, or if she’s still sick but a super human,” Steve rambled. “She tranq’d us. She kept this from us.”

“Stevie, what were you planning on doing about the meeting with Hydra?” The one they had soundly missed now, Bucky remembered with a bubble of relief.

“I-” Steve stalled.

“Because I was planning on incapacitating you and going alone,” Bucky admitted.

Steve gaped at him. Then he swallowed and looked back to the bed. “Same,” he muttered.

“I’m a little impressed, to be honest,” Bucky said. “She got the drop on us. And her plan didn’t involve anyone turning themselves in to the worst organization on the planet.”

“Are you suggesting we congratulate her on her subterfuge?”

“No, I’m suggesting we focus on whether or not she’s okay,” Bucky said. Steve flushed and sank into his chair. “Also, I suggest we use this as emotional blackmail occasionally when we need her to actually listen to us for once. Can you make your ‘America is disappointed in you’ face at her when she wakes up?”

“Because nothing says ‘I worried for you’ like emotional blackmail,” Darcy rasped from the bed.

“We gotta stop lettin’ you hang around the Black Widow,” Steve grumbled, even as he sat up from the chair to lean over Darcy in the bed and cup her face in his hands. “You keep sneaking up on us.”

“Give me some room, punk,” Bucky said rounding to the other side of the bed. He unfastened the restraints, doctor’s orders be damned.
Darcy caught his hand in hers and her touch was several degrees warmer than he’d memorized, but her skin was back to it’s usual color and her eyes had faded from that backlit blue to their standard cloudy day. Steve was slipping his hand into her hair and Bucky reached up to subtly check Darcy’s pulse. It felt like a rabbit’s steady thrum, twice as fast as before and a little slower than Steve’s or his.

“It changed you,” he said, thumb stroking across the side of her throat.

“Did it…have the tests come back?”

“Not yet.” Bucky turned her hand over so he could press his face into her palm and leave a kiss at her wrist. She still smelled like Darcy too. He added it to his inventory.

“Damn. I was planning on using good news as leverage against everyone being really mad at me.”

“Leo Fitz said the odds were equally likely you could have died, Darcy.” Steve’s stern tone was slightly dulled by the fact that he was dropping reverent kisses along her forehead.

Darcy pulled back to glare at him. “He did not! He said it was statistically impossible to predict the odds of results that have never been stable. There were no odds, Steve.”

“Darcy.” It was somewhere between a command and a plead for mercy.

She relaxed back against her pillows with a grimace. “Right, sorry.”

“There was a chance you could have died, and you knew that,” Steve clarified.

“I was dying,” Darcy said. “And there was a chance that if we tried to work with Hydra more people would have died. You or Bucky could have died. Or Tash, or Sam or anyone.”

“What do you think would have happened to us if you had died up there?” Bucky’s thumb was traveling up to run over her bottom lip. “You didn’t give us a chance to say goodbye.”

Darcy smiled sadly. “You guys don’t say goodbye, though. You just keep fighting for each other. I wanted to fight for you too.”

Steve’s eyes were watery and his own chest felt over full and they were just doing a lousy job of expressing reasonable anger. She’s alive, he thought. She’s alive, and we stood Hydra up.

“No more big secrets,” Bucky said. “It’s going to have to be a rule. You used your quota up.”

“I promise,” Darcy said immediately. “I will hide no pertinent information and formulate no further sneaky plots unless you are both in on it.”

“Darcy,” Steve said very sternly, “This is going to take time to forgive. And I love you.”

Steve nudged Bucky’s hand out of the way to kiss their girl, pulling at her lips as she arched up off her pillows. Bucky caught her answering whisper as Steve pulled away, a happy smile on his face. She looked nervously over at Bucky and he shook his head, trying not to feel so dopey. Of course, a few hours before he’d woken up thinking she’d walked straight into Hydra’s hands, so he supposed they were in a comparatively good place at this point.

“Definitely not saying goodbye now, doll.” He took a kiss for himself, reveled in the reminder of her taste and pulled back an inch to tell her, “I love you, Darcy Lewis, even though you did shoot me.”

“I love you,” She said, cheeks pink and wearing the shy and private smile she had in bed in the mornings. She fell back to her pillows again and a smirk started to wiggle and grow on her face. “So
on a scale between a couple pieces of plywood and a dirt floor, to a full complex with baseboard heating and trampoline suspended beds how In the Doghouse am I right now?"

“Darcy! Darcy!”

The doorway filled up immediately. Skye looked giddy and triumphant, and with one glance at Steve he knew that somewhere further down the road they’d be having a chat with her about encouraging Darcy in life-threatening schemes. Jemma Simmons and Leo Fitz crowded together at the edge full of anxious activity, but smiling all the same. And Natasha hung back, still and composed with her mask back in place, which was probably the biggest clue as to what was coming. Helen Cho slipped between all of them, notes in hand, but Skye beat her to the chase.

“It totally worked!!”

Bucky was surprised by the sudden exhale of breath from Darcy, something between a nervous giggle and a grateful sob. He turned back to her and watched her shake and cover her face. His chest eased as he realized that she wasn’t as flippant as she wanted to seem, and both Steve and he bracketed her on the bed. She pulled his arms around her and buried her face against Steve’s chest as Cho clarified with her usual good nature.

“All samples came back clean of cell damage. I’d like to keep taking samples today, and then every twelve or so hours for the next few weeks. Not just to check for any remnants of damage. The changes in your physiology and biochemistry are fascinating, and I’d like to compare it to the samples we have from the Captain and Miss Potts and Skye’s own samples…”

Bucky leaned down to whisper in Darcy ear. “No doghouse. You can sleep in the bed tonight.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope that felt alright to you guys. I know it was quick to resolve and a lot of people thought we were in for a big Hydra thing but generally speaking I’m a smooth sailer and I just want to keep on trucking and I totally just mixed my metaphors…

Just two or three chapters left now. (Did I say that in chapter two??)

Next chapter should be chock full of fluff, Natasha expressing her feelings on other people using subterfuge, finding out what the ‘Lewis Serum’ actually did to Darcy, and some smut. And then there should be some plot soon too. It’ll take me a little longer to get out but I like keeping things within the range of a week.

You’re all perfect. And I would bake every single one of you a nice pie because nothing says love like a pound of butter. Leave me some sugar?

Also, I may be in the market for an experienced beta reader for my next story cause I want it to be more fantastical and that requires someone making me proofread. (It’s gonna be Darcy/Bucky and if you’re familiar with the podcast Welcome to Night Vale it’s bonus points, but not totally necessary.)
Darcy’s back hit the mat with an echoing slap and hot licking sting on her skin. Natasha rolled her shoulders as she righted herself, unruffled, and folded her arms across her chest.

“You might actually have gotten worse at this,” Natasha said flatly.

Yeah, she was definitely still mad about the tranquilizer thing.

Darcy had given a full and flowery and one hundred percent sincerely meant apology to Natasha after Cho and Coulson’s team had cleared out - and after she had convinced Bucky and Steve to just give them a minute. Natasha had answered the monologue with, “I would never have let you take the injection. I understand the choice you made.” And, yeah, that was not a ‘Cool, girl, I forgive your betrayal.’ Not that Darcy had really expected her to.

So when Natasha had said that Darcy would get up with Steve at the crack of dawn - nothing was getting Bucky out of bed before dawn, not even Darcy’s mouth because she had tried and had been surprised at the no go - and come to the gym to train, Darcy said ‘yes ma’am’ and had Friday get her a couple new sports bras. A week ago she’d actually been excited to train with the Black Widow, even if Natasha was still pretty salty about Darcy keeping her in the dark. A week ago she’d thought she might have super strength or super speed or super reflexes or super ability to retain something from what Natasha was trying to teach her. Steve had told her about his epic chase fresh out of the super serum oven and she may or may not have come up with a few scenarios where she had totally kept up with Tasha and done a bunch of amazing flippy things she didn’t know the name of, and yeah, okay, maybe she’d imagined pinning the Black Widow to the floor.

Thirty minutes into their first day of training, she was not feeling so super. She was maybe feeling competent. Natasha simply pushed in response, barely giving Darcy time to catch her breath let alone time to wallow under her crushed hopes. Three days later she was feeling less than competent and was convinced that the only thing enhanced about her was her healing. She’d taken to waiting in the gym showers under a hot stream of water for her bruises to fade before leaving to find Steve and Bucky.

A whole week later and she was barely managing a good defense, let alone finding an opening for any kind of offense. Not even a flick on the nose or a hair pull.

“Well I’m not getting better from down here,” Darcy said, raising a hand and waiting for Natasha to take it and pull her up from the floor. She tried to hide her cringe as her back and hips cramped and cracked in response to her movement.

Natasha’s eyes narrowed and she stepped back.

“Would you like to take a break?” Natasha’s offer was crisp but not unkind. And honestly, Darcy really wondered if maybe they shouldn’t work backwards to some yoga or something.
“Nah, I can do this all day,” she said instead. “Come at me, bro.”

She could add another ten minutes to her recovery shower.

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Perhaps more successful than Darcy’s transformation to Super Ordinary All The Time but equally a result of it, was the way Hydra seemed to be completely flummoxed by Bucky and Steve not walking directly into their trap. There had been two days of complete radio silence, Hydra holding all of it’s head’s breath at the same time, and then a series of pesky disturbances, a comparative kitchen fire to their usual explosive setbacks. Like a child, trying to garner attention. Darcy was still on house arrest, since her recovery needed to be kept secret, and Steve decided their best shot of undermining Hydra’s plans would before him and Bucky to lie low as well. According to Tony’s global security intell, and the school yard taunts Coulson’s team was receiving any time they met Hydra agents on the field, Hydra was under the impression that Captain America and the Winter Soldier were sitting vigil at their dying soulmate’s side.

Steve thought it was starting to feel like a vacation.

Darcy’s hips were curling in a hypnotizing pattern from her spot at the sink. She was rinsing off the last of the dishes from their team dinner as she hummed along to the music she’d set playing. Honestly, Steve didn’t really like the song, the singer’s voice was grating and the musicians were clumsy. But Darcy had that sway in her body that meant she thought the song was sexy, and for Steve that was enough of an incentive to let it play. Bucky was attempting to dry dishes but his body was turned towards Darcy and his eyes were studying her movements. He’d been working on the same plate for the better part of the song.

“You think it’s dry yet?” Steve whispered in Darcy’s ear, curling up against her back and resting his hands on her hips so he could track them and try to mimic the sinuous shapes.

The rest of the team had gone off to their separate apartments after a long, wine-fueled feast. And while he and Bucky tried to coax Darcy out of the kitchen before the clean up, the honest fact was that everything would be in the same mess they left it tomorrow evening if it wasn’t dealt with.

Darcy glanced to her side where Bucky was still working on the plate, his pupils a little darker with the introduction of Steve in his eye line. She snickered down at the soapy water while Steve stepped back to roll his sleeves up.

“Hey.” Darcy laughed as Steve pressed her against the counter, flush against her, and reached down to dip his arms into the warm water to join hers. “You know this isn’t helping, right?” Darcy asked, her voice airy and warm.

Steve found a bare patch of skin where her - or was that Bucky’s - t-shirt had slipped a little across her shoulder, and leaned down to mouth at it, his hands focusing more on running across hers under the water than giving any attention to a dish.

“Shit,” Buck said, finally setting the plate on the counter. “We done here?”
Darcy was arching up and back, and if she thought Steve couldn’t tell that she was rubbing herself against the counter then she really did underestimate him.

“I think what’s left can stay to soak,” Steve murmured into Darcy’s shoulder before pressing his teeth into her skin.

“Fine,” Darcy gasped, trying to sound harried but only managing desperate.

“Friday is there anyone in the halls on our way to our suite?” Steve asked.

“The halls are clear, Captain.”

Steve stepped back, and Darcy sagged and grabbed the counter to steady herself before being promptly scooped up by Bucky and thrown over his prosthetic shoulder.

“Oof! Are you serious right now?” Darcy cackled and then reached down to stuff her hand in Bucky’s back jean pocket and squeeze.

By the time they’d made it to the suite, Darcy’s legs were around Bucky’s waist and his hands were rucking up the back of her shirt and digging into the hair at the nape of her neck.

“Tony has so much footage of you two now,” Steve mentioned as he opened the door.

He watched hungrily as Bucky deposited Darcy on the nearest kitchen barstool before peeling the shirt up and over her head, her hair falling over shoulders in every direction and only just brushing against the tops of her breasts in their pale blue bra. His chest ached with how beautiful they were together in their stunning contrasts, dark and pale, Darcy’s soft curves and Bucky’s hard angles.

“What do you think it looked like in the kitchen, eh punk?” Bucky said, taking a deep breath and pushing his hair back as Darcy leaned so far forward on the stool she almost toppled over while trying reach Bucky’s neck with her lips.

“I was being helpful.”

“Everyone needs to take their clothes off,” Darcy announced with an irritated huff. “Stat. I am super serum levels of horny right now.”

They did not need to be told twice. In less than a minute they had stripped and Darcy was perched back on the stool, Bucky kneeling with his face licking and nipping at the insides of her thighs as Steve stood at her back, kissing her messily and rolling her nipples gently between his fingers. She tasted a little bitter and tart, like the glass of red wine she’d sipped from.

“Please,” Darcy said, trying and failing to twist and arch without anything to brace against. Her knuckles were white against the seat of the stool. “I can’t wait. I need you both. Please don’t make me wait.”

Steve cupped her breasts in his palms, reveling in the weight and warmth, and soothing his tongue - here was salt, her flavor almost nutty in it’s richness - along her jawline as Bucky massaged her calves.

“Just don’t wanna wear our girl out too early,” Bucky teased. Steve could hear the wolf’s growl at the back of his throat and knew how he like to make their girl beg.

“Don’t make me send Steve down there,” Darcy snapped.
Steve was a little smug, and a little insulted, at how quickly that got results. Darcy fell back against him as Bucky threw her legs over his shoulders and spread her wet flesh with his metal fingers, mouth latching on and sucking at her clit and his free index finger pressing deep into her. Steve moved his hands to support her back, giving him room to lean over and pepper kisses across her collar bone, before ringing his tongue around one pink nipple and pulling it into his mouth. Darcy’s hands clamped onto his shoulders and he could see her toes digging against Bucky’s spine as her voice echoed up against his chest like a bell, and strands of her hair licked against his over sensitive cock. Her body levitated right off the stool as she came with an excited cry, suspended in their hands. Steve twisted as she trembled, holding her up until he could settle her against him on the stool, his erection heavy and pressing against her back as Bucky nuzzled carefully against her pussy, looking a little drunk, eyes almost black.

“Better?” Steve asked, pressing a kiss to her warm cheek, and reminding himself that the extra heat there was normal, not a symptom of sickness.

Darcy sighed, limbs soft in his arms and her fingers carding through Bucky’s hair, as he nuzzled the soft pillow of her thigh. “A little,” she said. “But I said I wanted both of you.”

Steve’s eyes widened. Bucky groaned into the crease of her hip. It was something they’d discussed, and occasionally prepped for, one of them gently thrusting fingers into her ass as the other fucked her. Steve and Bucky had left the actual timing of it up to Darcy since she’d admitted to being excited at the idea, but nervous about the reality.

“You sure, sweet?” Steve asked, trying to ignore the eager twitch of his cock at the thought.

“Mmmhm,” Darcy said, craning her neck to nip at his jaw. She met his eyes, steady and relaxed, and then looked down to reassure Bucky. She wiggled her way off his lap, taking his hand and waiting for Bucky to stand before leading them like ducklings into the bedroom.

“Lay down,” she said to Steve. And yeah, okay, he knew he had a thing for commanding women but even he was surprised by the way Darcy’s soft tone made his thighs quake. So he sat down on the bed and eased himself back against the pillows. Darcy made herself at home over his lap, leaning forward to tease her breasts against his chest and kiss him slowly and thoroughly, her tongue swirling against his until she had to catch her breath. She worked herself against him, slicking him up with her wetness and Steve let himself thrust up, bumping his hips against hers until he could see that precise swallow of her throat and catch in her breath that meant she was ready. She sat back on her heels as he grabbed condoms - one for Bucky too - from the bedside table and took him in her grip, rolling on the latex and guiding him inside with a mutual sigh.

Bucky rested his chest against Darcy’s back, lifting her hair up off her neck so his mouth could trail wet tracks. His hands wrapped around her hips, manipulating her movements against Steve, gliding her up slowly, and inching back down halfway before stroking her down in one sudden dive that made Steve’s heart leap up into his throat and made Darcy’s eyes flutter up into her head. Darcy took over the rhythm, making them both grunt and him reach out to the edges of the bed for a grip on something he couldn’t bruise. She hiccuped a little squeal as Steve thrust up against her and then her head fell back with sudden gasp and an internal clench of her muscles that made him mutter curses he hadn’t used since he’d been on the road with the Commandos.

“Relax, doll,” Bucky murmured, and then sucked at the skin behind her ear. Steve held his breath as Bucky worked one and then another lubricated finger into the tight rosebud of Darcy’s ass, his metal hand digging into her round softness, massaging and easing her.

Her answering groan and the faint brushing sensation of Bucky’s fingers along with the slow, hungry pulse of Darcy around his cock made Steve feel half feral. He sat up, making Darcy
whimper, and they met in a tangle of tongues and clash of teeth, his lips pulling at hers. His breath washed over her neck before he tilted her head back and set his teeth at the curve of her throat and shoulder. Her moan purred into his ear and shoulders sagged in submission, opening her neck up to the grip of his jaw. Steve felt it the moment Bucky entered those first few inches, the way she seemed to swell tighter around him, the full body shudder. His head was cloudy with lust and he was afraid of biting down too hard, and tearing at her skin. He lay back on the bed and pulled Darcy down with him, his tongue wrapping against hers then trailing to press at her pulse.


Bucky met his eyes over Darcy’s shoulder to share the same stunned happiness, that wide eyed shock that they’d found her and she was safe here with them and they were making her happy.

“Damnit, move,” she added, sweetness transitioning to urgency.

Bucky obeyed with a tight grin, rocking carefully deeper and making the two beneath him whimper and tremble. Steve was panting against Darcy’s hair as she kissed and licked a necklace of patterns across the top of his chest, sometimes biting down outright to muffle her shouts.

“Stevie, punk, you gotta,” Bucky grunted and Steve answered with careful upward thrusts, until they were rocking in unison, working in a tidal motion.

Darcy was sobbing in pleasure, her hands fluttering and grasping at his arms, weaving their names together in her cries. Steve could see Bucky’s pulse jumping in his throat and everything inside of him was narrowing to a deep, sharp point in his groin. Bucky reached his hand between them, fingers stroking at Darcy’s clit and the base of Steve’s cock where it was buried. For one brief moment, at the shock of Bucky’s metal fingers against too sensitive skin and the sight of Darcy flushed and delirious with pleasure, tongue peeking out to lick distractedly at sweat beaded on his chest, Steve was overcome with gratitude towards Hydra. And then Darcy’s body froze, and Steve and Bucky cried out at the sudden clasping flutter, losing all their steady rhythm in desperate jerks and stuttering hips, mouthing at warm skin, hands clasping and fingers knotting together. He could feel Darcy’s cunt grasping and pulling him deeper as her hands clutched at his chest until the tightness released into waves of bone melting warmth and rolling pleasure.

Buzzing white noise faded into heavy, uneven breaths at either side of him. And Steve’s brain restarted after another few seconds managing to translate the streaks in his vision to strands of Darcy’s hair that had fallen across his face. Bucky was purring in his throat and nuzzling Steve’s shoulder. Steve rolled his head to check on Darcy and found her grinning up at the ceiling.

“You good, sweetheart?” Steve asked, feeling his own face spread into a wide smile.

Darcy hummed and turned give him a loud, smacking kiss.

“We didn’t wear you out, did we?” Bucky asked in that ridiculous sing-song tone he thought made him sound innocent.

“Please, I could go all night,” Darcy volleyed back before breaking into a giggle.

It was not quite true. But several hours and a collectively unmentionable number of orgasms later Darcy had proved that she could go just as long as a pair of super soldiers. An enhanced female refractory period was nothing to scoff at.
She couldn’t fly. She couldn’t shoot lasers out of her eyes. She couldn’t even stretch to the top shelf of a cupboard. And she definitely couldn’t get a hit in while sparring with Natasha.

“Focus,” Natasha said, and Darcy narrowly missed a knee to the gut. Which would have been the fourth one that morning.

“I am. I’m focusing on how I want a fucking super power.”

Natasha’s lips twitched for a moment before a single balletic twirl had Darcy in a headlock with her arms restrained, her hands curled uncomfortably against the middle of her back.

“You have superior qualities,” Natasha said, like it was a lunch date.

“Quit flirting with me,” Darcy said, grinning. Natasha released her and let her hair swing in front of her face just long enough to smile. Because yeah, the Black Widow’s hair didn’t move unless she wanted it to.

“You’re trying to use strength against me,” Natasha said. “That won’t work. I’m stronger than you. I’m faster than you. I know the movements better than you do. I don’t want you to fight me, I want you to evade me. I’m teaching you defense and you’re trying to use offense.”

Darcy sighed and rolled the stiffness out of her shoulders, scuffing a sneaker along the floor. “I just want to be a badass like you,” she mumbled.

Natasha came as close to blushing as Darcy had ever seen her, lips pursed and cheeks swollen with the effort of holding back a smile. “Yeah,” she said, “well it took Mother Russia a decade to train me, so can you give me a few months at least?”

Darcy tilted her head to one side, and then the other before frowning. “I’m not especially patient.”

“Shut up and try not to let me pin you before five minutes are up.” Natasha said, and then her body did a little shift and transformed into some cross between runway model and jungle cat.

“Shit,” Darcy breathed before twisting away, ducking under, arching back and using every block, parry and - hey, wait, was she actually starting to remember this stuff?

With every second that passed without Darcy landing face down on the floor Natasha’s strikes transformed into a rhythm that reminded Darcy of a heartbeat. The where of the next hit was unpredictable, but the when became regular. She could take a breath, she could think, she could observe. More often than not her dodge was only managed at the last possible moment, and her lunge away was stumbled, and her block left her retreating back a step. But time was passing at least. Probably not five minutes, but Darcy was certain that it was longer than she had ever managed before. In the end Natasha swung an arm towards Darcy’s neck, distracting her from the approaching foot that hooked at her ankle and landed her on her side, Natasha straddling her waist with one hand holding her down at her neck and another pinning her behind her knees.

Weirdly, Darcy still felt proud of herself.

“Natalia.” The tone was hard and the accent was unfamiliar but it was still unmistakably Bucky if the warm heavy feeling sinking into Darcy’s skin was anything to go by. She couldn’t see from where her nose was gently mashed against the floor. There was a rough and angry rattle of Russian and Darcy felt Tash shrug before answering in the same and rising up from the floor.
Darcy rolled over onto her back and was going to reach to the other woman for help up when she caught sight of Bucky’s thunderous expression and the metallic sharpness of his gaze. Natasha was taking slow but steady steps away from Darcy on the floor, wearing her ‘ass-kicker at rest’ expression. Darcy sat up and Bucky was already there, lifting her gingerly from the floor, hands running so thoroughly over every inch of her it felt more like a diagnostics test than a lover’s touch.

“Hey goober,” Darcy snapped, leaning to the side to block his stare down of her friend. “I’m fine. We were training. You know, like you and Steve do every day. Stand down, Bucky.”

Instead of answering Bucky just took her face into a delicate grip of his metal fingers and tilted it to one side and then the other, eyes scanning every pore. He growled something at Tash and Darcy resisted the urge to bite at his fingers as they brushed against her bottom lip. It certainly wouldn’t hurt him, and she wasn’t sure the alloy his hand was made of wouldn’t chip her teeth.

“She has to know what it will feel like, or the first time a hit lands will be too surprising,” Natasha answered in english.

Which was…that made sense actually. She had always trusted Natasha’s reasoning but it was nice to understand.

Bucky grunted and Darcy could feel Natasha fighting the urge to roll her eyes…or maybe that was her.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, sestrichka,” Natasha said as she gathered her things. Then she smiled and said, “You did well today.”

Darcy beamed as Natasha left. It was the first time since she’d gotten serum’d that Natasha had called her ‘sister.’

“I don’t like seeing you in bruises,” Bucky murmured, flesh hand brushing carefully down her arm where there were a collection of purple marks in half bloom.

“They’ll be gone in a half hour or so,” Darcy said, “I’ve seen worse on you or Steve.”

Bucky’s forehead knotted. “She give you these every day?”

Darcy huffed a laugh and shook off Bucky’s arms, reaching up to hold his face in her hands. “Yes, and they go away every day. Have you ever looked at my hips after we have sex? Giant handprints for twenty minutes. I broke my toe the other day tripping over a chair and made you give me a piggy back ride everywhere for two hours. You didn’t even ask why.”

“You always make me give you piggy back rides,” Bucky protested. He sounded like Steve’s Brooklyn boy again, all flip.

Darcy stretched up to her tip-toes to nip him on the nose before stealing a quick, warm kiss. “Today was my best showing yet. I’ll make you give me a piggy back ride for that too.” Bucky drew a breath and leveled a solemn, tight-lipped gaze at Darcy. But she didn’t like losing an argument so she cut him off at the quick. “Don’t give me that look. Hydra’s not going to give up just cause we’re laying low. I’m not sick. I’m not kidnapped. I don’t want to be helpless.”

“We’re never going to let anyone hurt you,” he said, fierce and honest in a way that made Darcy’s whole body light up and want to wrap itself around his perfect - terrified, stubborn, worshipful, devoted - face. She would thank him later in bed.

“Don’t patronize me,” she said, softening the order with another, wetter kiss, that became two and
then she was leaning against him, his hands warming her back and working out knots that had formed in her training. “Maybe I don’t want you and Steve getting hurt, either. Can’t I protect you too?”

Bucky’s eyes were back to their fresh water blue and his smirk was widening as he answered, “Not stupid enough to say ‘no’ to that, doll.”

“Color me surprised,” Darcy sassied back before giving into the chase of his mouth against hers.

She was having a nightmare. She knew that she was having a nightmare. It was about the doctor, the one who had strapped her to frozen tables, had enjoyed the force of digging needles into her arm, had smelled like rotting onions. Most of what she remembered from Hydra’s labs she remembered in dreams. But this man was sharper. She remembered the sallow waxy skin that stretched over his swollen face. She remembered the exact temperature of his touch, like he’d just rinsed his hands in ice water. She remembered the way he studied her over edge of his long nose, sometimes more intimately invasive than any of his clinical touches, private and memorizing. She wanted to wake up. She would wake up. Wake up, Darcy.

“Wake up, sweet!”

She sat up, gasping, and it was not the first time she’d woken from this dream.

But it was the first time she’d woke in this room.

Where was this room? She’d never seen it before. Slightly barren and undecorated, it had unfamiliar mens clothes draped over an armchair in the corner. A desk covered in papers and anatomical replicas. Every inch was unfamiliar. She could feel goosebumps rising on her skin and it was becoming clearer every second that even this skin was unfamiliar, too tight and different in the wrong places.

Worse, there was something in the back of her thoughts, stirring. Starting to wake.

And…why did she smell like rotting onions?

Steve was shaking Darcy lightly on the bed, waving his hand in front of her unblinking, unfocused blue eyes.

“Darcy! Sweetheart.” Steve’s voice was uneven and Bucky’s hands were clenching and flexing, clenching and flexing from where he stood a few feet away from the bed, body vibrating in indecision. They had tried to wake Darcy slowly from another flinching, restless nightmare - her first in weeks - and for half a second she seemed to be coming to. Then her eyes had snapped open unseeing and her whole body had gone limp.

“Darcy, honey. Darcy, please, wake up,” Steve begged.
“Med labs.” Bucky squeezed the suggestion up out of his throat.

Steve nodded in jerks, arms diving under Darcy’s shoulders and legs to lift her up.

Then Darcy choked out a scream, narrowly missing smacking into Steve as she sat up, and scrambled halfway across the bed.

Steve sat back on heels, hands held up in the air, and Bucky’s hands relaxed as the rest of him froze.

Darcy’s head moved, bird like, as she looked around the room, her body relaxing with every familiar thing her eyes landed on.

“Holy shit,” she breathed. She looked at Bucky, and then at Steve, before smiling shakily. “I think I can do a thing.”

Chapter End Notes

You are all fantastic people, and I thank you. Every time I get a kudos, or comment, or any little thing I blush and think of you fondly! And then I get super pumped to keep writing.

Special thanks go to my new beta (!!!) itsjanetsnakehole, author of I’m the satellite, and you’re the sky. Without her jumping into her position early the above smut would have more than usual amounts of weird word choices and awkwardness. Thanks, friend, you saved a three-way.

Hope you enjoyed. More on Darcy’s thing - and what good it’ll do, in the next chapter.

Side note: I have a tumblr now! It’s has snippets of future works on it, and other tumblrish things. Find me @queenspuppetwriting cause it’ll make me smile a whole bunch.
I Think Of You When I Sleep At Night, Love Hydra

Chapter Notes

OH HAAAAAAYYY I’M BACK HERE YA GO I’M SORRRRRYYYYYYYYYY
Also, Darcy’s thing is not real science (Surprise, right?!) so I’m sorry if it makes less sense than it ought to. Especially in the grammar.

Warning: There is a smidge (teeny tiny see-it-if-you-squint, I think) of dub-con after ‘The next part was an accident, really’ but it is sincerely accidental and very promptly forgiven. I try to avoid that but this kept coming up in my head in one form or another so I decided to handle it as delicately as I could. Beyond that break the way is clear.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She could definitely do a thing. If you asked Jane or Helen Cho for the specifics there were words like ‘projection of consciousness’ and ‘superior empathetic’ and ‘psychic suggestive.’ If you asked Darcy she just shouted “I’M IN YOUR BRAIN, MOVIN YOUR BODY.”

Steve and Bucky had gotten the summary of Darcy’s nightmare about the Hydra doctor, and her subsequent out-of-body in-a-body experience on the way to medical. They seemed fairly dubious. Was she sure it wasn’t part of the nightmare? A waking terror? Darcy rolled her eyes and made them call Thor. Natasha met them in the medical wing, although no one was sure how she’d been alerted, followed by Helen Cho who promptly took new samples and hooked Darcy up to a number of monitors. Thor appeared with a still sleeping Jane in his arms and Darcy interrupted another retelling of her experience to deliver a lecture on allowing Jane to sleep in her lab coat. By the time Darcy had gotten through her third narration and Thor had declared his lightning sister a Völva, or shamaness, and Jane had woken up looking puzzled and grumpy, Helen Cho declared there was really only one thing to do. Test Darcy’s powers.

Thor was the only volunteer. Natasha looked cagy. Jane still looked like she was waking up. Steve and Bucky were settled on dubious and Helen Cho needed to keep hold of her consciousness to record the results. So Thor was plugged into similar monitors and Cho pulled up his standard readings on the holo-board. Then everyone stared expectantly at Darcy who looked back for a long moment before blinking and blushing.

“Oh…right.” Darcy said, looking uncertain. “Let me just try…”

She furrowed her brow, staring aimlessly at a far wall before promptly falling limp and empty eyed against the chair.

Tony made a lot of blonde jokes, and Jane always talked about what a physical person Thor was - not just in bed, but even in his active and emotional responses - and Darcy made a lot of references to Thor’s somewhat puppy-ish tendencies. So she definitely was not expecting to fall into his mind and have it feel so big. She understood that she was seeing out of his eyes, her own perspective
having moved to the right by several feet. It was strange to see Steve and Bucky’s immediate fussing
over her limp body - oh and seeing herself was even weirder, what was the point of a mirror if it
failed to really show you what you looked like this badly?

“Dudes, I’m fine,” Darcy managed, jumping slightly at the low, rumbling tone of her friend’s voice
at her command. Steve startled and stared at her/Thor, almost dropping her head back against the
chair before catching himself at the last second.

“Doll?” Bucky breathed, staring and going pale.

Jane winced and cocked her head. “I just fully realized the terrible potential of Darcy controlling
Thor’s body,” she said.

“Lulz,” Darcy said through Thor’s mouth, for the hell of it.

And as if he was behind her, she could feel Thor’s own amusement and an impish interest in her
experience. But it felt like… like she was standing at the very edge of a cliff, with her back turned to
the empty space and her heels just peeking over solid ground.

“This is fascinating,” Helen Cho murmured, fingers tracking the spiky progress on the holoboard.

Thor/Darcy’s mouth was hanging open, eyes wandering aimlessly around the room - barely noticing
Bucky’s wary approach from the side - before shutting itself in a distinctly Darcy-like moue. One
large hand raised, index finger raised as if politely asking for attention, as if the attention of the room
was settled anywhere else.

“I’m gonna try a thing,” was murmured before Thor’s body seemed to shudder and go still.

Darcy let herself fall backwards into the openness of Thor’s mind. And it did feel a lot like falling,
except instead of emptiness the space was full. Full of memories, and sensations, of horrors, of a
history so deep and so long and so layered that even Thor only kept track of it instinctually, in the
measure of it’s shaping of him. She felt safe, as if Thor himself was carrying her through the map of
his own thoughts and experiences and emotions so that even the most painful were witnessed with a
healthy amount of distant. She thought she could stay here forever. Just one extended Netflix
Marathon of Thor’s life.

The eerie still that came over Thor’s body shifted, but instead of Darcy’s careless slouch his
shoulder’s rose proudly and the rolling chuckle that started in the barrel chest was obviously the
man’s own. Steve looked back down to where Darcy’s face was still cradled in his palms, his chest
squeezing at the empty expression.

“I have her brother Steven,” Thor rumbled pleasantly, his eyes a little glazed.

Before Steve could ask what the hell that meant Darcy was gasping and rising up in his arms, her
hands clutching at his shoulders. Bucky squeezed in behind her, soothing at her sides and tangling
his fingers with the monitor wires. Her eyes were wide and pupils dilated, darting around the room
like they had when she'd woken from her spell in the bed.

“Holy shit, Thor, you’re crazy old,” Darcy huffed.

Thor smiled indulgently, before turning to meet Jane and Helen’s science crazed expressions of
wonder. “I am perhaps not the best volunteer for our Darcy as I am, and my mind is, so far removed
from her own. But it was a most enlightening experience.”
“So enlightening,” Darcy mumbled, still dazed and barely aware of her soldiers’s nervous nuzzling.

Darcy was too dazed to continue that night, and too buzzed back in their suite to fall asleep right away. Steve and Bucky were happy to listen to everything she’d found in Thor’s mind, and Friday was happy to record the pertinent details of the experience and pass them along to Cho. In the end it took two of Darcy’s ‘bedtime music’ albums, and one round of gentle but thorough love-making to get her eyelids to finally flutter shut.

“1. I dated one of those clowns that makes balloon animals for kids parties. 2. I regularly go commando. 3. I have a latex allergy,” Jane Foster recited in front of the gathered Avengers in the medical wing the next day.

“God those are all awful,” Clint muttered to Natasha. “I’m betting on number three.”

“It was a trick, BirdBro,” Jane Foster declared gleefully, pointing to Clint. “They’re all true.”

Everyone held their breath for a moment, even Jane, before Helen Cho looked up from studying the responses on the monitor and shook her head.

Jane took a deep breath and cocked her hip to the side, lifting a finger to her chin to pose in thought. “Okaaaaay…” she hummed.

Bucky shifted the limp Darcy in his hold, smiling into her hair. Jane winked at him and Thor frowned.

“Friday, can you give me some booty shaking tunes?” Jane asked.

Steve was surprised that sentence alone wasn’t enough to make the scientist break Darcy’s hold on her body.

Jane’s slow grind and wiggle leading gradually towards Tony - who looked torn between smug amusement and genuine terror at Thor’s expression - was the last straw.

“Enough, Darcy,” Thor growled, although it looked a little like he was pouting if that was something that a large wild animal could do.

Darcy huffed and shrugged Jane’s shoulders, wandering away from Tony who let out a shaky breath.

“If Janie can’t break through on the threat of grooving all over Tony, then nothing’s gonna work,” Darcy said on behalf of her friend… with said friend’s mouth.

“Heyyy,” Tony whined.

“Me next,” Sam said, with a raised hand.

“I will kill her,” Jane Foster announced on behalf of herself a moment later.

Sam stood and made a series of testing steps and motions. “Just checking for swag,” Darcy said via Sam. She stuffed his hands in his back pockets and appeared to be considering her options.
“I can see you squeezing his butt,” Bucky said drily.

Sam’s face smirked, “Just checking.” Sam sat back down…on Steve’s lap. “Wanna draw me like one of your french girls?”

Steve rolled his eyes.

“On a scale of one to America, how free are you this weekend?”

Clint and Tony were not bothering to muffle their laughter.

“I wanna take a swing on your liberty bell.”

“Wait- what?” Steve frowned, trying to figure that one out.

“Is Wilson even trying?” Bucky asked, grinning.

“No,” Darcy sighed, and leaned Sam’s head against Steve’s cheek. “He thinks this is hysterical.”

The next part was an accident, really.

Bucky had been torturing her for the better part of a half hour while they waited for Steve to finish training with Coulson’s team. Her hands were caged beneath his own against the mattress, his fingers arched over her wrists, gentle but refusing to budge against her tugs and twists. Not that she really wanted to be unpinned. Bucky was good about this, letting her wrestle against him for the fun of it, whereas Steve preferred for her to overpower him. What she did want was for Bucky to get the damn show on the road, so to speak. Her heels were digging into his back, trying to spur him on like a horse, the breath of his laughter brushing against the weeping, aching flesh he hovered over. His shoulders pressed down on the inside of her thighs where they held her open to his gaze and teasing licks and kisses.

“Jesus, Bucky, please,” Darcy moaned, trying twist her hips up and only just managing to bump her pelvic bone against underside of his chin.

“Look at me, doll,” Bucky murmured, brushing too soft kisses against her hip bones. Her eyes were squeezed shut as she panted. He’d had her so high for so long that she was afraid she might cum without any touch at all. Bucky’s perfect, smug face was going to be too much to look at the moment.

“I’ll look at you when you get back to work,” Darcy snapped through gritted teeth. “I know you know how to do this, Barnes.”

Bucky laughed and leaned back, ducking his head to lick one long stripe up from where she was starting to drip on the sheets all the way up to her clit.

“Please, please, please.” Darcy chanted. She felt herself about to snap and Bucky had pulled this move often enough now that she knew he was about to nip at her thigh and go back to carefully skirting around where she needed him most.

She could almost taste her orgasm. Like, she could actually almost taste herself… as if Bucky were
kissing her… Fuck. She tasted good. Now if she could just convince Bucky to lay his mouth right there and-

Oh!

She was wet and sweet, and her gut was clenching and she felt twice as dizzy with want, twice as sensitive, twice that sharp pleasure that was climbing. A wave of heat was flashing out from her center as her body coiled tight and then exploded. Bucky sucked, nibbled, licked, and lapped at her - downright, obscene in the hungry sounds he made against her skin - through one…two…three orgasms that crashed into one another like derailed train cars. Her hands spasmed and Bucky tied his fingers to hers, groaning lowly into her and triggering another, softer, pattern of tremors inside her.

It took one sharp breath for Darcy to realize that one of those orgasms hadn’t been hers, but instead belonged to Bucky who was now panting against the crease of her hip.

“Oh shit.” Darcy propped herself up on a elbow that felt just slightly more substantial than liquid and reached her still-shaking free hand out to sweep Bucky’s hair back. “Shit, shit, I’m so sorry.”

Bucky rolled onto his back and Darcy had to blink to clear her head and focus away from the flush that spread over his chest and the streak of sticky fluid that painted his stomach.

“I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean to do that,” Darcy said.

Somewhere in the haze of needing Bucky to work her over, she’d lost control and done the work for him.

“You okay?” Bucky rasped, reaching up to rub his thumb over her cheek.

“Am I okay? Are you okay? Are you mad? I really didn’t mean-“

“Darcy, you didn’t pass out.” Bucky’s smile was full of afterglow.

Darcy did not compute.

Bucky hadn’t ever put himself on the ‘volunteer for Darcy’s brain practice’ list although he wasn’t quite in camp ‘had enough mind control, thanks’ either. But as comfortable as she was making Jane dirty grind, or making Sam flirt with Captain America, she definitely wasn’t comfortable using it during sex without talking about it beforehand, if at all. Especially with Bucky, who’d had too much enforced control in his life. And…wait a minute…

“I didn’t…” Darcy trailed off, sitting up. “How did I…?”

Bucky sat up alongside and left a distracting trail of kisses across her shoulder. “You weren’t controlling me,” he said gently. “You were definitely making a very persuasive argument though. Think you could do it again?”

Bucky was growing hard, pressing against her back as he sucked a temporary mark on the nape of her neck.

“I don’t even know what I did,” Darcy mumbled. She sort of wanted to swat him away so she could think, but she also sort of wanted to swat thought away and tackle him to the bed for some proper revenge for the last half-hour.

“Focus on what you want me do next,” Bucky suggested lightly.
Focusing was definitely an issue. Focusing was an issue for Darcy on a good day. It was a bigger issue while tackling a super power and simultaneously being distracted by the wandering mouth of one of a super horny super soldier.

Still…something was coming to mind.

Darcy and Bucky both groaned as his hands came up to lift and press against her breasts, capturing her nipples between fingers, one hand hot and the other just a hair colder than room temperature. And yeah, okay, she’d rubbed her own breasts before and knew they had a nice weight and squish to them. But it was totally different feeling them through Bucky, the guttural comfort of their heft, the softness of her skin. She just had to shut her eyes because the double vision was a little dizzying. Bucky kept his open for them both of them. God, was she always this pretty to look at?

“Steve is going to love this,” Bucky said, before promptly following Darcy’s next unvoiced thought by flipping them around till he was flat on the mattress and buried to the hilt. Or maybe that was his idea? She was having a hard time keeping track in this halfway state.

They both cried out. Darcy thought she might actually pass out at the twin sensation. This added a whole new meaning to self-love. Or connecting on a deeper level. Or…

“Stay with me, doll,” Bucky rasped, rolling his hips into hers.

She pulled away from his thoughts and opened her eyes to see Bucky’s dopey smile and blown-out pupils below her. She braced her hands against his chest and got ready to focus in earnest on riding him until those eyes crossed when the bedroom door opened.

“Steve does love this,” Steve announced, taking in the sight of the two of them, Darcy already thoroughly debauched and covered in love bites.

Darcy glanced back down to Bucky who was grinning.

“Stevie, honey,” Bucky said, earning an eyebrow raised in suspicion. “Darcy has something she would like to show you.”

Bucky was right. Not that Darcy was that surprised. Steve really liked it when she took charge.

It was possible that Steve was just stubborn on the point of keeping Darcy out of the fray but it was Natasha who pointed out the tactical potential of Darcy’s new abilities. The boys were having less than none of it until Darcy put her foot down and argued it was better for her to prepare for a fight than let it catch them by surprise.

So every morning she rose and joined Natasha in her slow going pursuit of physical prowess. And now in the afternoon she sat on the sidelines and interfered with the Avengers training.

Steve and Bucky were easiest. She could slip in and out of their thoughts, suggest a swing of the shield here, a punch to the tender part of a thigh there - alternatively she could help, make Bucky duck when he was focused on his own attack, make Steve step back when he would have charged forward into a hit. Maybe because they were her soul mates, or maybe because they practiced her abilities in less noble pursuits as well, they were also the least likely to be thrown off when she slid in
and interrupted their own plans.

Sam was getting better, less like to stumble or be distracted by Darcy’s own focus. Wanda was still a hard no on letting Darcy in, which was fine. Vision was inaccessible, which was a bit of a relief to be honest. Clint, surprisingly, had lowered his own restrictions on the understanding that the final choice on his actions would be his own. They were now making a sort of game on Darcy picking targets at random from the room and seeing how quickly Clint could land a practice arrow. It still gave her dizzy spells to be halfway in two places at once though so she usually kept her own eyes closed whenever she could.

Which is how Natasha snuck up on her.

Although, honestly, it could have taken a lot less. Natasha could sneak up on you while in your direct line of sight and wearing neon.

“Cho says all you need is to see your target to be able to jump their mind.”

Darcy startled and left Clint to practice on his own.

She shrugged. “Yeah. It’s easier the more I know about them. Or if they’re unconscious.”

“Nothing to compete against.” Natasha nodded thoughtfully.

Darcy fidgeted. Natasha was still and straight backed next to her, eyes on the action on the mats. Darcy was unconvinced. Natasha was never just sitting and watching. And so she fidgeted.

“I have an idea.”

Darcy sighed, and then nodded. “Yeah. I’ve had a few too.”

“They’re going to hate it.” Natasha was watching Bucky and Steve sparring.

“Leave them to me.”

“Absolutely not.”

“Darcy, it’s out of the question.”

“You haven’t even let me finish!”

“You’re too important.”

“You’re important. And you jump out of planes. He’s important. He sits alone on missions.”

“Doll, we can’t lose you.”

“I’m not going onto a battlefield! It’ll be a public place. Totally innocent.”

“It’s not happening.”

“It is happening. You know it is. You know I have the resources to do it without you. So do you
Bucky felt ill from the anxiety. His stomach was breaking the laws of physics and his skin was hot and there was a throbbing behind his eyes. Steve looked like he was about to throw up, and he’d been holding his breath for...too long. Bucky nudged his side and Steve sucked in a gasp.

Tony walked into the room and stopped short at the sight of them.

“If I didn’t know you for the Debbie Downer’s you really are, I’d be offended at your lack of faith in my ability to create a secure environment for Darcy’s first mission.”

“Don’t call it that,” Bucky growled.

They’d refused to be less than a minute’s running distance away from Darcy’s meeting point. Initially they refused to be away from Darcy at all but somehow she and Natasha had beaten their refusals back. Again. ‘Steve, you barely manage covert with your face covered by a woman’s mouth, Bucky … well I hate to point out the obvious but your arm is made of metal. The idea is to not be recognized.’ So Tony bought a hotel a block away from the city plaza where the fourth highest Hydra investor regularly took his one vulnerable moment a day to buy a paper from a kiosk, and set up a state of the art surveillance den in what was formerly a conference room. Tony had wanted to use the penthouse but Darcy insisted on the ground floor. If anything did happen to her - which it wasn’t going to, Bucky, it really wasn’t - she didn’t want Steve jumping off the roof of a fifty story building so he could skip running down the stairs.

The door to the connecting restroom opened and Steve stood suddenly, blocking Bucky’s view. When he moved around Steve’s shoulder he thought for a moment that a hotel guest had found their way past Happy. Highly unlikely. But then Natasha followed the tall blonde out of the door and he remembered.

The fact that he hadn’t recognized Darcy should have been a relief. If he - who’d memorized every inch of her - couldn’t, then some Hydra hand certainly shouldn’t. Instead the sight set his teeth on edge.

Natasha had flipped every detail around, from the blonde hair to the browned skin to the heels hidden under a long sundress. Darcy’s chest was bound down to almost half it’s size and her lower half was carrying extra weight. Even her face was changed under make up, widening her nose and narrowing her lips. Her gait was slowed and heavier from the shoes. While the woman walking towards them was by no means unattractive, Bucky couldn’t find his girl clearly in all the changes and it was making him twitchy. He wanted to look away.

“Let’s get this done with, my tits are killing me,” Darcy muttered. He unclenched, just a fraction.

Steve sighed next to him, and ran a hand over his face where a little color had returned.

“We’re ahead of schedule and we agreed you’d be exposed for as little time as possible so just take a breath and be patient,” Natasha advised before joining Tony at the monitors and inserting her comm into her ear.
Darcy did take a breath, but only winced and huffed the breath back out.

“I can’t even recognize myself. I don’t think we need to worry about Mister One-Percent,” Darcy grumbled. She was fussing with a bit of tech wiring, standing a few feet out of their reach, avoiding their gaze.

“Avoid looking in windows and startling yourself with how different you look.” What he had meant to say was ‘Darcy, I love you. Don’t put yourself in danger for this. Let’s go home and eat ice cream and watch your favorite shows till you get bored and stick your hands down my pants again.’ Not spy advice.

But the fear was looming too high and weighing his tongue with lead. He wasn’t a suspicious person by nature, but he would be if it kept her safe, and he didn’t want to jinx this.

Luckily there was Steve.

“Sweet, please change your mind about this,” Steve begged softly.

Darcy grimaced, and it brought all her life through the mask Natasha had concocted. She walked up to them both and Bucky could smell her under the make-up and new clothes chemical tang, just a breath of mint and sweetly sour grapefruit. She took one of their hands in each of hers and Bucky laid two fingers down her wrist so he could feel her thrumming pulse.

“You know I won’t,” she said. She leaned forward and left a kiss on Steve’s jaw without having to pull him down to her. “I want to protect myself too. I want to protect you both. We’re a team and this is the part that I can do.”

Steve set his nose against her temple and wrapped an arm around Bucky to pull him against her side.

“Do as little as you need to,” Bucky said into Darcy’s shoulder, careful not to rub away any of the tanning spray Natasha had used. “And if you feel anyone that isn’t ours paying attention to you-”

“I’ll flag for back-up,” Darcy said. “Trust me. I’m not going to risk going back to them.”

“Time to go,” Natasha called from his back.

Now Bucky was pretty sure he was going to hurl.

Darcy brushed another kiss at Steve’s cheek and then one over Bucky’s brow, before slipping away and following Natasha steadily to the door.

Steve passed Bucky his comm piece, and lead them both to join Tony at the monitors, following Darcy’s path on a series of screens. The older man looked like he was biting back a hundred snarks per second.

“Everyone’s in position?” Steve asked, clipped and strained, eyes pulling in every scrap of information he could find on the screens and scrutinizing every person that passed Darcy out on the sidewalks.

It was too much for Tony.

“I just sent them on bathroom breaks.” He back-pedaled as Steve bristled, “Yes, considering you put Clint in position three days ago and no one less than three hours ago, everyone’s feeling nice and prepared for this fifteen minute mission- sorry, endeavour.”
“Is there insurance for being an asshole?” Bucky asked.

“As a matter of fact…” Tony grinned, then sobered. “If this guy has a quarter of the contacts and information we think he does, then Darcy will have given us our greatest advantage against Hydra yet. And I’m including my brain, and Bruce in that.”

The fifteen minutes were every bit as uneventful as he and Steve had been promised. Darcy walked alone - if you can call being monitored at short distances by a half dozen Avengers and SHIELD agents being alone - to the plaza, and slipped in line behind Thomas Leary at the kiosk. A dozen mean looking men in suits and sunglasses milled uselessly to the side.

This was Leary’s quirk: he’d bought his daily paper from the same kiosk owner since he’d been an intern working for the corporate web he now owned 53% of and he insisted on continuing to do this one thing alone.

Darcy hung politely, but not noticeably, back and texted Natasha - who waited around the corner of the block - from a burner phone. Not that Bucky could be absolutely certain, but he knew that she was following every last detail as they’d laid it out. One minor instance of eye contact if it came naturally, no conversation unless cursory, and no touching. Darcy waited for her gum and magazine at the kiosk, and then her change, as Thomas Leary brushed past her and he and his goons entered the high rise. By the time she wandered farther up the sidewalk the men would have already forgotten her.

A minute later Natasha commed in to tell them that she was following Darcy back to the building, and Bucky’s blood started circulating again.

Chapter End Notes

This was another couple thousand words longer and it wrapped everything up peacefully aside from a little epilogue I had planned and for some reason it just was making me twitch and frown. And then I realized it was cause it was boooooooring. But I didn’t want you to wait any longer. So I’m reworking the next chapter, which will be officially the last and then a little epilogue.

Thank you so much to all of you for being so patient. I am not someone who enjoys the holiday energy and it took me some time to mentally recuperate and get back into the story. You have all been so kind and I cannot say how appreciative I am of everyone’s interest and enjoyment of this story. By the way, I adopted all of you.
“Are you now merging physically as well as emotionally?” Sam asked, walking into the med lab where they were congregating for what Darcy was calling the ‘finale’ of her plan.

Steve only smiled since he’d just finished mentally congratulating himself for managing nearly constant physical contact with Darcy since she’d walked back into the hotel conference room and they’d packed up and left the city. She’d even let Bucky and him help her dismantle the disguise Natasha had built for her - which they did with relish. Bucky had since made it his personal mission to make sure that Darcy had everything that she could need, want, or merely enjoy - from her favorite take out to the hand knit socks she’d gotten from an old college roommate.

“We save our physical merging for when we’re in private,” Darcy answered Sam.

“I walked into that,” Sam sighed.

Darcy grabbed Bucky’s arm as he passed on his way to find something else that had decent odds of making her smile. “Quit fussing and sit.”

Bucky sat, and Steve rubbed at his back with the arm he had draped over Darcy’s shoulder.

“And now, for my next trick,” Darcy said.

Steve opened his mouth to lecture Darcy about being cautious and not leaving anything out of place that might alert Leary, but she’d simply shut her eyes and gone limp.

“Damnit,” Bucky growled, frowning down at where Darcy’s head had landed on his shoulder, red lips parted slightly and breath fogging against the star on his arm.
“She knows what she’s doing,” Natasha said from where she sat perched on a counter.

Darcy had spent the better part of month since discovering her ability making Jane, Sam, Tony and other assorted volunteers sleep walk, or follow her mental possession. She’d tested the range as well as the time frame of her ability and kept careful notes. Her control was best when her body was fully unconscious, but it also made the other person more aware of her presence.

Natasha’s reassurance did not make the minutes tick by more easily. Knowing Darcy was consciously in the den of a member of Hydra was just as bad as watching her walk up to one. Possibly it was worse since from here he had no way of knowing how things were going on her end. They’d discussed her going in halfway but it was too hard to operate that way while the other person was asleep.

Darcy sat up twenty minutes later - she was past gasping on waking now - and rattled off a rapid fire list of names, addresses, and bank accounts. She fell promptly back under again for another fifteen minutes that barely gave the room time to catch up to all the information.

When she woke again, it was with a shout.

“He woke up!”

The cheerful activity of the room stopped short to stare at Darcy. Her eyes were wide as she looked back.

“He’s… I was looking at a base file, an old Industrial Park in Linfield, Pennsylvania. He knows… enough.” She looked to Bucky who was sitting rigid at her side, and then to Steve. For once, the stab of danger wasn’t throwing him into action, but seemed to gripping at his bones and paralyzing him in place.

“We need to move on him,” Natasha said.

“You’ll have a little window for human confusion,” Darcy said, voice thin.

“We should move on the base,” Coulson said. “Wiping it out could give us our first advantage.”

“Darcy is our first advantage,” Natasha snapped.

“They’re both right,” Bucky said under his breath, passing the words over Darcy’s head to Steve.

“Natasha, take Clint, Wanda, Thor and Vision to subdue Leary,” Steve said, finally standing. “Coulson, your team with me, Bucky, Sam, and Tony will go tear down the base.”

“Miss Lewis, any further information you have on the location,” Coulson prompted.

“I’m coming with you,” Darcy said to Steve instead.

“Not happening, Darcy,” Bucky said, also looking to Steve.

His eyes flicked between them both, their faces stony in stubborn resolve.

“This is my fight,” Darcy urged. She crossed her arms over her chest and lifted her chin, daring him to deny her. But he could see the nervous purse of her lips, and the rapid jiggle of her heel against the floor.

He bent and pressed his lips to the top of her head.
“You’re not ready yet,” he said honestly.

No, he didn’t want her in any fire fight. Yes, he would rather she was always safe in a lab studying the stars with Jane or at home relaxing and waiting for him and Bucky. Hell, he’d rather that for Bucky too. Most days he wished it for himself. But that wasn’t the woman he loved. For all that she excelled at nurturing she did it to not just to comfort others but to cope from inactivity. That wasn’t why he would ask her to stay, though. As much practicing as she had gotten in, it was never done on ground with anyone actively trying to fight her mentally or physically. And he had to think about his team.

On the same page, Darcy looked to Sam and Tony with angry, watery eyes. She sucked in a breath and rolled her shoulders.

“Okay,” she said. “But I want to be. Soon.”

“Okay,” Steve said.

He looked at Bucky who huffed and shrugged. “Maybe. When the others are comfortable.”

Steve snorted and shook his head. Bucky was crazy if he thought Sam and Tony were stupid enough to try and stand up to their girl.

“Suit up,” Darcy snapped at Bucky, eyes already narrowed in plans. “I’ll work up the notes you need.”

By the time everyone met on the lawn in front of the two jets ready for take off, Darcy’s anger had thawed to worry. Directed primarily, at the moment, towards Natasha who she was hugging fiercely.

“If we let him live, I will erase you from him,” Wanda said to the two women embracing.

Darcy’s eyebrows rose as Natasha’s mouth curled in a smug smile.


Then she leaned forward and stole a quick hug from her too before slipping over to Steve and Bucky.

“No unnecessary risks,” Darcy said, eyeing them both.

“Got a lot of work to do beyond this trip, doll,” Bucky said. He was mimicking himself, his eyes already turning to the soldier’s steel. “Won’t blow our efforts just yet.”

Darcy sighed, and her face fell a little.

“We’ll be careful,” Steve said. He hoped his expression read the second promise, I’ll take care of him.

“If you come back without injuries you can cash in five clothing free days of your choosing in the suite,” Darcy said.

Bucky’s eyes lightened. “Deal.”

Steve bent at the waist so Darcy could press her hands to his jaw and pull him in for a short wet kiss that made his stomach sink anxiously. The pads of his fingertips, bare in his tactical gloves, slipped under her shirt to grab a last brush against her skin. He’d barely pulled back for air when Bucky was there, nudging him aside gently to pull Darcy’s lips between his, sipping at her and swallowing a
shaky sigh.

“Love you,” she breathed.

They answered her and made their way onto the quinjet.

-----------------------------------------------

Hydra arrived less than two hours later.

She, Simmons, and Fitz were working on a new Icer prototype in Tony’s labs - because, hey, he had the best toys and Darcy was currently on his good list - when the overhead lights turned red for one short second. Friday’s quiet alert. Darcy picked up one of the new guns and ran to the window, gesturing for the scientists to stay back.

One look at the black masked agents flooding the grounds like ants over ice cream and Darcy turned to Jemma and Fitz.

“Lock yourselves in the security sector and alert the team. Make their lives difficult and don’t leave, no matter what. I think I have a plan.”

She had parts of a plan, if she was being completely honest with herself. And none of those parts were what her brain was now referring to as ‘Super-Soldier Approved.’ Possibly, they were really bad ideas. But they were her only ideas and the alternative to that was trying to find somewhere to hide and wait for help which sounded like torture. She’d waited for help for the six months she spent with Hydra and it had changed things for her.

So she hid the Icer very carefully inside her bra and went to look for some of Clint’s best surveillance positions. She could hear the shouts first, then the facility’s major ear-bleed alarm accompanied by jets of angry red light along the tops of the walls, followed by an uneven staccato of shots on the ground floor.

Steve, always prepared, had once given her a very specific timeline of how the facility would respond in this kind of emergency and the approximated timeline of events. If he was right, and she’d bet on him any day, she had just under three minutes before there were enemy agents breaking past the first security defense and coming up the stairs.

Which was too much time, really.

-----------------------------------------------

Bucky knew without even taking a look at Steve’s wary, watchful expression, that it wasn’t a good sign they found the Pennsylvania base nearly deserted. The old plant was deserted from all but a handful of green looking agents who’d been left behind to clear away any evidence. It may have made things easier - the fight was next to nothing, their numbers being close to equal for once, and there was still plenty of intel left behind to give even Coulson a smile. But it meant that Leary had the sense to tip his contacts off.
Natasha and the others hadn’t checked in yet. Which may have been good news. Natasha wouldn’t risk being discovered until she’d accomplished her goal.

Still, it wasn’t as though they could reasonably blow off the work just because it seemed easy. So Steve knocked a few newbie Hydrettes unconscious before they could bite down on their poison capsule, and Coulson rolled away every last hard drive and filing cabinet they could find.

Skye was running down the ramp of the jet as they returned.

“Shit,” Steve sighed, already going pale.

“The call just came in,” Skye said. “Hydra’s at the upstate facility. Jemma and Greg are hiding, barricaded in the main security office.”

“Darcy?” His voice was a growl. There was ice crawling into the corners of his eyes.

Skye lifted her arms from her side for a moment and then let them fall, shaking her head. “She told them she had a plan. They aren’t sure what it is but…she’s not hiding.”

_Damn fool-headed, brave-hearted idiots_, Bucky thought. _Rescue mission_, the Soldier suggested. Bucky was glad Darcy wasn’t reading his mind right now because for once the soldier and he were in perfect agreement.

It wasn’t her intention to stand in full view of the battle on the ground. She really had been trying to be stealthy, crawling alongside the half-wall that overlooked the lobby. But then she heard a man on floor shout, “Get down, Zielinski!”

And Darcy knew Jay Zielinski, the evening desk manager that sometimes brought her a new craft brew he had tried, or a fresh order of mozzarella sticks from his local pizzeria, or showed her cat videos back when she still wasn’t allowed to even think about the outside world. He had three kids from an amicably ended marriage that he needed to drive to school in the mornings.

So she stood up, saw the gun aimed at the man behind the desk - the man who mattered to her - and followed it back to gun’s owner. And then she made the owner’s arm fall and shoot at his own boot.

The pain was a bucket of ice, a hand on a hot stove, and turning on your radio after forgetting that you’d left it at full volume, _all times a thousand._

Also, it really fucking hurt.

Her hands were clenched on the edge of the loft wall, her body shaking with unsympathetic pain, her eyes unfocused but open. She was about to jump again to the stunned medical trainee who hadn’t been noticed from behind the corner of the far hall. She was spotted first.
“Up there!” A giant brick wall of a man, with icy eyes and frosted tips to match, pointed up at her. “She’s the one! EO Team, clear me a path.”

Darcy was already running.

This was what Natasha had trained her for. Run, hide, and if you get caught, defend yourself. Except this time it was a little different.

There was a phantom pain running up her right leg, where the Hydra agent had shot his own foot at her command, and the back of her head throbbed. She knew what kind of space she needed to run to, but not where exactly. Between the physical sensations that weren’t hers and the way her heart seemed to be one long stinging vibration of nervousness she was having a hard time remembering the layout of the facility. It all seemed to be one netted mess of indiscriminate hallways. Tony really needed to think about hiring a better interior decorator for this wing.

Focus, Darcy.

Find stairs. Run away from the stairs.

Listen for the men coming to find you.

Run from the men coming to find you.

But not too fast.

Because-

The door - the stairwell door - at the end of the hall slammed open and Darcy’s heels skidded to a halt.

Large and Frosted emerged huge and hungry-eyed from the stairway and took no time at all in spotting her. She had a dozen yards of lead - or two dozen? How the hell were you supposed to tell anyway? He was grinning. Who’s afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

Focus, Darcy.

She did what she was supposed to, and turned away to run. The floor rattled with his answering steps beneath her and the ringing note of her heart was punctuated with worrisome drum beats that rattled her ribs. It took less than the length of the hallway for him to catch up, even at her best speed. One thick arm, ridged with veins, clamped around Darcy’s waist and lifted her off the ground. Frosted twisted, swinging Darcy like a rag doll, and shoulderered open the door on their right throwing her into the space.

She bounced hard off the desk with an abbreviated scream, the edge snapping against the left side of her back as she fell, dragging an ink jet printer and a jar of pens down with her.

“Watch the hall,” Frosted called behind him.

Darcy watched through a curtain of hair as his boots hit the floor in front of her, purposefully slow. Here is a man who loves a damsel in distress, Natasha’s voice told her.

Cornered, injured, and scared, Darcy was fitting that bill pretty well.

Which was good.

Because this wasn’t going to work if he didn’t believe he was winning.
She cried out as he tore at her hair, lifting her up from the floor before tossing her into the chair in front of the desk. Her head snapped back audibly and she flinched as he braced himself on the wooden arms and leaned her into her space grinning, grinning, grinning.

“I’ve heard a lot about you,” he said, voice lightly accented and caressing.

“Yeah, I’m pretty awesome.” She ignored the sound of on coming tears in her voice. No. Not ignored. Was grateful for.

“I bet you think they’re going to rescue you.” He nodded as if she’d already answered and then chuckled, leaning in closer - too close, she could smell his shaving cream and see the yellow tinge in his eyes. She cringed and tried to pull away as he darted up and pressed warm, wet lips in a long kiss against her hairline.

She was shaking as he pulled away and stepped back to lean against the wall across from her, arms crossed. Still grinning.

“It was never going to end differently, Darcy Lewis,” he said, sweet and gentle and grinning. “It doesn’t matter how long it took. Hydra gave you to them. And Hydra will take you away from them. And it’ll kill them. Hydra can see every step laid out in their grand plan.”

Fuck. This. Guy.

“Is this the part the part where you tell me you’re going to enjoy seeing the looks on their faces when you make them watch you hurt me?” Darcy asked. She gave him her best sneer, shaking all the while and pretending that her cheeks weren’t wet and salty.

He just laughed. “No. This is the part where I tell you that I’m going to enjoy the looks on their faces when they see your dead body.”

He lifted a gun out of his holster and leveled it at her face.

So Darcy did what any good damsel would do.

Fainted.

Bucky, quite frankly, didn’t give a shit about the fight on the ground. He knocked four men in black masks out of his way into the facility and left them for the others to worry about.

Natasha had called in when they were halfway back. Wanda had cleaned up the Leary situation. The man had gotten a few warnings out, but nothing wide-scoping, and at least he hadn’t gone underground. When they told her about the situation at the facility there was a stony pause. She promised to meet them there, and very nearly crashed into them on their simultaneous landing. She did crash into a few Hydra agents, at least.

Steve was barreling through the madness at his side, cowl down and shield merciless.

“Darcy’s location. Now!” Steve shouted the second they stepped inside the building.

“Miss Lewis is in Tanya Prosser’s office. Second floor, administrative wing hall D.” Friday was
barely, even to them, audible over the sound of gunshots. It was enough.

Steve covered them with vibranium, and Bucky with well-aimed bullets.

He’d long since gotten over the way adrenaline seemed to slow a battle down to manageable moments of information. In fact, he’d been grateful for it in the past, that extra sense of time to process actions. Now it was torture, the trip upstairs feeling like a marathon run instead a quick dash through a handful of hallways and up a quiet stair case.

Too quiet.

Hall D was worse, the bang of the door opening thundering in his ears. Steve stopped dead in front of him, and he ran right into his back.

“What the-?” Bucky pushed at Steve a little, and he stepped to the side.

A cluster of bodies in black tactical gear were scattered around an open doorway, collapsed on the cold floor.

“Darcy?!” Steve shouted, running ahead.

Bucky followed, slower. The ice was in his chest now, spreading downwards and making his legs drag.

“In here.” It was not Darcy’s voice. Low, and with the hint of a Serbian accent, the man spoke with a nervous tremor.

Steve nearly tripped over a body as he stopped and stared inside the room.

Bucky caught up to him just as he choked on another broken refrain of her name.

Darcy was in a chair, facing the door, arms hanging and head lolling over the back edge, her face obscured by hair.

The ice was everywhere. In his throat. His hands. Surrounding his feet and making it impossible to move. His vision clouded over.

“It’s me.”

Bucky blinked. Tears, not ice.

The Serbian, blonde and swarthy and mean bodied with an open expression, was kneeling on the floor. Two guns laid on the floor in front of him and his arms raised over his head were shaking.

“It’s me,” the man repeated, lip trembling. “I couldn’t secure him, so I needed to wait for you. Iced the others.”


“Language.” The Serbian’s lip twitched.

Bucky defrosted. “Get him bound up before I kiss that mouth.” It took a moment to realize he’d spoken.

Steve laughed, and it sounded like the little kid from Brooklyn with asthma, panic trailing off in weak relief.
Natasha appeared behind them and immediately assessed the situation for what it was.

“Good work,” she said, before walking into the room and taping a mouth guard shut between the Serbian’s teeth, and cuffing his wrists and ankles all together.

Darcy sat up from the chair with a grimace.

Steve and Bucky had her lifted between them in a super-serum’d heartbeat.

“I take it back,” Bucky mumbled, burying his face deeper into her thick hair. “You come with us everywhere now. Keep an eye on you.”

“Promises, promises,” Darcy said, craning around to kiss him before hissing in pain. Bucky tried to pull away but ended up with his kevlar fisted in her hands. “I think something got twisted or bruised when he threw me,” she said shuffling between them, wrapping one arm over Bucky’s shoulders and pulling Steve close against her back with the other.

“The med bay is clear,” Natasha said, before shooting her captive with an Icer charge. “Sam’s on his way to help me with this one.”

“Love you, Tash,” Darcy said over Bucky’s shoulder.

“Proud of you, sestrichka,” Natasha answered. “Excellent hiding.”

“So proud, sweet,” Steve added.

Darcy woke the next morning in the same position she had her first night sleeping with Steve and Bucky. Head tucked beneath someone’s chin, feet tangled in their legs. Bucky was purring in his sleep, her face pressed to his throat, and Steve was leaving a little drool spot on her shoulder.

She started crying almost immediately.

It was gray out, just starting to brighten, and she’d only just gotten to sleep a couple hours ago, but her brain was used to waking up at this time. Or maybe the shock was still settling in.

“Hey. Hey, hey.” Steve mumbled, rubbing his cheek against her shoulder before leaning away and pulling her carefully onto her back. Her bruised muscles had healed long before the whole facility had been cleared out and declared safe, but that didn’t stop Steve and Bucky from handling her with kid gloves while they’d undressed her and tucked her between them.

“You’re safe,” Steve whispered. He pressed a kiss into the mess of her hair before lifting a sleep heavy hand up to clumsily brush it out of her face. “You’re safe.”

“I know,” Darcy managed. Her voice was wobbling and thick.

“You’re safe,” Steve repeated. He was still blinking sleep out of his eyes.

Darcy started giggling on top of her tears.

Bucky shushed them. It was still before dawn. He wasn’t waking.
Darcy laughed harder.

Steve waited for her to catch her breath and rinse some of the crying out of her chest before reaching and brushing her tears away with his fingers. He was half-smiling and his forehead was all scrunched up with worry.

“I’m happy,” Darcy said.

An eyebrow raised in question. He looked like he might argue that point.

“I’m happy,” she repeated. “I’m happy I’m with you. I… I don’t want this to end.”

Steve’s face eased into a warm, blushing, smile. “It won’t,” he said. There wasn’t a hint of uncertainty in his tone.

“I know.”

She did. She’d been afraid for so long but… not now.

She was not an accident. She was not a bridge. She was not a tool designed to hurt the people she loved.

She was a fraction and she was whole.

“I’m just happy to be here,” she said. It maybe fell short, but Steve was smiling all the same.

“Never lettin’ you outta our sight,” Bucky grumbled, shifting so he could drop a kiss against her eyebrow. Darcy thought it was maybe a few inches off aim. “Now shuddup. M’sleepin.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks everyone who came back after my accidental holiday hiatus! I missed you all so much.
I was super pumped about this chapter after I realized where I wanted it to go. Like, I can’t believe I ever had it ending differently. So yeah, there’s probably a lot of typos or missing words in this but I was just… really excited.
Just a little thing left, to jump ahead in time and check up on the team.
I love you guys. I’m just hugging you in my mind all the time and I don’t know how you get anything done like that.
I. Love. You.

Here's a little status quo peek into our trio's life as it goes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

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**One Year Later**

“I take it back,” Bucky muttered into his comm, “From now on she stays at home.”

At that moment Sam Wilson, and Darcy by proxy since he was her favorite person to ‘pilot’ on missions, whizzed by in the air dropping ICE grenades on the scattered clusters of a Washington state Hydra cell.

“No take backsies!” Darcy/Sam shouted in the air, before taking off into the cover of trees to hunt down the scared and running.

“You need cover?” Steve grunted in Bucky’s ear piece. Bucky winced at the sounds of gun fire pingiing off Steve’s shield.

“Worry ‘bout yourself, Stevie,” Bucky answered. “It’s quiet up here.”

The quiet was his main complaint.

Roofs were excellent places for trained snipers, it was true. Backed against the service access door, several yards away from the edge and unable to see the action on the ground? Less so. But when Darcy asked him to cover her so she could dive fully into the action and keep Sam from getting mowed out of the air by an over enthusiastic rocket launcher, he took the position very seriously. And literally. He’d propped his girl standing against the brick wall and then pressed his back to her front, head to toe, a full-body shield. And while there worse positions to be in than with his body against Darcy’s, he preferred it when there wasn’t a battle going on around them.

Darcy’s arms shifted behind him, winding around his front and slipping fingertips under the tactical gear to scratch lightly at his waist and make him twitch.

“Miss me?” she mumbled into his back. “Steve’s at the southwest corner. Go shoot some bad guys.”

“Always, doll.” Bucky ran ahead to the corner, catching one black clad enemy in the shoulder before he could jam a taser into Steve’s gut. “Got my back?” he called over his shoulder.

“Always, doll,” Darcy quipped back.

Bucky scanned the ground fight around them before taking his next shot. “Tash could use a hand, direct south.”

“Got it, going in half.”
Darcy sat on the roof behind and to his side, turned so she could watch the fight and keep her eye on the access door. She didn’t like to be standing while she worked from two places, said it was too easy to lose her balance if she took a hit. Bucky and Steve were less than pleased when she’d finally got around to telling them that she ended up with phantom pains from those she piloted who were injured, although it should have been obvious. She was under strict rules - strict, even, for their relationship which tended towards allowance by previous omission of restriction - that she never pilot someone with a gun pointed at them. No one wanted to find out what happened to Darcy when her host was killed.

Bucky cleared the crowd around Steve, keeping Tash’s fight in the corner of his eye. Darcy systematically allowed one enemy after the other to be rendered unconscious by Natasha, until the woman was surrounded by limp bodies. By the time they were done, Darcy was leaning back on shaky hands taking deep breaths.

“I want you to take a break,” Bucky said, tone soft against the backdrop of tapering off gun fire.

What he wanted to say was, ‘get your sweet ass over here where I can keep you covered while you rest.’ But Darcy still bristled easily when it came to direct orders. So he and Steve maneuvered in carefully phrased requests and statements of preference.

“Yeah, okay,” Darcy said, shuffling over on her knees, sitting at his side with her back against the ledge.

“On my way up,” Steve said on the comm before Bucky could quiz Darcy on how she felt.

She looked flushed and Tash didn’t pull punches when it came to subduing her opponents.

Steve was up the wall before Bucky could really work up a mood.

“Clint could use some help clearing up the ground,” Steve said, launching himself over the ledge to land on Bucky’s other side. He kept to a crouch, running one hand across Bucky’s back as he hurried around to Darcy. His shield arm looked swollen in the straps and Bucky and Darcy shared one brief look. Damn Steve couldn’t keep his damn self out of medical for one damn mission.

“Broken or fracture?” Darcy asked, as Bucky stood and got ready to jump down to the ground.

“Hm?” Steve asked. “Oh. Maybe.”

Bucky and Darcy sighed in unison before he dropped into the air.

Darcy waited outside medical, curled against Bucky’s side with his metal arm over her shoulder. It’d taken him awhile to believe it, but she liked the weight and security of it around her. She also liked that the more she expressed being comfortable, the less Bucky seemed to resent its presence. Darcy felt Bucky’s sigh just before he set his chin down on the top of her head.

It’d been a few weeks since they’d been home at the base and they’d missed their planned vacation last week. Whatever successes the extended mission may have held - five Hydra cells wiped clean and another six month’s worth of intel gained -, it was still a slightly bitter pill.
“We ready to retire yet?” Darcy asked wistfully.

Bucky snorted. He knew she didn’t really mean it.

Steve wandered out of medical with a sheepish tilt to his smile.

“You didn’t need to wait,” he said.

“Shut up,” Darcy said and Bucky shook his head, huffing.

“Doll’s talking about retirement,” Bucky said.

Darcy elbowed him lightly as Steve’s face lit up for a moment. He winced a moment later, likely remembering that they’d just brought home one more year’s reason to stay in the fight. Steve took Hydra pretty personally, and not without reason.

“Not yet,” Darcy soothed, taking Steve by the arm he hadn’t broken in three places, even if those spots were healed by now. “Right now the only retirement I’m thinking about is to bed.”

Steve hummed, swinging the freshly healed arm across both their backs as they walked.

“We can plan another vacation,” Steve offered.

“Probably just jinx ourselves,” Bucky grumbled. “Next time let’s just take off.”

Darcy smiled at the thought of running away with her soldiers and leaned back against their arms as they made it to their suite door.

“We could stop,” Steve said, as they walked in, barely missing tripping over where their gear had been dropped for them. Darcy could feel his gentle stare on the top of her head. “If you meant it, we could stop. It’d be hard to hide, but we’d manage.”

He wasn’t wrong. It would mean saying goodbye to the others, probably permanently. It would mean ignoring the outside world to avoid the temptation of helping. It would mean Steve and Bucky in her hair constantly, worrying about splinters instead of knife wounds. They’d drive each other insane within a month.

“Maybe someday,” Darcy said instead, since Steve could be a bit of a devil’s advocate when he wasn’t paying attention. Bucky smirked like he knew exactly what she was doing.

The truth, which Steve probably wasn’t ready to hear, was that Captain America and The Winter Soldier were as much her soul mates as the men behind them. The truth that Bucky would definitely try to deny was that he loved the girl who jumped brain first into danger as much as the one who built a home around them in safety. And the truth that she didn’t outright tell them was that she didn’t want to be bored, on an island, sunning herself. She liked fighting.

“I want out someday,” Steve agreed. “Before… before something happens to one of us.”

“Ain’t nothing happening,” Bucky growled, pulling his sweaty, stained clothes off and leaving them on the floor of the living room.

Darcy just pulled Steve along behind her to follow Bucky into the bedroom. She agreed with them both. Steve wouldn’t see a magical point in the future when enough was enough and it was time to go until it was too late. And Bucky would throw himself in front of anything that tried to hurt her or Steve. So she would interrupt the threats that came and keep them out of fights they couldn’t win.
And there likely weren’t many of those.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you, thank you, thank you! Really, this has been so much fun. It's not my strongest writing, but I really just wanted to have fun and bust out a story. Thanks to all of your support I got to do that and I absolutely loved the experience. I hope you did too!

My next story is a very strange Darcy/Bucky story called And Now For...The Weather and I'll be posting the first chapter within the hour. It's set in Night Vale - which is from the podcast Welcome to Night Vale - but the two people who've read it so far promise it's easy to understand what's going on regardless of setting. Hope to see you there!

Sometime, hopefully within this month, I'll have a smuty as all get out one-shot set in this verse that is basically just Darcy having fun using her powers in bed with her boys. I've also got a Galentine's Day gift coming out before Feb 13th that I'm pretty excited about. But the details of that are a secret so yaaaaaay mysteries!

Pie and warm socks and kittens to every one of you. Love.

End Notes

Okay, I did a thing! This is my first story here on the site so any encouragement is welcomed. I just couldn't keep my fingers out of this pairing/tri-airing? I won't call this story a slow-burn because I'm impatient and I can't really stand to drag out every longy-angsty moment these three share, of which there are certainly many, before letting them have a nice moment, so things will move ahead chronologically as well as emotionally in the next segment. Thanks for reading lovies!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!