Proof of Concept

by MegaraNoelle

Summary

Tony survived the alien invasion. He survived making sure that his son, Peter, survived, so far. The Avengers are a thing, and most of them are living in his Tower, including Steve Rogers. Peter thinks it's exciting living with so many superheroes, and living so close to his Daddy. Tony just wants to get Peter through school, and ignore all the signs of his growing attraction, and attachment, to a certain Super Soldier. Easy to do when old enemies are trying to take apart the Avengers. Why is Hydra so much closer to Tony's personal life than he ever wanted it to be?

Sequel to "Proof Positive". Follows Captain America: TWS.

Notes

I'm back! I couldn't wait! I started working on this almost right away at the end of Proof...
Positive. What can you expect from this story? More adorable Peter, more Tony feels, more Steve feels! More Fluff, and more Angst this time around! We'll for sure see some Winter Soldier action and some Hydra action. I'll probably be touching on some Iron Man 3, Thor 2, and Age of Ultron. There will be no Civil War in this story, that's not happening here! Peter is going to grow up before your eyes, making his way to becoming Spider-Man. I've got some big ideas for this story, so let's see how they play out, yeah?!

I've posted a playlist to Proof Positive over in the last chapter of that story, and throughout this story I'll be keeping, and updating, a running playlist for this story. It's fun, specially for the first chapter.

Let's party!

Unbeta'd as usual, Marvel owns more than me, and the songs are property of their respective artists/movies.
September 2011

Chapter Notes

I also don't own the movie "My Best Friend's Wedding", or the scene that Steve attempts to re-do.

September 2011

Tony hummed, nodding as the bakers brought in the cake to the kitchen space. Blue ombre, with blue and purple butterflies streaking up the side. "That is a beautifully done cake."

"It should be for the price you paid for it." Tony smiled when Pepper walked into the kitchen. "All the tables have been set, the flowers in place, and the DJ has set up her stuff." Tony nodded and took the tablet from Pepper's hands.

"All the food is about to be taken out of the oven, or being prepared now, so it'll be fresh when the reception starts." Even the coffee the team he had assembled had been heaven in his mouth that morning. Tony turned to look at Pepper and smiled. "You look good in that blue dress."

"A birthday present from you, Mr Stark," she smirked back at him. "Everything looks beautiful. The chairs are going up outside as we speak."

"I'm not worried about Agent or Mary getting dressed on time, but I feel that I must ask about my wayward son, and his best friend." Tony groaned when Pepper just smiled at him. "Where are they?"

"Steve is with them, trying to get them to, stay, dressed." Tony rubbed his face, handing the tablet back to Pepper. "Third door, on the right," she said brightly as Tony left the kitchen, before snagging one of the crème puffs.

Tony could hear the excited laughter coming from the room before he even reached the door. Tony knocked twice before opened the door. Peter and Wade were jumping on the bed that was in the room with their pants and shirt on, while Steve was sitting in the corner chair, still in his clothes from when he woke up, looking exhausted.

"Rogers, you've only been up for three hours," Tony said as he stepped in the room, hands on his hips. "There's no way that two kids have exhausted a super soldier."

"You're assuming this super soldier got sleep last night," Steve said, his eyes closed in the chair.

"Jarvis did tell me that you were up all night," Tony said, grabbing the two pair of socks that Peter and Wade should have had on by now. He turned towards the bed, and Peter jumped towards Tony with his arms out. Tony caught the boy in his arms, then flopped him down on the bed, making him giggle. Wade flopped down next to them, smiling. "Talking to a friend."

"I told you, I have friends outside of New York," Steve said with a slight smirk. He pushed himself up from the chair grabbing the two pair of shoes from the bench. He grabbed Wade around the waist before the older boy could scramble from the bed. He laughed in Steve's arms as the blonde put the
socks on him. "They do like to talk to me occasionally."

"Apparently not during regular waking hours," Tony said with a smirk. He grabbed Peter's converse and started to put them on the squirming boy.

"You never had a bad night?" Steve said, holding onto Wade, feet pointed towards Tony. Tony raised an eyebrow at him, but grabbed the other converse and put them on Wade as well. "Bow ties are going to be near impossible to get on these two."

"That's why I've got clip-ons!" Tony said with a grin, tickling Peter. "Come on, kiddo, if you finish getting dressed we can go see Mama before everyone else gets here."

"Okay!" Peter said with a grin, hopping up to his feet. Tony chuckled and pulled out two red clip-on ties. He passed one to Steve and they put them on the boys. "I have taken two wily, scrappy, little boys, and I've turned them into handsome little men!"

"You did?" Steve looked at him. "Excuse you, I helped!"

"Mmm, I don't know," Tony turned his eyes to Steve. He got up, standing behind Peter and Wade. He crossed his arms, Peter and Wade copying him, all three looking at Steve now. "I don't know if we can turn this scrappy blonde into a handsome man. I may have used all my magic on you two boys. What do you think?" Steve turned a deadpan expression to Tony.

"We can do it," Peter proclaimed.

"Yeah!" Wade agreed. "I mean, we'll try our best, no promises Mr Tony," He looked up at Tony as Tony looked down at him. "It's a lot of work." Tony let out a laugh and Wade grinned.

"You're going to be dangerous when you get older kid," Tony said ruffling his hair a bit. There would be no saving either boys hair for the wedding. "Alright, get to work you two." Tony dropped into the chair that Steve had been sitting in earlier.

Wade went for Steve's suit and Peter hopped back up on the bed. "Wade, I need a comb!" Tony smirked, watching the boys work with a ruthless efficiency that Peter never even gave to his homework.

"I feel like this should be a violation of my basic rights," Steve commented, but didn't move from his seat on the bed.

"A lot's changed since your time, Cap!" Tony called out. "This is a whole new beast to contend with."

"I think I've been doing pretty well with the Twenty-First Century, Tony," Steve said back to him.

"I was talking about kids!" Tony laughed. "Heaven help us all if the day comes that you have a child of your own."

"I think it should be a little girl," Steve said with a soft smile. Tony let out a groan, dropping his head back on the chair. "What?"

"You with a little girl? We would all be doomed!" Tony straightened in the chair, watching the boys push Steve to the bathroom to get dressed. "Can you imagine, some blonde girl running around, the same spit-fire nature in her as Captain America? And I would give just about anything to see the first person who dares ask out Cap's precious little girl. Would polishing your shield be the equivalent of cleaning the rifle?"
"I'll let you know the answer to that later," Steve called out from the bathroom.

"This is one reason why I'm glad I have a boy," Tony continued on. "I'm a boy, so I have an idea on how to handle boy stuff."

"What kind of boy stuff?" Peter asked, looking at his Dad curiously.

"Stuff that you'll find out in a couple of years, I'm sure," Tony told him with a smile. He held out one arm to Peter, patting his leg with the other, and the boy ran over to him, hopping up in his lap. Tony wrapped his arm around Peter. "Nothing to worry about, Petey-Pie." Tony bit back a laugh when he saw Wade open the bathroom door, pushing Steve's shoes and socks inside, hearing a surprise yelp from Steve. "You're usually supposed to knock first, Wade."

"But, we're all boys here," Wade said, looking suspiciously innocent. "We all have the same boy parts." Peter giggled in Tony's arm. "And no one takes that long to put on pants."

"Oooo, someone was using logic, I see," Tony said, pointing at Wade. "Next time, knock though. How's he looking in there, though?"

"I think he's almost done. Not great yet, though," Wade said before walking into the bathroom. Peter scrambled from Tony's lap to follow his best friend, and crush, into the bathroom. Tony rolled his eyes a little before shutting them for a few seconds. As he shut them, he saw a little blonde girl, a toddler, with curly hair, running around. Bright blue eyes as she giggled, running as Steve chased her, both grinning. Tony sucked in a breath and his eyes shot open.

Steve stepped out of the bathroom, adjusting his blue tie, the boys smoothing out his jacket and pants. Tony blinked and swallowed. Steve's hair was swept back and when he looked up, Tony swore that his blue eyes were a little brighter, and his smile was a little wider.

"How'd we do?" Peter asked, hands behind his back, rocking on his feet.

"Keep this up, and you boys might have a future in fashion." Tony stood up, buttoning the first button his jacket. "I think we all look good enough to go visit the bride now, what do you think?"

"Yeah!" Peter exclaimed, he and Wade running for the door. Tony followed them, Steve stepping up next to him.

"Through all of that, how did your suit not wrinkle?" Steve asked as they walked out into the hallway. "You were holding onto a less than still Peter, rolling around on the bed, then in the chair. How do you still look this good?" Steve willed himself not to blush at his choice of words.

Tony grinned, putting his hands in his pants pockets. "It's a carefully cultivated skill."

"You haven't seen the pictures from the Nineties," Tony warned him. Peter and Wade were waiting by the door where they knew Mary was getting ready. He leaned over the boys, and knocked twice.

"Announcing four handsome men to see Ms Mary Parker one last time before she becomes something else!" Steve elbowed Tony gently, but he just grinned.

The door opened a little and Natasha's head peeked out, her red hair pulled back. She looked at Tony and Steve, then down at Peter and Wade. "There are three handsome men out here, and then there's Tony." Tony opened his mouth a little. They could hear Mary chuckle behind the door.

"Let them in Tasha," she told the spy. Natasha glanced down the hall, looking to see if there was
anyone else, before opening the door for them. When Tony and Steve walked in last, Natasha shut the door again. Mary was sitting down at a vanity, Rachel behind her, finishing her hair.

"Hi Mama! Hi Granma!" Peter greeted happily, running over. Rachel turned to hug Peter, smiling, moving out of the way a little and Mary got up. "Whoa. You look really pretty, Mama."

Tony let out a soft breath, giving her a smile. She did a little spin, and the knee length, lace covered, dress flowed out a bit. "Agent is a lucky man, that's for sure."

"Thinking that you didn't get there in time?" Rachel asked with a little smirk. "Missed your chance Stark?"

"I may have," Tony said with a little chuckle. Mary picked up Peter, kissing his cheeks.

"Tony? Did you put the boys in Converse?" Mary saw the shoes that Peter and Wade were wearing.

"You said that you wanted something more casual, and small," Tony said. "I've got little suit jackets on the boys, and we all compromised by wearing Chucks." Tony rocked on his feet, and when Mary looked down she saw that both Tony and Steve were also wearing Converse sneakers. Tony grinned back at her, hands in his pockets.

"I think Peter and Wade look very handsome," Rachel said, leaning down to straighten Wade's bow tie. Wade beamed with a wide smile. "I wonder though, how did you get talked into wearing those shoes, Captain?"

"I wasn't going to wear them at first," Steve admitted, looking down at his matching blue converse. "I tried on the dress shoes, then tried these on, and I have to admit that these are far more comfortable."

"Comfort wins out!" Tony said in triumph. "Little do you all know that my very slow plan to completely corrupt America's national icon is in full force, and I'm winning." Mary snorted with a smile, putting Peter back down on the ground, but still holding his hand. "In three years I fully expect to see him getting arrested for disturbing the public." Steve elbowed Tony's side, dropping his head a little.

"Shouldn't you be greeting the arriving guests?" Rachel asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I was checking on the other arrangements, before I had to step in to get these three delinquents dressed," Tony defended. "I was actually on track, for once! All of the food is on schedule, and the outside seating is almost all set as well. Your officiant has her own room and getting ready herself. The guests are allowed to roam the vineyard, but the gate to the ceremony area hasn't been opened yet." Tony stretched out his arm to pull his suit jacket over his watch to glance at the time. "We still have seven minutes until those gates open." Rachel was staring at him, and Mary was smiling. "What? I usually meet all my business deadlines, and I was a fairly competent CEO of a multi-billion dollar company for several years."

"It just has to be something that you care about," Steve said not unkindly, and Tony shrugged a little.

"Depends on the importance," Tony threw in. He glanced at his watch again. "Rachel, can I entrust the boys with you? We've got to check in with the groom as well, then I'm going to rendezvous with Pepper." Rachel shooed them off, and Tony hooked an arm with Natasha to pull her form the room as well, Steve following.

"I'm assigning you and Barton to making sure the guests make their way to their seats," Tony told Natasha. She shot him a glare, but Tony didn't seem to notice. "We're keeping this wedding low-key,
and I think putting myself or Steve up at the front will draw attention from those that did not receive invitations. Also, you're like a bodyguard and beautiful greeter all in one." Tony flashed her a smile and she rolled her eyes a little.

"You're lucky you snuck that compliment in there, Stark," Natasha said to him.

"No need to sneak that in, it's true and you know it." Tony kissed her knuckles a little. The red head looked unimpressed, but didn't pull her hand away. "You're also the best chance we have at pulling Barton away from Agent's room. He'll try to hide away in there."

"Try?" Both Natasha and Steve said with a snort.

"Yeah, yeah," Tony said with a wave of his hand, the trio stopping by another door. "Get your archer boyfriend out of there."

"Not my boyfriend," Natasha said as Tony knocked twice, then opened the door to the room. Clint was perched, almost like a bird, on the top of the couch in Coulson's room, with the man himself finishing his tie in the mirror.

"And here I thought that the only kind of suit you owned was black," Tony told the groom. He was wearing a white suit, rather reminiscent of his work outfit, with a black shirt, and a white tie.

"I hold a lot of surprise, Mr Stark," Coulson said before turning from the mirror, tucking the tie under the button of his jacket. "I assume the boys have been wrangled into their clothes."

"With very little help from the good Captain," Tony said with a grin, and Steve groaned a little.

"Extenuating circumstances," Steve claimed.

"I'm just getting my brownie points for being on top of things today," Tony said, glancing at Steve. "Let me build my ego before the magical moment shifts to someone else." Natasha had gone over to the couch, pulling Barton off of the couch and back to his feet.

"You're so kind, Stark," Barton quipped, smoothing down his own jacket. "To willingly give away the attention like that."

"I know!" Tony put on a grin, giving a wave as Natasha pulled Clint from the room. Tony sat down on the arm of the couch. "The boys are dressed, your bride is nearly ready, and I've just sent the greeters out to get the guests herded."

"There's less than fifty guests," Coulson told Tony. "Not much herding to do."

"You're right, most of them are probably SHIELD agents anyway," Tony said with a little sigh. "They'll know exactly where to go, they probably already have a map from spy surveillance." Coulson hummed with amusement. "That hum says that I'm probably right." Tony's phone pinged and he pulled it out. "That's Pep, gotta go." He hopped up from the chair, then pointed at Coulson. "You've got twenty minutes, and I expect to see you out there with the boys." Tony pointed to Steve as he headed for the door. "You are in charge of getting the boys form Mary's room so Agent doesn't see her yet, and making sure that they're dressed. Don't fall asleep on me, Rogers!" Tony saluted before leaving the room, shutting the door.

"Is it just me or does he seem-"

"Anxious? Yes." Coulson nodded. "Luckily I was able to stop him from planning the wedding, we just let him take over the actual set up."
"He seems to be taking to it very well," Steve commented.

"It's what he does," Coulson told him. "I also think it's a way for him to cope with the wedding in general." Steve hummed a little.

"Glad to know I wasn't the only one who noticed it." Steve crossed his arms over his chest, watching Coulson grab a corsage from the desk. "Although it certainly made being stuck in the Tower interesting, while trying to avoid cameras."

"Thanks for taking one for the team," Coulson said with a little smirk.

Steve watched him for a couple minutes. "Are you hiding your nerves? I thought people were still supposed to be nervous at their weddings." Coulson looked at Steve. "This is why I refuse to play poker with you, you know that right?"

"I thought it was very smart of you to not play with us," Coulson commented. "I would start off slow if you wanted to get into poker, work on your poker face. I can teach Peter and Wade how to play Poker." Coulson's lips twitched up when Steve gave him a very unamused look. "I did skip breakfast though," he added and Steve raised an eyebrow. "I probably would have thrown it all up by now. I'm sure there will be very little food left after the reception."

"You'll have eaten it all?" Steve asked and Coulson nodded. "For a small second I thought you were going to say that Mary was pregnant."

"I like living in the Tower," Phil told Steve. "I really don't want Tony throwing me out."

"He wouldn't-" Steve stopped when Coulson looked at him. "Okay, so he might." Steve pulled out his phone when it buzzed in his pocket.

'Sorry about messing up your sleep last night. You still good to go for the reception?'

Steve reached into his pocket and pulled out another phone, a bigger one, then tossed it over to Coulson who caught it without looking.

'No worries, you know I don't need a lot of sleep anyway. Everything is still set up, camera should be in place. Thanks for helping me work out the details.'

'I didn't do much, I'm just in it for the camera feed. Have fun!'

"I'll give you the signal before the song start," Coulson said as he finished getting the corsage of lavender straight. He walked over to Steve, tugging a bit at the end of his jacket, and nodded. "Probably time to get the boys." Steve put a hand on Coulson's shoulder and smiled at him.

The weather for the wedding was perfect, something that Tony and Mary had fretted about. Just a light enough breeze, not too much to drown out the voices at the ceremony. The sun was out, but too bright, fluffy white clouds lazily gliding through the sky to cover the harsh glare, but keep the day looking bright. There was no wedding party, and forty-two guests were in attendance, not including Peter and Wade who stood up front with Mary and Phil, (respectfully), each holding onto a ring. Pepper had accepted Tony's handkerchief to keep dabbing at her eyes, in an attempt to keep her makeup from running. She said that nearly everyone cried at weddings. Tony wiggled his nose when the newly-wed couple shared their kiss, swearing that he was just chasing away a sneeze. That awful burning feeling, of a sneeze, of course.
Steve had disappeared with Mary and Coulson, and Tony assumed that he was showing them their cake in private before they would have to cut into it. That was fine by Tony, as he was currently trying to walk with Peter attached to his left leg, and Wade attached to his right leg.

"You boys are starting to get too big for this," he grunted as he made his way towards the reception area. That was inside. Tony hadn't wanted to take any weather, insect, or bird related chances with the food. Dancing was always more fun inside anyway. "Wade, you already reach my waist!"

"You're just short, Mr Tony," Wade said with a cheeky grin. Tony looked down at the boy, then back up with narrowed eyes at the delighted laugh of Wade's mother, Julie, just in front of him.

"He certainly doesn't hold back," she said to Tony. Julie Wilson was looking good for someone who had just went through another round of radiation and chemo two days before the wedding. Tony was glad that his stylist was able to help her out.

"That's nothing new," Tony said, still making his way towards the building. "His personality is dangerous." Julie hummed with a smile as she nodded, falling into step besides the child-laden man.

"Hi Mom," Wade grinned over at his mom. "Did you see how I stood up there, and stayed quiet, and didn't even fidget that much!"

"You did perfectly, sweetheart," his mom replied proudly. "You and Peter were the picture of perfection up there." That made both boys beam proudly.

"What about me?" Tony asked, looking over at the woman. "I stayed in my seat the whole time, and I didn't even speak up at the, 'Speak now, hold your peace' shtick."

"Did you really want to speak up at that part?" Julie asked, looking at Tony.

"Well, no, but that's just something that would be expected of me," Tony argued weakly.

"Were it anyone else's wedding, sure." Tony let out a sigh and Julie chuckled. "The sooner you reach the reception hall, the sooner you get your legs back." Tony let out a shout and tried to move faster, making the boys laugh loudly at the movement. Tony certainly wasn't going to be winning any races.

Dinner was a hit, and Tony made a mental note to keep the catering company in mind for the future. He was becoming more and more surprised at how everything was coming together, and flowing like he and Pepper had planned. Mary and Coulson were able to literally just enjoy their wedding, not having to worry about any of the details or anything that might go wrong.

Tony had made a quick scan over the music that the DJ was going to play, and was very happy to see that Coulson had indeed not managed to sneak in the Captain America theme song. That had been a very legitimate fear for Tony, Mary, and Steve. They compromised that whoever Steve married in the future would have to have their first dance to the 'Star Spangled Man'. (Steve had no intention of actually remembering that if he got married.) But Mary and Phil's first dance, (Everything by crooner Michael Buble, even Tony could agree to that), went off without a hitch. Agent had some moves that could admire. Just for a second.

Mary smiled, watching Peter and Wade at the table with Tony and Bruce, all of them leaning in looking like they might be performing some kind of experiment with the carbonated water. It wasn't her problem tonight. Phil leaned in behind her, kissing her cheek, and pulled out a piece of lavender from his corsage, slipping it behind her ear. He slipped something into her hand before turning around and heading towards the table where her parents were sitting. Mary raised an eyebrow until
the thing in her hand started to buzz and ring quietly.

Mary lifted up the, very old, clunky, cell phone and flipped it open, putting it to her ear.

"Hey gorgeous, having a good time?" Mary bit her lip a little as Steve Rogers’s voice came through the phone. He had been trying to keep it low, but she would know his voice anywhere.

"Very much," she replied with a smile.

"That's not the line," Steve whispered, then cleared his throat a little.

"But I am," she whispered back.

"Then skip to the next line."

"I did what I came to do," Mary continued.

"You split up?" Steve said, going back to his low voice.

"No, I said I do." She looked around the room, trying to spot the blonde. There weren't that many people there, it shouldn't be that hard to find him.

"Good girl, I'm proud of you." Was he really doing this right now? "I'd be prouder still if you were dancing." Apparently he was doing this. Mary really should have expected it, especially after calling him George for two weeks after they watched 'My Best Friend's Wedding'.

"I have big plans for dancing, just give me thirty, thirty-five minutes." Steve chuckled a little over the phone, clearly trying to stay in character.

"Oh, the misery, the exquisite tragedy, the Susan Haywood of it all. I actually know who she is," Steve whispered that part before continuing. "I can just picture you there, sitting alone at your table in your white dress and lavender flower."

Mary bit her lip a little. "Did I tell you I was wearing a lavender?"

"Hair swept up, you haven't touched your cake-"

"Because we haven't cut it yet."

"-probably, uh, not drumming your fingernails on the mostly white linen tablecloth." Mary chuckled, looking down at her nails. "Perhaps even looking at those fingernails and thinking, 'God, I should have stopped in all of my wedding plotting to have that manicure.' Too late now."

"Steve, I didn't tell you I was wearing a lavender." Mary's eyes widened a little when a song started to play. "Suddenly a familiar song." That asshole had this planned out. It was even the cast version of 'I Say A Little Prayer.' She stood up, looking for him now, forgetting that she playing into the scene. "Then you're off your chair, in one exquisite movement, wondering, searching, sniffing the wind like a dapple deer." Mary noticed that Phil was dancing with her mother on the dance floor, a little familiar smirk on his lips. He had even helped! Mary decided to go with it, moving towards the dance floor, other couples still there.

Tony glanced over when he saw Mary move from her chair, an ugly phone pressed to her ear, looking around. He thought he heard Steve talking at the table next to them. "Has God heard your little prayer? Will Cinderella dance again?" Tony looked over, watching Steve in his chair, smiling, looking over at Mary. Why did those lines sound familiar?
"And then... suddenly, the crowds part." Steve smiled as Coulson moved to show Steve to Mary. She smiled at him, shaking her head a little. "And there he is, sleek, stylish, radiant," Steve was damn proud he could roll that R, "with charisma. Bizarrely, he's on the telephone. But then, so are you." He even did the point in the air.

Tony watched as Steve stood up from his chair with more grace than he had seen in the man. He blinked, lost, and maybe a little turned on.

"And he comes towards you... the moves of a jungle cat." Mary was trying very hard to not laugh, grinning at him. "And although you, quite correctly, sense that he is..." Steve paused, looking side to side with his eyes, then back at Mary, "bi, like most devastating handsome single men of his age are, you think," Steve closed his phone, then took her phone, setting them down on the closest table, the table that just happened to be the one that Tony was sitting at, "what the hell, life goes on. Maybe there won't be marriage, no you've already done that," Steve smiled, taking one of her hands, "maybe there won't be sex," he made a shocked face and Mary could keep her laugh in that time. "But, by God, there'll be dancing." Steve spun her out, keeping a hold of her hand.

Mary laughed as she spun back in to him, taking his other hand. "You said you couldn't dance!" She accused.

"I said I have two left feet," Steve told her, grinning. "And if you'll notice, I'm not really moving that much." It was true, he was just moving side to side, occasionally spinning her in his hand. Mary grinned and pulled him back in a spin towards her, making his eyes go wide at the change up. He stumbled a little, but somehow managed to get his footing back. "I think it took more time memorizing those lines than it did to learn a few simple steps."

"You're still a little wobbly, like newborn calf," she giggled at his face at the comparison. "I can't believe you even managed to get Phil to help with this," she said as they went back to simple moves.

"I needed to get the lavender in there somehow," Steve smiled at her.

Tony's phone buzzed on the table with an alert. Had anyone been paying attention to the groom, they would have seen the wink and nod to the hidden camera Steve had set up a few seconds earlier. A new song had been added to Steve's playlist. 'I Wanna Dance with Somebody.'

Tony looked up to see Coulson stepping in to take his bride back from Steve as the song came to an end. Had Steve added that just now? Was the alert late, or had he simply missed it? Was it a question, or just a coincidence? Was Steve- Oh shit, he was coming to the table!

Steve grabbed the two old phones. "Did you just pull a movie on Mary?" Bruce asked.

"It's kind of an inside joke?" Steve said with a shy little smile. "Coulson helped me find some phones that looked like ones from the movie, and that would still actually work. I'm pretty shocked that I managed to pull it off, honestly." Tony watched Steve for a second. He had set-up, and pulled off, a well-timed stunt, without Tony's help. "I thought I was going to fall right on top of her trying to dance."

"Not a fan of dancing?" Tony heard himself asking.

"Dancing's not a fan of me," Steve replied, looking at Tony now. "Never could get it down, two left feet and all that."

"Even after getting your new build?" Tony said with a motion to his body. "You've got some hidden grace and footwork in there, I've seen it."
"If anything I think I became more awkward when dancing," Steve admitted. Tony's ears perked a little when he heard the guitar of a song start, everyone recognizing it immediately. Except Steve of course.

Tony glanced at Bruce, before hopping out of his chair. "I've got something that you can learn easily, and it doesn't matter if you have two left feet, or no feet."

"Tony," Bruce said, still in his seat, but looking faintly amused. "You aren't thinking about taking him out to this song, are you?"

"Not thinking about it Bruce," Tony said, putting his hands on Steve's shoulders and directing him back towards the dance floor. "Doing it!" Steve looked vaguely scared, not sure what was going on. "Alright, Spangles, just listen to the song, and watch everybody else. I have faith in you."

'It's just a jump to the left.' Tony jumped a little bit, looking at Steve, amusement practically burning in his eyes. 'And then a step to the right!' Tony stepped right, purposely bumping into Steve's side. 'With your hands on your hips.' Tony wrapped Steve's hands to his hips before doing it himself. 'You bring your knees in tight.' Steve watched as everyone else was doing all the same moves, then his eyes slid back to watching Tony. 'But it's the pelvic thrust, that really drive you insane! Steve was hoping that he wasn't actually blushing. 'Let's do the Time Warp again!'"

"You think you can remember that, Cap?" Tony asked with a smirk.

"I think I might leave the dancing to you, Tony." Steve chuckled a little, putting his arms down.

"Nope! Everyone dances to this song." Tony wrapped his arm around Steve's when he went to move from the dance floor. "Even Agent is doing the dance!"

Steve closed his eyes for a second, then looked at Tony, letting out a soft sigh. "Alright, I'll do it. But if I look stupid doing it, it's all on you!"

"Everyone looks stupid doing this dance, that's the beauty of it!" Tony laughed, pulling Steve over towards Mary and Coulson. They all needed a front row to Steve Rogers, Captain America, doing the Time Warp.

Now Tony just needed to get Steve to watch 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show.' That would be entertaining.

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Tony sat at his table, a glass of champagne in his hand. The staff was cleaning up the room, pulling tablecloths for washing, and folding up the food tables. Everyone else had left, the married couple gone off on their honeymoon, Julie taking both Wade and Peter back to her house for a sleepover, and all the guests off with their leftovers and wedding favors.

He took a drink from his glass as someone sat in the chair next to him. He smiled a little. "You're a planning guru. No wonder I made you CEO of my company." He held up his glass as Pepper clinked the drink together.

"You had your hand all over this," Pepper said to him. "Don't ignore your part in making this special day." Tony nodded a little, still not looking over at her. "I thought that after the wedding I would either find you still here, or running back to the Tower."

"Peter won't be back until dinner time tomorrow, and I've got no alcohol in the penthouse." Tony
held up the glass again before taking another drink. "It would just be a shame to let this leftover champagne go to waste."

"There was an open bar," Pepper said, tilting her head a little.

"Less likely to get a buzz from the champagne," Tony told her. He let out a little sigh. "It's been a long time since I've even had a buzz, much less get drunk. A hell of a long time."

"When was the last time you even had a drink before tonight?" Pepper asked him.

"Two weeks ago," Tony answered automatically. "Peter's second day of school. Before that, I hadn't had a drink in four months, one week, and two days." Pepper raised her eyebrows, and Tony glanced over at her. "Summer break is always the hardest on my drinking habit."

"I don't know if you can call it a habit anymore." Pepper took a sip from her own glass, watching him.

"Makes your job a lot easier," Tony commented. He finished his glass and set it down on the table.

"For the day of a wedding, you don't look too terribly joyful." Pepper turned more towards Tony.

Tony just sighed a little and ran his hand through his hair. "Just tired, is all. It really was a perfect day, for them. They deserve it, specially after this summer." He glanced over at the dance floor, someone starting to sweep the floor. "Everyone had fun." Pepper leaned over, rubbing the back of his neck a little with her fingers. When Tony closed his eyes, he saw a laughing blonde trying to dance, sparkling blue eyes. Everyone had fun. Tony opened his eyes again. "Now it's time to plan Peter's birthday party. Never a dull moment in my life."
Chapter Notes

I have plans, I swear. This chapter feels awkward to me, but don't worry, everything will work out! Slight trigger warning for a flashback/anxiety.

I'm so happy by the reception to this story! You guess me go 'D'awwwww'.

Unbeta'd as usual, and Marvel owns more than me.

"We're investing in dancing lessons for you."

Steve snorted as he grabbed his dark blue uniform from his drawer. "What is this 'we'?"

"I can't invest emotionally?"

"No one's investing in any lessons," Steve replied as he put the uniform in his bag, followed by his gloves and belt. "I don't actually plan on dancing again anytime soon."

"That's no fun! You didn't do horribly, but when Mary spun you, you almost did a face plant. But, really Steve, how does someone mess up the Time Warp when Tony Stark was teaching you?"

"Someone who doesn't know how to dance, Meg," Steve said with a chuckle. He grabbed his boots and sat on the edge of his bed to slip them on.

"You have potential!" The woman said.

"It's a little more difficult than that. And I'll have to leave you to dwell on that thought, because I have to go." He grabbed his duffle and the bag from the side table.

"You are an evil man, you know that, right?" Meg told him, sounding amused. "You'd better not take too long on that mission, because this conversation is not over."

"Yeah, I think it is," Steve corrected.

"Okay, yeah, but doesn't mean that I won't find something else!"

"Bye, Meg." He shook his head a little as they hung up and slipped the phone in his pocket. It had only been two days since the wedding, but Natasha had called Steve with a mission, and he was eager to jump in. He'd been self-confined to the Tower, trying to stay away from the people that were still trying to figure out who Captain America was, but he had been getting antsy. He still hadn't managed to figure out how to stay in one place with nothing to do. Left over habit from the War.

"Jarvis, where's Tony?" Steve asked as he got onto the elevator.

"Sir is in the workshop," the AI dutifully answered. "Shall I take you there?"

"Please, Jarvis," Steve said with a nod. A couple weeks ago Tony had said that he was working on a new harness for the shield, and he had told Steve to stop by before his next mission. This may be too
soon, but Steve also wanted to say bye to Tony before he left.

The doors opened and Steve headed down the hallway, knocking on the workshop door. He could hear the deep bass, and guitar, of music coming from inside before the volume turned down and the door unlocked. Steve pushed the door open and stepped inside.

"What's up, Cap?" Tony called from somewhere in the workshop. Steve looked around, then saw a pile of metal shift.

"I'm getting ready to leave for a mission," he started, headed towards the metal. "Wanted to let you know, and check up on that harness?" He jumped back a little when a metal arm came from the pile, Dum-E's claw spinning. He chuckled a little and pat the bot's arm.

"Mission?" Steve whipped around, startled when Tony walked up behind him. He was wiping his hands on an already greasy rag, tank top and faded jeans resting on his hips. Steve blinked a couple of times before nodding.

"Yeah, Natasha called with a mission, and I said yes." He watched Dum-E swerve around Steve, going past Tony, but claw taking the dirty rag from him. "Should only take a couple days, and I'm afraid I'm starting to get cabin fever."

"Peter's only been in school for two weeks," Tony accused. "You can't be that bored already."

"Says the man that's in the workshop from the moment Peter gets to school, to the minute you go to pick him up." Steve crossed his arms, watching the genius.

"That's different," Tony tried to argue. "I'm working on important stuff, lots of stuff, stuff." Steve raised an eyebrow at him. "Work stuff. Of course." Uh huh. "I've got your harness." Tony said and turned around, heading back for the table he had been working at, Steve following behind him. "It works on a magnet system, which should make things easier than trying to hook it."

"Won't that be hard to pull off when I need it?" Steve asked as Tony pulled out a new leather harness. "I assume that it's a strong enough magnet so that it won't fall off during a mission." Tony nodded a little.

"It's pressure sensitive," he explained. "I had Jarvis take readings when you were wailing on a punching bag last month, so I have some readings on how much force you can exert. When you go to pull the shield, and you reach a certain amount of force, the magnet automatically lets go." Tony held out the harness to Steve. "I would test it out on the jet on the way to your mission so you can get used to it. Technically anyone could pull it off, but not with a casual grab."

Steve nodded, examining the metal piece that would go on his back. "Thanks, Tony." Steve smiled at him and Tony leaned against the table so he didn't react to the flutter of warmth in his chest. He shrugged a little.

"Well, it's just a prototype. Let me know how it works after a couple missions, and I'll be able to go from there." Tony crossed his arms over his chest, covering the blue glow of the arc reactor. "I know I can make something better, but can't get better until I find out the weaknesses of the first product."

"Stop it you sweet talker, you," Steve smiled at Tony. "I love being told that I'm a guinea pig for your experiments."

"If you were a guinea pig for the important experiments, you'd know it, Rogers," Tony said with a smirk. "If you get that excited over it, let me know when you're back, we can get started right away. I've got a couple of questionable things that Bruce doesn't even want to get near."
"So you want me to get near it?" Steve wasn't sure if Tony was serious or not.

"You're less likely to turn into a giant green rage monster," Tony said. "And I don't know how it would react with my arc reactor, so I can't take that chance." He grinned.

Steve looked at Tony, blinked once, then nodded. "Alright, you know what, I've got a mission. Thanks again for the harness, Tony. I'll let you know how it works out." Tony gave him a little salute.

"Be careful, yeah? I know what kind of missions SHIELD would give to you and Romanoff," Tony said seriously. "I'll keep your room warm for you." Steve smiled and nodded, leaving the workshop. Tony waited approximately three minutes before calling for Jarvis. "Get me the specs of his mission."

"Do you have concern over the Captain's safety?" His AI asked, even as a screen popped up, gaining access to SHIELD's servers.

"Something like that," Tony muttered, pulling over a stool. "Is Bruce back yet?"

"I'm afraid not, Sir. Dr Banner is still in South America." Tony nodded with a small sigh.

Tony tapped his screwdriver on the tabletop, waiting for Jarvis to pull up the mission report. Peter was at school, would be getting out late as he and Wade had joined the newly fledged chess team, or were at least trying out for it. Mary and Coulson would be gone until the next weekend, Bruce was in South America, Barton, and now Romanoff, were off on missions for SHIELD. Tony was alone in the Tower, again.

The flash of the holographic screen caught Tony's attention and he looked up seeing the file pop up. Steve's mission looked low risk, mostly stealth. Nothing undercover, which was good, because Tony didn't think that Steve was ready for that yet. It looked like they shouldn't be expecting any trouble. It also looked like Steve was getting bored. He may have had a point when he noticed that Tony was spending more time in the workshop. There was always something to keep him busy over the summer, helping Peter with his art and science experiments, or rather being there as Steve gave Peter art lessons; helping Mary with her healing and then the wedding; working with Bruce before he went to his Doctors without borders, or whatever he did when he ran off. But now everyone was gone again.

"J, bring up the plans for the Mark IV suit," Tony said, spinning a bit on the stool. "Let's start putting him through baby's first steps." Tony had some time to kill before it was time to get the boys from school, he could work on the suits.

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Tony pulled himself out of the chest of the Mark IV suit, took the welding goggles off and wiped his brow. "Run the tests, J," Tony said as he dropped the welder in its case, and stood up and stretched his arms. A couple of pops from his shoulders and back told him that he should probably actually be in bed. He rolled his neck a few times as he heard the machinery take up the suit to reconnect it with the rest.

There was a grinding noise that had Tony turning around. He saw the assembly unit stalling, a couple sparks. "Apologies sir, but the assembly unit has not taken the calibrations for the new suit."
Tony swore under his breath and walked over to the platform.

"Yeah, I can see that. Shut it down Jarvis, I'll pull it out and we'll go into manual mode." He sat at the edge, peering down to see the top half of his suit leaning against one of the arms that would have taken the helmet. Tony sighed and leaned down into unit as Jarvis released control. He pushed the chest of the suit up, hearing the groan at the joints, then reached for the pin to lock them in place. He pushed the first one in, then reached for the second as there was a louder groan. A stripped wire sparked, dropping onto Tony's arm, and he shouted as he jolted back. The loose arm dropped against Tony's shoulder, the wire sliding against others, electricity flaring by his eyes.

Tony fell back, arms covering his face, chest heaving as he tried to get a breath. All he could see was blue, covering him, trying to get inside of him. His shoulder burned, spreading like fire to his head. No, he wouldn't let this happen again!

Anthony.

"No!" He twisted, pain lancing through his body.

Tony.

Hands on his arms. "No!!" Tony tried to back up, but he couldn't move. He was being pulled forward and up. "Let me go!"

"Tony!" That voice, that was a familiar voice. "Open your eyes, Tony!" There was a pressure at his arms, but they weren't forced back. "Come on, it's alright." That voice was warm, he could trust that voice. "It's me, it's Steve. It's alright, Tony."

Tony felt himself being moved to his back, gently. Steve. But he was gone, on a mission, wasn't back yet. Again, there was the pressure at his arms, trying to bring them away from his face. "Let me take a look at your injuries." Injuries? He could trust Steve. Steve wouldn't hurt him. Tony let his arms be brought down, away from his face, but he body was still tensed, ready to defend, to strike. "Open your eyes for me, Tony." He jerked when he felt a warm touch by his eyes. "Yeah, there's a nasty burn there, I wanna make sure it didn't do any other damage. You can do this, Tony, I know you can."

Tony blinked his eyes open. At first everything was too bright, too blue, then something moved up, blocking the light. Tony blinked a couple more times and he saw a face, blonde hair, Steve. "Can you see me alright?" Steve asked, his voice quieter. Tony nodded once. Steve moved to get out and Tony's hand shot out, grabbing onto his shirt, fingers digging in tightly.

"Don't," Tony breathed out. "Please, just, don't go yet." He relaxed slightly when Steve put his hand over the one in his shirt.

"Not going anywhere, if you don't want me, too," Steve told him, giving his hand a squeeze. "How's your head feel? Think you might be able to sit up?" Tony nodded a little, and moved with Steve to sit up. He took a deep breath, but it felt like his lungs couldn't get enough air and he started to cough. Steve started to rub his back in circles.

"You're in New York," Steve started softly. "In your Tower, down in your workshop." Tony could feel his hand starting to shake. "It's almost two in the morning, and Peter is fast asleep upstairs on your floor." Steve flattened Tony's hand against his chest. "Follow my breathing, nice and easy, match it up."

Tony closed his eyes and let their hands move with the Steve's breathing, focusing on it. It took a
few minutes, but Tony felt like he could breathe again. His head felt a little foggy, but it was starting to clear up. There was no more blue, but he was still feeling pain. When he opened his eyes again he could see Steve clearly, watching him, concern all over his face. Tony was indeed down in his workshop, he could see that now. He saw his hand on Steve's chest, felt the warmth of Steve's hand on top of his, and he tried to jerk it back. Steve kept a grip on Tony's hand, not letting him move.

"Nope, not until I'm sure you're good," Steve told him. "You remember what happened?"

"Uh," Tony glanced around, wincing when he moved his shoulder. "I was working on the suit, but I messed up the calibrations on the assembly unit. Just wanted to run some tests." He glanced down at his arm, saw the angry red of the wire burn. "Put it into manual mode and hopped in."

"Yeah, I saw something on your shoulder, didn't look good." Tony moved his head back when Steve tried to move his head closer. "I wanna check your eyes, see if maybe you got a concussion."

"I don't remember hitting my head," Tony said with a frown.

"You must have been deep inside your mind at that point." He let Steve get a little closer to his face, most likely checking his pupils. "You were trying to get away from me, before I could pull you out of that little pit. Looked like you could have hurt yourself even more."

"Thanks, for that, by the way," Tony said softly. He ran his free hand over his face. "Guess I was setting myself up for this, probably went too long without sleep."

"Have you been down here long?" Steve asked him.

"Nah, Peter went to sleep a little after nine. I didn't come down here till ten." Tony glanced around the workshop slowly. "What time did you say it was?"

"About ten to Two," Steve answered. "I'm thinking we should get you up to bed."

"Not going to do much good," Tony muttered. "Not going to sleep tonight, anyway."

"I know the feeling." Tony looked at the man in front of him.

Tony licked his lips. "Well, I got some ice cream upstairs, leftover dinner, and nearly every movie known to man. I know I'll feel better being on the same floor as my son, and I think you're not getting any sleep either, so let's be crazy insomniacs in the same place."

"Sounds like a plan," Steve said, a little smile curling up. "I'd feel better keeping an eye on you anyway, in case of a hidden concussion."

"I'm proud that you're learning about my aversion to actual medical professionals," Tony teased. "Help me up, Cap. Then I wanna hear how your mission went."

"You know I can't talk about the details." Steve gripped Tony's other hand and slowly helped him up. Tony already had plans to grab some painkillers along the way. "But, I'm glad to be back. It was simple, but I guess I've gotten used to sleeping in a very nice bed."

"I thought it'd take a lot longer for you to get used to that nice of a bed," Tony told him. He waved a hand over the panel by the main door and the workshop went dark.

"Had about eighteen months to get used to something that wasn't sleeping on a cot when I got out of the ice," Steve replied. "Thanks for the concern, though." Tony couldn't help but note that Steve was still holding onto his other hand. His hand was released when they made it to the elevator. "When
was the last time that you got any sleep?"

"That's information that I don't feel like-"

"Seventy-Six hours." Jarvis tattled. Traitor. There was that look from Steve, one that he would get from Mary sometimes as well. Like he was doing something he knew he shouldn't be doing.

"So, I'm thinking that we need to find something mindless to watch," Tony started a new topic as the elevator took them up to the penthouse. "Even though we're not getting any sleep, it doesn't mean that we're able to focus on important facts."

"Important facts?" Steve questioned.

"Well, I'm not going to have you watch something like Star Trek and have you miss everything." Tony scoffed a little like he was insulted. "Maybe a series instead of movie, there are a couple of those where you can watch most of the first season and not miss much, or just watch them again." The elevator doors opened and the duo walked out and towards the kitchen. "I'm feeling some hot chocolate, how about you?" He didn't wait for Steve's answer before he reached into one of the cupboards.

Steve leaned against the counter watching the man. "Is this the same hot chocolate that is a secret recipe?"

"Pretend you're not seeing anything." Tony said automatically. "Really, I'm just lacking the energy to kick you out of the kitchen." And he kind of didn't want to be left alone just yet. When the drink was done he had planned on checking on Peter while he grabbed some pain killers.

"I'll take the secret to the grave," Steve swore, putting a hand up in oath. "Peter told me that it was your mothers’ recipe?"

Tony hummed and nodded as he grabbed a sauce pan. "My mom was Italian, and I fell in love with it the first time she made it for me."

"It's a thicker drink, I was pleasantly surprised," Steve admitted. "Bucky had become a fan of an 'Irish hot chocolate'," Steve said with a chuckle. Tony snorted.

"Alcoholic hot chocolate you mean." Tony smirked a little. "Always a classic, but not what I'm feeling at the moment. You Brooklyn-Irish boys, always causing trouble."

Steve let out a laugh. "Us? I'm pretty sure you Long Island-Italians got into more trouble than us! All your ego and flirtatious ways."

"We got in trouble with husbands and boyfriends, not the law! We knew how to control our temper." Tony pointed his wooden spoon at Steve. Steve just smiled at Tony, giving him pause. He turned his attention back to his concoction. "So, why aren't you going to get any sleep tonight? Post mission adrenaline?"

"Something like that," Steve said with a shrug. "Starting to think that I should have taken Mary up on the idea of becoming a teacher, or something."

"Why's that? Hero life not what it used to be?" Tony asked, genuinely curious.

"Not really?" Steve wrinkled his nose a little. "There was always something to do, another mission, another task, no real break. That's war. But here, it's not as urgent sometimes. Then there was this past summer, and it all ramped up, and then... nothing."
Tony could feel his canines tapping together in thought. Sounded like Steve needed something for the day to day monotony. "Before, well, this," Steve motioned to himself, "I was always doing what work I could, if I wasn't confined to the bed. It may not have been the action of battle, but it kept me busy. Now, not so much."

"Well, now that you're staying here, I'm sure we can find something for you to do," Tony said. Maybe there would be the added benefit of Steve staying around the Tower. Tony grabbed two mugs and started to pour the sweet treat for them. "If you haven't eaten, there's left overs in the fridge -"

"Thanks, I think I'm good for tonight, though." Steve took a drink from the mug and made a soft moan that Tony thought was not family friendly, after-hours only. "This is better than I remember it."

"I may not be able to cook much, or well, but what I do know how to make, it's made very well." Tony turned to face Steve with his own mug. "Little bits of my childhood that I remember fondly. Let's move out to the TV, mindless media calls for us." Tony moved before Steve could say anything else.

The drink had Tony's desired effect; lulling Steve to sleep. He hadn't known that the blonde would fall asleep with his head practically in Tony's lap though. Tony almost drifted to sleep as he ran his fingers through Steve's hair, keeping him asleep until the sun came up in the morning. When Jarvis turned off the TV, Tony gently moved the super soldier's head from his thigh back onto the couch, making sure the blanket he threw over him didn't fall off, and got to work getting breakfast, (cereal), ready for Peter.

Tony just had to wait for the weekend to come, and Mary would be back. Then he could have his nightmares in peace. He didn't need Steve to keep rescuing him from every anxiety attack, even if he did feel much better afterwards. Just a few more days, then he could sleep.

Tony had to wonder if when normal people said they had 'plans' on Friday, were 'plans' for villains attacking a city? Just after dinner, him and Peter putting the dishes in the dishwasher, Tony was starting to think so when Jarvis sounded an alarm.

"Silence," Tony called when Peter covered his eyes from the noise.

"Director Fury is calling, Sir," Jarvis announced.

"Fine, put him through," Tony said as he followed Peter back out to the living room, where his weekend homework was waiting.

"Stark, I need you out there," Fury's voice came out through the speakers. "Some out of control experiments have broken free from a lab."

"Can't," Tony said simply. "Call Reed, or Xavier's crew." Was Fury crazy? He was alone with his son, there was no way that Tony could go out there. "Where's Rogers? Or your spy twins?"

"Rogers is on his way from DC, but you're closer."

"Got no one else here at the Tower, Fury, I can't do it," Tony tried to re-iterate. He saw Peter about to speak up, and Tony pointed at him as he said his next sentence. "And Peter is not old enough to stay him by himself, even with Jarvis." Peter's face fell a little as he let out a huff of breath. "Send me the info that you have, and I'll talk your people through disabling whatever it is. That's the best I can
do."

Fury grumbled and cut the line, but a few seconds later there was the ping of a new message. Tony grabbed his tablet and brought up the information, scanning through it. "Petey, continue your homework, I gotta grab something from the workshop."

"Kay," he said as he plopped down on the ground, his notebook open on the coffee table.

Downstairs, Tony went for one of the comm units that everyone had. He had passed on the design to SHIELD as well, knowing that they were much better than what the organization had been using before. When he turned it on he was treated to a familiar voice.

"ETA twelve minutes." Of course Steve was already on the line.

"You coming alone, or bringing a guest, Cap?" Tony asked, glancing back down at the tablet.

"Got Widow and Hawkeye with me," he reported. He was still in Captain America mode. "Are you in the field?"

"That's a big negative," Tony told him. "No one's here to watch the little Spider." After Natasha had coined it, Peter had loved the nickname Spider. They decided to use that as his code name over the comms when they on missions. "Not taking the chance."

"Good choice. What can you tell us about the threat?"

"Looks like something that SHIELD field teams could take out on their own, honestly." Tony was just skimming, it looked like experiments on animals gone wrong, plain and simple. So far no reports of civilian casualties, minimal injuries. Most of the animals were dumpster rodents; skunks, possums, a few cats and dogs as well. They had grown in size, and no doubt were more vicious. "Containment looks like the best idea until I can get a sample of whatever was used on them. From what I can read it looks like a bunch of strays were used, animals that would have been done a kindness of a quiet death on the streets than the tests they were subjected too."

"So, deadly force is not ruled out," Black Widow stated more than asked.

"That would be a positive. I can still use samples from the bodies." Tony couldn't see Captain America killing a dog or cat though.

"We'll try containment first." Tony smirked a little as the Captain confirmed his thoughts. "If possible, back in the building they escaped from."

"Keep me updated." Tony was cut off, frowning when he heard a subdued 'boom' from outside. "I'm not see anything in the reports about this, but did you guys hear something about the experiments being able to explode?" Tony was already on the move back up to the penthouse.

"No, no reports of that," Hawkeye answered. The lights actually flickered as the elevator doors opened, and Tony opted for the stairs, taking them two and three at a time.

"Okay, well I'm reporting explosions near the Tower," Tony said.

"The source building isn't that close to the Tower, they shouldn't be there that fast," Captain America said, concern dipping into his voice.

"Jarvis will put the building on lock down," Tony said as he neared his floor.
"Contain first," Cap backed up Tony's words. "Keep us posted Iron Man."

Tony huffed out a breath and yanked the door open to the Penthouse floor. Peter was crouched behind the couch, away from the windows, where they could see a small plume of black smoke floating past. He rushed over and wrapped his arms around Peter. "You okay?"

"Yeah," Peter said with a nod. "What's going on, Daddy?"

"Some scientist got a little over-zealous in the lab," Tony told him. He leaned over, looking over the couch, frowning when he thought he saw something small sail past the window. "We've got it under control though."

"The Avengers?" Peter asked with a smile. He found the prospect of living with superheroes exciting, since his Daddy was a superhero.

"Yeah, the Avengers," Tony glanced back at him, ruffling his hair. "We're gonna stay up here though."

"They don't need Iron Man?" Peter asked with all the innocence he could muster.

"I believe we've been over those," he said with a bop to Peter's nose. "You can't stay here alone. They don't need Iron Man for this one, so we get to chill in the-"

"Sir, my proxim-" Jarvis was promptly cut off in the middle of his warning, and Tony's arm pulled Peter a little closer. The lights flickered again before going out, the comm in Tony's ear giving a slight static sound before going out. Someone had hit his tower with a powerful EMP.

"Alright, maybe things have come a little close," Tony said, keeping his voice calm.

"Do we go to the safe room?" Peter asked quietly, and Tony nodded. He took Tony's hand, holding onto his tightly as they stood up.

"It won't be for long, though." Tony tried to keep Peter confident, distracted from what could be really happening outside. "Cap, Widow, and Hawkeye are on their way."

"We'll be safe," Peter replied happily. Tony chuckled and couldn't help but pick up Peter as they walked by the couch. He ducked when the glass exploded inside, covering Peter with his own body, shards hitting his back. Peter clenched up, holding onto Tony tightly.

"I should just invest in a glass company," Tony muttered under his breath "You hurt, Petey?" Peter shook his head no, and Tony dropped a kiss on his head. He put him down on his feet, keeping his son behind him as he turned to face the windows, one hand holding onto Peter. Tony's eyes narrowed at the man standing there, dressed in black with a visible metal arm.

"Doom trying a new look for his bots? Because really, he should just stick to all silver." The bot tilted his head a little. "If you're going to try and create something life-like, why stop half way through?" The man turned and Tony saw the red star on the shoulder. Something cold curled in his gut. "You're not a Doom-bot," he said quietly. He needed to get Peter out of there. A hand gripped a gun in his flesh hand, aiming at Tony now.

The comm unit beeped twice in his ear, the reboot sequence complete. "-to the Tower." He had never been happier to hear Natasha's voice.

"Where'd you get that arm? Hmm?" Tony spoke, knowing that the others would hear him now. "Please tell me you didn't get it from HammerTech."
"Tony?" Steve sounded a little out of breath, and worried.

The man in black stayed silent. Tony could make out that there was a mask on his face past the glare of the setting sun shining past him. "Well, if you used that to help you get in, then it must work, so not Hammer. Probably a good move. Maybe I should get into the prosthetic game, bet I could make something better."

"Tony, if you can hear me, we're on our way," Steve told him through the comms. "We're only a couple minutes out."

"I bet we could work out-" Tony gasped as the man fired his gun, the bullet finding purchase in his upper arm. The force pushed him back, throwing off his balance, falling back and landing on his side.

"Daddy!" Peter shouted, wrapping his arms around Tony's uninjured side. Tony tightly wrapped his arm around Peter, holding him close, and trying to turn him away from the assailant. Tony swallowed and looked back over at the mysterious man again. "Please don't hurt my Daddy."

The man looked between Tony and Peter, his gaze lingering on the boy. His arm lowered a little, the gun pointing down now. "Peter, get back," Tony said quietly. "Get back to the stairs."

"No." He shook his head and held onto Tony tighter. "I'm not gonna let him hurt you." If Tony didn't have a bullet in his arm, he would have laughed at the glare that Peter sent towards the mystery man. "Don't hurt him."

"I don't have a choice." Tony blinked at the gruff voice that spoke to them, surprised. The sounds of the quinjet had the man surprised this time, and he turned quickly, jumping out of the window quickly.

Tony groaned and moved to sit up, his good arm wrapped around Peter. "He jumped out of the window, Jarvis is still down, but I've got Peter." Tony kissed the top of Peter's head, not paying attention as the other three coordinated their approach.

"Why would he want to hurt you, Daddy?" Peter asked him, crawling into his lap.

"I don't know," Tony answered honestly. He had no idea who that man even was. He was no one that any of them had run into, at least yet. Maybe it was time to take a look in SHIELD's files. Peter scrunched up his nose and buried his face into Tony's shoulder. Tony couldn't help but feel guilty, being unable to stop Peter from being a part of the danger that he was constantly getting in to.

"Tony? Peter?" Tony turned his head and saw Steve burst through the doors from the stairs, helmet pulled off, shield still in hand. He spotted them and jogged over, taking a knee next to them. "Are you two alright?"

"The strange man shot Daddy," Peter said instantly. Tony shot him a look before Steve was looking for the wound. He hissed in pain when Steve's hand brushed over his arm.

"Yup, that's it, right there." Tony let out a slow breath. "Nothing big, probably stopped bleeding by now."

"Yeah, not exactly, but it'll be an easy stitch up," Steve told him. "What did this man look like?"

"He was in all black, even a black mask. He was wearing it like the color was about to disappear from existence," Tony started rambling out. "He also did a lot of staring, like talking was overrated. And then he, you know, shot me."
"I asked him, then I told him to stop hurting my Daddy," Peter spoke up. "Then he stopped." Steve glanced at Tony who shrugged, then hissed when he moved his arm.

"Okay, but he still hurt me a little, and I think it's time to make that stop hurting." Steve and Peter helped Tony to his feet, Peter sticking to the uninjured side. The lights flickered back on, this time Jarvis booting back up.

"My apologies, Sir, but I'm afraid that my systems were compromised by an electromagnetic pulse of some foreign origin."

"I figured, it's alright Jarvis." The elevator doors opened, and Tony gratefully stepped on with Steve and Peter. "Do you happen to have a location on Brucie-bear?"

"I'm afraid not, Sir," Jarvis answered, sounding like he was sorry. "I'm finishing the link-up with the SI satellites." Tony sighed a little, but nodded. The elevator opened on the med bay level and the three walked out. "Shall I place a call to Dr Duff?"

"Let's take a couple scans, and we'll go from there." Tony hopped up on one of the beds, pulling over a screen. For a second it looked like Steve was going to try and pull Peter away, take him somewhere else so he didn't have to watch, but Peter was faster, pulling himself up on the bed next to Tony. He took the screen from Tony's arm and held it over his injured arm. "Thanks, Petey." He looked at Steve and tried to give him a reassuring look. That's when he saw that some of Steve's uniform was torn, scratches from claws. "Hey, after you get the scan saved, why don't you help Cap clean up his scratches. I'm sure he's got some on his back that he can't reach."

"Okay," Peter nodded. He could deal with that, as long as he got to stay in the same room as his Daddy. The screen beeped twice and Tony reached over to take it from him. Steve moved up, lifting the almost seven year old in one arm, and moving towards the other end of the room where more supplies were.

Tony looked down at the scan and wobbled his head a little. It could have been worse, and he could see the wound. He could pull out the bullet, then bandage it, and if Bruce got back in time, get him to treat it properly. If not, tomorrow he'd call for a house visit from his doctor. Glancing behind he saw that Steve had pulled down the top of his suit, the undershirt seeing better days, but Peter was helping clean up some of the cuts on Steve's arm. He was preoccupied enough to miss Tony reaching for some forceps. It wasn't going to be pleasant, but this was something that Tony could deal with, bullets were something that Tony knew.

"Peter? Tony?" Tony glanced up when he heard Mary's voice.

"Mama! You're back!" Peter cheered. "Did you have fun?"

"I did," she said, making her way directly over to Peter. Tony was sure that she had seen, and heard, what happened. "We didn't break any glass though."

Tony nodded to Coulson, who walked over to him. He took the forceps from Tony's fingers, looking at his arm. "Looks like you guys had some fun."

"You and I have two very different definitions of fun, Agent," Tony said. He bit his lip when Coulson reached in for the bullet suddenly. "Can't even count to three?"

"Where's the fun in that?" Tony swore he saw Coulson smile. Tony pressed an alcohol wipe to his arm and held it there. "Good to see you guys have all of this covered while we were gone." Tony did notice the Agent wrap the bullet up and slip it in his pocket.
"We are capable of not dying when Mom and Dad are gone having fun." Coulson stared at Tony. "Ouch, Agent, that look, it hurts. You need to cut that out, you're the new step-dad to our son."

"It sounds weird when you say it like that." Coulson narrowed his eyes a little at Tony, and he started to wrap his arm.

"Just saying it how it is," Tony grinned. "What do you think he's going to call you? Papa? Pa? Da? He could always go Italian with it."

"He'll probably continue to call me Phil," he said interrupting Tony.

"Not even by the first name?" Tony said in an exaggerated, shocked, gasp. "I'm mortified, Agent."

"Mortified isn't a good look on you." Mary walked over to them, Peter in her arms. Steve followed behind. "I'm very glad to see that you managed to keep our tiny human in one piece."

"I'm not tiny," Peter giggled.

"Yeah! He's not tiny," Tony agreed. "He's turning seven next week!"

"Yeah!" Peter put his arms up in victory. "Mr Steve, will you be here for my birthday?"

"Wouldn't miss it for the world, kiddo," Steve told him with a smile.

"Why don't you come help us unpack, and we'll get your room ready for tonight," Mary told the little boy. "Not safe with all that broken glass up on Daddy's floor." Peter hummed and nodded, hugging Mary around the neck. Coulson fell into step next to Mary and they retreated for the elevator.

The doors closed and Tony lilted a little to the side, closing his eyes. Steve put a hand on his side to catch him. "Son of a bitch! He was not gentle when he stole my bullet."

Steve let out a breath and leaned his forehead on top of Tony's head. "I think Coulson stealing your bullet is the least of your worries right now."

"Watch out, Cap, someone might think that you were worried about me." Tony smiled a little, patting Steve's arm. Tony felt Steve smile through his hair. "Um, hey, follow me?" Tony asked as he got up off the bed. Steve tilted his head, Tony thinking not unlike a golden retriever, or maybe a labrador. "Just, come on." Tony headed for the elevator, Jarvis bringing it back down for him. Inside Tony hit a button before Steve got on.

"Where are we going?" Steve asked, a tiny frown forming. "Natasha and Clint are still looking for-"

"We're staying inside the building, if that's what you're wondering," Tony assured him. "I just, this is something I want to do. I was shot today, indulge me." Steve just nodded, falling into an easy silence in the elevator. Tony let his eyes give a hidden roam over Steve's body, half in the suit, arms exposed, peeks of skin that was red, but already starting to heal.

The ding of the elevator pulled Tony back to the present, and he was moving down the hall. He peeked his head in the gym, or well what was finished of it so far. There were at least punching bags, and a sparring corner set up. As soon as Steve was inside, Tony closed the door and pulled Steve over to him. The blonde stumbled a bit, but Tony was still moving, hands holding onto his shirt, leaning up to press his lips to Steve's.

Steve made a noise in surprise, but put a hand on Tony's waist and tilted his head so they had a more comfortable angle, returning the kiss. Tony moaned softly before his teeth tugged at Steve's bottom
"It's not fair how soft your lips are," Tony murmured.

"Tony, what's going on?" Steve asked again.

"Remember, gyms are like Vegas," Tony said, opening his eyes a little to look at him. "What happens here, stays here?" He started to lean back up, but Steve put a hand on his arm. "Why do you have to question so many things?"

"There are so many things I could say," Steve started. He pulled Tony a little, pushing open the door until he was stepping out. He left Tony standing just inside the gym, then leaned down, kissing Tony softly, gently. Tony's hand reached up for Steve's face, but Steve pulled his head back. "So, I guess we'll have to do this a different way."

Tony stared blankly as Steve let go of him and started walking down the hall. "I'm pretty sure I was the target of an assassin today!" Tony shouted after him. "Shouldn't that change things?"

"Guess I'd better make it fun for you then," Steve called back, shooting him a little smile as he stepped into the elevator. Tony licked his lips when the doors closed, then looked down at the floor. Steve had kissed just outside of the gym, leaving Tony toeing the separation of the floors.

Tony groaned and rubbed his face with his hand. Now he was making things complicated, exactly what he didn't want to happen.
Steve went back up the Penthouse floor and saw that Clint and Natasha were already there, looking at the mess that was there. Steve picked up the shield that he had left by the couch when he had gotten there, seeing Tony and Peter on the floor. There was one thing that Tony had said as he walked away from the gym that Steve was taking to heart; There had been an attempt on his life, and Steve needed to figure out who would do that.

"We didn't see anyone, Cap," Clint said, turning towards him, bow folded up and on his back. "Whoever was in here got away pretty quick."

"Jarvis is scanning traffic cameras," Natasha threw in. "I don't think that we're going to find anything though."

"Why do you think that?" Steve asked, walking over to them, glancing at all the broken glass on the floor.

"Whoever did this must have been casing the building for a while," the red head said as she stood up from inspecting the missing window. "They knew that this wouldn't be regular glass, if they weren't thinking about breaking into one of the most dangerous buildings in the state."

"Except we were all gone," Steve said, a little frown marring his brows. "And he would have known that, the news would have been reporting it."

"If they had been casing the building, they would have seen that Tony was the only one here," Clint added. Steve swore silently, crossing his arms over his chest. "Do you think they were responsible for the incident with the animals? Or just using it to their advantage?"

"What did Tony have to say?" Tasha asked, turning to look at Steve.
"Just that the man was in all black, covered his face."

"Either a professional, or a professional hit."

"Either way, nothing comforting," Clint threw in.

"I'm sure that it'll drive Tony crazy that someone was able to get past Jarvis as well," Natasha said as she looked between the two men. "Steve, I think that you should stay here while Clint and I go back to report to Fury."

Steve nodded. "Yeah. He seemed to have no interest with Peter, just Tony, and Mary and Coulson are back and have Peter now." But how could he watch Tony, without actually watching Tony?

One shower and a change of clothes later, Steve was rubbing the bridge of his nose as he rode the elevator. As the doors opened one half clothed child ran, hiding behind him, out of breath but grinning. "Peter Parker." Steve looked up to see Mary standing there, the front of her shirt, and part of her pants wet, holding onto Peter's pajama top. "Come put this top on, you know it's time for bed."

"But Mr Steve is here," Peter argued weakly, holding onto Steve's legs. "He's a guest."

"And the adults will talk when all little boys go down to sleep," she said with a soft smile. "We live with him for pity's sake!"

Peter giggled when Steve reached around and wrapped an arm around Peter's middle, picking him up, carrying him under his arm. "Ma'am, I think you lost something in the elevator." Steve smiled at Mary as he walked onto their floor. Peter let his body become dead weight, flopping as Steve walked.

"Hmmmm, did I?" Mary crossed one arm over her chest, tapping her chin with her other hand. "You know what, on second thought, I don't think I need it anymore."

"I don't know what to do with a little boy, though, Miss."

"You don't?? Oh, well, let me show you what you do!" Steve stopped in front of Mary and she reached down, slipping the shirt over Peter's head, making his squeal. "First, you have to have a fully dressed little boy before you can do anything else." Steve held up with both hands now, helping Mary get the shirt on the boy. "Then, you gotta make him tired."

"How do you that, ma'am?" Steve asked, trying not to laugh like Peter was.

"Just hand him here, I'll have to show you everything." Steve passed Peter over to Mary, and he couldn't keep his laugh in anymore.

"I'm not sleepy, Mama," Peter claimed, wiggling around in her arms until she was forced to put him down, still holding onto his hand.

"You were yawning during your bath, baby boy," she told him as they turned down the hall, Steve following behind.

"Nuh uh."

"Well, I know what will help you get to sleep then. Jarvis, if you could?"

"It would be my pleasure, Mrs Parker." The AI's reply had Steve tilting his head a little. When Mary
opened the door to Peter's room Steve could see that it was dark, but there were lights that seemed to be moving across the floor. When he leaned in a little he saw that they were actually moving across the ceiling. Mary patted Peter's back and he crawled into bed, letting his Mama tuck him in with his stuffed animal.

Mary got down on her knees and they both looked up at the ceiling. "Alright, what's that one right there?" Mary asked as she pointed up to a spot. Steve crouched down a little to get a better idea of what was happening.

"That's Vega," Peter told her. Mary pointed to another one. "That's Altair. Polaris is over there," he said as he moved his arm. The night sky had been projected in Peter's room.

"Very good, baby," Mary said with calm excitement. "Okay, pick up the planets for me." Peter nodded as he looked up at the ceiling, searching. Steve could see his eyes were getting heavy as well. The boy was only able to point out two planets before he drifted off to sleep, Mary kissed his forehead.

Outside of the room, Mary pulled the door closed most of the way, leaving a crack open, and walked with Steve back towards the living room. "What brings you down here this time of night?" Steve raised an eyebrow at her. "I'm a mother, anything past Eight is starting to feel late to me when I have a bedtime to keep track of." Steve smiled softly. "Did you find out anything new about what happened upstairs?"

"Not yet," Steve said with a shake of his head. "Clint and Natasha are going back to talk to Fury about it, and I'm staying here to keep an eye on Tony." Mary glanced at him as they sat down in chairs in the living room. "In a manner of speaking." She nodded. "But, that's not why I'm down here. Well, Tony is, but not the incident. How is Peter doing by the way?"

"He's doing surprisingly well," she told him. "Tony told me that after, the Incident in the summer, he talked with Peter several times. He has implicit trust in Iron Man and the rest of the Avengers, and if it keeps nightmares away from my baby, then I'm okay with that for now." Steve nodded a couple times. "Alright, what did Tony do?"

"It's at times like this, that I vaguely wish I could feel the effects of alcohol," Steve muttered.

"Have you ever been drunk?" Mary asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Once," Steve nodded. "Obviously before the big change, with Bucky. Not what I came here to talk about though." Mary let out an amused hum. "I need to know how to woo Tony."

There was a pause, a beat of silence, then Mary started laughing, throwing her hands over her mouth when she started to get too loud. Steve just watched her, waiting for her to be done.

It was taking a long time.

"I'm sorry," she breathed out, wiping at her eyes from the tears that slipped out from her laughter. "I thought you said you wanted to 'woo' Tony Stark."

"I did," Steve said in a rather unimpressed manner.

Mary took a couple deep breaths, then looked at Steve. "Oh, lord, you're serious." Steve nodded. "I think I'm going to need more details. I know you and Tony have been tight lipped about most things that happened back at the Manor when--"

"We kissed," Steve blurted out, making Mary stop and blink. She looked at him. "At the Manor, we
kissed. It had been a kind of emotional day? I mean, we were talking about Howard-" Mary's eyebrows shot up "-and then he had had a nightmare, and I couldn't sleep. And one thing led to another, and we kissed." Mary blinked a couple of times, slowly. "And then, just a little bit ago, Tony dragged me to the gym, and we kissed again...."

"Give me a second," she said while holding up a finger. She took a breath and nodded. "I can hear the lingering, 'but'."

"Tony says, what happens in the gym, stays in the gym," Steve said carefully, and it seemed that Mary caught on.

"And he purposely dragged you to the gym this time?"

Steve nodded and let out a little sigh. "I still don't know nearly enough about what kind of father Howard was with Tony, but I know there are some deep seeded insecurities if he thinks the only way to do this is to keep a secret in the gym."

"It's not even a good hiding place," Mary murmured.

"I know that he'll never ask me out, so I need to woo him." Steve was sure in his actions. He wanted to get to know Tony Stark, wanted to know what made him tick, wanted to help build up the self-esteem that had been chipped at since he was a kid. Steve wanted to be there for Tony, to stay in his life, to keep that warm feeling in his chest whenever he saw Tony smile, or laugh, when Tony really just let himself be him. "I've got outside help, but I need an insider."

"Outside help?"

"It's not really working, yet," Steve admitted. "A friend of mine is trying to help me, uh, well, flirt, with music." He had texted Meg before his shower, saying that they needed to up their game. She had responded saying that she would get a list ready for him in a couple of hours. "But, she doesn't know Tony, specially not like you do."

"You're really serious about this?" Mary asked, leaning forward, looking Steve in the eye. "Tony's been hurt before, and he's very guarded. He's stubborn, an ass, and he'll try to get you to run away as soon as he figures out what's going on."

"Did you think you were telling me something new?" Steve asked, still casual in his seat. "I've had some time to really think about this, and I'm positive about this."

Mary nodded a couple of times, then sat back up. "Alright."

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Tony stood by the newly installed glass (glad that he could finally take down the plastic after having to wait over the weekend), a glass in his hand, staring outside as the night lights of the city started to go out, the sun giving enough light to wake up the city in full force. He tensed for a second when he heard a footstep behind him, but relaxed again when Mary came up next to him.

"The sunrise is beautiful," she commented, and Tony snorted a little.

"That's a horrible come-on," he said and she smirked. "I used more cliché lines to better effect."

"Good thing I'm not here to romance you then."
"No, you've got Agent for that." Tony turned his head to look at Mary. "Is everything alright? Do you need me to take Peter to school?"

"No, no, everything's fine," she assured him. "Just came up here to see how you were doing."

"I'm fine," he said, turning away from the windows and walking over to the bar to set the glass down. She raised an eyebrow at the amber liquid. "Relaxes me to just pour a glass and hold it. Wasting a lot of good scotch, but," he shrugged one arm, "creature comforts. Listen, really, I'm fine. Captain Guard Dog has already been checking up on me, and I'm already upgrading Jarvis. There's no sign of the-"

"That's great." Tony turned when Mary interrupted him and saw that she was already moving to take a seat by the couch.

He pointed a finger at her. "You're getting good." She smiled innocently at him. "You're trying to get me to talk."

"You talk all the time, Tony. I really don't think I need to get you to try to do that."

"No, no, you want me to talk about feelings, and emotions, and stuff like that." Tony hadn't moved away from the bar.

"Then why fight it?" Mary asked with a shrug. "Just come on over, take a seat, we'll talk and get this over with." Tony dropped his head back and made his best impression of a whale. "What are you, ten? That's not going to work on me. Get over here." Tony let out a loud sigh and went over, dragging his feet a little, and practically threw himself on the couch. Tony and Peter were too much alike.

"I'm actually kind of wishing that I had brought that drink over here with me," Tony mumbled, then turned to face Mary. She slipped from sitting on the arm of the couch to sitting on the other end of the couch from him. Tony didn't like that.

"I think that I'm going to have to be blunt," Mary started and Tony bit back a groan. "Tony, are you okay with the fact that I got married?" Tony blinked a couple of times at her, almost too shocked to answer at first.

"If I had issue with it, would I have helped with the wedding as much as I did?" Tony hoped that would get them off that topic.

"Yes." Or not. "In fact, involving yourself is exactly what I would expect you to do. Throwing yourself into the thick of it so that you don't actually have to think about it means, a distraction for you."

"That just seems like it be counter-intuitive," Tony said, crossing his arms across his chest a little.

"For anyone normal, yes," Mary nodded a little. "But, we all know that Tony Stark is not normal. It's alright if you're not all for it and excited like everyone else." Tony wrinkled his nose at her, clearly not believing her words. "I'm serious."

"I was fine with you dating, why wouldn't I be fine with you getting married?"

"Because dating is loose and free," Mary said matter-of-factly. "You know, like I do, that dating someone can end easily. More easily than a marriage can." Tony snorted softly. "Usually marriage means that someone's serious about something."
"Never doubted that you and Agent weren't serious."

"Didn't think that you did."

"How do you figure that?" Tony asked, curious.

"You wouldn't have let get as close to Peter as you have if you didn't think that he was going to stick around." Mary kept his eye contact, both knowing that she was right. "Tony, it's alright if you've got feelings that are less than stellar about the marriage things. Specially now that we're all living under the same roof."

Tony tightened his jaw a little, then the words forced themselves out. Mary had a way with him. "Yeah, I'm not thrilled about it, wasn't when you first announced it. Didn't mean I wasn't happy for you, that I am happy for you, you deserve to have that happiness again. And I know it couldn't have been easy for you to even get back into a relationship so soon after your last one, ending the way it did." Mary shrugged and nodded at the same time. "But, this one affects me, too, and it's completely selfish, and childish, of me."

"Maybe not as much as you think."

"Really?" Tony gave her a disbelieving look. "I'm not happy about it because now it means that you have someone else to depend on when it comes to Peter." Mary blinked, not expecting that answer to come from Tony. "He gets to stay down on your floor, living with two parents at the same time, like any other normal kid. I know I'm not going to be the first one to be called when he has a nightmare, or wants to have a sleepover with friends, or comes home with an A on his test. I'm not the first one anymore." Tony couldn't stop the words from coming out now. He didn't notice how his chest was heaving a little, breathing heavily as he kept rambling on. "And it's stupid, because it's selfish, but I liked that. I liked being the one you would have to call, or turn too when it came to stuff with Peter. It's because I know I can't be the same full-time parent that you are- Yeah, I know we've talked about it, but it's still true. I'm not you." Tony looked down at his knees, that he noticed he had brought up closer to his chest.

"Oh my god, Tony," Mary breathed before moving over on the couch and pulling him into her arms. "Tony, I didn't know."

He let out a soft snort, letting her hug him. "You weren't supposed, too," he said quietly.

"You're not being selfish," she told him. "You're his father, Tony, and no one can replace that. Of course I'll still come to you with stuff, that's how co-parenting works." She started to rub his shoulder, briefly reminding of comforting Peter. Too much alike. "And you know that I would never make any of the big decisions without you."

"Like moving across the country?"

"That was a little different." Tony raised an eyebrow at her. "I didn't have a choice, I needed the pay raise." Tony opened his mouth but Mary put a finger to his lips. "You know that I wouldn't have just accepted your money."

"Not like I have anything else to spend it on, and it's not like I wouldn't hesitate to spend my entire fortune on Peter." Tony would give up his fortune for Peter, in fact. He leaned his head against Mary's shoulder when she started to run her fingers through his hair, and they sat there for a couple of minutes. "You're not done are you?" Mary hummed and shook her head no. "I'm going to be emotionally wrecked, aren't I?" She nodded.
"But, I hope that in the end, I'll have given you a way to seek the comfort you need to get through it." Tony frowned a little. "I want you to talk to me about the Battle, Tony." Tony froze in her arms, body tensing up, breathing stuttering. "I know you haven't talked to anyone about it, like I told you too."

"I can muddle through on my own, always have," Tony said a little tightly.

"You don't have to, Tony, for pity's sake. You talked to Rhodey about Afghanistan, and I was okay with that. I'm not okay with not knowing all the details, but it helped you get some sleep, and get back to some kind of normalcy, so I kept my mouth shut."

"Rhodey was there," Tony said, pulling out of her arms, but not away from her. He couldn't look her in the eyes though, not yet. "He pulled me out of that hell hole, he saw me-" Tony clenched his jaw shut. "Rhodey knew most of it anyway, so I just filled in the details for him, asked him to keep it out of official reports. Even he was turning green at what happened, and he's seen action! How could I tell that to anyone else?? I still want to be able to look people in the eye at the end of the day!"

"Then why won't you tell someone about what happened this year?" Mary asked gently, moving a bit closer to his back, but not touching, not yet.

"Because no one else went through what I did," Tony bit out. "I can't close my eyes for five minutes without being gripped by fear, and I would never want someone to know even an inkling of what I went through, because that would wreck their lives." He closed his eyes tightly, seeing the spark of white flash with the darkness, putting too much pressure on his eyelids. "No one else was there! I can't-"

"Steve was there," Mary interrupted him, and he snapped his mouth closed. "Steve was at the same battle you were. He's not a delicate flower, someone whose innocence needs to be preserved. He fought through a good chunk of the Second World War, and battled against things that no other soldier had too, or should have had too."

"He's still just young man!" Tony said, and he found himself surging to his feet suddenly. He started to pace in front of the couch. "What kind of life has he lived?? Only knowing sickness and war?!! That's not how anyone should live." Tony shook his head, running his hands through his hair. "He deserves to go out there and be like everyone else, discover the world, date someone normal." Tony dropped back down onto the couch, his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.

"You don't want him to, do you?" Mary asked, and Tony shook his head. "Why, Tony?"

"Because I feel lonely." Tony's words were so soft that Mary almost missed them. "Fuck." He got back up to his feet, keeping his back to Mary. She stood up, watching him, but didn't move. "This is what I didn't want!" He shouted, more aimed at himself. "I didn't want this, didn't want any confusion! Didn't want feelings getting involved." Tony growled a little and shook his head. "I need to keep things how they are, because I have it all worked out. I have plans set in place to keep people safe, and not pulled into any of my bullshit, at least more than they have, too. It works that way, it's always worked that way."

Mary took a step forward and Tony moved back. "I have to go," he said and moved for the elevator. "I have work to do, I have a deadline for SI."

"Tony! Wait-"

Tony was already stepping inside of the elevator. "I'll be down in the workshop, Jarvis can keep an eye on me down there." The doors were closed before Mary could get to him. She let out a sigh,
resting her hands on top of her head.

How had she missed so many signs from him? She hadn't known that he was this out of whack, so affected. Mary needed to know what was going on between Tony and Steve while they had been at the Manor.

"Jarvis? I wonder if you can't help me," she asked tentatively.

"I shall endeavor to do my best." Tony's AI was very faithful to his creator

"Would you be able to shed some light on what happened between Tony and Steve?" She knew it was a long shot, and this was close to an invasion of Tony's privacy "What they talked about, what they did, all that while I was out."

There was a pause before she got the answer that she thought she might get. "I'm afraid that I am unable to share that information." Mary nodded, heading for the stair access door. "But, I believe that perhaps Dr Banner could." She stopped, then smiled a little. "He is currently in possession of his Starkphone."

"Thank you, Jarvis." She smiled and headed back down to her floor. She had a phone call to make, and a Super Soldier to talk too.

Tony had all but spilled out of the elevator as he made his way to his workshop. It was his safe place, his haven. The Iron Man suits were there, his bots were there, his distractions were there. "Jarvis, black out mode," Tony forced out as soon as he slipped into the work area, leaning against the doors. "Emergencies only." The AI didn't say anything, but the glass went dark. He slid down to the ground slowly, closing his eyes and trying to catch his breath.

What had he been thinking? How was it that Mary was able to break him apart like that? He hadn't wanted her to know any of that, he hadn't wanted to say any of that to anyone. The warm sting of tears were prickling at the corners of his eyes, his traitorous emotions only getting worse instead of going away. He was Tony Stark! Stark men were made of Iron, not tears!

Tony growled and opened his eyes and pushed himself back up. Apparently that applied to all Stark's but him. In what world did he think that he had a chance to have his own happy ending? He had ruined that shot when he became, embraced, his title as Merchant of Death. He should have gotten the hint when Stane had tried to kill me, not once, not twice, but at least three times. He wasn't a hero.

His fingers hovered above his arc reactor. "You have been weighed," Tony started to whisper to himself. "You have been measured. And you have been found wanting." He closed his eyes, furiously wiped away any stray tears that dared to appear, then went to his work station. It was time that he started working on what he was good at; his Iron Man suits.

When Mary walked to Steve's floor, she saw him on the loveseat. To her, he looked cramped up. His back was against the arm, and his feet were pressed against the other end, forcing him to draw his knees up. Even though he was using his thighs as a surface to hold his sketchbook, it still looked like he was too close to the paper. But he looked comfortable.
She also heard music playing.

"I'm adding that to the secret list." Mary raised an eyebrow when she heard a female voice talk over the music, the song fading away.

"Is that song relevant, or is it just something that you like?" Steve asked, not looking away from his sketchbook.

"Little bit of both." As Mary walked closer to the living room she saw the phone that was balanced on his knee. "I'm trying to pick good songs, as well as ones with cheeky titles. I think we can safely guess that he's never going to listen to these songs."

Steve snorted. "I think that's a given." He glanced up when he caught Mary's movement, and waved a hand to her.

"Am I interrupting?" She asked quietly, and Steve shook his head.

"Ooo! Who's that??"

"Mary, this is my friend Meg. Meg, this is Mary," Steve motioned from the phone to Mary and back.

"The Julia Roberts to your Rupert Everett? It is an absolute pleasure to meet you! Vocally, at least." Steve rolled his eyes with a slight smile. Mary walked over to sit in the chair next to the loveseat. "We're planning the musical reckoning of Rogers and Stark," Meg said with dramatics in her voice.

"Do you spend a lot of time on stage?" Mary couldn't help but ask. "Acting maybe?"

"Nope," she popped the P. "Unless you count the few times that I've sand a solo in High School. And I don't, because I had to stare at the Exit signs above the heads and still try to look natural while singing. That shit is nerve wracking!"

"She's naturally, uh, spirited," Steve explained.

"Is that really the best word that you can come up with? I mean, really, Steven."

"Why does it always feel like you're scolding me when you use my full name?"

"I could have used your middle name, that's when you really know that you're in trouble."

"She's right," Mary said with a nod. "I've only had to use Peter Richard twice."

"Both times involving Wade?" Steve guessed, and Mary nodded.

"Is this the friend that's helping flirt with music?" This time Steve nodded.

"And we have to move from subtle, to direct," Meg added. "And Gods above if the man doesn't get the direct route."

"Is there something that comes after direct?" Mary asked, raising her eyebrow.

A piano started to play in the background, and Steve swung his head to look at Mary. 'Now you've done it,' he mouthed to her. The song skipped a bit to what Mary assumed was the chorus. "What did I say, what did you do? How did I fall in love with you?" Mary raised both eyebrows now. Another song started, this one she recognized, and slapped a hand over her mouth before she laughed. This song also skipped to the chorus. "She's got me lovestoned. Man I swear she's bad and she's knows, I think that she knows."
"Oh, can we use that one anyway! Everyone needs Justin Timberlake in their life." Mary grinned at Steve's face.

"No!" He shouted and both women started to cackle.

"And I've got a backup that I know Tony will get," Meg continued, trying to wipe her laughter. Another song started that they all knew, thanks to Peter. "And at last I see the light, and it's like the fog has lifted."

"Fantastic," Mary said with a nod. "Steve, I approve of your friends tactics."

"Aww, that is super sweet!" She was right, spirited was not the words that Steve should have used. Enthusiastic, theatrical, exuberant, vivacious even. "I'm touched, really, to be approved by a personal friend of the good Captain. Alright, I can sense that she wants to talk to you about serious matters of the heart, so I'll let you go. Corporal Wingman will continue her mission."

"I'm sorry, what did you call yourself?" Steve asked, pulling the pencil away from the sketchbook.

"Well I can't go over the rank of Captain, and I'm obvious not as high ranking in this mission as Mary is. And I'll admit, I don't know many other ranks without possibly crossing over into another military rank, and that's just tacky and in bad taste."

"Goodbye Meg!" Steve called out, rubbing his forehead with the heel of his hand.

"Now I really like her if she can pull that reaction from you," Mary said with a smile. Steve just let out a soft groan before closing his sketchbook.

"There's a reason that she lives so far away," Steve said as he tucked his legs under himself now. "I really don't know if I could keep up with her energy all the time."

"Maybe I should get her to be a babysitter."

"No!" Steve said, eyes widening. "She would encourage the boys to do questionable stuff! And then join them!" Mary snorted a little. "I can tell that you spoke to Tony, though."

"I also talked to Bruce." Steve stared at her blankly for a second. "I didn't know that Tony took you to see Howard's office."

"I think it was very spur of the moment," Steve told her. "I didn't ask, I had no intention of asking."

"But it had been bugging you for a while to not talk about Howard." They had fought about that when Steve first learned that Howard had a surviving family member.

"From my understanding, he changed from the man that I knew." Steve shrugged a little. "There's a lot I'd like to talk to Tony about, the past, but I don't want to push. He's very reluctant about that stuff."

Mary let out a sigh and nodded. "He is. And I missed some big signs, Steve" The blonde frowned and leaned forward. "We're going to have a lot of ground work to lay out."

"He's worth it." Mary smiled at Steve's automatic answer.

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Tony rubbed his eyes, and set the soldering gun back in its holder. The workshop was still in black out mode, and the last time Jarvis had informed him of the time he had already spent thirty-six hours
down there. Tony wasn't actually sure how long ago that was.

Slowly pushing himself up, he dragged himself towards the back towards the bathroom. A shower would be good, and it would wake him up a bit more. He already had enough in production anyway; Marks X, XI, XII, and lucky number XIII, were in fabrication. It was time to take a break. A familiar ping from his phone had him reaching into his pocket as he walked into the bathroom. Tony really needed to trim his beard.

Best Songs
Hey Ya! - OutKast

What the hell had Steve added to his playlist now? Tony frowned at the song and shook his head, not in the mood to respond just yet. Maybe after his shower.

Tony had pulled on a fresh pair of sweats, and had a plain tee waiting while he worked on fixing his beard. He may have been feeling his best, but that didn't mean that he wanted to look like a homeless man. Another ping from his phone, and he glanced down, pulling the straight razor away from his face.

Best Songs
What You Waiting For? - Gwen Stefani
Ain't No Other Man - Christina Aguilera

Tony sighed a little and put the razor down and picked up his phone. Tony couldn't let this go on without retaliation.

Better Songs
Robot Rock - Daft Punk

Best Songs
Don't Speak

Better Songs
Highway To Hell

Best Songs
SexyBack

Better Songs
Message In A Bottle

Best Songs
Come On Over Baby (All I Want Is You)

Tony blinked at the song title, then shook his head. "I don't have time for this, Rogers." He picked up the razor again. A couple minutes later, another ping.

Best Songs
The Call - Backstreet Boys

Tony frowned. "Sir, Captain Rogers is attempting to call you." The cheeky bastard.

"You talk to him, J," Tony said, turning back to the mirror. Almost done.

"Captain Rogers has some dinner for you," Jarvis said a couple minutes later. "And he will only
"deliver it to you personally." Tony sighed. He wiped his face before splashing some water to get any stray hairs or shaving cream off of his face.

"Will he go away if I take the plate from his hands?"

"That seemed to be his intention."

"Fine," Tony bit out. "Tell him I'll be there in five." Tony dried his face, double checking his lines and edges, before deeming it suitable. He pulled on his tee, squinting a little in the mirror. "Jarvis, retinal scan." He kept his eyes open for a few seconds without blinking, before turning and walking out of the bathroom.

Tony stretched and rolled his neck as he went over to the workshop door. Opening it he saw Steve standing there with a plate and a mug in his hands. The mug smelled suspiciously like coffee. "Hey Tony," Steve said with a smile, holding up the items. "I brought you some food, and thought maybe you could use some silent company?"

Tony narrowed his eyes a little at the man. Did Mary put him up to this? "I'm working," he said shortly, but Steve didn't stop smiling.

"Yeah, Jarvis said that it's been almost fifty hours, and it's been almost ten hours since the last time you ate something." Jarvis was so getting his code re-written after this. "And you'll have to take a break to eat, and since that has to happen, maybe you could watch a movie with me. Down here, in your workshop that is. I know there's a couch in there."

"Why don't you just watch a movie with Peter?" Tony edged forward to grab the coffee at least, but Steve kept shifting.

"Well, I was told that you were the sci-fi expert." Tony raised an eyebrow at him. "I'm trying to broaden my movie horizons."

"Since we've realized that your music horizons are shot to shit?" Steve pursed his lips a little, but he still wasn't handing over the food yet, and Tony's stomach was starting to make its wants known.

"Fine, but you said silent. So, give me the food and get in here." Steve's smile got a little bigger and he handed over the plate and mug before sliding in before Tony could change his mind. He grumbled a little, but the food was smelling very good. Steve walked to the side, sliding onto the ratty couch that Tony kept down there. Steve picked up a Starkpad by the couch and started scrolling through it, probably looking through the movies.

Tony sipped his coffee slowly, this stuff fresh, not the stuff that he just kept re-warming up until he forgot about it, again. The food was definitely something that Mary had cooked, and it was the best thing his stomach had tasted in at least four days. A tender pot roast with vegetables, and the mashed potatoes that Rachel had taught her to make. He thought the secret was to add sour cream and ranch dressing while they were being mixed, but there was another ingredient that he couldn't place.

When one of the monitors of Tony's computer screens flipped to the screen saver, he was able to catch a look at the time. It was after four in the morning. Tony glanced back over at Steve. "What has you up this early?" He knew for a fact that Steve didn't get up for his morning run until five-thirty.

Steve lifted his eyes to glance at Tony, then back down to the tablet. Tony wasn't going to push, he was too tired to figure it out if Steve wasn't going to-

"Had a nightmare," the blonde said. "Couldn't get back to sleep, and it was too early for a run."
"Didn't feel like hitting on a bag?" Tony asked, looking at his plate as he ate.

"Wouldn't help this time," Steve said quietly. He put the tablet back down, not really knowing what he was really doing with it anywhere. Although Steve was loathe to relive his nightmare, he thought that it might help Tony open up. "It started here, in the streets, from May."

Tony looked up. Was Steve really going to tell him about it? "Steve-"

"That usually wouldn't be too bad," Steve continued like Tony hadn't tried to stop him. "Dreaming of a recent battle or mission is normal. But I'm throwing a punch, I'm turning to throw the shield, and when I turn around I'm on a train." He let out a breath and looked up, unintentionally meeting Tony's eyes, but found he couldn't look away. "I'm going for my shield, and it's Bucky who's holding it.... And then he's falling, again. I can't stop it, I can never stop it."

Tony put the food on his desk, no longer feeling hungry. His feet were taking him over to the couch, sitting next to Steve. "This nightmare never goes away. Sometimes I jump out after him, but I lose him in the snow. Sometimes I save him, I'm just in time, and the train is falling, slipping off the tracks. And sometimes, luckily not tonight, sometimes I'm the one falling off the train. The snow swallows me up and it's the plane all over again." Steve started rubbing his hands together, like he was trying to get warm.

Tony turned and wrapped his hands around Steve's, following the motion. "J, raise temperature ten degrees," Tony said gently, looking down at Steve's hands. The vents above them started spilling out warm air. "I can't guarantee that it'll stay like that for long," Tony started to follow up. "The workshop has to stay temperature regulated, specially when production is going. And, I uh, I can't handle a certain temperature. Reminds me of the desert. But I'm not a huge fan of the cold either, again, desert."

"You were there for three months?" Steve asked carefully. This could go very well, or very badly.

Tony nodded. "Where I got the arc reactor," he said, tapping his chest. "Got blown up by one of my own missiles, got my own shrapnel in my chest. I don't know why I got lucky, but there was a man there, Yinsen, he saved my life." Tony let out a breath, focused on Steve's hands. "They wanted me to build a weapon, and oh, did I ever build one." He let out a hollow laugh. "That's where the suit was born. But, Yinsen, damned, brave, bastard, he saved my life again. Got himself killed in the process. He told me to get back here, to get back to Peter, he helped me make sure that I could do that." Tony swallowed thickly, and suddenly it was Steve's hands that were covering Tony's.

"I can't go in the water," Tony told him. Steve waited, letting Tony take his time, keeping his hands around Tony's. "I haven't been swimming in five years, I can't take baths, and sometimes even showers are hard. I have taken some interesting positions in a shower to avoid water getting to my head. Turns out having your head shoved in water over and over again has some effects."

Tony tilted his head back, looking up at the ceiling. "Shit, I'm too tired to be doing this. Peter watched this movie once, I don't even remember what it's called now, I was only half paying attention. Something to do with food, it was based off a book, I don't know. Point is, and this is a really stupid point, there was a character that could literally pull his tears back into his eyes. How I wish that was something that was possible right about now."

Steve brought one hand up, tilting Tony's head back down. His fingers were soft against Tony's skin, and Tony closed his eyes. "Did I mention that there were a lot of unfair things about you? This would be one of them."

"Talk to me, Tony," Steve breathed out, pressing his forehead to Tony's. He felt a tear against the
"I can't." Tony opened his eyes, brown meeting blue. A blue so open, warm, welcoming, that he almost broke down right there and told Steve every shitty thing in his life that he had kept to himself. "Not," Tony pulled in a breath and held onto it for a second before letting it back out. "Not, yet."

Tony pulled his hand up, fingers resting lightly on Steve's arm. "I am a glorified, volcanic, mess, Steve. My baggage? My baggage has its own penthouse with little baggage babies, and grandbabies. I come with a kid, that will always be first in my life, and I can't say that I can ever put you before him, or anyone. Your life was stolen from you, and you have a chance at getting it back now-"

"I don't like the cold, so go ahead and burn as bright as you want," Steve cut him off, thumb rubbing his cheek. "Your baggage is sharing pillow talk with my baggage, guaranteed. And I think you know already know how I feel about Peter, and how I would be disappointed if you didn't always put him first. Hell, I put him first a lot of the time." Steve could see something in Tony's eyes, something loosening, softening, brown eyes becoming brighter, more golden. "I volunteered for the experiment, to go to war, that's all on me. Mary gave me a chance to take up some other mantle, to change what I wanted to be, what I was. I find myself here, in front of a man that I find myself very rapidly caring about, very much. And it's exactly where I want to be right now."

Tony took a shaky breath, keeping eye contact with Steve. "You play damned unfair, Rogers."

"When I want something bad enough." Tony leaned his head forward, but Steve twisted his head, foreheads still together. "We aren't in the gym."

"I know," Tony said with a small smile. He leaned in again, capturing Steve's lips, sliding his hand up Steve's arm and to the back of his neck. "Why do you think I'm kissing you in my workshop? Nothing ever stays here, at least not for long." Steve smiled and kissed Tony again, drawing a moan from the genius.

"Maybe you could start calling me Steve?" Steve asked, hand still on Tony's cheek.

Tony hummed. "Kissing you outside of the gym wasn't enough? Now you want me to actually use your name? Next you're going to tell me that you want to go out on a date."

"Let's not get crazy, Stark." Steve smirked at him.

"You are going to be trouble."

"You're going to have fun."

Chapter End Notes

I wish I could say that I was done with Tony, and Steve, emotionally..... :)

* * *
"Tony, you can't fly everyone to Africa for Peter's birthday." Mary was looking between Steve and Tony at breakfast. Steve was cooking and Tony was pouring juice, and a coffee for himself. "I know he likes the zoo, but we're not going on a safari."

"You know it would be fun!" Tony told her.

"I'm sure it would be. Steve, help me out here," Mary turned to look at the blonde.

"I've already tried to tell him that it's a bad plan," Steve said. "I said that he should just call up the Zoo, and try to get a private day for his birthday."

"I'm not entirely sold on the Zoo theme," Tony said with a hum. He leaned against the kitchen counter, stealing a piece of bacon from the pile that Steve had started. Steve eyed him, but didn't say anything. "What about a spider themed-"

"No!" Both Steve and Mary turned to look at him. "No spiders, because that be creepy as hell, Tony," Mary pointed at him, warning him.

"What about just a birthday party here at the Tower?" Steve put more bacon on the pile, then slapped Tony's hand away when he tried to steal another piece. "You can wait until it's all done." Tony gave a pout and Steve just raised an eyebrow at him. "Or you can have the party at the Manor."

"That sounds like a great idea," Mary said, nodding. "There's the pool there, and the gardens. It's still nice enough to set up some games outside, and a buffet."

"I think we can wrangle up the Avengers, maybe in costume," Steve said with a smile. Tony looked at him, then back to Mary, tilting his head a little.
"That's not a bad idea." Tony nodded, stealing a piece of bacon when Steve turned his head back to the stove. He pointed at Steve, sliding out of the kitchen. "That's actually a really good idea. I like it. Okay, I need to-"

"Stay to eat an actual breakfast," Steve stopped him. "Then you can go do what you need to do." He pointed at a chair and Tony sunk down into it.

"Why are you still even making food?" Tony asked him. "Peter's at school, Agent is headed to the office, and I'm sure that Mary's about to head that way, too."

"I technically wouldn't have to go in," Mary idly commented, pulling a look from Tony. "I'm his Handler, he's kind of my job."

"Are you still his Handler even if he's part of the Avengers?" Tony turned in his seat to face her. "He's like a free agent now, isn't he? Do I have to start getting managers and agents, non-shield agents?" Mary rolled her eyes at him. "Okay, but seriously, we're the only three here to eat this, and you're making a crap ton of food. Food from my kitchen."

"Food that you haven't touched," Steve reminded him. "And most of this food will be for me."

"Ah, of course, that super soldier appetite," Tony said with a nod. He pulled out his phone from his pants pocket and started scrolling through his messages. "Oh, hey, Mary. Thought I'd mention, I'll take Peter right after his birthday party, Wade'll be staying over the two nights after."

Mary raised an eyebrow at him. "An extended stay again?" Tony just nodded, and Mary glanced at Steve. "This is the, third?, time since school started." Steve snuck a glance at Tony that Mary didn't miss. "I'm missing something."

"Nothing horrible is going to happen," Tony assured her, not looking up from his phone. "Everything's been cleared with Wade's Mom, all lights are green. It'll be amazing." Mary raised an eyebrow at him. "I can feel your judging, it's very judgey. Distracting even."

Mary opened her mouth to comment, but her phone started to ring. "Keep me updated on party details," she said as she pulled out her phone, looking at the caller ID. "I have to go into the office apparently. Try not to break anything."

"No promises!" Tony said with a sweet smile that had Mary rolling her eyes. "Have a good day at work sweetheart!" He waved as Mary stepped into the elevator, answering her phone.

"You're in rare form today," Steve said as he set a plate down in front of Tony. "I'd almost say that this possibly isn't your first cup of coffee."

"Well, surprisingly it is." Tony held up his mug, clinking it together with Steve's orange juice. "I got more than four hours of sleep last night."

"Ahh," Steve nodded, trying to keep a knowing smile off of his face. "I didn't think you ever slept."

"It's almost as if someone came down to the workshop and dragged me to my bedroom." Tony shot Steve a glare over his mug. Steve just smiled.

"Well, sounds like someone cares enough about your health to force you to go to bed." Steve put his two plates down, sitting across from Tony at the kitchen bar. "Must be a smart person."

"I'm not convinced." Tony leaned over, stealing a kiss from Steve before digging into his breakfast. It had been three days since they had both found themselves in Tony workshop, breaking down
barriers, (and discussing what their baggage babies would look like), and they hadn't done much more than steal kisses as they passed in other in the Tower. It may not be happening in the gym anymore, but Steve didn't fail to notice that Tony only did it when they were alone.

"You know, we're going to have to actually have a talk about what this means," Steve said before taking a bite of his eggs. Tony raised an eyebrow at him, waiting for him to swallow. "Not that kissing you isn't fun-"

"Not the first to say that," Tony replied with a smirk.

"-but I like having a little more information to go off of."

"You want a label, don't you?" Tony asked. Steve shrugged a little.

"Doesn't have to be a label, not really. But, I think we should talk about what comes with the kissing."

"When we had this conversation, I was expecting a lot more blushing coming from you, Cap." Steve raised an eyebrow at Tony. "I thought I was going to be dealing with a lot of Forties morality, and all that.

"People did have sex back in the forties," Steve quipped. "They just didn't talk about it as openly as they do in this time period."

"Fair enough," Tony nodded. "I do see what you're trying to do though, and really, I'm all emotioned out for at least another three days. So if we have to do the "is this/isn't this" relationship-type thing, let's just dive in."

"Emotioned out?" Steve questioned. Tony happened to notice that one of his plates was almost empty already. How did the man manage to eat that much food already, and have a conversation? All without talking with the food still in his mouth? Maybe Tony should ask Steve for a blood sample, study that super soldier metabolism. Maybe he could use some other perks to get better results in the workshop.

"Yeah. There's a reservoir of emotions inside of me, somewhere." Tony waved a hand around his body. "And it's been tapped too many times over the past week. Really, it's a slow filling thing, and I don't think it's very big, honestly."

"Do you keep special reserves for Peter?"

"Oh no, that's an endless flowing river when it comes to that little boy," Tony admitted with a smile. "I would kill people for that kid. I have, actually." Tony tilted his head, staring off into the distance, tapping his chin. "Not the point." Steve was smirking at him now. "Point is, apparently, us." Tony waved his fork in a back and forth motion between the two of them.

"It's both frustrating, and endearing, the way you can ramble on about five different things, but still remember the original point of the conversation." Steve finished his glass of juice and Tony found himself grabbing the pitcher to refill it on instinct. "But, yes, we do need to that thing where we talk about us. The adult thing."

"Adulting is hard." Which is apparently enough to make snort while taking a drink, but nothing coming out of his nose. Tony counts it as a win that he laughs after he's done coughing though. "We need to work on your humor receptors, because that wasn't that funny."

"Little funny," Steve said with an easy smile. Tony rubbed at his chest a little, feeling a bloom of
"Okay, so here's what I'm thinking," Tony starts. He had every intention of getting up to refill his coffee mug, and to not have to look at Steve and get distracted. That was before grabbed his mug and got up to refill it for him. "We should test this thing out, whatever this thing is that might or might not be between us." He took the mug from Steve, trying his hardest to keep his eyes down. "Because, although you know about Peter, and he likes you, and all that wonderful jazz, I still gotta be, careful." Steve looked like a quizzical puppy when he tilted his head, and his blue eyes shining. "Mary didn't introduce Agent to Peter, at least as her boyfriend, until they had been dating for like, four months or something, and I think there were 'I love you's' exchanged."

"I think I understand," Steve said with a little nod. "If things for some reason don't work out, you don't want Peter to know."

"We kind of work and live together, and my kid really likes you." Tony's hands were starting to move around, getting involved in his words. Tony was a very animated talker. "And I hate when my kid is sad or upset, so I'd like to keep you in his good graces, and not angry at either one of us. Or making it awkward if he sees us kissing, or you know, stuff."

Steve watched Tony for a second, and decided not to comment on 'stuff'. "Alright," he nodded, then put his silverware down on an empty plate. "Do you have Peter tonight?" Tony shook his head, cradling the coffee mug in his hands. "Great. Why don't you come on down to my floor tonight for dinner then?"

Tony blinked slowly. "Did you just ask me out? Are you talking a date?"

"You're not used to being asked out, are you?"

"No! I'm the Asker, not the Askee!" Tony watched Steve stifle a giggle, and he couldn't help but smile. He bit his lip so it didn't become to glaringly obvious. "What can I expect on a date with Captain America?"

"Don't know," he said with a shrug. "But, with Steve Rogers you can expect homemade food, hopefully some good conversation, and maybe some catching up on pop culture with you as a guide."

"Oo, appealing to my superior future knowledge," Tony pointed his mug at Steve in lieu of a finger. "You're sly. Rogers, well played." He laughed when Steve seemed to preen a little. "Here's the deal, I'm going to get working on setting up the details for Peter's party, and if I get started now then I'll be back with plenty of time before dinner."

"I'll hold you to that."

"On one condition," Tony said as he got up from his seat. "I want more kisses tonight, cause dayumn son, is your skin soft." Steve gave him a confused, but amused, look. "I have a thing for soft skin."

Steve chuckled, standing up and leaning across the island towards Tony, where the genius leaned in, too. Steve stopped just before their lips touched. "Only if you're on time for dinner," he said quietly before pulling back, smirking, leaving a gaping Tony Stark.

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Tony holds true that he wouldn't have been on time for dinner. He would have been dressed for it, too, had it not been for the Avengers alarm, as Tony was starting to call it, going off as soon as he
stepped foot inside of the building. He sighed as he went straight for the workshop to get the Mark IX suit, then meeting Steve up on the roof.

"Another science experiment gone wrong, boys," Natasha said as the quinjet landed, Clint in the pilot's seat. Steve and Tony stepped on board. Steve was still insisting that Tony stay close to someone when he left the building, just in case the assassin was still watching him. They didn't believe that he had given up on taking out Tony so easily, but that of course Tony would beef up his security. That apparently meant not flying the Iron Man suit ahead of the other Avengers.

"I'm starting to think they do this on purpose," Steve said, slinging his shield on his back as the jet took off for their destination.

"They're from the same group, so you might not be far off, Cap," Natasha said, handing him a tablet. Tony leaned in to get a look at the information as well. "At least it's not giant animals this time."

"No, it looks like some kind of energy disruptor," Tony commented as they looked at grainy pictures.

"What does that mean?" Steve glanced over at Tony.

"Depends on what kind of signals they've programmed in, but anything that gives off energy or power is going to shut down as soon as it enters the field." Tony zoomed in on the pictures, but he wasn't able to get any more details from that. "It can take down energy shields, disable tazers, most alarms, force-fields," he listed off.

"What about the Iron Man suit?"

"No idea yet, again it depends on what they're trying to take down. Everything gives off different kinds of energies, like lazer grids and tazers are two different things," Tony explained. "I can't be sure until we get there, and I'll try to take some scans."

Steve nodded, adapting into the Captain America persona now that he was armed with more information. "Iron Man, I want you up in the sky, staying away from this things until you can get us more answers about this. Hawkeye, you're our eyes, get to the best vantage point." Clint nodded from his seat. "Widow, you're with me on the ground. We need to shut that thing down, and figure out why it was set up in the first place."

"Copy that, Captain," she said as she took the tablet back from him.

"There's no way they set that up to test it."

"Couldn't agree more," Tony said, putting his helmet on. "I'll meet you all there, I'm gonna get a head start on those readings."

"Keep us updated," Steve told him, grabbing the strap as the back of the jet opened. Tony gave a sloppy salute before jumping out, the jets in his boots taking over. Steve turned back to Natasha, their comms turning on when Tony left the jet. "Do we have any other information on this group that they belong to?"

"Not yet," she shook her head. "The buildings they operate out of are owned by dummy corporations, but Coulson is tracking down all known names now." Steve nodded and glanced out the front of the jet.

Jarvis was constantly scanning the area as Tony flew closer, then pinged on the outside of the barrier. "The disruptor has a twenty foot radius," he told them. He could see all the cars on the street that were still parked, and the cars that he been driving down the street and died as soon as they hit the
energy field. "It can kill a car, so keep the Jet away."

"Copy that," Clint said. "Touching down now."

"I've got scans running now, but it seems to me that this thing is growing." Tony was looking over some of the calculations that Jarvis was able to start pulling up. "It's not fast, but it's steadily increasing."

"Do you have a way to shut it off yet?" Cap asked.

"Still working on it." His sensors registered movement behind him, and figured that it was just Cap and Widow. He changed his mind when a bullet slammed against his back. Tony dodged out of the way as he turned around and saw four people filing out of the next building, dressed in black, pistols in their hands, but Tony could identify semi-automatics on their backs. "We've got company! Armed, obviously protecting the device."

Tony charged up the repulsors and launched a shot in the middle of the group, trying to scatter them. It seems that the black clothing was not just fashion trend, but some kind of armor. "Really, black is not that great anymore, people, start picking different colors." He dodged another bullet and fired another shot into the group. This one came close to hitting one of them, and they hopped back. When he saw Natasha jump on one of them and bring them down with her dangerous thighs, and Cap right behind her, he safely turned his attention back to the device.

Once the bullets had started flying on one side of the device, the people that were still in their cars had quickly vacated the area. On the other side people were still in their cars, engines idling, and as the barrier grew another foot, Tony caught a strange reading. There a power surge and Tony quickly flew over to where the car was. It was dead, like the others, but what had happened to the disruptors readings when the car entered the field was what had Tony's attention.

"It's taking the energy," Tony breathed.

"I believe that is correct, Sir," Jarvis agreed. "I do not believe that it would be wise for the suit to cross into over the energy field."

"Couldn't agree more." Tony flew a little higher. "Any idea on how to shut it off, yet?"

"I'm still working on that, Sir." Tony blew out a breath.

"I'm gonna try and get the rest of these cars away from the device," Tony said over the comms, flying over first the cars that had been abandoned, trying to avoid the fight still going on. "The disruptor is stealing energy from anything that crosses into it. If it gets too powerful-"

"Hello Dark Ages," Clint said. "Cap, on your eight."

"What was it like in the Dark Ages, Cap?" Tony smirked, pushing back one of the cars and moving to the next. "Were smoke signals used?"

"We had perfected using mirrors and sunlight." Steve grunted as he landed a punch to one of the gunmen.

"Someone's getting witty." Tony couldn't help but smile a little.

"I've got movement across the street," Clint called out. "They really don't want us touching this machine."
"If it's collecting energy while powering itself, then I wouldn't want us touching it either," Tony said as he pushed back a third car. His sensors alerted him to the barrier growing another foot. "We'll have another power sustaining device on our hands, and I could think of several horrible ways to use it all. Specially if the energy can be converted."

"You're thinking weapons?" Steve asked.

"I'm thinking powerful weapons that we don't want to see out there." Tony flew out and zipped over to the other side, looking at the people who were still at their cars. "Everyone needs to back their vehicles up, get out of here!" Some of the people murmured as they looked at him, then back to the fighting on the other side. "It's not safe here, time to get a move on!" He waved his arms and the people started to move, getting back in their cars.

"J, I need a kill switch solution here," Tony called out to his AI as he circled around, shooting the main door of the building that more assailants were about to file out of. An arrow arced over his head, landing inside the new opening, a small explosion sending the three people in the front back into a wall.

"I believe that I have found a weakness in the circuits." An image zoomed in the side of the HUD and Tony flew back up into the air to avoid a spray of bullets.

"They put in a little self-destruct sequence for us." Tony grinned a little. "Alright, first one to the device gets the honor of." Tony turned when an alarm blared to the side of the HUD, and a something was slamming into the chest plate and throwing him back. The HUD of the helmet flickered before going dark. Tony drew in a deep breath and quickly reached up, catching the latches and forcibly pushed the helmet off. The light of the sun hit his face and he let out a breath. Then he remembered where he was. "Shit."

Tony reached for the emergency latches and peeled himself out of the suit as quickly as he could. As long as he was here, he could disable the disruptor. Tony stood up and scrambled over to the machine, circling it once before he got down on his knees, crawling underneath, to find the main hatch inside. He took a deep breath before reaching up to open it.

He found the hatch sliding away suddenly, grunting when he was sliding across the cement. Tony looked up and stopped when he saw a gun inches away from his face. "I don't think I want you touching that," the man said. This man was different, he was still in black, but his clothes were more casual, less armor. This was one of the men in charge. His eyes flickered to Tony's chest, and Tony couldn't help but frown. He leaned his head a little and looked down, and saw what was so interesting. It also explained why Tony was feeling out of breath. It was stealing the power from the arc reactor. "Now, I really don't want you touching it."

"Interesting device you got there," Tony said conversationally. He knew that Clint had probably seen him go in, and he would relay the information. Help would come soon. "What exactly are you looking to power?"

The man chuckled a bit, never moving the gun, or his eyes. "And go into the monologue where you learn about our plan? While I'm sure that you'll probably die, one way or another, I'm not going to take that chance."

"It is so refreshing to see that the bad guys are getting a little more smart." Help could come anytime.

"An inspiration to us all, Stark." Tony heard the click of the safety coming off the weapon. "I'm not patient though. I'll still get-" The man slammed to the ground, the gun falling from his hands, and an all too familiar red, white, and blue shield was flying in the air.
"Thank fuck," Tony breathed. He turned to his side and started to pull himself back underneath the energy disruptor. Steve was there, beside him, helping him move.

"You okay?" Tony nodded at Steve's words. With the arc reactor so close to losing the rest of its power he didn't have time make conversation. The latch swung open and he reached in, pulling out a mess of wires. "That looks, complicated."

Tony let out a breathless chuckle. "Sounds like what you said when we had to fix the Helicarrier."

"Pop culture is becoming easy, but I'm still slow on the tech," Steve said, watching Tony closely. He turned suddenly, throwing the shield, watching it ricochet off the building and into the three approaching men.

"This would be complicated even in your time," Tony tried to reassure him. He made a noise and grabbed the wire he was looking for, ripping it from the socket, and bending it to wrap around another wire. He hissed when the shock ran through his fingers and up his arm, pulling away quickly. "I've almost got this."

"Are we going to need to get you back to the Tower quickly?" Tony heard a tightness in Steve's voice, and oh, he noticed the reactor.

"Depends on the reaction once I replace these wires," Tony told him, risking a glance. He could see Steve's blues eyes through the helm, concern written all over them. "This is either going to shut down, and everything will return to normal right away. Or it's going to release all the build up energy at once, causing small blackout that won't last long, and then after a few hours everything else will return to normal."

"Will you have a few hours?" Steve asked. Tony didn't say anything, focusing on his hands. "Stark."

"Worry about the bad guys now, I'll."

"SHIELD is here, they've got the rest of them in custody."

"Oh, well, that solves that I suppose." Tony took a breath as he held onto the wire. "Here's go nothing." He replaced the wire, quickly pulling his hands back, and waited. The machine made a deep whine and Tony was blinking when Steve was suddenly grabbing him from the ground and throwing him over his shoulder. Tony let out a 'whoomph' of air and blinked. The air pulsed, then a low vibration passed over their eardrums and Steve stumbled in his run, and Tony covered his ears.

Steve put Tony on his feet, and kept his hands on Tony when the smaller man stumbled, his knees buckling. "Barton, where's the jet?"

"The, the suit," Tony said, pointing weakly back towards the device.

"We'll get the suit, Tony, don't worry," Steve tried soothing him. He looked over and saw the quinjet coming down, hovering just above the street. He picked up Tony again and ran for the jet, his shield already on his back. Natasha put her hand out, pulling the two of them on board and Clint was already off and headed back for the Tower. Tony's head lolled to the side, eyes closing as he passed out, the arc reactor dim, but still running.

Tony took a deep breath, slowly coming back to. He was reclined, warm, and on something soft. And moving?
"He'll be alright," someone was talking softly. "Just sleeping, Jarvis assures me that everything is working how it should be, no lasting damage." A familiar voice, but he felt it rumbling through his back. He was lying on whoever was talking. "Yeah, thanks. Tell him goodnight from both of us." His pillow moved and then stopped talking. A moment later there was a low sound of other talking, but it was coming from another direction. The TV.

'Dad's on a hunting trip. And he hasn't been home in a few days.'

Tony mumbled a little. "Supernatural?" The person he was lying on jumped a little when he spoke. "Couldn't make it through the first twenty minutes last time I tried to watch this."

"Thought it might be a worth a shot to watch, there's a big fan following online." Steve, it was Steve that he was on. "It's a little late for dinner, but we still have time to catch up on some pop culture."

Tony slowly blinked his eyes open and turned his head to look up. They were on the couch in Steve's living room, both laying out on it, a blanket around Tony. Tony found that his back was against Steve's chest, and he was damn comfortable. "Trying to salvage the date?" Steve hummed, nodding a little. "Why am I laying on you?"

"Wanna move?" Steve asked.

"Nope," Tony shook his head. "It's actually not that bad laying on your muscled body. Which, surprising, actually."

"I was told to make sure that you were comfortable," Steve said like it should have been obvious. "And I wanted to make sure that you were alright, so it just made sense to bring you here."

"Look at you thinking all logically." Tony and Steve watched the show on the TV, the lights dimmed, but not off all the way. "I will admit, that the older brother has a nice choice in cars, and good taste in music."

"Did they secretly base Dean on you?" Steve asked with a smirk.

"It wouldn't surprise me, I'm a lovable person." Tony leaned his head up a little to grin. "My irresistible charm, and dashing good looks."

"Dean has longer eyelashes than Mary. I wouldn't say that that's dashing." He chuckled at Tony's pout. "Don't worry, he fills out later. I saw pictures of the current season, and he looks nothing like that now."

"I'm still better looking though, right?" Steve leaned down, smiling at him, noses touching. "Steve, I need vocal affirmation. I'm a vain, selfish man. Please feed my ego."

"You're up front about it, too," Steve said with a chuckle. Tony leaned up a little, trying to catch Steve's lips, but he pulled back just a fraction. "I'll reward you for watching two episodes of this with me."

"Who taught you how to bribe? Seriously, I think I need to ruin them, financially, at the very least, because teasing me is illegal." Steve wrapped an arm around Tony's shoulders, then leaned back on the couch to continue watching the show, smiling.

Peter tossed and turned in his bed, clutching to his stuffed animal. He let out a little whimper before
he opened his eyes, a few tears falling to his pillow. Peter sat up, stuffed cat to his chest. "Daddy," he murmured quietly.

"Young Master Peter?" Jarvis's voice was soft as it came from the collar of his stuffed animal.

"Jarvis?" Peter called out softly. "Where's my Daddy?" He had an urge to see him, to get him.

"Your Daddy is downstairs, with Mr Steve." Jarvis only ever broke from his code of names with Peter, knowing it would make him more comfortable. Tony had added a couple lines of code to the AI to make sure that Peter always felt comfortable, safe, and would be taken care of. "If you will follow the light, I will take you to them." Something lit up just at Peter's bedroom door.

Peter very carefully, and slowly, pushed himself from his bed, feet softly touching the ground. He liked the glow on the floor. It was a warm blue, which Peter knew almost couldn't happen. Mr Steve had been teaching him about colors, and blue was a cool color, not warm, like red. But Jarvis would put a ring of yellow around the blue, but not enough to turn the light green. Peter really liked learning about colors, almost as much as he liked working with his Daddy in the workshop with Dum-E.

Another spot appeared on the floor, followed by another, and another, until there was a trail leading to the elevator. The doors opened, the light dim, but comforting to Peter after his nightmare. "I'm sure that both of them will be happy to see you, Young Master. They always are." Peter nodded, holding the stuffed animal against his cheek.

The ride wasn't too long, opening up on Mr Steve's floor, the lights appearing on the floor again for him. He followed them to the living room where he could hear the TV playing in the background.

"That's a messed up family business." That was his Daddy's voice. "I'll take my family business over that one. They get hurt too often."

"And you don't?" There was Mr Steve. Peter was starting to feel better already.

"I have armor."

"Daddy?" Peter called out a little as he got closer to the couch. The TV went on mute and Tony sat up immediately, turning his head to look for the little boy.

"Petey, come here baby," Tony called out as soon as he saw his son. Peter ran to the front of the couch, Tony and Steve putting a little space between them. Tony caught Peter in his arms and brought him close, sticking him between himself and Steve. Steve put a hand on Peter's back, rubbing circles, while Tony wrapped his arms around him.

"I had a bad dream, Daddy," Peter told him, cuddling up against Tony, his hand on the arc reactor. "You were there, but then you weren't, and I couldn't find you."

Tony ran his hand through Peter's hair, kissing his forehead. "I'm not going anywhere, Petey. No matter what happens, I'll always get back to you, you know that." Steve watched Tony with his son, saw the easiness that Tony held him, tried to comfort him from something that Tony was probably all too familiar with. He slid over a little closer to grab the blanket from the end of the couch, wrapping it around Peter and over Tony.

"Hey, Cap," Tony called out quietly, even though Peter wasn't falling asleep again anytime soon. "Why don't you find another blanket, settle in for a movie or two."

"I like it when you're here, Mr Steve," Peter said, looking at him from on top of Tony's chest. Tony shot Steve a knowing smirk.
"Yeah, I can do that," Steve said with a smile. "Do you want anything to drink while I'm up?"

Tony mused Peter's hair, whispering encouragement in his ear. "Can I get a glass of lemonade?"

"Of course, Pete," Steve agreed easily. "And you and Daddy can pick out something for us to watch when I get back." He reached over for the tablet that was on the coffee table, Jarvis having paused the show they were watching before, not wanting the little boy to see any of the scarier elements after a bad dream. Peter eagerly took the tablet, turning and getting comfy on top of Tony. As Steve headed for the kitchen, he paused to look at the two of them on his couch. Peter had his back to Tony's chest, Tony's arms wrapped around the boy as little hands were gliding on the screen to find something to watch. Peter tucked his head under Tony's chin as Tony brought his knees up to properly cuddle the almost seven-year-old.

Steve escaped to the kitchen, taking a deep breath and closing his eyes. He didn't need to be thinking about how he wanted to be on that couch with them, with his arms wrapped around Tony. It was just that morning that he managed to get Tony to agree to a date. Steve was still trying to play it cool, to pretend he knew what he was doing. While his friend, Meg, was being an immense help, he couldn't help but miss Bucky. Bucky and his Ma had been the only ones who knew that sometimes he felt the same way for guys as he did for gals, and his best friend had always known exactly what to do. Not that it ever went anywhere, with either gender, since he was so small and sickly, and after the experiment he was too busy with the War.

Blue eyes closed, leaning against the fridge in the kitchen, taking a couple of deep and steady breaths. He was getting worked up over nothing. It was obvious that Tony was also interested, or else he wouldn't have taken the carefully crafted bait to kiss Steve outside of the gym.

"Mr Steve!" Peter called out from the living room. "Get your rear in gear!" He heard Peter's giggles as he finished the line, and shook his head fondly. Tony must have fed him that line. Steve could see himself with a family, little by little. Maybe it was the odd family atmosphere that Tony and Mary worked so hard to cultivate for Peter. Steve was fairly positive that this wasn't normal for the everyday American family of the Twenty-First century, and maybe that's why he could feel at ease here. Not completely, he still needed to be doing something, moving, in action, but the anxiety inside wasn't as bad now as it had been back at the first apartment.

Steve walked back out to the living room, lemonade and water in his hands, and saw that the opening credits to a movie were on pause. He plopped down on the couch and Peter leaned over to pull him closer, so that Steve was leaning against Tony's bent legs. "Thank you for the drink, Mr Steve." Steve smiled and ruffled his hair a little, smiling when Peter wiggled away to settle back against Tony. Tony snorted and rolled his eyes, a smirk on the corner of his lips, and wrapped the blanket back around them.

"You didn't get a blanket," Tony said absently, not looking at him. Steve blinked a little; he had completely forgotten around it. Tony kicked his legs out, lying across Steve's lap, and his feet pushed the blanket out with them so that it covered Steve's legs. "Alright, everyone settled in? Good? Good. Let's start this thing!"

A familiar black and white opening started and Steve couldn't help but grin, a little giggle bubbling out. He looked over at Tony and saw him also smirking, but watching the screen. 'I'm sure this has nothing on the original on the big screen, Cap, but try to humor us and enjoy it.' Steve leaned back, putting his feet up on the coffee table, making a better surface for Tony's legs, and smiled as they watched The Wizard of Oz. And Steve and Tony choked back their snorts at the first time the flying monkeys showed up.
October 2011

Chapter Summary

Party time! And Tony is not okay.

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning: Flashbacks, nightmares, panic attack, talk of drowning, and some PTSD. I don't think it's too horrible, I try not to be too graphic with some stuff, cause I might accidentally trigger myself, but I'm putting it out there. I will summarize things up for people if some stuff gets too heavy, just let me know. The warning is still there.

I did see Civil War, it as amazing. The movie will influence me to a point, but only in the fact that it reinforced ideas I already had, so still, no spoilers happening in this story! (Be sure to check out the end notes as well.)

Unbeta'd as usual, and Marvel owns more than me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As far as birthday parties with a dozen kids in attendance went, this one hadn't created as much damage as Tony had thought. Wade was of course glued to Peter's side throughout the party, and then their friends from school were laughing and screaming as they played in the bouncy house and the pool. Tony had hired two professional lifeguards for the pool room, and all the parents who came, (and were invited to stay as well), were delighted to see that. Mary had mentioned that some of the parents had been reluctant to let their children come, knowing that Tony had a penchant for trouble, and that the Avengers would be there. Some parents hadn't let their kids come, but there were at least kind enough to come up with a reason why that wouldn't hurt Peter's feelings.

Natasha and Clint were watching the kids in the bouncy house, devoid of all sharp and dangerous weapons. Apparently there was some kind of contest going on, because the kids seemed to be trying to impress the two spies with bouncing acrobatics. Tony really shouldn't have expected anything less from a trained ballerina, and an ex-carnie. Bruce was sitting with Coulson, both enjoying a cup of tea, while Mary chatted with the parents of Peter's friends that had decided to stay.

When Tony glanced over to the side he smirked a little when he saw Steve down on one knee, helping a little girl try to hold up his shield. All the kids had wanted a picture with Captain America, and they petted his shield like it was a beloved pet, or an endangered animal. Steve was a natural with the kids, that much was obvious, and a few of them had been awed when they saw Peter run over to Captain America and immediately be picked up. Tony had a feeling that he would be the coolest kid at school for a while. Wade had tried to sneak off with Cap's shield while he was distracted with Peter. It had been quite a sight when Peter ran over after being put down, the two boys running off with the shield like they were a double headed turtle with a star-spangled shield for a shell. The other kids had giggled while Steve chased them down through the gardens.

Tony had his newest suit, Mark XIX standing by the main entrance, balloons in hand, a party hat on
the helmet. He assured the parents that all weapon systems were offline, and it was on limited mobility. Basically, it could bend over and hand someone a balloon and a hat, that's it. Really, this was a way for Tony to test the suit, to see how far he had come in making a suit that could take orders when he wasn't inside of it.

"This is a nice party, Tony." Tony turned his head when Mary's dad, William, walked over to him. Both grandparents would be staying through the weekend to give Peter a birthday spree. Mary and Coulson would have the run of most of the Tower to themselves while Tony, Steve, Peter, Wade, William, and Rachel would stay at the Manor until Sunday night.

"Well, I was convinced that perhaps simpler was the better way to go," Tony replied. "Apparently, Safari's in Africa are frowned upon for seven to ten-year-olds."

"You weren't actually thinking about doing that, were you?" Rachel asked, handing William a glass of punch.

"What?" Tony turned to face them, his own club soda in his hand as he crossed his arms. "Peter likes the zoo! It's like a living zoo in the wild."

"Peter likes the reptile and arachnid displays," William corrected. Tony wrinkled his nose a little. "Wade likes the big animal displays."

"Well, with those two they sometimes share the same mind," Tony argued. "They follow each other everywhere and share the same enthusiasm." Rachel even had to hum her agreement to that statement. While she wasn't Tony's biggest fan, and still often threw some contempt his way, she had indeed lightened up and become more receptive towards Tony. It had helped that Mary was married now as well, and that Tony kept their daughter and grandson close, safe.

"You know, Tony, we've been discussing some things," William started to say, causing Tony's eyebrow to raise. "Does the offer still stand?"

It took Tony a few seconds for his brain to cycle through what William might possibly be talking about before his eyes widened. "Wha?" Intelligently said. "I mean, of course," he nodded quickly. "You're sure about this?"

"There are more important things in life than stubbornly staying put," Rachel said to him. "And it doesn't hurt that you're footing the bill." Tony let out a little laugh, smiling.

"You are the first person to shamelessly accept my offer of something that could potentially get expensive." Tony was used to being turned down when he offered a gift, or to help with something. So much so that he usually just went about and bought whatever it was he wanted to give to someone, and never mention the price.

"Might as well put that fortune to use," Rachel fired back. Slowly, slowly to was starting to like him.

"Consider it done," Tony told them, waving his hand a bit. "Get everything scheduled, don't worry about what it would cost, just send me the bills. Jarvis can help get everything set up tonight, or tomorrow, if you want, and I've already got-" Tony stopped when William put his hand over Tony's mouth.

"Don't worry about it, Tony," the older man chuckled. "Just enjoy the rest of today."

There were the twin whistles from the pool room, signaling the end of swim time. The party was coming to an end, and Tony wanted to make sure that there would be enough time to hose the kids
off of the pool water and get them dry. He wandered over to where several hoses were set up and turned on the water. Peter and Wade had been some of the ones in the pool. Tony grinned, grabbing a hose in each hand. He caught Steve's eyes, who was shaking his head at him, but still smiling.

"You're not allowed to judge me, Spangles," Tony called out to him. The other kids had left him alone, hearing the whistle, and wanting to get some last bounces in the bouncy house before having to go home. Tony didn't feel bad at all for loading them up with sugary cake, getting them hyper, then sending them home with their parents. Not one bit.

"Just looking a little too eager there, Tony," Steve called back, putting his shield on his back. His cowl was still up, and he looked like he had to be pretty hot in the suit. Before Tony could reply a small gaggle of kids came out from the pool room, wrapped in towels, the lifeguards following them.

"Alright my minions!" Tony called out to them. "Time to hose off!" He sprayed a line of water on the grass, making a temporary line as the blades of grass were bent down by the pressure. "Line up there and we'll get all that icky pool water off, so you don't smell like chemicals." The half dozen kids laughed and scurried over to the grass. Steve walked over to the cement where Tony and the two lifeguards were standing, now also holding hoses.

"Mmmmm," Tony hummed, carefully looking down the line of kids. Towels had been thrown on a chair so they didn't get too wet. "I think I'll take, those two!" He pointed the nozzles at Peter and Wade and quickly shot them with water. They both squealed and wiggled around, Tony following them with the hoses, cackling loudly. The rest of the kids erupted in shouts and laughter, also yelping a bit when they were also hosed off.

"Daddy!" Peter cried out in between laughs, trying to hide behind Wade, who was then trying to push Peter in front of him in retaliation. "Captain! Help!"

"I can't ignore a distress call." Steve announced in his best Captain America voice. "Mr Stark, I must command you to stop your evil water ways."

Tony turned his head, raising both eyebrows at Steve, hoses still turned on the two boys who were too much fun. "And if I refuse, Cap?" He saw the amused glint in Steve's eyes.

"Then it will be my duty to stop you," Steve replied, hands on his hips in a faux superhero pose. Tony took his fingers off the handles of the nozzles, the rest of the kids already done. They were watching the standoff now, big eyes as they watched Captain America and Peter's Dad start to circle each other.

"You know," Tony said casually, "you look a little hot in that suit!" Tony was already lifting the hoses, pressing down on the handles before Steve could get his shield back into his hand. He took a clean shot to the face, and one to the chest. Tony bust out laughing when Steve spit out a stream of water, then gasped when a jet of water hit his shoulder. Steve was grinning, shield in one hand, another hose in the other.

The kids were cheering behind them, towels wrapped around them again, and they had drawn the attention of the others kids, and their parents. Tony raised one hand and Steve lifted the shield, deflecting the water, then leaned out with his own hose, Tony jumping to the side to avoid it. Tony rolled forward and shot one hose upwards towards Steve's face, and the other down towards Steve's knees. His shield was only able to deflect one shot, but Steve had been ready and shot Tony in the back with water.

Tony jumped up from his roll, reaching forward to get past the shield at the same time that Steve was lunging towards Tony. With incredible aim, Tony managed to get the nozzle shoved between the
neck of Steve's uniform and his skin, setting the lock to make a continuous stream of water. At the same time Steve had managed to reach with his own hose, shoving the nozzle between Tony's hip and the belt of his pants, also setting the lock. Both men yelped loudly, (very manly, not at all high pitched), and jumped back, Steve dropping his shield, as they both grappled for the hoses. It wasn't until they were able to get the water to stop that they realized there was clapping, cheering, and laughing around them.

"We win!" Wade declared, running over to Steve.

"There were teams??" Tony shouted with exaggeration.

"No one can beat Captain America!" Steve chuckled as Wade started to dance around him. Peter ran over and hugged Tony around the waist.

"It's okay, Daddy," he said, big brown eyes looking up at Tony. "I still love you, even if Captain America won."

"You little-" Tony laughed, trying to grab onto his son before he ran over to join Wade in their dance around Steve. "I think it was a tie!"

"No, you definitely lost," Mary said as she walked over to them, draping a towel around Tony's shoulders, and tossing one over to Steve. Mary motioned to the crowd of overly-enthused kids, and smiling parents, and Tony thinks he'll take the loss this one time.

Steve was off changing into some dry clothes, seeing the last of the guests off, and Tony was picking up the pool toys and chairs that are around the pool itself. Natasha and Clint headed back for SHIELD, unable to stay for dinner, while Bruce, Mary and Coulson, and William and Rachel, were wrapping up the leftovers from the party, and probably ordering a pizza or something for dinner, while Peter and Wade had collected all the presents to put in Peter's room. Steve had said he'd be back down to help Tony with the clean up of everything else. He was going to let Steve grab the toys from inside the pool.

There was a soft click behind Tony, and he turned away from the pool, expecting to see Steve coming in. A bright flash of blue light and his eyes widened at the large shadow of a figure. Tony was suddenly falling and the air felt thick and it was hard to move. He was no longer in the pool room, and he looked around, recognizing the streets of New York, seeing the Tower behind him. Tony's feet didn't touch the ground, but everything was frozen. Cars were in mid-motion in the street, and there was a black town car parked in front of the Tower.

'He will find you. He does not forget.'

Tony choked on the air, unable to draw in breath, the voice sending a chill straight to his bones. There was a metallic glint from the roof across the street and when he looked up a pain blossomed in his chest. He gasped and felt himself falling forward this time, the pain radiating throughout his entire body. The streets of New York disappeared, an arm wrapped around his shoulder and under his arms. Tony felt his head being pushed and he started to trash.

No! He wouldn't go back to the cave! Tony coughed when his head was shoved down into the cold water, his lungs burning for needed air. He had escaped! He had destroyed that place!

'He will make you suffer. You will know loss, destruction. He will destroy all that is yours, as you have destroyed what was his.'
Tony tried to scream into the water, tried to push away, to push out of the water. It was filling his nose, in his mouth, pouring down his throat. He had worked so hard, tried to get away. He had just wanted to live.

Steve walked into the pool room as he heard a splash of water. He frowned and looked around, then saw the form in the water, slowly starting to sink down. "Tony!" Steve's eyes widened and he ran for the deep end, diving in immediately. Tony was sinking fast, almost as if something were pulling him down, and Steve coiled his body before releasing, giving his body the extra momentum he needed in the water. Steve could see that Tony's eyes were open, but he didn't seem aware of what was happening. Tony tried to breath, his mouth opening.

He cursed mentally when he realized what was happening. Tony was stuck in a flashback. No wonder he wasn't fighting the water, to swim back up to the surface, he didn't know where he was. Steve swam with a heightened determination, reaching an arm out towards Tony, just as his body seemed to flop onto the bottom of the pool. His arm slid underneath Tony's arms, around his chest, and he turned, kicking off from the floor of the pool and towards the surface.

Tony started to move then, tried to push away, to get away from Steve. Steve just continued to hold on, trying to get back up as soon as possible. He could feel Tony's chest heaving, drawing in water instead of air.

Steve sucked in his own gulp of air as he broke the surface, and then there were hands reaching for him and Tony. Looking over, he saw Bruce and William at the edge, arms extended, and he started to move as fast as he could closer. He made sure to hand over Tony first to them.

"He's stuck in a flashback," he told them as he tried to catch his breath. Bruce was moving Tony to his side as they pulled off his wet clothes at the same time. Mary had towels and was wrapping them around Tony. As Steve lifted himself out of the water, he heard Tony give a shout, then immediately start coughing, hacking, up water. He was trying to throw off the towels, rocking his body a little, to get away from the hands on him.

Steve moved closer to Tony's back, hand hovering for just a second, before gently resting on Tony's back. He moved his head closer to Tony's ear as his hand moved in circles. "Tony, can you hear me?" The smaller man was still coughing, almost violently, his body desperate to get air back. "Tony, it's Steve, I'm right here. You're in New York." Steve started up the mantra to try and ground Tony. "You're in the mansion, it's just after Peter's party. Peter is in his bedroom with Wade, they're both safe. You're safe." Tony was wheezing now, but he was pulling in some air now, the coughing not nearly as bad. "You're safe, Tony."

Tony heard the soothing voice in his ear, felt the pain in his chest, his lungs, but it had receded to a burning pain, no longer crippling. He was in New York. Not the cave. Not the cold darkness of space. "-party. Peter is in his bedroom with Wade, they're both safe." Tony almost let out a choked sob of relief at the sentence. "You're safe, Tony." He dragged in uneasy breaths, feeling his chest constricting, pain, finding it hard to pull in a breath, but there was air coming in this time, instead of water. Tony was pretty sure, by the way that his throat burneded, that he had coughed up as much water as he could.

A shadow passed in front of his eyes, and he instinctively brought his arms over his head, trying to pull his knees up. There was a soft sussing, a gentle hand pulling something warm over him. "Just me, Tony." Steve, that was Steve's voice. "It's Steve. Bruce, Mary, and William are here, too." He just wanted Steve to keep talking, his voice was soothing to him, it helped him come back down. "Try and pull in a deep breath, alright? As deep as you can, without hurting yourself. I'll be right here."
Tony shook his head a little. It was a trap. If he breathed in too much air, he would cough again, and then he wouldn't be able to get any to his lungs, to his body. But, if he stayed like this he wouldn't get enough air to his body anyway. There was a hand gently pressing to his, lifting it and placing it on a wet, but strong chest.

"Nice and easy," the voice whispered to him. "You got this." Tony wanted to believe it so badly. He felt his body start to shake, no, to shiver. He was cold. The arms started to wrap around him and he let out a strangled noise, arms pushing back weakly. "Sorry, I'm sorry, Tony." He could be hold down, he had to have the freedom to move. There was murmuring, quiet and rushed. "Tony, can you open your eyes? Bruce wants to put on a breathing mask to help you out, but we don't want you to get upset."

Soft fingers were in his hair, rubbing his scalp, and Tony felt himself relax the tiniest bit. Right, opening his eyes, that's what he was trying to do. Despite the still burning pain in his chest, Tony managed to blink his eyes open. Steve was on the ground, his shirt off, a big towel around his shoulders, but he was looking at Tony. It was his hand that was in his hair.

"There we go, you're looking better already," Steve said, giving him an encouraging smile. There was something else in his eyes. "Can I put this on?" He asked, pulling forward a clear oxygen mask. "Just for a little bit, I'll stay right here with you. It's going to help." Tony watched him carefully, calculating. Steve wouldn't doing anything to hurt him, right? He cared about him, he cared about Peter, too. Tony nodded once and Steve slowly, carefully, slipped the mask over Tony's face.

Steve grabbed a big towel and put it in his lap and over his legs. "Let's get you sitting up a little more." Tony let his hands move him a little, always keeping his hands in view. "I'm gonna sit you up, leaning against me. Bruce says it'll help with the breathing." Tony moved his eyes around, looking for his other friend, but it was just Tony and Steve now. He moved with Steve's hands, until several minutes later Tony was leaning against Steve, shoulder to chest.

They sat in silence for a while, and Tony could feel his chest not moving so rapidly, not trying to force air into his lungs. He was feeling a little calmer, and not so much pain. His eyes were starting to drift shut, feeling exhausted, until Steve's near whispers caught his attention. "I was worried." Steve? He was worried? About what? "I saw you falling in the water, that's the only way I can describe it. And you weren't moving, weren't trying to get back up, and I thought that..." Steve trailed off, taking a deep breath. Steve was worried about him. "All I could think about was what you said a couple weeks ago, about how you didn't go into the water. I couldn't lose someone else in my life."

Tony felt a pull in his chest, but this wasn't from a lack of air. The burning was behind his eyes now. Tony turned his face into Steve's chest as warm tears slid down his cheeks. He wasn't supposed to still be haunted by this, wasn't supposed to be this weak, this broken. A hand fisted in the towel around Steve, and small sob ripped through his sore throat. Tony's mask was starting to shatter, and he didn't like it.

Mary watched them from the hallway. Watch Tony work with Steve, watched him press against the bigger man, watched him have his silent breakdown. She bit her thumb to avoid biting her lip, but never looked away. Tony had nearly drown in that damn pool, and if Jarvis hadn't of alerted them, who knows what would have happened. She could see his nightmares and panic attacks getting worse, and she had glanced at the production number stamped on the newest Iron Man armor. Tony was cranking them out faster and faster, but she wasn't sure what she could do.

"Jarvis doesn't have much footage that we can actually use." Bruce came back over to her, handing over a Starkpad. She looked down and saw Tony cleaning up the pool room. He was in mid turn, almost as if someone had called out his name. The video blinked out a little, like a glitch, and
suddenly Tony is falling back first into the water. As his body went under the water Steve was running in and diving into the pool. There was no way that Tony should have been able to reach the bottom of the pool that quickly, but it felt like an eternity before she saw them run in and Steve coming back up with Tony in his arms.

"Was it tampered with?" Mary asked as she went back to replay the glitched part.

"There was no internal, or external, tampering that I can detect, Mrs Parker," Jarvis supplied from the tablet. "There is one full second of footage that is unaccounted for. As if it never existed in the first place." If it was possible for an AI to be distressed about something, that would be Jarvis over the missing one second.

Mary handed the tablet back to Bruce, looking back inside the pool room. "He's getting worse," she said softly to the Doctor.

"I can try to prescribe him sleeping aids," Bruce said, knowing that it wasn't what Mary wanted to hear. "I can't make him seek help, none of us can."

"But he's not handling it," Mary fired back, turning her head to look at him now. "I already went through this with Steve, I can't watch it happen to Tony, too. He'll never forgive himself if he has an attack when Peter's around."

"I don't think I'm the one you should be telling this, too," Bruce said quietly. "My panic attacks tend to leave me turning green." Mary sighed and rubbed the spot between her nose, nodding. "When they come out, have Steve take him to his room. I need to get a treatment ready to try and stave off a bad case of pneumonia, or worse."

"Is Tony going to get sick?"

Bruce nodded. "His lung capacity is already diminished thanks to the arc reactor, and most near-drowning victims have a very high risk of getting sick. Pneumonia, Acute Respiratory Distress, sometimes even brain damage. I won't know until he's in his bed and Jarvis can collect scans for me."

"Shouldn't we be moving him right away?" Mary asked, not liking at all what she was hearing.

"Jarvis is keeping tabs on him, but he should be fine for a few minutes," Bruce said, tapping at something on the screen, most likely a treatment plan. "No longer than ten minutes though." He looked back up at Mary. "The only reason I'm stepping out of my comfort zone to treat him like this, is because I know he'll turn away any other medical doctor. He doesn't realize it now, but this is serious. And that's not even mentioning what's going on in his head right now." He gave Mary a purposeful look. "This is all stuff you should be telling that man," he said pointing in the pool room. She knew that he was referring to Steve. Bruce squeezed her shoulder a little before heading off down the hall.

Mary went back to biting her thumb. The first few months of being frozen had been hard for Steve, His PTSD rearing up with a vengeance, making up for lost time being trapped in the ice. He had survivor's guilt piled on top of all the nightmares and insecurities. She knew that he still suffered from them, but Mary had helped Steve find some coping mechanisms, and he had even talked to a non-SHIELD issue therapist that specialized with soldiers and veterans. It hadn't lasted long, but Steve had stayed there long enough that he was actually able to sleep at night.

Tony though, Tony was a different matter entirely. After the first week of not being able to sleep, of Mary staying up with Steve, he had been able to admit that perhaps he needed help. Even with the
Super Soldier Serum, he still needed to sleep. Tony was the opposite. Unless it came to Peter, he would rather take a firing squad of rocket launchers outside of the suit than admit that something was wrong or that he needed help. To Tony, there was nothing that he couldn't fix, nothing that he couldn't handle on his own. Mary suspected that had more to do with how he was raised as a child, and then his parents death at Fourteen, but it didn't change what was happening now.

Tony hadn't been handling things well after The Battle of New York, and she thought that maybe something was getting better between him and Steve. Steve said that Tony had talked to him, but he wouldn't say about what. Mary was glad that Steve was so loyal, protecting him, but in some ways Tony's behavior hadn't changed at all. He was still only sleeping when he passed out from sleep deprivation, staying in the workshop while Peter was in school or asleep, and only eating if she or Steve brought him something. The two men had gotten closer, and she thought she caught them kissing once. Perhaps it wasn't enough, yet. She cared about Tony, she had since Peter was just a baby. He was the father to their son, and one of her best friends.

Mary walked forward and rapped a knuckle against the glass of the door softly, getting Steve's attention. She motioned that they needed to come out now, and he nodded a little. Steve leaned his head down, pressing his nose to Tony's hair, mouth by his ear, speaking to him. It took a little bit but Tony nodded minutely, and Steve was picking him up. Tony carefully arranged himself, pressing against Steve's chest and Mary saw his body shaking; most likely a mix of the cold, shock, and whatever emotions were wrecking their way through his body. Tony didn't tolerate many emotions well, treating them as a weakness. She was glad that he hadn't passed that particular ideology onto Peter, encouraging the boy to cry is he sad, or to talk to someone if he was feeling upset.

"Bruce is waiting in Tony's room," Mary told Steve quietly, holding the door open for them. A cough worked its way through Tony. "He'll have some medicine for him so he doesn't get sick." Steve nodded and walked towards Tony's room. She'd talk to Steve later. Soon.

Tony was bored. Bored and upset. He had been restricted to bed rest for the whole weekend, and he hadn't even been able to sneak away. Every time he tried to get up, to leave and go do something with Peter, or even just make it to the kitchen, he ended up on his knees in a coughing fit and wheezing for breath. Bruce or Steve would come in and help him back into bed, then start a breathing treatment for him. Tony was not happy.

He grabbed his Starkpad and pulled up the latest scans and results that Bruce had uploaded. He looked at the x-rays first and wrinkled his nose. His lungs were already shifted and looking funky with the arc reactor in his chest, but now they looked cloudy, and just, not right. They were looking better than the first images that were taken. Bruce had him on an intensive medical regiment to treat the pneumonia, and while it sucked, it seemed to be working.

"Better than brain damage," Tony muttered to himself. He flipped through some vitals, turning his head a little when he heard a knock on his door. The door opened and Steve walked in with a food tray. He grabbed his Starkpad and pulled up the latest scans and results that Bruce had uploaded. He looked at the x-rays first and wrinkled his nose. His lungs were already shifted and looking funky with the arc reactor in his chest, but now they looked cloudy, and just, not right. They were looking better than the first images that were taken. Bruce had him on an intensive medical regiment to treat the pneumonia, and while it sucked, it seemed to be working.

"Brought lunch," he announced with a smile. He flipped out the legs and put the tray over Tony's lap before taking a seat across from him on the bed. Sometimes Steve would bring his food in as well and eat with him. Tony brought up his legs, sitting up a bit more, to give Steve more room. "Happy just got here to help Peter put all his presents in the car."

"Is he disappointed?" Tony asked as he grabbed his plate and a fork. Steve tilted his head a little in question. "I was supposed to give him and Wade a fun weekend." Tony closed his eyes and took a
couple of slow and deep breaths. Sentences with more than four words sometimes left him feeling out of breath.

"No, not at all," Steve said with a shake of his head. He grabbed his own plate from the tray. "He was more worried about you, but he agreed to go out with William and Rachel, so he still had fun. I think Wade had a lot to do with that, too."

"We're all doomed if they ever have to split," Tony told him. Steve just nodded with a grave seriousness. They ate in a comfortable silence for a few minutes, before Tony spoke up again. "Steve." He had said it quietly, but Steve's head shot up when he heard the use of his first name. Tony almost flinched; apparently it had not gone unnoticed that Tony only used his first name when he was being serious. Rhodey would gloat if he ever found out about that. "I have to.... I can't...." Tony let out a soft sigh, then looked into his eyes. "Thank you." There was so much more than he wanted to say, that he needed to say to the blonde, but he physically couldn't get it all out without needing another breathing treatment.

Steve reached over and put his hand on Tony's arm, nodding to him. "I'd do it again, without hesitation."

"You did it the first time without hesitation," Tony smirked a little, but it fell flat. "I just-"

"Don't strain yourself, Tony," Steve said gently. "I'm not going anywhere anytime soon, we can talk at length when you're able to string together a paragraph."

"How do you do that?" Tony asked, and Steve raised his eyebrows a little. "Make it sound okay."

Steve just shrugged, picking up his fork again. "I'm Captain America." Tony let out a laugh, that quickly turned into a cough, but Steve was right there helping him.

And he was still there to help him a week later. The next Friday Tony finally felt like he was able to take a breath without the familiar stirrings of a cough. It was still there of course, but his lungs were looking much better, and he was able to leave the bed. Which seemed to be just in time.

Steve was trying to stick a sandwich in Tony's mouth, trying to get him to slow down, but Tony had an agenda planned out. The two of them were on one of the empty living floors, the smell of fresh paint still lingering a tiny bit, and movers were bring in furniture and boxes.

"Can you stop for two seconds?" Steve finally huffed out, taking the Starkpad from Tony's hands. "Eat the sandwich, you've still got time."

"Not with furniture needing to be moved, and there's still boxes coming in, and I know everything is labeled." Steve cut off Tony's rambling with a quick kiss.

"You're going to start another coughing attack if you keeping talking at that pace." He put an end of the sandwich in Tony's mouth again, making him take a bite this time. "You know that they'll want to move the furniture themselves, and they'll have plenty of help. They don't get here for another few hours, and there is literally nothing else that you need to do until they get here."

Tony pouted a little as he ate the sandwich. "Maybe you're right," he finally admitted.

"Come on," Steve said, putting a hand on Tony's back and steering him back towards the elevator. "Time for your meds, and you've been on your feet all day."

"You are such a mother hen," Tony half complained. The doors shut and they were brought up to Steve's floor.
"I think I'm bigger than a hen," Steve replied, guiding Tony towards the living room.

"Fine, you're a den mother, happy? That makes you a wolf." Tony dropped down onto the couch, curling up against the arm.

"I actually like to think of myself as human." Steve brought over Tony's meds and a glass of water for him. He sat down next to Tony, leaning over to kiss him again after he had taken the pills. Tony leaned into the kiss, resting his forehead against Steve's even after their lips broke apart. "How are you feeling?" Steve asked in a soft voice.

Tony simultaneously loved and hated that voice, that tone. He swallowed and closed his eyes, feeling a familiar prickling starting to build up behind his lids. "Strangely emotional," Tony croaked out. He sniffed a little when he felt Steve's finger threading through Tony's hair. "How did you stick by me all week without wanting to throw me out of a window?"

"I didn't want to have to pay for the replacement glass," Steve cracked, drawing a tiny smile from Tony. "You were sick, and I wanted to help you get better." Everyone had been careful not to mention the words 'pool' or 'drowning' around him, but he knew that all of them were waiting for some answers.

Tony vaguely remembered what happened after Peter's party had ended. He remembered why he fell in the pool, and he remembered what he saw, and he remembered sobbing into Steve's chest. He wished he didn't remember that part.

"I didn't know I was in the water," Tony said quietly. Steve's finger stilled for a second, before starting up again. "When I hit the water, I retreated into my head."

"Flashbacks," Steve guessed and Tony nodded.

"One can only drown so many times before it becomes a Pavlovian response to water," Tony hit out, trying, and failing, for a chuckle. "God, I'm so messed up."

"No," Steve said with a shake of his head. "Not messed up, just troubled. It's more common than you think." Tony almost frowned a little. "Anxiety and PTSD, they go hand in hand, and--"

Tony pulled from Steve and looked at him. "Just, stop right there." Steve was the one frowning this time. "This isn't my first rodeo, I know what you're doing. You're not the first person to try to talk me into seeking help." Tony pushed himself off of the couch, Steve following him. "You got lucky when I opened up and told you about Afghanistan, but don't you dare try to turn it around on me to try and get me to see a shrink."

"Tony--" Tony waved his hand to cut off Steve.

"I had a flashback, guess what? That happens when you've been tortured for months," Tony growled out. "That's never going to stop, no matter what some quack says to me on a couch. I've got too many things to do without wasting my time on something that won't work."

"No one said that it was going to stop, but it can get easier to deal with," Steve continued. He stepped in front of Tony to block his path to the elevator. "Coping mechanisms, and talking--"

"No!" Tony shouted, glaring at the blonde. "It's not going to happen!" He stepped to the side to get past Steve.

"You're getting worse, Tony!" Steve shouted at him, making draw up short. Tony kept his back to the man as he continued. "You don't sleep, Tony, you barely eat. I can see the haunted look in your
eyes. This isn't healthy. What happens if Peter-

Tony whirled around, a finger in Steve's face, anger racing through Tony's body. "Don't you dare," he hissed out. "Don't you dare pull him into this. I won't let you use him as a guilt device." His finger was shaking, his hand, his whole arm was shaking.

"You know I wouldn't do that," Steve said evenly. "But, would you forgive yourself is something happened while he was around?" Tony clenched his jaw, drawing in deeper breaths. "Soon enough, everything is going to be too much for you to keep hiding. Your walls are going to break, and you'll hate yourself."

Tony put his arm down and let out a hollow laugh. "You think I don't do that already?" Steve frowned and Tony rolled his eyes. "Come on, Rogers, don't act like you're surprised." Tony took a step back, shaking his head. "You know, you're really something. Here you are lecturing me about getting help, about nightmares and flashbacks, when you have them, too. Remember? I'm there when you can't sleep. What do you know-"

"Because I've done the whole song and dance," Steve lashed out. "I've done the not sleeping, not eating, not living. It drove me nuts, Tony!" Tony blinked, eyes going blank. "Almost insane, I was starting to hallucinate from my flashbacks, I couldn't break out of them. I've been to the therapist, was there for months. And now? I can sleep at night, almost every night of the week." Steve never broke eye contact with Tony, the words pouring from his mouth. "I don't wake up screaming in the night nearly as much, but it still happens. Do I still live with the guilt of being alive, and still so damn young? Of course, every day, but now I know what that crushing feeling is, and I know how to try and make it lessen."

Tony reached up a shaky hand, thumb wiping away the tear that slid down Steve's face, feeling a bit confused. Steve grasped his wrist, pressing a small kiss to his palm. "You have your family here, Tony. You have others willing to help you through this."

"What if I can't do it?" Tony whispered. "I can barely talk to you or Mary, hell even Jarvis, about what happened. I don't know if I could open up to some stranger. Everyone knows who I am."

Steve wrapped his arms around Tony, pulling him into his chest, feeling him press back against Steve. "Then talk to me, Tony," Steve whispered back to him. "Just please, talk to someone, I can't watch you go through this much pain, not when I know what it feels like." Tony gripped Steve's shirt in his hands tightly and he let out a shuttered breath. Steve's hand moved up and down his spine, his arms tucking him into Steve's warm body.

And then, it was like Steve said, only, less catastrophic. One of Tony's walls broke, slowly crumbling, and Tony found himself crying into the safe place that Steve presented him with. Maybe he could do it, could talk to Steve. It would be easier now, after Steve's own confession, because maybe he would actually be able to understand where Tony was coming from. He didn't need a kindred spirit, but, then again, maybe it would help. His crying turned into soft sobs, but Steve never let go, and Tony knew, (when this was all done), he'd need to think of a way to repay Steve's kindness. He wanted, too.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will pick up where this one left off, so get ready for some more emotions to be felt! There are emotions being felt as I write this. Don't hate me!
The only thing that might come up later that's related to the movie, that could possibly be considered a "spoiler" is the correlation between Hydra/Winter Soldier, and the car accident that killed Tony's parents. But I think we all knew that already, (it was a couple other movies as well.)

If you've seen the movie, and need to have nerd conversations about what happened, I'm all up for that as well! I love discussing that stuff! I have many thoughts and feels, and it gets nerdy.

See you all on Tuesday!
Chapter Summary

Emotions. And Fluff!

Chapter Notes

I hurt you guys last chapter, I did, it was rough, but I'll make up for it in this chapter! Promise! You guys wanted some domesticity, well you got it! (See, you guys really can influence the story. I literally had shaped this chapter off of your requests.)

Thanks to this new schedule, I'm actually ahead in chapters, so that means I get to shape what happens better, and Bucky is really starting to pester me, so expect to start seeing him coming up.

I have an incredible wealth of knowledge about the MCU, specifically, and I'm a person who really gets into the character study of recurring movies characters, (such as the MCU and Tony and Steve and Bucky), and fortunately for me (unfortunately for you guys), I have some amazing angsty Tumblr posts that reaffirm everything I've been applying to characters. What this means is, I'm going to have to put in more domestic chapters for you guys to make up for what happen in later chapters...... :D

You're all amazing though, and I love you!
Unbeta'd as usual, and Marvel owns more than me. Songs and TV shows/Movies referenced don't belong to me either.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"There are too many variables left open," Tony said quietly. The two were sitting on Steve's bed, facing each other, legs crossed. There was coffee on the table closest to Tony, just in case. His eyes were still red, a bit puffy, but he was feeling a little bit better. Steve had held onto him until Tony had stopped crying, waited until he was ready move, then suggested that they go to his room. It would be more comfortable, and private in case anyone came off the elevator. Also, Steve could change his shirt that had a large wet spot on it.

"What do you mean?" Steve asked, pulling on a pair of socks.

"Well, like, that assassin from almost two weeks ago now," Tony prompted. "Haven't seen hide nor hair of him since then. If he really was tasked to kill me, then why stop?" Steve hummed in thought, nodding his head a little bit. "There have been plenty of other times to get me, and he's obviously did his homework if he figured out a way to get inside and shut down Jarvis, even if it was for a couple of minutes." Tony's fingers started to play with the bottom of his jeans. "And that group, with the disruptor, something just seems off about that whole thing." And whatever Loki's scepter did to me, he thought to himself. "I don't like when things don't make sense."

"I don't like that we haven't heard anything else from the assassin, but I'm going to take no news as
good news at this point," Steve said to him, looking back at him. "We're still on guard, and combing through street footage. And I know that they're tracking down the fake company names, so we should have a lead on them, hopefully, soon." He ducked his head down a little, trying to catch Tony's eyes. "There's something else on your mind. You usually wouldn't fret over things like that."

Tony licked his lips a little, and nodded. "You remember two weeks ago, in my workshop? When you pulled me out of a panic attack?" Steve nodded. "And, in the pool room, I, I thought I saw something. It startled me, and that's when I fell into the water."

"You sank to the bottom pretty quickly," Steve said, a bit of worry in his tone. "No one sinks that fast, not even after just falling in. It was like you skipped the whole floating part of water."

"I can't tell you what happened there," Tony said as he glanced up a little. "I didn't even know that I was in the water at the time. I was..... I was somewhere else entirely." Steve nodded, letting him have his time to reorganize his thoughts. Tony opened his mouth to speak, then shut it again. "At night, when I try to sleep, the lights go out and that's when it starts. Even as a kid I was never afraid of the dark, but here I am, almost thirty-five, and the dark is enough to start to send me into an attack."
Tony knew that these nightmares were the most frequent, were the ones that he should be telling someone about. Steve was right, what if he was taking a nap and Peter came to wake him up? Tony would never be able to forgive himself if he hurt his son.

"Even with the arc reactor, well, that's a whole different problem." Tony shrugged, trying for casual and missed by a mile. "You know, those shows about the stars, and about space? And they tell you that it's dark out there, because light just keeps going and going. Well, they're right, in a simplified way. There's so much, Space, out there, that light just keeps going until it hits something. In the absence of light, there is, nothing." Tony's voice trailed off for a second, looking at the bedspread. "There is so much nothing out there," he whispered, not sure to who.

"And it's cold," Tony said, his voice finding volume again. "Again, it's that whole lack of anything out there, no way for heat to stay when it has so much room to move about." Tony met Steve's eyes. "I was dying out there, I felt it, and I was so damned cold. I wish I could say that the last thing I heard was Peter telling me he loved me, and it would have been enough. Surrounded by absolutely nothing, to either drift for the rest of my life until whatever else lives out there found me, or to be destroyed by the explosion I delivered. It would have been enough because my son loved me." Tony shook his head a little, before tilting it up, eyes looking at the ceiling. "But, there wasn't, there was another voice. You've heard it. Before Thor took his destructive little brother back to Asgard."

Steve's mouth opened a little. He remembered. The Asgardian brothers had called someone down, to go through Tony and Loki's memories, and he had seen both of them. He had never spoken to Tony about them, because they had even put a chill of dread down Steve's spine. He had seen what the scepter had done to Tony before he was forced to fight him, and he had seen, through Tony's eyes, what it was like going through the wormhole. Worst, he had heard the voice. He thought that he had it bad with the Red Skull's voice being stuck in his head, this one somehow almost sounded like death.

"I don't know who it was that was speaking, Loki never told me any names," Tony continued, snapping Steve back to the present. "Just said that he knew what it was like. It was the same one who gave him the scepter, and now it was aware of me."

"SHIELD has the scepter now," Steve said quietly. "It's locked up, and the tesseract and Loki are far away."

" Doesn't mean that I'm any safer," Tony rasped out. Steve jerked back a little when he saw Tony's eyes. He was afraid. "I still hear that voice. But, last weekend,.... I don't think that it's gone."
"What do you mean?" Steve asked carefully, leaning forward.

"It said something new," Tony told him. "Something it never said before, something my mind couldn't have put together on its own. I don't sleep, because if I sleep, I feel like, they might actually find me."

Steve couldn't stop himself. He surged forward and wrapped his arms around Tony, pulling him into his lap, against his chest. "I won't let that happen," he promised fiercely. "I promised Peter, and I promise you, I won't let anything happen to you."

"You can't realistically keep that promise," Tony murmured, twisting his body a little so he could get more comfortable. It didn't seem that Steve was going to be letting go anytime soon. "We fight in the same battles sometimes, I'm going to get hurt."

"I can try and stop some evil alien from getting to you though," Steve huffed out. Tony smiled a little.

"You're a good man, Rogers," Tony mumbled from Steve's arms. "It's so frustrating sometimes."

"You wouldn't have fun any other way." Tony hummed his agreement.

"Sir, I do so hate to interrupt, but Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald are arriving in the garage." Tony pressed his face into Steve's shoulder when the AI spoke up. Steve dropped a kiss on the top of his head, rubbing his shoulder.

"And then you get to deal with both Peter and Mary when you tell them that you've moved them in," Steve reminded him.

"You hate me, don't you? This whole thing just now, it was all an act," Tony complained, wiggling away and off the bed. "Build me up only to taunt me!" He wandered to Steve's attached bathroom.

"Peter's going to be ecstatic, you know that!" Steve called as he got up from the bed.

"And Mary is going to give me the stink eye for not telling her!" Tony grabbed a wash cloth, made sure the water was warm, and did a quick swipe across his face.

"I can't help you with that."

"See! Horrible!" Tony looked at his reflection, eyes still red, but not as puffy. He could hide it, but he knew that William and Rachel wouldn't call him out on it either. "Why do I put up with you?"

"If I remember right, my soft skin, specially my lips, the fact that I'm unfair but I'm fun, that I'm a good man-" Tony hopped out, putting his hand over Steve's mouth as he listed things off, ticking them off on his fingers as well.

"Alright, Captain Sassypants." Steve grinned under Tony's hand. "You're being my shield today, get used to it, let's go." Steve slipped his hand into Tony's as they left the bedroom, a tingle spreading up Tony's arm at the sensation. He could handle this.

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December 2011

"Steven." Said man smirked as he pushed another set of hangars aside in his closet. "Don't make me
"use your middle name."

"I've never told you my middle name." He didn't know why, but it was sometimes fun to get Meg all riled up.

"Because the internet is so hard to use to look up details about Captain America from World War Two," she deadpanned. "I'm serious Steve, I'm going to send some of this stuff back to you."

"That would only hurt my feelings. Isn't that taboo, anyway?" Steve pulled out a blue button down shirt. "What about a blue shirt?"

"Well, it's not if someone went way overboard sending too many Christmas presents," she countered. "Long or short sleeve?"

"Long sleeve, I'm in New York in winter, it's cold." He glanced at a black button down, but didn't pick it up.

"And I'm in Michigan in the winter, I think I'm winning right now because I can't leave my driveway. Plus, it's not like Stark doesn't have heat in that place." Steve bobbed his head a bit, enjoying the warmer temperature that he kept his rooms at. "Stay dress casual, throw on black vest with matching slacks, but don't put on the jacket. And roll the sleeves up a bit, show off your arms, they're gorgeous."

"I don't think my arms have ever been called gorgeous before," Steve said as he raised an eyebrow.

"Then someone isn't treating you right." He rolled his eyes, heading over to the pants section. His closet was generously big, and stocked, thanks to Tony. "Seriously, Steve. This is overboard. And you told Mary!"

"How do you know?" Steve asked, frowning a little.

"I have a separate pile with tags that say 'From Mary and Phil Coulson.'"

"Oh, yeah, well," Steve shrugged a little, biting his lip as if she could see the smile on his face. "I had to ask her advice! And she seemed like a great source of knowledge, first hand and all, and she knows who you are."

"I had three, Three, vans from the post office here to deliver all the stuff." While she sounded frustrated, she didn't sound mad. "I live in what is generously called a two bedroom house, the size of a postage stamp. My laundry room, second bedroom slash storage room, and most of my kitchen is full of boxes and bags."

"Are you pretending to be angry because you don't want to think about what the implications of the presents mean?" Steve asked, and was rewarded with silence. He pulled out a pair of pants, then went to the socks drawer. "Your only family lives hundreds of miles away, and we both know that while they are lovely people, you're not on their list of people to visit for the holidays. It's a half-sibling, and they've got her family, and her husband's family to visit, all in different states."

He could practically hear Meg take the time to properly collect her words and thoughts. "I'm just, not used, to this much," she said softly, making Steve smile. "And it makes my gift pale in comparison."

"I don't even know what you got me, but I'm sure it's amazing," Steve immediately countered. "I know you made it, so that already makes it better than any store bought item. It's the curse of us artistic types." He paused when he heard a sniff. "Are you crying?"
"Shut up!" She had pulled the phone away, trying to mute the sounds of sniffling. "It's a very grand gesture, and I cry at anything!" She let out fond huff, and Steve could hear her smiling. "Thank you, Steve, really."

"Well, in a few weeks I'll come over there." He grabbed all his clothes and laid them out on the bed, starting to get dressed. "For your birthday we'll start looking-"

"No, no no, no," she cut him off. "I don't have any more room in my house, and I think that Tony is going to start to notice when you and Mary keep spending so much money."

"We're not using his money," Steve said as he pulled his pants up, tucking the shirt in. "Although, with what I have in mind, it would be easier to-"

"Nope! Not allowed to tell Tony Stark."

"Come on! I think you and him would get along fantastically," Steve told her. They had the personalities where they would instantly clash, but it would make things interesting, so they would probably be instant friends.

"I don't know Tony, and I'm not going to start accepting things from him just because you tell him about me. He's your boyfriend, and he'll do anything for you."

"Well, he's not exactly my boyfriend," Steve muttered under his breath a little, feeling his cheeks blush a bit.

"Psshht! You're dating, you've been dating for nearly three months, and if the accidental moaning I caught over the phone last week had anything to do with Stark's lips, then yes, he's your boyfriend." Steve's whole face had to be red by now. "You've spent over half an hour on the phone with me so far asking what colors to wear just to go up to see him. You are so smitten it's equal parts adorable, and disgusting."

"Now, I don't feel bad for taking up so much space in your house."

"You are an evil man, Steve Rogers."

"Imagine the day that Captain America goes villain," he said with a grin.

"That's a frighteningly easy thing to imagine. Please don't do that."

"Open your presents, it's Christmas Eve, you've earned it," Steve said as he buttoned up the vest, then sat down to pull on the dress socks.

"Enjoy your special date. Thanks again, Steve. I'll talk to you later." He smiled and nodded as she hung up. Steve slipped his feet into the black shoes on the floor, then slipped into the bathroom to check his hair. He had gotten a haircut the day before, and had somehow managed to keep Tony from seeing it yet. It helped that Tony had been out doing last minute board meetings with Pepper for SI, and spending the night with Peter.

Steve ran a hand through his hair, fluffing the much shorter hair a bit, and smiled. He really was looking forward to spending Christmas Eve with Tony. It would be the first holiday since waking up in the future that he actually spent it with someone else, just for the sake of having company. He walked back into his room, grabbed the wrapped present for Tony, and headed for the elevator.
Tony lightly tapped the edge of the small envelope against the counter of the bar. It was starting to get dark outside, and he could see the fat, soft, snowflakes outside the windows. Downstairs, Peter was probably ecstatic about the snowfall. He and Mary had agreed that Peter would open presents with him on Christmas Day. Since her parents now lived with them, they'd be having Christmas Eve on their floor.

Tony had of course been invited to have dinner with them, and to watch Peter open his presents down there, but Tony made up some excuse to just wait until the next day. Honestly, it would have felt weird for him. Mary was married now, and as much as they were all a family because of Peter, he was still personally aware that they were two separate families. Plus, Tony was attempting his own thing for Christmas, maybe with Steve.

It had taken Tony nearly a week to work up the courage, and he just kind of threw the invitation out to Steve as a random comment down in the workshop. "You know, there are still a bunch of holiday movies that you've gotta catch up on, and Jarvis insists on keeping the holiday spirit alive by taking over the TV. If you've got some free time, you can stop by anytime."

Here he was, waiting for Steve to come up, new butterflies being born inside of his stomach every two seconds. The day before, after getting back from SI, he had paid the kitchen staff a generous holiday bonus if they would teach him how to make some easy for dinner. The two head chefs, (one for entrees, the other for desserts), had instantly grinned at him, asking if he was trying to impress his new beau.

"The kitchen staff knows all gossip in this Tower," Pierre had told him when Tony started to sputter. "We are almost as informed as your AI." He started to pull out things for Tony to take back upstairs to his penthouse.

"Also, we are used to taking your meal orders from Senor Steven," Marcello added with a smile. "He has a good palette. Now, let us teach you something that won't burn down our place of employment."

"I will take back those bonuses," Tony threatened. The Frenchman and Italian just laughed as they pulled out supplies.

Jarvis let the ding of the elevator reach him, stirring him from his thoughts, and he straightened his tie a little, before quickly pulling it off and shoving it in a drawer of the bar. He unbuttoned the top button of the black dress shirt, slipping the envelope in the pocket of the gray vest he wore and headed towards the elevator.

When Steve stepped out, he stopped, smiling widely, almost laughing that they had decided to wear the same three pieces of clothing, just in different colors. Steve shot him a dazzling smile and walked over to him, leaning in to kiss him softly. "You look, really, good," Tony said when they pulled back. "You cut your hair, too."

"You look better." Steve took the present he had and leaned it against the couch. "I didn't actually realize how much hair I had until they started cutting it off, and the ways to style my hair were drastically reduced."

"It looks good though, I like it." Tony tilted his head, hands in his pockets, watching the pants pull and hug Steve's butt, letting the man catch him doing it too. "Yeah, you look really good tonight." He grinned when Steve pushed his shoulder.

"Well, it smells good up here," Steve said as let his fingers trail across Tony's arms as he walked by, headed towards the kitchen, following his nose. Tony smiled and followed him, trying not to be as
nervous as he felt.

There were several plates on the table. "I went for a kind of buffet style, thing. There's some chicken gnocchi soup, and some caprese bruschetta mini sandwiches, along with an antipasto plate. I tried for some blueberry clafouti, and some beignets for a dessert." Tony wasn't sure if Steve understood any of what he said, he had been talking so fast. Steve was leaning in closer to the clafouti dishes. "It's a French dessert, like a cross between a flan and a cheesecake, but not really a cheesecake, cause it's more creamy than anything, and soft, and I just really like blueberries."

Steve turned and smiled at him, walking over to Tony and pulling his hand out of his pocket so their fingers could lace together. "Nothing smells burnt, there's no smoke or signs of a fire, and it all looks edible, so it must be amazing." Tony snorted softly. "Okay, but you have to admit it looks much better than what we had on our first real date."

Tony let out a loud laugh, with a snort working its way out, making Steve grin as he bit back his own giggles. "That date was an unmitigated disaster! And it wasn't even my fault!" Steve just grinned, then pointed up as Jarvis started to speak.

"Sir, Captain Rogers has added a new song to the playlist. 'Beautiful Disaster' by Kelly Clarkson."

Tony couldn't help but laugh again. "You've been saving that one, haven't you?"

"Jarvis had the song on a delay, because I knew the time would come."

"Okay, but we're not gonna listen to your crappy music," Tony said, poking Steve's chest. "Jarvis always puts together a playlist for the holidays, and I trust his choices."

"You're faith in me is very appreciated, Sir." Tony leaned up, his other hand sliding along Steve's jaw, and kissed him slowly.

Steve hummed and smiled. "Never get tired of that." He pulled Tony closer, kissing him back, but stopping when he felt the brush of Tony's tongue across his lips. "I think this happened on our third date. I think we should eat the food before we get distracted, again."

"Does that even count?" Tony whined a little as Steve pulled him back over to the table. "We fell asleep on the couch like ten minutes later. We didn't even get to act like a couple of horny teenagers on their first make out session. We fell asleep while kissing, Steve. While. Kissing." Steve smiled when Tony used his first name. It had been happening more often, usually in private, but Steve still smiled every time it happened.

"It's counts, because we could have had food before we fell asleep," Steve countered, handing an empty plate to Tony, before started to load up his own. The food did smell delicious, and he could see a bit of Tony's Italian side in the food, as well as Marcello's own influence, and Pierre's in the desserts.

"Are we counting dates that get cut short by Avengers callouts?" Tony asked, sticking close to Steve's side, popping an olive in his mouth from the antipasto plate. "Those end up being like, half dates, if we even make it."

"Those are, outings, I would think."

"Most of the time we just fall asleep on your couch with Supernatural playing in the background, so then the next time it happens we have to replay the episodes we missed," Tony continued, stealing another olive from Steve's plate this time. Steve trade plates with Tony, putting another spoonful of green, then black olives on the plate, before filling up the empty one. Steve had planned for that to
happen. "In reality it should not take us over two months to make to Season Five."

"I think we're lucky to have made it that far," Steve said as he balanced the plate on his hand, and slid the small dish of beignets on his forearm, and the individual portion of the clafouti next to that. He knew that Tony wouldn't grab his own plate of the small doughnuts, but he smiled when Tony grabbed his own dish of the clafouti. The man really did have a weakness for blueberries.

"You know, I'm not totally convinced that the show is fictional." Steve raised an eyebrow as he grabbed two sets of silverware and they both headed back out to the bar, Tony leading the way. More often than not, if they were up on Tony's floor, they would eat at the bar. Tony would wrap his ankle around Steve's foot, and pull their stools close together. He didn't like eating with a plate in his hand, preferring a hard surface.

"I know for a fact that you're not religious," Steve commented as they put the plates down on the counter. Tony moved to the other side of the bar, leaning down to pull out the small ice bucket as Steve grabbed two tall glasses. "Are you telling me you think Angels are real? Like Cas?"

"I didn't point out the angels specifically, but I find Cas endearing, to a point," Tony admitted. "But no, I mean, what if Hunters are out there, taking care of the stuff that we don't." Steve watched Tony for a second, mulling over the thought. Tony pulled out two bottles of carbonated water. "Think about it, though. We fight supervillains, some not so super, and sometimes we fight ugly abominations that really have no rhyme or reason to exist, right?" Steve nodded, taking a glass from Tony as he filled it up. "So what's to say that there aren't others out there, like the Winchesters, or Bobby, fighting quietly behind the scenes what doesn't fall onto our scope as Avengers?"

"Well, it's not an entirely outrageous idea," Steve said as Tony walked back around to take his seat next to Steve. Tony's foot shot out, pulling the two closer. "But, demons?"

"I am a personal fan of Crowley, he has decent taste in liquor, and understands the price of fine taste in decor. Even if it is too garish." Steve snorted, smiling.

"Figures that you would like the sneaky, snarky, demon." Steve grabbed an olive and pushed it into Tony's mouth before he could talk again, smirking. "Please tell me that you're not going to start searching for Hunters, or supernatural occurrences."

"I'm not a Winchester." Obviously. "Plus, if I started doing that I'd have to accept that magic is an actual thing, and that it works under a certain set of rules, and I believe too much in science to do that."

"How did we go from talking about dates, to if Hunters are real?" Steve asked and Tony snorted.

"Says the man who stepped into a weird chamber and let someone experiment on him. For fun."

"It wasn't for fun," Steve said, rolling his eyes.

"I'm enjoying it, though," Tony grinned. Steve moved his leg to wrap his ankle around Tony's. He eventually ended up continuing to feed Tony every so often, to keep the genius from stealing the food from his plate. Tony repaid the favor though by sharing his dessert with Steve. All the while, Jarvis playing Christmas songs softly.

Tony was getting used to Steve's habits of housekeeping. He of course knew some things from Jarvis, the human one, from when he was younger, but he had grown up with maids, and cooks, and other servants, but Steve hadn't. He was very particular about leftover food as well, but that was from growing up with little money, and war rations. Tony helped him put the rest of the food in containers
and into the fridge, dishes in the dishwasher, before he was able to pull Steve over to the couch.

Steve had grabbed the present he brought up before sitting on the couch and pushed it towards Tony. "I uh, I got you something, and you can wait until-" He stopped when Tony grabbed the present and started peeling the paper off. "Or you can open it now," he chuckled. Tony smiled at him as he pulled the rest of the paper. It was a picture frame and Tony felt his breath catch when he lifted it up to look at it.

It was one of Steve's drawings, this one in just pencil. There was no denying Steve's talent with this piece. He had had to manage to catch one of the times that Tony had fallen asleep on the couch with Peter. Tony's head was resting on the arm of the couch, Peter on his chest, hand resting over the arc reactor, a blanket pooled around Tony's legs. Steve even managed to show the glow of the reactor against Peter's hand, and the softness in his face as he slept. Tony's arm was wrapped around Peter's waist, fingers curled around his side.

"Shit," Tony murmured, unable to look away. "This is, amazing." Tony suddenly started looking around the penthouse, at the bare walls, jumping up with the drawing in his hands. Steve blinked, turning on the couch to watch him. Tony pulled a painting off the wall, quickly replacing it with Steve's drawing. "I like this much better here. This is better than any other art in this whole Tower." Tony was resolutely ignoring the tingling behind his eyes, staring at the drawing for a few more moments. He hurried over back over to the couch, leaning over Steve and cupping his face with his hands, kissing him deeply.

Steve made a noise of surprise, but his hand was already moving to slide through the short hair at the back of Tony's neck. "You just threw a painting on the floor," Steve panted when they finally pulled back to breathe.

"It wasn't nearly as good as its replacement," Tony answered back with a smile. "And people will be able to see it when they get off the elevator, so bonus." Steve smiled and leaned in to kiss him again. When Tony's hand reached for his pocket, he could sense Tony's nervousness. "I, ah, I have a present for you, too, but I don't think it's anywhere near as nice.

"Won't know until I open it," Steve said, hand sliding down Tony's back. "And now that you've told me about it, there's no backing out." Tony leaned back onto the couch and pulled the envelope out of his pocket, handing it over to Steve.

The envelope had Steve's name printed on it, and the back was lightly sealed. It looked like Tony had held onto it for a bit, the corners looking a little worn. Steve opened it and pulled out a thick piece of card stock, a couple of lines of words and numbers printed on it. He raised his eyebrows a little and looked at Tony, who had started to wring his hands a little.

"Okay, so, I know it looks ridiculous, but those are codes for you. Like you're own personal set of codes, and they're override codes, and they'll be voice matched later." Tony had immediately launched into the rambling spiel, his nerves spurring him on. "And they're codes for just about everything. The first one is for the workshop, and only Pepper has another code for that. Mary has heightened privileges to the workshop, but not an override code. The second one is a code for the garage and all the cars and bikes down there, and then there's a code for Jarvis, which only is used in extreme cases. Then there's a code for, well, the Tower, in general, and of course a code for SI...."

Steve blinked, looking back down at the card in his hand. Tony had generated codes, just for Steve? "When would I need to use the code for SI?" Steve asked softly.

Tony shrugged, hands in his lap. "I'm not actually sure. If you wanted to get in after dark? Or if you needed to save me, or something, I don't actually know, but if something came up I didn't want you
be stuck." He worried at his lip a little with his teeth. "I know it's nothing like that utterly amazing
drawing, but-" It was Tony's turn to sound surprised when Steve leaned in to kiss him.

"Tony, you just gave me unfettered access to you, all of you, at any given time." Steve sounded
awed by the gesture, which Tony didn't quite understand, but he liked that it was making Steve
smile. "You trust me enough to use these responsibly. This is, this is huge, Tony. I love it." Steve
wrapped his arms around Tony's neck, leaning in to kiss his slowly, hand sliding through his hair. He
moaned softly when Tony pressed against him, tongue teasing at his lips. One of Tony's hands slid
up Steve's neck, the other sliding around his side to Steve's back.

Tony couldn't help but smile against Steve's lips when he was pressing back against Tony, taking
back control of the kiss, a slight growl in his throat. He never would have thought that one gift would
make him so happy at Christmas, but it was becoming harder to ignore how much Steve was starting
to mean to him. His last relationship, that had actually lasted longer than a month, had moved much
quicker, but he hadn't felt as strongly for them as he was feeling for Steve. He almost didn't care
that they hadn't had sex yet.

Tony was so lost in his thoughts, and the happiness that was coursing through his chest, that he
missed the elevator arriving to his floor until- "Daddy!" Tony jumped when Peter came running into
the living room. He took a deep breath so that he wasn't panting from the kiss, and looked over to see
five people standing in the living room, looking at them. Steve still had one arm around Tony's neck,
and Tony still had his arm around Steve's waist, and Steve's face was turning red.

"You were kissing Mr Steve," Peter stated, and there was a wrinkle in his nose. "Adults look gross
when they kiss." Tony snorted, biting his lip and swallowing the laugh that bubbled up his throat.
"Why were you two kissing?"

Mary looked like she was about to tell Peter not to ask questions like that, and he felt Steve tense a
little, knowing that they hadn't wanted to tell Peter yet, but Tony put a stop to all of it. "We're dating,
Petey." He felt Steve turn his head to look at him, saw Mary giving Steve a smug smile, and William
just flat out smiled.

"Oooooh," Peter said, making his mouth big as he drew the word out. "Like Mama and Phil. They
dated, then fell in love, then they got married." Tony already saw where this thought process was
-going. "And then I got another parent." Apparently Steve had caught on, because Tony felt Steve
drop his forehead against Tony's shoulder, shaking slightly with silent laughter.

"We're still dating, let's not jump any steps," Tony told the boy with a smile. Peter hopped over, then
pulled himself up to sit between Tony and Steve, in both of their laps. The two men had to move
their arms to rearrange, but they didn't mind.

"I'm happy that you two are dating," Peter said as he started to kick his feet back and forth. The other
two couples in the room moved to take their own seats, watching with interest how Tony and Steve
were going to handle the curious boy.

"Well, that's good, because I'm glad we're dating, too," Tony responded.

"Why are you happy about it, Peter?" Steve asked, leaning back a little so Peter could look back and
forth between them.

"Because, that means that you have a reason to stay here," Peter said, completely innocently.

"He still has work," Tony told him. "He'll still have to leave the Tower."
"Yeah, but when he's done with work, he'll come back here," Peter responded. Tony was usually impressed with the fact that Peter had started developing logical reasoning at such an early age. Until it came to his love life. "Like Phil would come back and see Mama when he came home from work. Mama and Granma were right." Steve and Tony looked at each other, then looked over at the two women in question.

"What were they right about?" Tony asked, his eyes finding Rachel's.

"They said that you two should be together," the little boy said easily, leaning against Steve now. Tony got a cocky grin on his face, one that only grew larger when Rachel shot him a glare. "You two are happy when you do stuff together, and I like doing stuff with both of you."

"We like doing stuff with you, too," Steve told him with a smile. Tony knew that Steve worried what Peter would think about them being together, if he would find it weird, or be upset. This was the best case scenario so far. "Now we can do a lot more stuff, the three of us."

"I'd like to offer the heartfelt words of, it's about time," William said with a smile. Coulson snorted softly with a smile, his arm around Mary's shoulders.

"Tony? Is that a Jackson Pollock painting on the floor?" Coulson asked, glancing over to the floor.

"Probably, it's something Pepper picked out. Oh! Petey!" Tony picked up Peter suddenly and jumped up from the couch. "You gotta see what Mr Steve made!" Mary glanced at Steve, a smirk on her face, when Tony willingly used his first name. "Actually, everyone's gotta see this, come on! It's the reason that a multi-million dollar painting is on the floor. I should probably pick that up before Pepper sees it." He used his foot to at least prop it up to lean against the wall. "Look!"

Peter looked at the drawing, his eyes widening. "That's us!" Tony grinned, holding onto his son as they looked at the picture frame. The other had gotten up to come look at it, and Tony wanted to preen like a bird for Steve's sake. Steve had deemed him and Peter important enough to draw, and with so much detail. "That looks just like us Daddy!"

"You have an incredible talent," William said to Steve as he looked at the drawing. "No wonder Peter is so good at art if you're the one teaching him." Tony turned a little to grin at Steve, seeing his cheeks turn a bit pink at the praise. He reached his arm out, grabbing Steve's arm and pulling him over to him and Peter.

"Can you teach me to draw like that, Mr Steve??" Peter asked, turning in Tony's arm to look at him. "That's really good, I wanna be as good as you!"

"We'll start learning about shading after we learn a bit more about color theory," Steve told him with a smile. Sometimes Tony had Jarvis pull up the camera on the weekends to watch Steve with Peter with their art lesson. Tony decided that he needed to make a better art room for the both of them.

"Did you take art lessons when you were a kid?" Rachel asked Steve, and he shook his head.

"I couldn't afford college when I was younger, but I took the classes that the community centers would offer," Steve started to explain. "I caught up a bit with the internet, and Mary pointed me in the direction of some more classes two years ago."

"But most of this is self-taught?" Rachel asked and Steve nodded.

Tony leaned in with Peter, pointing to where Peter's hand was always resting on the arc reactor. "It even looks like it's glowing, doesn't it?"
"Yeah!" Peter breathed out, studying more details. "I can see the design on my shirt. I like that shirt!" Peter smiled, suddenly acting shy and putting his face in Tony's neck, loudly whispering like kids do. "You put it on your wall."

"Of course I did!" Tony grinned at him, kissing the side of his head. "Just like I put all of your artwork up, I'm gonna put up art that has you in it." Peter wiggled happily in Tony's arms. Mary leaned over to kiss Peter's head, making him giggle a little. "You're silly, Petey. You're our silly little boy."

Steve watched Tony, watched his smile that seemed just a little bit brighter, and watched him interacting with Peter in his arms. He wouldn't deny that he was a bit worried about the reaction from everyone, but Peter in particular, about him and Tony dating. Tony hadn't wanted to say anything unless they were serious, and Steve didn't want to make things awkward. But when Tony had easily said that they were dating, Steve felt a little lighter inside, warmer, happier.

He stepped closer to Tony's back, resting his head on Tony's unoccupied shoulder, pressing a soft kiss to his neck. Tony turned his head to smile at him. This was Tony, the real Tony Stark. Here in the Tower, with the family he managed to build, there was no pretending for the press, no fake smiles, or exaggerated attitude. Tony was naturally cocky, and yeah he had an ego, and sometimes a jerk, but he wasn't a bad person, wasn't uncaring as the tabloids sometimes made him out to be.

This Tony, where he didn't feel he had to hide completely, this was who Steve felt drawn, too. Steve knew why they had clashed on the Helicarrier, because they were thrown together in a situation where both hadn't trusted each other, and were both angry about what they had been hiding. Honestly, Steve had been willing to just leave after they had won the battle. He would have helped with the cleanup of the city, then gone back to his apartment, and keep the distance that he and Tony had. Steve was very glad that hadn't work out like that. He figured that he and Tony would clash still, like they had on their second date, but Tony was one to push back when he didn't agree with something. Steve liked the challenge.

"Hey." Tony's voice caught his attention back to the present. Mary was holding onto Peter now, trying to tickle him. "So, I was thinking maybe you could, maybe, bring some stuff up here? Like, a couple sets of clothes, a toothbrush?" Steve felt Tony shuffle his foot a little on the ground.

"Only if you do the same in my room," Steve countered, and Tony threw on a cocky smile.

"You got it, Soldier." Steve grinned at him. "Can you believe that Rachel said we'd be a good couple?? I think she's starting to like me!"

"Stark!" Tony started to cackle when Mary's mother turned a light glare on him. Steve rolled his eyes fondly. Yeah, he was pretty happy right where he was.

Chapter End Notes

I think maybe, we need more details about these failed dates? :P
January 2012

Chapter Summary

Plot progression!

Chapter Notes

Fluffy/actiony chapter, this one is. It's needed for plot progression for what I have planned. More domestic fluff coming next chapter, and then a few chapter after that, all the fluff you can't handle. For now, I'll be working out my action feelings. :D

You guys are awesome, seriously.

Unbeta'd as usual, and Marvel owns more of this than I do. Also, all music/movies/tv shows belongs to those that wrote/performed/produced/etc them. I use them for humor and good times.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

January 2012

Tony whined a bit. "Can I help global warming along? It'll melt the snow."

"You're not going to turn into a weather villain," Steve told him. Tony flopped down on the couch in the workshop. "It's just a couple of days."

"I could easily get a quinjet out there," Tony countered.

"And land it where?" Tony could hear the crunch of snow as Steve was walking outside. "They've closed the airports because they can't keep the runways clear fast enough. I'm in the middle of the city, so there's no place to land safely."

"Then I'll come out to you, the suit can land anywhere." Tony looked over to see the Mark XXXIII standing there.

"Are you really that bored, Tony?" Steve asked, sounding amused.

"Peter is trapped with Wade because of the snow here, which he was spending the rest of Winter Break over there anyway, and Mary and Coulson are still on their own mission, and her parents are the only smart ones, still in California riding out the snow storm in warm weather."

"Where's Bruce?" Steve asked him. "And I thought Romanoff and Barton were going to be staying at the Tower this week."

"Bruce is working in his lab, and he's in that super intensive mode." Tony sat up on the couch, before deciding to start moving towards his room, Jarvis making sure the call followed him. "And I'm not sure if the wonder twins managed to make it here before the snow storm hit."
"I can confirm that Miss Romanoff and Mr Barton are still at the SHIELD offices," Jarvis threw in for him.

"There you go," Tony said, walking out of the elevator on his floor. "I'm super bored, and Bruce isn't going to emerge for at least three more days-"

"That sounds familiar."

"-so I'm going to come out to you." Tony ignored Steve's comment.

"Hang on a sec." Tony started going through his clothes, looking for something warm that would at least be semi-comfortable in the suit. He heard Steve talking to someone, but couldn't hear the words. Then he heard a squeak, which was not from Steve, and probably the friend that he was visiting. "Yeah, she's not happy with that."

"So I'll see you in like an hour?"

"Wouldn't expect anything less." Tony could hear the smile in Steve's voice.

"Admit it, you miss me, too," Tony said, a little tune in his voice.

"And inflate your ego even more?"

"Yes in fact, I demand it," Tony said with a grin as he pulled out a long sleeve shirt and some jeans. "I have to regularly feed my ego. It's really for the safety of everyone."

"I'll see you soon, Tony." Steve chuckled, ending the call.

Steve jerked a little when something punched his shoulder. "I said, No Tony Stark." Steve smiled at Meg, pulling his gloves back on before grabbing the shovel again. This was the third time he had shoveled the driveway at her house, and he was half tempted to ask Tony to order a snow blower for her on his way over.

"Did you really think he wasn't going to come?" He asked, pulling the hood of his jacket up when it started to snow again.

"I just thought that I would have to set up a phone charging system for you after telling him that all flights had been canceled," she said, following behind him on the cleared path. She tucked her hands under her arms and huffed out a breath.

"You're getting cranky," Steve commented.

"It's cold, and now Tony Stark is coming."

"You don't have to stay out here with me, you know I'd rather you be inside anyway." She snorted a little and Steve shook his head. "You keep using his full name."

"He's a celebrity, and someone I never thought I would meet in my life," she told him. "Much less be friends with his boyfriend."

"I actually can't wait for you two to meet."

An hour later Steve was waiting outside in the driveway again, sans shovel, and looked up as he heard the jets of Iron Man boots approaching the small house. Meg hadn't been kidding when she said it was small, it was almost the size of the Queens apartment, which just wasn't going to work.
Tony landed and Steve tilted his head a little before the suit opened from behind and Tony stepped out. Steve smiled and wrapped his arms around him, kissing him. "Don't let go of me, or I'm going back inside of the suit," Tony said as he snuggled into Steve's chest. He had his own wool coat on, but Tony was never a fan of winter. "It's too damned cold here."

"Why do you think I asked you to add thermal heat to my winter clothes?" Steve asked, happily keeping his arms around Tony. "Come on, let's go inside. I'm sure Meg's got some coffee and hot cocoa ready."

"This is the friend that encourages your bad music habit?" Tony asked, not moving from Steve's arms, so they were forced to practically waddle to the back door.

"Oh, this is going to be fun," Steve said under his breath with a smile. Steve stomped the snow off of his boots before slipping his shoes off and jacket, Tony following suit when he felt the heat from the house. Tony started to sniff the air, and Steve smiled, because there was indeed coffee scent. Meg was in the kitchen, her back to them at the coffee machine.

"She has red and orange hair," Tony said as he leaned around Steve, taking in the small house.

"She used to have pink hair," Steve told him.

"She can hear you," Meg called out. "I don't drink coffee, by the way, so this isn't for me." She turned around to face them and Tony's eyes widened, whipping his head back to Steve. Steve blinked, looked over at his friend, then let out a laugh. She frowned as she rested a hand on her heavily pregnant stomach.

"No! No way, Tony!" Steve tried to stop laughing and put his hands on Tony's shoulder. "Not my babies!"

"You failed to mention that she was pregnant," Tony said with a frown.

"That's your first thought? That I'm carrying patriotic babies?" Meg said, watching them. Tony looked back at her. "I'm having twins, hence the plural. I was his wingman while he was still pining after you."

"She's cranky today," Steve stage whispered, kissing Tony's forehead. "Hormones."

"I'm not cranky," she mumbled under her breath. She turned and picked up the mug that held the coffee, and held it in offering. Tony eyed the mug carefully, then started to inch forward before he was in front of her. He took a sniff and accepted the mug, making a pleased sound at the first drink. "I'm sorry your boyfriend didn't tell you I was pregnant."

"How was that an apology for me?" Steve asked as he followed Tony further into the house.

"He's supposed to have manners, I don't know what happened," Tony shrugged a little. "But people were supposed to have taste in music, as well."

"I always thought that taste was evolving, and that people were supposed to move on from the Eighties," Meg fired back sweetly. Tony raised an eyebrow at her.

"Twins, huh?" Meg nodded. Steve watched them silently, anticipating. He was afraid to make a sound, thinking he was watching two cats meeting for the first time, not wanting to scare them off.

"A boy and a girl," she responded, leaning back against the counter. The alpha marks her territory, letting him know that he's in unfamiliar lands.
"Sounds like you're going to have your hands full," Tony said, taking another sip of coffee. The visiting alpha shows that the previous offer is appreciated. He has no want to take over her claim. Steve shook his head a little. Perhaps he should stop falling asleep with the animal channel on.

Meg snorted a little. "I have my hands full already." There was a knock at the front door and the three looked over. "Excuse me a second, it's probably just my neighbor checking on me." She walked towards the front of the house, which Tony and Steve both noted that it didn't take long in the small house. She grabbed a jacket before opening the door, and another voice was heard.

"Father not in the picture?" He asked as soon as he as positive she wasn't going to hear them.

Steve shook his head. "It was a rough situation. Actually the reason I got no sleep before Mary and Phil's wedding," he confessed and Tony nodded a little. He'd be asking for details later.

Tony turned around the kitchen, headed for the two doors to check them out. Steve knew he was a curious, and nosy, person by nature, but this could work in his favor. He opened one door and saw a cramped bathroom. "This thing is barely wide enough for you to walk into," Tony muttered to Steve. "And could that toilet be any closer to the bathtub? I'm surprised they managed to fit one in here."

He closed the door and moved over to the next, pulling the door open, then stopped. "What is this room supposed to be, Steve?"

"The second bedroom," he answered, crossing his arms over his chest in amusement. The room was packed with furniture and a couple totes, barely enough space to walk in. They could make out a new dresser on a wall by the window, and a changing table on the perpendicular wall. Those were the items that could be reached.

"No, I have closets in the hallway bigger than this. Your old apartment had closets bigger than this."

Tony closed the door and looked out into the living room, catching glimpse of Meg talking to an elderly man who handed her a casserole dish. There was a small couch and one chair situated in one corner, with a TV stand across from it, and in the other corner there seemed to be a crowded desk with smaller storage containers around it, and then a door that he assumed was the main bedroom. Tony pointed to the desk and looked back at his boyfriend.

"That's her work station," Steve explained. "She works from home. Remember that glass lampshade I put up before New Year's?" Tony nodded.

"Very vintage looking." Tony had though that Steve had discovered the Tiffany's glass store, or something.

"She made it for me for Christmas." Tony raised an interested eyebrow. "She works with glass and subtractive sculpture."

"Later, I want you to explain to me the details of subtractive sculpture," Tony said as he walked into the living room, Steve close on his heels. "I mean, I have an idea, but I want to know materials and tools involved."

Meg was closing the front door with her foot when Tony opened the door to her bedroom. "What are you doing?"

"Looking at your closet," Tony said, leaning his head inside the room. There was a twin bed against the wall, and a crib on the parallel wall. "Only one crib?"

"Twins sleep better when they're together for the first several months, and do you see anywhere else to put a second one?" Meg said, walking to the kitchen to put the covered dish in the fridge.
"I don't see much room for you," Tony said under his breath and came out, closing the door. He peeked out the window to see the man she had been talking to walking down the sidewalk. "Does your neighbor drop off food with only one usable arm?"

"His arm was run over in a work accident," she said. "Mr Allen is one of the nicest people I've ever met. His food is the best."

"He cooks with one arm??" Tony turned to look at her.

"He does a lot of the house work, too. I help him when I can if he's outside." She lowered herself into the chair in the living room, Steve taking a seat on the small couch, pulling Tony down next to him. "He made some meatloaf and mac and cheese to thank Steve and me for shoveling his sidewalk and driveway." Steve raised his eyebrows at her. "I was directing you." Steve snorted.

Tony pointed at her work desk. "That is not a work station by the way."

"Yes it is?" Her last word going up to make a question in confusion. "The drawers hold my tools, and the containers have my supplies.

"What if you need to work on more than one project at a time?" Tony now looked confused. His workshop was bigger than this house, easily.

"Well, I am already." She waved a hand at Steve. "Here's your time to shine, strong man, show him the marble."

Steve got up and walked over to the desk, pulling the chair out and crouching down to grab something from the floor. He gently pulled out a piece of marble that almost three feet wide and two feet tall. The base was still in a block formation and it was clear that work was being done from the top down. Tony could recognize that it was going to be an octopus, some of the tentacles already being formed.

"I've been working on that one for a couple weeks, and I've already done two glass sun catchers, and I've got a window commission."

Tony reached out to touch the piece of marble, feeling the beginnings of texture on the tentacles and near the eyes. He had gained a bit more of an appreciation for art through Steve and Peter, but he found he was most fascinated when he could see it being worked on.

"You work entirely on commission?" Tony asked as Steve put the piece back in its resting spot.

"I make some smaller pieces and sell them online, or at art gallery gift shops," she said with a shrug. "It took a while, but I've got enough steady commissions that come in to keep me busy."

Tony looked at Steve, and the blonde saw the look in his eyes. He knew what was going to happen, the wheels were turning in Tony's head. He smirked and sat back down next to him. "Get ready."

Meg frowned at him, and Tony pulled out his phone.

"Are you attached to this city?" Tony asked suddenly. "Anything particularly keeping you here? Anyplace you've ever thought about living in before?"

Meg looked between Tony and Steve, then she narrowed her eyes accusingly at Steve. "No, no no no."

"I would just accept it, it's going to happen," Steve told her. She knew about Tony's penchant of setting people up with things that they needed, heard about it all the time from Steve, especially with
everything that he had done, and was still doing, for the people of New York.

"I don't need it, though. I have a roof over my head with working heat and running water, I'm good."

"You are so far from good I could almost laugh," Tony said, still looking down at his phone, thumb scrolling. "I would laugh, but I'm too busy cringing. Seriously, this work, it deserves a proper space."

Steve leaned over to look over Tony's shoulder, then pointed at something. "That's one of my favorites."

"You're in cahoots on this, too??" Meg leaned forward, looking at Steve. "You hid that black card that Tony gave you because you don't want to use his money, but now you're actively encouraging him to do something outrageous?"

"Yes," Steve said with a nod. "It's for a good cause, I feel."

"You're biased," Tony commented, turning the phone so that he could use both hands to tap something out. "I like when you're biased, means I get permission to spend this money." Steve hummed a little and continued watching the phone. "What do you think about Philadelphia? Well, just outside the city, too busy in the thick of it all."

"You can't just move me to a different state," she tried to argue.

"I can, actually. I've done it before," Tony state. "I moved the mother of my son without telling her it was happening. To be fair, I told Peter."

"Mary told me about that," Steve said, pinching his side a little. "That doesn't count, because Peter wasn't even one yet."

"It was for a good cause," Tony parroted. "What about this one?"

Steve shook his head, scrunching up his nose. "There's no yard."

"Nope, putting my foot down-" Meg interrupted.

"I hear it's good to have both feet on the ground," Tony commented.

"I can't just let you buy something for me like that-"

"I want to commission you," Tony said and looked up from his phone. She blinked at the sudden shift. "I want you to make me some sculptures, out of various stone and glass."

"And where would you put them?" She said crossing her arms. They all knew that they only art that Tony willingly put up in his homes were those done by Peter or Steve.

"I want to display them at Stark Industries," he countered. "Both the California and New York locations. One for outside and one for inside, so I'm thinking four in total." Her mouth opened a little in disbelief. "And I want them big, something that people will notice, because I'm not known to do anything half-way."

"Those would take some time," she countered, eyes narrowing a little at him. He was up to something.

"Yeah, figured as much," he said with a shrug. "I'm thinking, what, three to five years?"

"What's the catch?"
"There's no question that I will be able to compensate you with a near limitless source of wealth, correct?" She had to nod at that. "Alright, so I'll commission you, you get some sketches together, and I'll show you what I'm thinking for payment." And then his eyes were back to the phone, thoughts moving a mile a second. "Have to get Pepper to draw up the contract, she's much better at the wording than I am. Or at least tell her what I want and she'll draft it with legal, then I'll probably have to give her a raise after this, too."

"Sir," Jarvis spoke up from the phone as a loud howling wind sounded from outside. "Might I suggest finding shelter for the suit? Conditions are not safe to fly in it for the next several hours, to possibly overnight."

"We tested it for extreme weather conditions, J," Tony answered automatically.

"Yes, Sir, but I think you would rather not have to dig it out of the snow." Tony blinked and glanced up when the possibility was presented with him. Then his mind put the words together.

"Overnight?"

"Yes, Sir." The three in the room all took a little glance around the house.

"Steve, the SUV outside is yours right?" Tony looked at the blonde, and he nodded. "Great. Kid," he snapped and pointed at Meg, "Pack a change of clothes, you're staying in style tonight at whatever hotel I put Steve up in while he was staying here."

"I didn't my research, and I found a Marriott," Steve said, sounding proud of himself. "It's only about four miles away."

"Great, J, call the hotel for me." Tony was out of his seat, phone up to his ear. He glanced at Meg, eyebrow raised. "Steve, she's not moving, she should be moving."

"He's actually pretty serious about this," Steve said to her, noting her shocked expression. He helped her up from the chair to get her moving.

"I believe that he is, and I listened when you said that he sometimes impulsively does stuff," she murmured, heading for her bedroom. "I guess it's just different to witness it firsthand." She glanced at Steve. "He's an absolute menace."

"I know," Steve said with a grin.

"I approve." She nodded. Steve kept smiling and walked back over to Tony as he booked an extra room, throwing his name a bit to make sure it would be ready.

"She's an absolute handful," Tony said as he hung up. "Bit of a smartass, too, I can sense it lingering under the surface."

"That is a fact," Steve said with a nod. "Sometimes exhausting."

"An absolute menace." Tony swiveled his head around to look around the house again. "You can keep her around."

"Oh, you're so generous, Mr Stark." Steve rolled his eyes, walking towards the back door to grab three sets of coats. "I'm so happy that you approve of my friends."

"And don't you forget it." Tony wore his shit-eating grin. "Stop taking in strays, though. You get me attached, and then I'm forced to see the good in people, and it just gets annoying."
"Can't make that promise." Steve cupped Tony's cheek and leaned in to kiss him slowly.

Tony flopped on the bed of Steve's room and hummed happily. "You did alright, Stevie." He propped himself up on his elbows to watch Steve hang their coats up. "First time booking an adult hotel, and you picked a very nice room." They had managed to make it to the hotel before the storm got too bad, and the city had put out a travel advisory. Tony's suit was in the back of the SUV that Steve had rented, and Tony was glad that he had been experimenting with lighter alloys.

Steve dropped next to Tony, leaning over him to kiss him, Tony pulling a soft moan as he deepened the kiss. "Feeling better about it now that you're here." Steve took a second to just breathe in Tony, his cologne, with the undercurrents of metal and spice that always seemed to follow the man around. "Not that I'm not happy to see you here, but I am wondering why you were so insistent."

"I told you, I was bored," Tony said, kissing down his jaw.

"Tony," Steve insisted, pulling back to look at him properly. "Does this have anything to do with that research Bruce is distracted with?"

Tony looked at him, before narrowing his eyes a bit. "How did you make that connection?"

"Because, Bruce only kicks you out of his lab if you're becoming a pest about results, or you're too vested," Steve said, moving to sit up now. He grabbed Tony's hand and pulled him into a sitting position on the bed. "And it was pretty obvious that Bruce had kicked you out when you said that he was in 'ignore-the-world' mode, and you weren't with him."

"I think you're learning my tricks," Tony said with a pout.

"I've got Mary helping me out," Steve admitted. "Plus, you wouldn't usually be concerned with a snow storm delaying my flight by another day. If it were Peter? Yes, absolutely, but not me so much."

Tony's foot started to tap in the air and he started to snap his fingers. "Bruce is following a lead about those scientists from the Fall, a biological lead after Clint and Natasha dropped off a couple of files, and lab samples."

"They have a name then?" Steve asked, but Tony shook his head.

"Kind of, but not really. A-I-M kept being repeated in some of the information they found, but we can't pin down what it stands for. Turns out, there are a lot of companies that either use the acronym, or have Aim their names." Tony let out a puff of breath. He hated not being able to find out information when he already had half of the equation. "They did a raid on another building, but it was already mostly emptied out. Seems they know that we're on to them, so they keep moving around now."

"But they found something."

"Yeah, a couple of lab monkeys were wandering around, and they found some left over files about some experiments, and a couple of samples." Tony slipped his shoes off, dropping them on the floor at the end of the bed. "Bruce has all that now, trying to parse through what the experiments were. So far, nothing about that energy disruptor."

Steve hummed, nodding a little. It still didn't explain why Tony had come out so quickly. "What do
you know?” Tony looked at him. “You found something first, and connected a couple of dots.”

"Remember the animals you guys fought? The first they popped up?” Tony asked, turning on the bed so the two of them were facing each other. "The same day that assassin popped up, who's still on radio silence." Steve nodded, he very much remembered that day. "I'm pretty sure that was when they made breakthroughs on their experiments. And I'm not completely sure yet, but I got an early peek at some of Bruce's tests, and I know enough about DNA to know that in that sample of whatever, it was human. I'm pretty sure they're doing human experiments now."

Steve ground his jaw together a little. Tony reached over and put his hands on Steve's knees, trying to ground him. "Natasha and Clint are already looking for another site, and I've got Jarvis going through all the information that SHIELD has. We'll know as soon as we get a hit." Steve nodded, putting his hands over Tony's. "Don't need you getting all righteous and angry just yet, not when there's no target to take it out on yet."

"Did you come all the way out here to tell me that?" Steve's fingers rubbed along Tony's knuckles. Tony's body always ran a bit warmer, thanks to the arc reactor, and Steve always tried to drink that in whenever he could. Tony shook his head a little and Steve shifted a little.

"I think I caught sight of our assassin," Tony said quietly and Steve frowned. His hands tightened around Tony's. "Not in New York. Following you." That wasn't what Steve had been expecting to hear. Tony slid one of his hands away to grab his phone from his pocket, tapping the screen twice and a hologram was projected. Steve looked at them, and he saw traffic cams pictures of him walking with Meg down the street yesterday. When Tony moved his hand, multiple images appeared, and he saw the same person following them, dark clothes, black ball cap.

"How can you be sure that that's him?" Steve asked, leaning in to study the pictures.

"He followed you in every store you went into," Tony said, showing hacked footage of some stores and a restaurant. "And I thought it was just some fanboy who figured out your identity from those pictures last year, until I saw this." The footage from a restaurant paused, and Tony overlaid it a heat filter. "This footage I was watching live, Jarvis tracking it in real time, and I got a little creative." The man's body was glowing reds and oranges, some yellow, except for his left arm. There were thin lines of red, but the outline was cooler blues and purples.

"What's wrong with his arm?" Steve frowned. Was it some kind of new weapon?

"The man that attacked me, I thought I saw metal," Tony told him. "I wasn't sure exactly what I was seeing at first, but there was metal around his whole arm. I thought it was part of his armor, but no, he had a metal arm." He looked at Steve, eyes hard, underlining with a bit of worry. "I don't know what his MO is now, and that worries me."

"So, the idea to move Meg...?"

"He was tailing you, but he's seen her as well," Tony said with a frown. "Also, that house was not suitable for one person, much less three." He tapped his phone again the holograms disappeared. "That's why we're picking a home for her tonight, and I'm getting a crew there as soon as possible to install SI security tech." Tony had made the mistake once of letting someone use a loved one against him, he wasn't going to give this assassin the chance to do that against Steve.

"I assume that Jarvis is in the security system of the hotel." Tony nodded in the positive.

"Do you think that the assassin is working with the scientists?" Tony asked, taking his phone back. "Or is it just another threat on a never-ending list of enemies?"
"I asked Clint and Natasha the same thing," Steve murmured. "Never did get an answer, but I think this man is working alone. This AIM, or whoever they are, they aren't interested in following us, or trying to kill us. At least not exclusively. I think we're experiencing the bad luck of fighting two different enemies at the same time."

"Aren't we just lucky." Tony rolled his eyes before twisting his body to fall in Steve's lap. "They had better have the streets cleared tomorrow, I'm cheating and we're getting pancakes for breakfast. And you are never going to tell Peter about it."

Tony had a smug little smile when he woke up the next morning. The weather had seemed to have a complete turnaround. The streets were indeed cleared, the crews working all through the night, and the sun was out. The temperature had risen just a little bit, and the snow was easier to clear from the sidewalks. Jarvis found a well-reviewed Diner that was only a couple blocks away, and after a well-rested night sleep with Steve at his side, even Tony was willing to make the walk.

"We'll talk about making a morning walk later," Meg had grumbled when she opened the door to a ridiculously happy looking super couple. Tony had happily walked in with Steve behind him as she went into the bathroom to finish getting ready.

"Exercise is good! Specially for pregnant women," Tony crowed, taking a look around her hotel room, heading over to the windows. Jarvis hadn't detected anything through the night, but Tony wasn't taking any chances. They could still be being watched.

"I'm going to put nearly forty pounds of primarily water weight around you, then tell you take a walk in winter," she called through the bathroom door. "Your boy is crazy, Steve!"

"I already did twelve miles in the gym this morning," Steve informed her and they heard a scoff of disgust.

"Morning people are gross."

"I'm not a morning person," Tony piped up. "I just usually happen to be awake in the morning because I haven't gone to sleep."

"I'll get you some maraschino cherries," Steve said, leaning by the bathroom door. Tony raised an eyebrow at him, but he just smiled, holding up a hand for him to wait.

The bathroom door opened enough for Meg to stick her head out the door, peering at Steve.

"Cherries?"

"The big bottle," Steve told her. "Won't even limit you to how many you want to eat." She eyed him, throwing the offer around in her head, then smiled brightly at him.

"I'm just finishing brushing my teeth, then we can go." The door shut again, and this time they heard humming coming from the bathroom instead of grumbling.

"What the hell is up with the cherries?" Tony asked immediately. The last time he had seen a mood change that fast was when Peter found out that Wade actually could go to summer camp with him two years ago. Or himself in front of a paparazzi camera.

"As far as it was explained to me, she has a cherry allergy." Tony's eyebrows went up, about to yell at him for giving someone something they're allergic too. "Something that's in the juice? Not sure,
anyway, it's actually a kind of mild reaction, but it's not dangerous. I've seen it happen, and it was one of her friends who discovered what was wrong."

"It's like I get high," Meg said, coming out of the bathroom, pulling her, now blonde hair, into a ponytail. Tony hadn't noticed the change in hair color when they walked in. "Really I just get real giggly, I'm in an amazing mood, and my pupils dilate. I remember almost everything though, but when it's happening, I'm not really aware of what I'm doing. I'm technically under the influence, of cherries."

"Your hair is a different color," Tony pointed out instead.

"I wear wigs," she answered.

"Makes more sense," he nodded. "I want to take you back to Bruce's lab, and record this reaction to cherries."

"That's my morally questionable boyfriend," Steve said fondly, heading for the door.

"I'm not a lab experiment," Meg said, but she was smiling. Tony was starting to like her if she thought that it would be fun.

"No, no, of course not," Tony shook his head, holding the door open for her as Steve helped her put her winter jacket on. "You're a voluntary test subject."

"Who gets fed cherries." Tony nodded and she smiled. "Now, I've checked with my Doctor, if I don't eat like, three hundred of them in a week, it's not unhealthy to the babes. So, maybe you should do a round while pregnant, and a round not-pregnant."

Tony looked at Steve with big eyes, like a kid at Christmas. "You cannot yell at me for testing on a pregnant woman if she volunteers for it! She's already checked with her doctor about her health, I'm making a liability waiver."

"You two can't do experiments while pregnant," Steve said to both of them as they walked down the hall. "I should haven't to tell you that."

"She volunteered!" Tony insisted.

"He's going to give me cherries!"

"She's all for it!" Tony motioned with his hands. "It's not like I'll keep repeating the process, just one time, while pregnant."

"It sound really creepy, and almost mad-scientist, when you keep saying 'while pregnant.'" Steve put his hands on his hips, looking at the two of them. They both whipped out the puppy eyes on him. "I am not easily swayed by those expressions."

"I bet if they came from Peter you would be," Meg argued, the trio stepping into the elevator.

"He crumbles like a badly built card house in a hurricane," Tony retaliated, and Meg laughed.

"Like you're any better!" Steve shot back at Tony with a smile. "He said he liked the stars and you wanted to build a Planetarium on the roof of the Tower."

"To be fair, he stills likes the stars," Tony pointed at him. Steve held the door to the main floor open so they could leave first.
"Mary had to talk you down to only making a real time projection on his ceiling at night."

"And it's Awesome!" Tony finished up with a grin. "I kind of want to install in my room. Jarvis," Tony took out his phone as they walked for exit outside, happily accepting that it wasn't nearly as windy as it had been the day before. "Make a note, install the Galaxy System in the Penthouse bedrooms."

"Of course, Sir."

"That sounds so cool," Meg said, hands in her pockets. Tony and Steve naturally flanked either side as they walked down the sidewalk. "Astronomy was the only science class that I did well in at University. It was just interesting to me, it didn't feel like I was putting much effort into the class at all."

"I want you to repeat that to Peter someday," Tony said. "I want him to prepare for Middle School and High School classes. If he goes in with that attitude, maybe there won't be so much whining about homework."

"Did you whine about homework?" Steve asked, looking over at his boyfriend.

"Daily," Tony confirmed. "It felt like such a waste of my time!"

"Then Peter is going to whine." Steve grinned. They turned the corner and Steve was looking at Tony when he was suddenly tackled to the ground. Tony's hand went to his wrist as he went to step in front of Meg, the black clad figure rolling off of Steve and to his feet. Tony saw a metal hand and tensed.

The assassin reached for Tony with his flesh and blood hand, but both were surprised when a smaller hand grabbed his wrist and twisted up, then yanked down. The assassin went with the motion, flipping, but landed on his feet and spun, Meg still holding onto his wrist, wide eyed. "That wasn't supposed to happen." The man looked at her, everyone tense for a couple of seconds, before he spun her away from Tony, Steve catching her as he had jumped back to his feet.

Tony gripped his watch face on his wrist, taking a giant step backwards, and pulled out the frame work for his latest experiment. The metal latched his fingers, repulsor gauntlet assembling in nearly a second around his hand, and lifted it up as he saw a gun being grabbed by his attacker. He raised his hand and let out a sonic pulse, making the guy stumble back, disorientating him for a bit. Steve came up behind the guy, wrapping an arm around his neck and trying to pull him back away from Tony.

Steve was flipped over the mans shoulder and Tony moved forward with a thrust to his chest from the heel of his hand. His wrist was grabbed and Tony threw an elbow at his jaw, but the man deflected it. His armored hand free once again he grabbed onto the barrel of the gun, palm covering the opening as the man pulled the trigger. The vibration of the shot reverberated through his hand and he felt the bullet lodged in the workings of the repulsor, effectively shutting it down. His eyes widened as it occurred to him that the gun was at head level.

The assassin pulled back at the same time Tony pulled, and the gun was pulled apart. Tony couldn't help but smirk a little and he threw a fist, catching the man in the face with the metal of the gun in his hand. His wrist was grabbed and Tony threw an elbow at his jaw, but the man deflected it. His armored hand free once again he grabbed onto the barrel of the gun, palm covering the opening as the man pulled the trigger. The vibration of the shot reverberated through his hand and he felt the bullet lodged in the workings of the repulsor, effectively shutting it down. His eyes widened as it occurred to him that the gun was at head level.

Tony turned slowly, and then there were hands helping him sit up. "Are you okay?" Meg asked
quietly, trying not to draw the attention of the two still fighting. "Shit, your nose." She pressed a cloth into his hand and let him bring it up to his face. His chest was on fire, and he glanced down to see that the arc reactor was still glowing under his shirt, just missing the hit.

"Tony!" Tony looked up to see the man in black swinging past Steve again, headed straight for him. The metal arm was pulled back for a hit, and Tony was pushed back into the snow, the arm just missing him. Suddenly there was a spark and the man was shouting in pain, a butterfly knife sticking out of the elbow joint, locking it in position.

Steve grabbed the man's shoulders and threw him back, following him with his fists up. The man was up on his feet again before pulling the knife out and throwing it at Steve. He moved back, taking his eyes off of the man for a second, and when he turned back the man was gone. Steve instantly took off, rounding the corner, but didn't see anyone. There were enough buildings around that he could have ducked inside of one to make his escape, just like at the Tower.

He hurried back around the corner and over to Tony, down in the snow in a second. "Tony? Are you okay?" He was holding a cloth to his face with one hand, the other on his chest.

"Think he broke my nose," Tony rasped out. "Probably some bruised ribs." He didn't mention that his new gauntlet was dented in and digging painfully into his hand, but it wasn't drawing blood, so it wasn't that important.

"There's, uh, there's an ER half a mile that way." The two men looked over at Meg's shaky voice. "That was intense." Steve leaned over, gently patting her arms, and checking her over for any injuries. "I'm okay, just not sure that my legs are going to support me right now."

Tony leaned over a bit to grab the knife that was thrown, folding it back up. He held it out to her, and she grabbed it with a shaking hand. "That's yours?"

"I carry around mace, too." Tony stared at her for a second before letting out a snort of laughter, a little bit on the side of manic.

"We are so having a serious talk about this at the hospital," Steve told her before jumping to his feet. "Stay here, I'm going to get the car." He took off running, applying his Super Soldier training to speed up.

"You tried to stab an assassin," Tony said, dabbing lightly at his nose, trying not to put too much pressure on it; it already hurt, he didn't care if it bled a little.

"I tried to apply a self-defense technique on him first," she said quietly, pulling her legs out from under her carefully. "I guess it was instinct, both times, and I wasn't really thinking."

"Yeah, there's going to be a discussion about this later." Tony tipped his head back to try and slow the bleeding a bit more, winching as his chest pulled. "I need to put a call signal in the suit," he groaned out. "Last time I took a blow like that, it was from Steve. This guy hits nearly as hard." Not a minute later Steve was pulling up in the car, and jumping out to help Tony into the passenger seat. "I would say that we're not telling Peter or Mary about this."

"I'm not sure how you're going to explain away a broken nose," Steve told him, before helping Meg to her feet and to the back of the car. Jarvis had directions to the hospital already on the GPS inside of the car. "Did he get the arc reactor?" Tony shook his head and Steve let out a breath. He pulled on his seat belt and they were headed down the road. Steve checked every mirror compulsively, hands tight on the wheel, all the way to the ER.
Tony managed to get a room that set furthest away from any entrance, applying his charm, and a bit of Steve’s pensive face, and he sat patiently as they applied the bandages to his nose. He hadn't even been shown to his room before they had taken him directly to get an x-ray. He was lucky that nothing had shifted too far out of place, they would straighten it and it should heal on its own.

As the nurse finished with the last piece, Steve came in the room with Meg behind him. He had insisted that she get checked over too, and Tony waved him off to keep an eye on her. Steve closed the door as the nurse left, and Tony leaned back closing his eyes a little, feeling the pain killers start to kick in. Tony could feel the waves of ‘Captain America’ radiating from the blonde.

"That was incredible dangerous," Steve started, pacing the room.

"And insane," Tony muttered.

"What were you thinking? You could have gotten hurt, or worse!"

"He was going to kill, Tony!" She shouted back, getting on the defensive.

"He's a highly trained assassin!"

"He didn't seem like it the first time I saw him," she said. Tony jolted up, hissing and pressing a hand to his ribs at the movement, and Steve stopped in his tracks.

"What do you mean?" He asked her seriously.

"I've seen him before," she said a little more hesitantly. "Last week when I was at the grocery store."

Steve turned to look at Tony, sharing the share look of confusion and dread. "How do you know it was him?"

"I remember his eyes, the same kind of slate blue." She looked between the two men who were openly staring at her. "Someone's cart had gotten away from them in the parking lot, and it was kind of icy, so it just kept on rolling. I didn't see it until someone was shouting, and it was about to hit me when he was suddenly there, stopping it." She rubbed her hands together in a nervous habit. "He didn't really say much, just asked if I was okay, and that's when I saw his eyes, then he walked off."

"New York," Steve said, turning to look back at Tony. "She's coming back to New York."

"What??" She squawked.

"He was following you last week, and he was following us two days ago," Steve told her, and her face paled a little.

"Don't know why, when I was obviously his target," Tony said as he started to lean back again in the bed. His nose was starting to itch. "That didn't change from last time. He's got some super soldier feeling punches though." Steve looked at him, eyes imploring more details. "Well, I mean, I only felt the force behind the shield, but when we had our fight last summer, and you beaned me in the head." Steve looked a little guilty as he was reminded of fighting a compromised Tony. "I remember your punches though, and the force behind them. Even with this guys’ actual arm, he was packing a literal punch."

"We'll get that information to SHIELD, maybe they have something in their databases about an enhanced assassin." Steve sighed after a second before practically slumping down in a chair. "Yeah, you're not getting that knife back, by the way," he told the woman next to him.
"Why not?? I helped with that thing!"

"You got lucky with it!" Steve looked at her with what Tony called his Captain America eyes. Not the disappointed eyes, those were worse than Peter's Puppy eyes. "If anything, you probably just put yourself on his radar."

"I'm not going to sit idly by on some kind of house arrest." She was about as stubborn as Steve. Tony idly thinks that they could have been siblings in another life.

"You will until we can track him down," Steve shot right back at her. "It's not just you that's in danger! And he knows it, or else he wouldn't have stopped that cart. If you weren't pregnant, you probably could have gotten away with a couple of bruises. He knew I was coming up here, and if you would have been hurt then I probably would have canceled and told you to get some rest." She wrinkled her nose, but did deny his words. "We don't know if he was trying to get Tony alone at the Tower again, or if he would have attacked me to draw Tony out. He's unpredictable and that makes him even more dangerous."

Tony held up his phone, wading into the argument. "I've already called a Stark jet to meet us at the airport in a couple of hours. I've got exactly Twenty-Four hours before my son is back at the Tower, and I'm going to take advantage of it by actually sleeping."

"They gave you a narcotic didn't they?" Steve asked him.

Tony hummed and nodded, closing his eyes again. "Those make me sleepy. I'm okay with this." Steve pushed himself up from the chair and walked over to the bed. He pushed Tony hair gently from his forehead and dropped a soft kiss there. "I'm okay with that, too," he said as he gave Steve a sleepy smile. "I prescribe a kiss every hour, no chance of overdosing." He heard Steve snort softly, then felt his fingers threading through Tony's before nodding off.

Chapter End Notes

BTW, the cherry allergy, specifically to maraschino cherries, is completely true. I have it. It's so fun when it freaks your friends out, too. They limit my cherry intake.
Chapter Summary

Valentine's Day is coming up.

Chapter Notes

With this chapter, (and future chapters), I officially have to move the rating up and out of Teen. It's Valentine's Day, stuff gonna happen. Not a lot of detailed description, but there's enough there that I feels a shift in the rating, just as a pre-caution. It's totally fluffy towards the end though! You'll love it.

Also, if it wasn't clear before, I'm a huge Supernatural nerd/fan. I have no regrets to the references that keep sneaking into this story. I also talked a bit about the cherry allergy in my Tumblr, just how I discovered it and my own reactions. If you're interested, here's The Cherry Incident.

Keep being awesome, and enjoy!

Unbeta'd, and Marvel owns more of this than I do. Also, all music/movies/tv shows belongs to those that wrote/performed/produced/etc them. I use them for humor and good times.

Tony closed his eyes tighter as he slowly came back to consciousness. He knew that he was in his own bed, back at the Tower, and it was still kind of early since Steve had woken him up to go down to the gym to get a run in, since he hated running in the snow. So why was Tony awake already if Steve wasn't the one waking him up?

His eyes cracked open a little and he pressed his body back down into the bed when he saw a pair of young brown eyes less than two inches away from his face. They weren't Peter's eyes, these had a tinge of green to them. "Hell, Wade," Tony breathed out, relaxing his body a little. "Why are you that close to me?"

"I wasn't sure if you were awake or not," the nine-year-old said as he fell back on his butt on the bed, pulling his legs into a sitting position. "You weren't, by the way." Tony rolled his eyes a little and pulled his blanket over his face. "Is it safe to be sitting on this bed with you?"

"I wasn't sure if you were awake or not," the nine-year-old said as he fell back on his butt on the bed, pulling his legs into a sitting position. "You weren't, by the way." Tony rolled his eyes a little and pulled his blanket over his face. "Is it safe to be sitting on this bed with you?"

"Why wouldn't the bed be safe?" Wade was still in his pajamas, but Peter wasn't with him, so he assumed that his son was still sleeping. Like Tony wanted to be.

"Because, I saw Steve leave your room this morning." Tony pulled the blanket back enough to raise an eyebrow at Steve. "Did you two have sex in here? I don't wanna sit on dirty sheets."

"Oh, for the love of- Wade!" Tony sat up, hand pressed to his side a little to ease the small ache still in his ribs. "How do you even know about that, you're- Never mind." He shook his head, rubbing at his face with one hand, careful to avoid his nose. He and Steve had been back in the Tower for two
days since their run in with the assassin. Winter break was over, it was the weekend, but Wade's Mom was going back to the hospital for another round of treatment, and Tony said he'd make sure that Wade got to school starting on Monday.

"You didn't answer my question," Wade said patiently, eyes sparkling with amusement.

"Not that it's any of your business, because I am an adult and you are not, but no, we didn't have sex. The sheets are clean." It was too early in the morning for this, specially with no coffee. "What do you get into when no one's looking?"

"A lot," the blonde answered with a grin.

"Your mother has the blessing of a Saint in every religion," Tony groaned out, falling back onto his pillow.

"Yeah, she's pretty awesome." Wade nodded, then flopped back on the bed as well in an impressive spin. He tucked his hands behind his head.

"Wade, what are you doing in my room?" Tony asked with a soft sigh, turning his head to look at the older boy.

"Peter's still sleeping, and I was getting bored," he replied easily.

"So, it's okay to wake me up, but not Peter?"

"Duh." Wade looked at Tony with a little roll of his eyes. "Peter's my best boy, I'm not going to wake him up. And I didn't actually wake you up, I just stared at you until you did wake up."

"I do admire your unwavering loyalty to my son," Tony confessed, and that pulled another grin from Wade. "I do not admire the little bit of creepiness that you possess."

"My teacher's tell my Mom I'm a handful." It seemed to Tony that Wade enjoyed that. "She says I'm special."

"Well, Mom's tend to know best," Tony said with a nod. "Wanna know what I think?" Wade shrugged a little, but kept looking at Tony. "I think that you've got like, way too much energy. I got that sometimes. So you just have to find different ways to burn it off, and you've got like no fear, I swear."

"I got some fear," Wade countered. "Just a little bit though. I like trying new things, it's fun!"

"That's what I figured." Tony reached out to ruffle Wade's short hair. "Don't listen to what the teacher's say about you kid. If I thought that way about you, I wouldn't let you in my home all the time."

Wade sat up on the bed then, and scooched a little closer to Tony. He had a serious look and Tony blinked for a second. "I do really appreciate it, Mr Tony. I know you're helping my Mom a lot, too." This kid was too grown up in all the wrong ways. "I don't know how I'll ever be able to make it up to you, but I'm gonna try. I really like Peter, and I'll never let anything happen to him, not while I'm around. Just like you don't let anything happen to me, or my Mom."

Tony pushed himself up, then wrapped one arm around Wade's shoulders and pulled him into a hug. "You don't have to make anything up to me, Wade. I'll tell you what I do want you to do, though." Wade peered up at him with expectant eyes. "Keep being you, keep being Peter's friend, and looking out for him. I know it can't be easy for him being the youngest, or the smallest, kid at school."
"He's real shy at school," Wade said with a nod. "Lots of kids try to pick on him, and he's real quiet in class, but I got his back. He knows he doesn't have to be afraid of them jerks." The boy leaned his back against Tony's chest, getting comfortable. "Peter told me that you were real young in school, too, just like him."

"I was younger," Tony told him. "I was already in college by the time I was a teenager, so I know how hard it can be. I'm real happy he's got a friend like you."

"Who was your friend when you were in school?" Wade asked with all the innocence of a child. He was assuming that he and Peter had the exact same experiences in school.

"I didn't have my own 'Wade' when I was in school." Wade looked up at him with big eyes. "It was just me. But, I went to several different schools, so it was okay. I wouldn't want to make a really good friend only to leave them a few months later."

"True," he nodded. "I'd be real upset if Peter had to change schools."

"No worries, we don't plan on splitting you two up," Tony told him with confidence.

"Cool." Wade was wiggling then, moving from Tony's arms, but he kept his back to Tony. "You know, it's nice spending time here. You and Mr Steve, you're real cool, and it's kind of awesome having you act like my Dads' sometimes." He then turned back around to look at Tony. "Maybe, if you ask my Mom when she gets back from the hospital to come live here again, she'll say yes."

Wade's eyes looked so hopeful. "I told her about Peter's grandparents living here now, and that I was always over here anyway, and I think I'm making progress."

Tony couldn't help the little laugh. "Alright, I'll ask, but I make no promises!" Wade whooped and hopped off the bed.

"Don't need those! Just needed your word that you'd ask her again."

"You got it, Wade." Wade blasted him with a grin before running from the room. "Be careful! Slow your roll in the hallways!" He heard Wade shout back 'Kay!' before shaking his head a little. Tony was swinging his legs off the bed when the door opened again and Steve was walking back in, towel around his neck, shirt soaked with sweat. Tony thought the view was better than coffee.

"Wade looks really funny when he's fast walking to the elevator." Steve walked over, leaning in to drop a light kiss on Tony's lips, trying not to get him sweaty either.

"I told him no running," Tony said as he stood up, slowly stretching his arms above his head. "The kid is creepy as shit when he's trying to wake you up."

"When he's hovering just above your face, eyes wide open, like he's trying to study you?" Steve said as he walked into the attached bathroom, leaving the door open.

"Yes!" Tony shouted as Steve started the water in the shower. He walked in to grab his toothbrush. Steve shot him an annoyed look as he was pulling off his shirt, and Tony grinned. The first time Tony had walked in before Steve had gotten into the shower, he had made Tony leave, not wanting a show while he got undressed. By the fifth time, Steve had given up on that, mumbling about just pretending that he was back in the army showers and that he was supposed to have something called privacy or something.

"He's done that to me a couple of times," Steve told him as he pulled off his shoes and socks next. Tony watched Steve in the mirror, smirking a little. His next move was usually pretty humorous to watch. Steve slid open the shower door, frosted glass today because Jarvis liked Steve more than
Tony apparently, then swiftly pulled his shorts and underwear off and hopped in the shower at the same time. One day Tony would get Jarvis to quit frosting the glass doors.

"I bet you he doesn't do that to his mom," Tony continued the conversation, then started to brush his teeth.

"He probably did it to her, and got accidentally smacked when it scared the crap out of her," Steve replied. Tony could see the faint outline of Steve washing up, washing his hair first. "So now he does it to us, because he and Peter probably think it's freaking hilarious."

"Wade wants me to ask his mom if they'll move in here, again." Tony rinsed his mouth out, before leaning in to inspect his nose before the temperature of Steve's shower fogged up the mirrors completely. "Can you imagine what kind of chaos that would be?"

"Do you have insurance on this building?"

"Har har, but you're not wrong." Tony opened a drawer and took out the small bottle of pain-killers he had gotten from the hospital. "But, neither is he. They'd be closer, and she wouldn't have to worry about getting Wade over here when she goes to the hospital. It would probably be a little easier on them financially, as well. Single mother and all that."

"It's sometimes weird how much like a little adult he acts like," Steve commented in a soft tone. He knew what it was like to have to take care of things at a young age, to have to deal with illness.

"He told me that he'd always look out for Peter, like we look out for him and his Mom." Tony hopped up on the counter, swinging his legs while Steve finished in the shower. "Said he'd make it up to him for all the help I was giving his Mom, and for watching him. I wasn't sure if I should be incredibly depressed that he wanted to put a value on help, or smile because it was super sweet."

"I think Wade has a crush on Peter," Steve declared. Tony's nose wiggled a little, and one eye twitched. "You already know that Peter has a crush on him."

"They're not even ten yet, Steve!" Tony declared, throwing his hands up a little. "They're school yard crushes, that's it. They'll be friends forever, of that I have no doubt-"

"And I bet you that they become High School Sweethearts," Steve retaliated, then stopped the water.

"High School Sweethearts?" Tony wrinkled his nose up. "And is he gonna ask Peter to the Sadie Hawking's dance while drinking a shake next to the jukebox?"

"Just stating what I see." Steve reached out, grabbing his towel from the hook next to the shower. "How's your nose this morning?" He stepped out of the shower with the towel around his waist, and tried to ignore the leering look he was getting from Tony.

"Still sore, but I didn't bump it while I was sleeping this time," he stated, watching Steve go through his morning ritual. He combed his hair through first, then started to brush his teeth. Tony still felt a little rush of giddiness when he saw Steve's toothbrush next to his own, and vice-versa down in Steve's bathroom. "Took a pain killer, non-narcotic," he added when Steve side-glanced him. "I should be good to go for the rest of the day."

"Good, cause it sounds like Clint and Natasha will be coming back later today."

Tony hummed a little. "Avengers meeting time." Steve nodded, grabbing the little glass to fill with water so he could rinse his mouth. "Bruce said he'd probably have some test results ready early afternoon, too."
"Maybe we can actually get somewhere," Steve stated and pulled out some mouthwash.

"And get the angry, pregnant lady out of here and into her new house?" Tony leaned back as Steve's hand flailed out to try and smack his arm.

He spit the mouthwash into the sink. "Mary's entertaining her today, and Coulson will be with our meeting."

"I love it when you take charge," Tony said with an exaggerated growl. Steve rolled his eyes with a little smile. Tony made a clawing motion with one hand, and this time Steve reached out to push Tony's forehead.

"Get dressed, killer," Steve said as he headed back for the bedroom. Tony hopped down to the floor to follow him. "We've still gotta make breakfast for the boys before the others get here."

"Who's going to watch them during the meeting?" Tony would often tell Peter some of the safer, non-explicit, details about their Avenger call-outs, but it didn't mean he'd ever take him to a meeting. He didn't want to scar the boy.

"Mary and Meg." Tony held in his cackling laughter for a whole five seconds.

Steve was at the front of the table in the meeting room they sometimes used when they needed to debrief after a mission. Tony was casually sprawled in a chair at the other end, Clint and Natasha on the other side. They had handed Steve a folder with some information to look through, and they were just waiting on Bruce. Coulson sat with a chair between him and Tony, watching Steve. No doubt he had already seen this information, being both Barton and Romanoff's Handler.

"Three more empty buildings?" Steve asked with a frown, looking over the file.

"Cleaner than the other we found," Clint told him. "Not even a dust bunny left over. Thinkin’ they started to move out of these places first."

"Do we have any other leads?" Steve looked up at the two spies. They were temporarily distracted when Bruce came in the room, immediately taking a seat next to Tony. Tony heard Steve start his conversation up again, but Bruce was shoving his tablet into Tony's hands.

"Confirm what I'm seeing," Bruce said quietly, but quickly to him. Tony frowned but looked down at the screen.

At first glance he could see equations, things that he seen before scanning in the files that Clint and Natasha had brought back from their first raid. But he saw that the equations were longer, more variables. He brought up the graphs to compare them with, and frowned harder, but not in confusion. He could see a couple of Bruce's test results in the other corner, and proceeded to bring those into view. Tony's stomach dropped.

"Oh my god," he whispered. "Do you know what stage this is in?" He asked, finally tearing his eyes away to look at Bruce. The older man shook his head, but the look in Tony's eyes knew he hadn't misinterpreted the findings.

"Tony?" Tony and Bruce looked over at the end of the table, the other four looking at them now. Steve looked a little concerned. "What did you find Bruce?"
Bruce glanced at Tony, then looked back at Steve, and pulled his glasses off. "I've been able to confirm, that from the sample that was found, it's human DNA." That had a hard look from everyone in the room. Tony had looked back down at the tablet, still trying to process that what he was looking at was actually in the process of happening. "They're experimenting with cloning, and they've moved on to humans."

Steve's eyes had widened a little and Clint was maybe starting to look a little pale. "The animals from before were their first try?" The archer asked.

"Well, could be one of their tries," Bruce amended. "But, I believe so."

"Monster pets, that they cloned," Clint said, leaning back in his chair. "They considered that a success, so they think it's okay to move onto humans??"

"They're trying to recreate a Serum," Tony bit out, back to looking at the equations. Equations that were turning into formulas. Bruce had included the samples taken from the animals several months ago, and compared them to the sample. Tony could practically feel Steve's dark look, and was glad it wasn't actually being directed at him. "They're trying to make an army, and the fastest way to do that, is through cloning."

"As long as they can get a stable version of the serum to work on human DNA," Bruce interjected. "They barely had something stable with the animals."

"Someone has to be bank-rolling them," Tony continued. "These guys seem disorganized, jumping the gun from animal DNA to human DNA before they even know it'll work. Something tells me that they're not working alone."

"Dr Banner," Coulson spoke up this time. "You're the best expert we have on the scientific aspect of a Serum, do you recognize the formula?"

Bruce let out a little sigh and shook his head. "I'm separating the DNA from the other chemicals right now. Once I can do that I can run the compounds of the serum, and run the DNA through CODIS, and other international DNA databases."

"Hopefully we can find out if someone is working with them, or if they've stolen someone's DNA," Natasha commented. She glanced at Tony for a second, then looked back at Steve. "We might have a lead on another location." That had Steve's attention. "It's a flimsy one, but if it's right, then this would be one of their main locations, one that they wouldn't be able to move quickly, or want to move at all."

"You think it might be where they're conducting their experiments?" Steve asked her seriously.

"Or where they're doing their research," she said with a nod. "They would have a lot more information there."

"You said it was flimsy," Tony looked at her as he sat up in his chair, Bruce taking back the tablet. "But, it's enough that you want to take a shot at it?" Natasha nodded.

"If our intel is right, it's located in DC." She looked at Steve. "We'd have better luck if we moved the operation to the Triskelion."

Tony's eyebrows shot up and he looked between Steve and Natasha. "You want to move our base of operations to DC? To SHIELD's main HQ??" That was out of the question. Tony couldn't leave, and he certainly wouldn't be working with SHIELD looking over his shoulder. At least even more than they were already trying.
"No," she said with a shake of her head. "Just a couple of us would need to go. It would look suspicious if the whole team was suddenly in the capitol." Tony didn't like what she was suggesting. "The intel isn't solid yet, so we would need to gather more."

"How long do you think that would take?" Steve asked her calmly. Tony wasn't sure how he could sound so calm.

"I'm hoping just a month," she said. Coulson hummed a little, but nodded. "Could be longer if they're intent on hiding this location."

"A month??" Tony exclaimed. "And in the meantime that just gives them another month to keep working on their experiments, possibly torturing people with their unstable science!"

"We'll keep looking for other leads," Clint spoke up again. "That never stops. Like you said, they're unorganized, so we just find another one of their slip-ups and go from there."

"Dr Banner, how long until more of your tests are done?" Steve asked him, pulling out his Captain voice.

"A week at most," Bruce answered, cleaning his glasses out of habit. "Jarvis can help me start to separate the compounds in the samples, and try to recreate a formula."

There was a bit of silence in the room, everyone mulling over their options. Except for Tony, he was glaring daggers at Natasha, because he knew what she had decided. "Who would be going to DC, Agent Romanoff?" He was still a little mad about being spied on, too. Sue him.

To her credit, she looked him right in the eyes when she answered. "Captain Rogers, and myself." Tony opened his mouth to protest, but Steve locked eyes with him, and shook his head. Tony frowned angrily, mouth clicking closed that everyone heard his teeth chatter together before he locked his jaw.

"Seems all the decisions have been made," he muttered, before pushing out his chair. "If you'll excuse me-"

"There is one more thing," Coulson interrupted him, with that infuriatingly calm voice of his. "The assassin who attacked you twice," and that had Tony turned around, "you said he had a metal arm, right?"

Tony crossed his arms over his chest, not caring if he looked like Peter who just wanted to stay up for ten more minutes. "Yeah, the left arm. You got something?"

"Nothing definitive," Coulson said carefully.

"But," Natasha picked up, "it would be best if you stayed inside." Tony looked at her, his expression going back and forth between "you've-got-to-be-kidding-me" and "are-you-actually-suggesting-this?"

"Let me get this straight," Tony looked at her, putting his hands flat on the table. "You've got some weak information that you think is enough to put a long-term assignment into play, and you want to take one of our strongest players out there with yourself to check it out. At the same time, you want me, a very public face with lots of business to still conduct, because I still Own a business, to stay indoors. Stay indoors from an assassin who is targeting me that you deem to be dangerous, but apparently not dangerous enough to leave me with adequate guarding." Tony hoped he looked as unimpressed as he felt. "Did you not read the report on how he was easily able to take on Rogers? Easily able to meet Captain America's capabilities and knocked me on my ass with one punch?"
Literally, he sent me off my feet, with one punch, from his Flesh and Blood hand."

Tony was rubbing the spot between his nose, closing his eyes for a second, before continuing. "He was following Steve, and Steve's friend, and then still attacked me. What's to say that he's not following my son, or my son's friend? Or following Pepper, or Rhodey? Just waiting to try and draw me out? And you think that it's smart to just tell me to stay indoors?!!"

"Tony," Steve said, starting to move towards him now.

Tony held up his hands and took a step back. "What do I know, I'm not a SHIELD Agent. I've leave this to experts, because you know what? I was working just fine by myself before Fury decided to put his little organization into my life." He turned around and stalked out, anger fueling every step. Bruce hopped up from his seat to try and follow Tony.

Steve was halfway out the room before Natasha put a hand on his arm. "You should have talked to me about this one beforehand," he told her, expression halfway to disappointed.

"You know it's the right call," she answered back right away. "We don't need Stark's approval to leave the Tower."

"No, but usually couples talk about a long-term mission," Coulson threw in, looking down at his phone. Natasha frowned at him.

"Why would you need to talk to Mary about this? Steve would be the one leaving-"

"He's talking about Tony and me," Steve interrupted. Clint's head whipped around to look at Steve.

"No shit," he said as he stood up. "You and Stark finally quit your awkward song and dance and hooked up?"

"Very new and fledgling," Coulson added.

Steve frowned, feeling that he was doing too much of that in this room, and moved out Natasha's touch. "I've gotta go talk to him."

"We'll leave at Oh-Five-Hundred," she told him as he moved towards the door. Steve sighed as he left to track down Tony.

"Jarvis? Where's Tony?" Steve asked, really hoping that he wasn't going to say where he thought he would.

"Sir has retreated down to the workshop." Steve groaned and pushed opened the door to the stairs, not bothering to wait for the elevator, the one that Tony may have made sure would stop at every floor except the workshop. He couldn't even blame Tony for being angry, hell, Steve was angry himself even if he knew that it was the best call.

Steve stopped in front of the workshop door, the windows blacked out, and he could hear loud music already blaring. He could also hear the familiar sound of repulsor blasts. Taking a breath he entered the override code, the little feeling that had been hoping to not have to use one of them for a long time flaking away, and pushed the door open.

There was a half assembled Iron Man suit hanging from the ceiling, one of the arms already on a workshop table, and Tony was attacking it with a soldering iron. This suit was looking different already, white and grey, instead of the usual red and gold. There was no helmet yet, but Steve longed to get a look at the Mark number. He was starting to see too many suits, too quickly.
"When do you leave?" Tony asked when he was close enough, the music dropping down just enough to be heard, but he didn't look at Steve.

"Early in the morning," Steve replied, stopping at the edge of the table. Tony just grunted. "I didn't know about this, Tony."

"No, because you would have told me before hand, cause you're a damned gentleman." He leaned further into the arm, pulling out a couple of wires. "You would have told me you were leaving, before insisting that I have to be more careful with this assassin around, before insisting that we shelter someone else who may have fallen under his scope, before insisting that I never be alone!" Tony growled and threw the soldering iron on the table. "I'm pissed, if you couldn't tell."

"This doesn't change that he's still dangerous," Steve said calmly. That was probably only making Tony's mood worse, in retrospect. "But, we had already agreed that he wasn't working with these scientists, and now we know for sure that they're doing human experiments." He leaned in on the table a little. "You said it yourself, we can't afford to let them continue these experiments, not when there's a possibility that innocents have been caught in the crossfire."

Tony worked his jaw in a circle a couple of times, staring off at the wall. "What are you going to tell Peter?" He asked in a blank tone that had unease pricking at the back of Steve's head. "You're going to be gone for a long time."

"I'll tell him that it's for work, which is true." Steve wished that Tony would look at him. "It isn't a radio silence mission," he said quietly. "I just won't be around in the Tower. We can still talk on the phone, or video chat."

"You're going to have too, Peter won't accept it any other way." Tony turned his head to look at Steve, and he saw the guarded look in his eyes. He could practically see Tony's walls rebuilding themselves in real time. "Better check in with your Handler, she should probably know about this mission, too."

"Tony-"

"Get things straightened out," he said, turning back to the arm on the work table. "I'll still be down here." Steve didn't move for a second, then he nodded and took a step back. "Door'll be open, you won't need to use your code again," Tony commented. And then quieter, that his enhanced hearing almost didn't pick it up; "Didn't need to the first time." Steve closed his eyes for a second and headed for the door. He so owed Tony for this, he had to make it up to him.

A couple days later, Tony saw the impossible.

Steve was in DC, and Tony would never admit that he was giving him the cold shoulder, but he knew that Steve was at least calling Peter. Tony needed to let a couple new suits work through production, so he figured it was as good a time as any to check up on their new house guest. He had put Meg down a couple floors from Mary and Coulson, on one of the floors that held multiple apartments.

He knocked on the door where she was staying, and a couple minutes later, Wade was standing in the doorway. Tony blinked a couple of time. "Hey Wade."

"Hey Mr Tony." Wade turned his head, still standing in the doorway, and shouted. "It's just Mr Tony!" He turned and left the door open for the older man.
Tony walked in and pushed the door shut, heading for the living room where Wade had gone back, too. Meg was laying out on the couch, this time with the pink hair that Steve had mentioned last week, casually pulling the skin off of an orange, while Peter and Wade sat on the floor with their homework. Tony glanced at the time on his watch. Not even four pm. The boys never worked on their homework until at least five.

"Hey, Tony." She raised a hand in greeting. "Orange slice?" As she said it Wade held up a plate that was sitting on the coffee table with various piece of fruit on it. Tony wasn't convinced that he wasn't dreaming at the moment.

"Where did you get these children? What did you do with the real Wade and Peter?" Meg snorted and smiled, and she took the plate from Wade's hand.

"Kids are fascinated with the miracle of life." She waved a hand around her stomach. "I told them if they got their homework done first, they could feel the babies kick, and play any kind of music they wanted for them."

"And she's going to let us play video games," Peter piped up with a grin.

"And we're going to play video games."

Wade looked up at Tony, smiling, and he just knew that something funny, and probably inappropriate for a nine-year-old was going to come out of his mouth. "Did you know she's got two babies in there? You'd think she'd have to be bigger, make more room. They're probably pretty cramped in there."

Tony smirked at Meg, hands sliding into his pockets. "Oh, that's what you have to look forward, too."

"You bite your tongue!" Her words only caused Tony to laugh.

"Oh no! Oh, I want to see that happen!" Tony had to lean against the couch as he laughed. "This is what your crappy music gets you!"

"I'm convinced that you're actually a villain." She sat up on the couch a bit, putting the fruit plate to the side.

"Forget the house, you're staying here. These children of yours need to be corrupted in the best way possible. And then I will have them listen to good music." He grinned when she punched his arm. "Steve'll love it, and then I'll have an extra babysitter for these two hooligans. Living with superheroes is the best."

"Awww, Peter and Wade aren't hooligans," she cooed and Tony saw her toss something to the boys. They immediately grinned as Wade grabbed it before Tony could see what it was, and handed part of it to Peter. "They're very energetic boys, that's all."

"And yet, you seem to be pretty relaxed," Tony said with a suspicious eyebrow raised.

"They're also very well behaved," she beamed. Tony slowly walked around the couch, over to where his son and his best friend were, and suddenly sat down in front of them. Both boys looked up at him with very serious, and innocent expressions on their faces.

"Peter."

"Hi Daddy."
"Why are you doing your homework so early?"

"Because Miss Meg asked us too."

Tony narrowed his eyes at Meg, then looked back to Peter. He could get the boy to crack. He'd never get Wade to crack. Tony leaned in closer to Peter, who didn't move, but was trying not to giggle. He made a big show by taking an exaggerated sniff around Peter.

"Cheater!" Tony pointed at Meg, whose eyes widened. "You've been feeding them Andes mints!"

"How did you know that??" She exclaimed.

"They have a very distinct smell. And I love them." Tony looked smug as he crossed his arms over his chest. "Is that seriously all it takes?"

"Andes mints, kicking babies, and video games." She nodded. "Did Steve mention that I have a nephew? Because I have a nephew, and my brother-in-law tells me how to tame the wild four-year-old. So I have a little bit of an advantage here."

"You're babysitting all the time now, I hope you know that." Tony rubbed Peter's head as he got up from the floor.

"I don't think I should have too, unless you're gone for work," she said, splitting her orange in half, and starting to eat one half without pulling the slices. "I know for a fact that I'm not the only one on house arrest now." Tony wrinkled his nose a little. "I also know that you sir, are holding a grudge against my friend."

"I'm not holding a grudge." He walked by and stole a couple apple slices from her plate.

"You're not answering his texts," she deadpanned. "You're holding a grudge. Stop that, you two deserve each other. Your stubborn matches his stubborn."

"Do you even know who you're talking too? Most people don't talk to me like this."

"Steve gave me express permission to talk to you like you just some normal middle class working man." Tony gave an offended gasp and she grinned. "See, it works so well."

"He said middle-class??" Tony had a hand to his chest. "I'm insulted, offended, hurt even."

"No you're not."

"No, but it's still unfair." She raised an eyebrow. "You're too comfortable with the notion."

"Did you know, that even celebrities are people, too? I know, it's a shocking misconception, where the general public and news organizations would have us believe that they are akin to Gods!"

"I know a God, two actually," Tony said smiling a little.

"I know, and I have to meet Thor sometime. It's not every day that you find out that there is an actual personification of the Gods of your religion." Tony raised both eyebrows at her. "Steve told me not to talk to you about religion. Unless it had something to do with Supernatural."

"You watch Supernatural?"

"I'm on the current episodes," she smiled. "Season six will make you cry a little, and season seven so far, is an absolute trip." Then she moved the collar of her shirt a little to expose a tattoo.
"You have an anti-possession tattoo," Tony gasped out like a little kid.

"You think I'm going to take chances like that?? I'm not about to find myself stuck in the first fifteen minutes of a Supernatural episode."

Tony jumped over the back of the couch, sitting on the opposite end to face Meg. "I have theories about that show, and I need to talk about them with someone other than Steve."

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**February 2012**

Nearly five weeks since they left, Steve and Natasha hadn't been able to find anything. Tony had of course had Jarvis follow every mission that had Steve's name attached to it, and found out that Fury was at least keeping them both busy. Steve had at least kept up with regular calls to Peter, letting him know that he was indeed coming back after his job was over, but he still didn't know when that would be.

As much as Tony still wanted to be angry with him, he just missed Steve. He told himself that it was stupid, to miss him more on this day more than any other, but it seemed to be human instinct. This time last year he was alone as well, so what did it matter that he was alone again, on another Valentine's Day?

'Because this time you're actually supposed to be in a relationship,' his inner voice supplied. Tony tossed a screw across the workshop as he worked, snorting softly to himself. Steve was on a mission, in another country. Mary and Coulson were on a date, even William and Rachel had plans, and Peter and Wade were spending the night down with Meg, no doubt playing video games.

The phone rang and he jumped a little to grab it, shoulders slumping when he saw that it was in fact, said babysitter. "Jarvis tells me that you're in your workshop," she said as way of greeting.

"I am an engineer by trait," he replied, turning back to his work, Jarvis throwing the call to the workshop speakers.

"I always pegged you as more of a mechanic, myself."

"Are the boys setting something on fire?" He asked, just really not feeling in the mood to talk to anyone.

"Nope," she said with a big pop of her lips at the end. "All homework is done, they've eaten dinner, and now I have them engaged in an epic Mario Kart battle. Even if we are still trapped inside the building"

"Join the house arrest party," he mumbled. Tony had sent an iron Man suit, controlled by him and Jarvis from back at the Tower, in a car wherever Peter went, just in case. Peter and Wade thought that it was awesome. "But, seriously, not to be more of a dick than usual, if nothing's wrong."

"Nah, nothing's wrong. I'll let you go, but you should totally look over at your door. I'm an awesome distraction" She hung up and Tony furrowed his brows together. He turned his eyes then his eyes widened and his mouth dropped a little.

Steve was standing there, the door closing shut behind him. He was still in the pants to his uniform, in his blue undershirt, and the cowl and shield were gone. His hair seemed to still be sticking up, so he had just pulled them off, and he was panting like he was out of breath. In his hand he held onto a
little glass vase with some rather interesting looking orange flowers in it.

"So, I was down in South America, and we wrapping up the mission early, and I saw these flowers," Steve launched into a story before Tony could get his brain going again. "I asked a local what they were called, and I swear, I'm not making it up, but they're common name is Darwin's Slippers. I'm instantly thinking of you, more so than usual, and then he tells me that they usually don't bloom for at least another two months, and that these are rare." He had been moving steadily closer to Tony as he was talking, and he holds out the little vase to him. "And, I just knew that I had to pick them for you, even though they're flowers, and I really don't even know if you're a flower person, if I had to hazard a guess I'd say no, but it didn't matter. They had a name that I thought you would find amusing, and they were rare and beautiful and unique, just like you...."

Tony's mouth had completely dropped open by this point, and he accepted the flowers out of instinct, gingerly holding the vase to his chest. "You got me flowers from South America." Steve nodded. "Why are you out of breath?"

"Because I ran from the New York office all the way back to the Tower," Steve told him.

"Just to give me flowers." Steve nodded again.

"It's still Valentine's Day, right? I'm not off?" Tony shook his head and Steve look relieved.

"Steve-"

"I know that this isn't the greatest situation," words starting to tumble out of his mouth. "I had hoped to be back by now, and I'm not, and it just, it sucks. I know I left and you were still mad at me, and I'm really sorry. This doesn't make up for that, or for whatever I've been putting you through by being gone, and I don't blame you for avoiding private calls with me most of the time. Tony, I miss you so much, and the best part of my day, are the days that I get to see you and Peter on my computer screen." Steve reached out, cupping Tony's cheeks with both hands. "I have been thinking for weeks on how to try and make this up to you, and every idea I've had has fallen flat, but I knew that I didn't want to miss today. I didn't want you to be alone one more year on Valentine's Day."

Tony had found himself leaning in to Steve's hands, closing his eyes a little at the warm touch, letting it soak in. One traitor tear slipped down to run over Steve's thumb. "I'm still mad at you," he said quietly, not trusting his voice not to crack.

"I know."

Tony slide the vase onto the table, then threw his arms around Steve's neck, melting into his embrace. "I missed you, too." He drew a hand back and punched Steve's shoulder with a fist, but didn't move his head from resting on Steve's chest. Steve started to move them then, carefully without making either one have to part, and Steve went down on the couch with Tony wrapped in his arms.

It was the little touches at first that broke through to Tony. The fingers tracing circles on the back of his neck, the soft motion of the other hand running up and down his spine, and as Tony shifted a little to get comfortable, Steve's leg was wrapping around his. A shiver ran through Tony's body then and he had to take a breath. It was a sudden sensory overload. Steve's breathing had been soft and measured, but could hear it, picking up just slightly, could hear his heart beat start to speed up. Tony could hear the muscles shifting in Steve's arms as he pulled Tony closer, moving him up further on his chest. He saw the fabric of Steve's shirt bunch minutely as Steve tilted his head down to kiss Tony, and that, Tony felt all of that.
He still held true to the fact that Steve's lips were soft, softer than they had any right to be, but there was always passion behind his kisses, a sense of purpose. Tony's lips were not nearly as soft, years of biting and licking out of habit while he worked, and even the months of torture in a cave had taken their toll on Tony's lips. He regularly pulled skin off, never regularly used chap stick, and he let them bleed sometimes if he pulled a little more than usual. It was all habit.

As he felt the movement of Steve's lips against his, he was aware of the differences then, how the even heat from Steve's lips pressed against his, and their lips seemed to form to each other, locking into place. Tony felt the breath from Steve's nose, hot, coming out a little more ragged every second. Steve's tongue brushing against Tony's lips was a sensory burst all on its own, and Tony felt his mouth moving on its own to let Steve in, unable to stop the moan that came from his throat, the vibration itself almost enough to bring another, as their tongues met.

Steve's fingers slid up into his hair, tightening, gripping to make sure that he didn't lose Tony. His other hand tightened in Tony's shirt against his back, the fabric sliding against Tony's skin. He could even feel the slight bristle of short hair from Steve's cheeks from where he hadn't shaved yet brushing against Tony's cheek. The coarseness bring a tiny raw burn on the beard free skin.

That's when Tony was aware of his own reactions. The tiny little receptors on his fingers could feel Steve's shirt, how it wasn't as soft, how he gripped it tightly in his fist, and how warm Steve's skin was against his palm as the other hand had moved to slip underneath the shirt, pushing down against side. Every twitch of Steve's muscles sent a ripple through his hand, up his arm, and spiderwebbing through his body like electricity.

His own chest was bobbing up and down as he tried to get in as much air as possibly through his nose, not daring to think about moving his mouth away from the man under him. The way that Steve's tongue was mapping every inch of Tony's mouth was sending too much information to his brain, too much to feel, to properly sift through.

Tony swore he could only see colors in that moment. Every touch, every feeling, every shift of their bodies, it sent a ripple of color, lighting up everything inside of Tony. His brain was a wonderful work of color, some spots glowing brighter from Steve's mouth, others flaring every few second from Steve's hands and fingers. Tony's own hands were a constant glow, sending pulses of bright light to travel his limbs, and he swore he could map out the internal workings of a human body from this alone.

When Steve's knee brushed against Tony's thigh he couldn't help it when his head pulled back, back arching a little, heat a giant wave through him. They were both panting, and when Tony looked back at Steve's face, into his eyes, there was a sliver of blue around huge black pupils, but Tony swore he saw the blue actually moving in his eyes, swirling like paint in water, flecks of green bobbing to the surface every so often.

Steve's hand moved from his hair, sliding against his cheek, thumb rubbing against his cheek bone, and Tony let out a soft moan, feeling it move around his throat, and his eyes almost rolled back at the sensation. "Look at you," Steve whispered, and Tony's felt the words more than heard them, felt move through his body. "You're so,... Exquisite."

"Fuck." Tony dropped his forehead against Steve's shoulder, panting too hard now. "Clothes aren't even off, yet." His voice sounded rough, wrecked, when it had no right too, not yet anyway.

"I want to study every line, every curve, every divot of your body," Steve whispered against his ear. Tony swallowed roughly and felt his whole body move from the heat behind those words.

"If you don't get me to a bed right now, this is gonna be a short show," Tony forced out. He could
hear the buzzing of equipment in his workshop, the movement of gears, and the release of pressure from valves from inside the walls. The only thing he wanted to hear was their breath, their words, the movement that they made. Tony was already lost in everything about Steve Rogers at that moment, and he was sure to look into it later, but right now, that's all he wanted, that was all he needed.

Tony felt Steve's arms move, surround him, and he was vaguely aware of moving, but he was more aware of how Steve's muscles moved against him. He couldn't help but squirm a little, until suddenly he touch changed, and it was softness under his body. His bed. Steve was putting him down, but then he was crawling over Tony, and even his presence was pushing against Tony's sense in a way he couldn't deny. A growl reverberated up Tony's throat, and he swore he saw Steve's eyes flash before he was pushing down, capturing Tony's lips again in a near bruising kiss.

Tony's hands came up, fingers curling around Steve's head, cupping his temples, sliding into his hair, and he tried to pull Steve closer. The clothes were too much for Tony, too much moving, rubbing, feeling. His hands moved again, pushing against Steve's shirt first. He gave a higher pitched noise of pleasure when his hands were reward with the defined shape of a bare chest. They had to break the kiss, but Tony could forgive it this one time as not only Steve's shirt came off, but Steve had pulled Tony's shirt off as well.

Steve's belt was next, and Tony was even started to push his pants down with his feet in the need to get rid of their clothes. He was glad that Steve shared the sentiment when mere moments later all clothes were left carelessly on the floor, and Tony's hands were exploring the carefully maintained body of a super soldier.

His hands stopped, a small gasp coming from his lips when Steve's fingers traced the skin around the arc reactor. The crisscrossing of scars around the modification that had once been too sensitive, always covered, then dulled by the palladium poisoning. It seemed the new element had brought feeling back once again to the area, and Tony was pressing his head back into the mattress as Steve explored the skin there, careful to not touch the reactor itself. Bright flashes erupted as the sensation raced through Tony's nerve endings.

The hands went to leave, his gasp an unexpected reaction, but Tony's hands darted to grab Steve's wrists. "No," he whispered, voice a bit deeper, huskier. He licked his lips and looked into Steve's eyes, blue almost gone as desire traveled through Steve's system. Tony didn't need to say anything else as Steve's hands pressed back down against his skin.

It didn't take long for Tony to lose himself, his brain only able to focus on touch, feel, and sound. The way he and Steve was constantly touching, in contact, moving against each other, he wasn't sure when one began and the other ended. The sounds coming from both of them were just obscene; moans and whimpers, pleas and names, Tony felt it all, every sound and every word, almost as much as he felt their bodies against each other, almost as much as he felt Steve moving inside of him.

And then suddenly, Tony saw everything. He saw every color, every movement, he saw stars, and planets, and something pulsed against his being. It was only for a second, but it felt like an eternity.

When Tony was opening his eyes, it was too the feeling feel of Steve's fingers carding through his hair, gently rubbing his scalp, soft, hot lips trailing lazy kisses along his shoulder and neck, and both of them trying to catch their breath. He turned his head little to look at Steve, saw the absolutely luminous smile on his face, and sparkling eyes. Tony reached out his hand, gently caressing Steve's face, watching those eyes closed as he pressed against Tony's hand.

"I felt the Universe move," Tony heard himself whisper, and that only seemed to make Steve smile a little wider.
"Seems I set the bar a little high for myself." Tony felt himself smile so wide that it actually hurt a little. He pulled Steve's head up, kissing him sensuously, keeping him close.

Later, when Steve didn't get up to get dressed, to get back to his mission, when they were still laying in Tony's bed, Tony wasn't able to sleep. He traced numbers on the skin of Steve's arm, but it didn't feel the same as it had a couple hours ago. Earlier, he would have been able to see the numbers as he formed them with his fingers, would have seen the light as feelings arc through Steve's skin, and his own.

"You're restless," Steve murmured, turning his head to look at Tony, looking sleepy, but just the right amount of awake.

"It's for a good reason," Tony said with a soft smile. He leaned in and kissed Steve's shoulder, trailing his fingers along his side, delighting when a shiver ran through Steve's body. "Thoughts of you still rolling around my brain, and it makes me sound sappy as shit." Steve chuckled quietly. "Seriously, I should only get like that when it comes to my kid, and even then it doesn't get this bad. I have a reputation to uphold you know."

Steve hummed and pushed himself closer, kissing the end of Tony's nose. "All because you brought me flowers. You're so cheesy, Rogers." He couldn't help but smile when Steve did. His expressions were contagious. "I don't even like flowers, so, you were right earlier, I'm not a flowers kind of guy. But those one, downstairs in my lab? I fucking love those flowers, because they were picked with me in mind, not bought in a store, and it looks like you just threw them in whatever glass container you could find in the office, because it was the thought of the flowers that mattered more."

Steve took Tony's hand, wrapping his fingers around it and started to kiss every knuckle. "And this is something that I shouldn't even want, because it goes against my very nature," Tony continued, voice softer, watching Steve's mouth. "This cuddling, and little gestures, something that should make me uncomfortable, but then it's paired with your absolutely stubbornness. And there's a fire that thrives inside of you, and I'm like a moth attracted to a very good-looking flame. And I'm rambling, and you're not stopping me."

"Sometimes, your stream of consciousness is absolutely fascinating," Steve told him with a smile. Tony's breath caught in his throat as he watched Steve's eyes. He saw something change, something shifted, as he looked at Tony. Everything seemed more open with him. Tony pressed his face to Steve's neck, the blonde moving to wrap around the genius. He tried not to think about what it meant, what he saw, just grounded himself in the moment, knowing that Steve would be back in DC before lunch time
So, some of you may have guessed, that I gifted you all with so much fluff recently..... Yeah, I'm an evil author. I giveth and I taketh away.
The responses from the last chapter were astounding! Thank you guys, I'm Sooooo happy that you all liked it. I was actually incredibly nervous about that last chapter. That won't be the last we see of a chapter like that, but now my confidence is boosted for that. Yay! I know I say it all the time, but that's cause it's true; You guys are awesome!

Okay, enjoy!!
Unbeta'd, and Marvel owns more of this than I do. Also, all music/movies/tv shows belongs to those that wrote/performe/produced/etc them. I use them for humor and good times.

Light invaded Tony's eyes as the pillow was pulled off his head. He squinted and looked up to see Mary standing above him. Tony pushed himself up to a sitting position on the couch. "Please let this be something small and insignificant," he muttered, moving to pull his tie completely off now. "Five hours of meetings has fried my capacity to deal with anything that isn't either simple, or of an extremely high intellect level."

Mary held out a thumb drive to him without saying a word. He raised an eyebrow and took it, reaching for his tablet from the coffee table. "That might get your boyfriend home sooner." He raised both eyebrows and plugged it into the tablet. It was nearly the end of February now, and Steve and Natasha were still no closer to finding the location of the research lab, or coming back to New York. "It's got an encryption on it that we can't touch without it frying all the information on it."

"Where did it come from?" Tony watched Jarvis access the drive, showing him the encryption protection.

"Clint took a team after we saw a new building pop up," Mary told him. "Got luckier than last time, caught a scientist who actually had something on him."

"You interrogate him yet?"

"Didn't get a chance." Tony glanced up at her. "Cyanide pill in a fake tooth."

"I'll send you an update in a few hours." He turned back to his tablet, and Mary started to head for the elevator. She paused for a second.

"Mom and Dad are thinking about taking Peter and Wade to Disney World when school ends." Tony turned to look at her. "To give all us a little break with everything we've been dealing with." She bobbed her head back and forth a little. "They'll come talk to you about it later in detail, but, I don't think it's a bad idea."

Tony let out a little hum and nodded, turning back to the tablet. He heard her get in the elevator before he slumped on the couch, putting a hand over his face. He hadn't gotten a good night’s sleep
since Steve left again, and Pepper was taking advantage of him not being able to leave the building. He had attended more meetings in the past week then he had in all of January.

"Sir, Dr Banner requests your presence in his lab," Jarvis spoke up, thankfully quietly. "It does seems urgent." He let out a little groan, then pushed himself up, tablet still in hand, and headed downstairs. Tony trusts Jarvis to get through to the information while he's working with Bruce.

"You rang for me, Brucie-bear?" Tony says as he walked into the lab, unbuttoning the top two buttons of his dress shirt now. With the tie already gone he was feeling a bit more relaxed. When he looked at Bruce, he saw how tense the man was, pensive, and his eyes possibly tingling a little green. Not good. They don't say another word and Bruce motions to the computer screen in front of him.

Tony leaned in, looking through more calculations, but he realized that this is more of a formula and that Bruce must be getting closer to cracking the secret about these secret scientists have been working on. Only, as Tony read on, he started to recognize what he was looking at. Not in the "that's-human-DNA" way, but in the "I've-seen-this-before" way.

"Bruce," he said quietly, then looks at the other scientist. It's exactly what he thinks it is. "There's no way they have their hands on this, I made sure this was locked up, destroyed to anyone but you or me."

"How many years later, though?" Bruce asked, taking off his glasses. Tony thinks about it, and he's right. There at least a seven year gap between him and Bruce meeting. "They could have easily stolen this in the years after Howard died." Tony turned to look back at the formula that Bruce had made while working on the Super Soldier Serum for Howard Stark.

"But, why wait for so long to start using it?" Tony sat down on one of the lab stools. "They're not shy about using it while unstable, so why wait if they stole this nearly two decades ago?" His tablet beeps and he grabs it without thinking. Jarvis has broken through.

"Maybe your theory about them working with someone is right," Bruce said. He was rubbing his nose as he often did when trying to work something out in the lab. "Maybe they just got their hands on this recently, the ones they're working for didn't have the proper facilities?"

Tony barely heard the words as he looked through the information from the drive. Jarvis had done a scan, and brought forward a folder first. He thought it odd, until a cold knot wormed its way through him. "They have it all." Tony whispered. He didn't see Bruce look over to him, and walk over to look over his shoulder. He saw the copies of a journal with familiar handwriting. "They have Howard's Journals. That's how they got the formula." Tony tossed the tablet on the desk and dropped his head into his hands.

"Tony-" Bruce started, and he suddenly shot up from his seat and started pacing.

"No," Tony cut him off. "No, this changes nothing. This actually works in our favor."

Bruce frowned. "How is that?"

"Means that you and I can work on a way to counter-act the serum," Tony said, turning to look at him. "We already know the ground work."

"They're working with a formula that didn't exactly work," Bruce deadpanned.

"But they changed it." Tony started rolling his hands, and turned back to the formula on Bruce's computer. "Yours was the base, with the base we can do anything. And here, we have their modifications. We don't even have to reverse engineer this!"
"We have to tell the others, Tony," Bruce told him.

"No we don't," he said, tensing his jaw. It wasn't Bruce's fault his father was such a dick, no need to take it out on him. "You and Steve know, and that's all that needs to know. The history changes nothing." He could feel Bruce staring at him, before he finally nodded and walked over to Tony. "Use my blood samples as test subjects," he said more calmly. "We already know that Howard had figured out that my DNA would be stable enough. Next best thing next to the Captain himself."

"Even with after years of drug and alcohol abuse?" Bruce asked, but he still moved to get a needle and some vials. "And the arc reactor?"

"If anything, with the new arc reactor, I'm probably a better candidate," Tony said with a scoff. "The element has been slowly working at my internal organs and cleaning them up. I can feel it sometimes." I can feel a lot, he thought.

"You should finish going through those files." Tony was seated again, Bruce searching for a vein. "If they had the information with the journals, they might have more locations saved as well."

"I think there's going to be a lot in there," Tony said quietly. Tony wasn't exactly looking forward to it.

"You can't be serious about this." Tony stared at Meg across from him.

"Completely serious." She tossed him an Andes mint.

"I think I almost barfed in my mouth in the first thirty seconds."

"You can not judge that quickly." They were sitting on the couch, at either ends, the TV on. "You can't even judge it on the first episode, which seems incredibly cheesy I know, or even the very short first season. I'm serious, it gets better."

"Sir, Captain Rogers is calling."

"Oh, there is mercy. Pause and put him on!" Tony flopped back on the arm of the couch. "Steve!"

"Hey, Tony," they could hear the smile in his voice.

"You have to save me from your friend!" Meg squawked and Tony pushed her leg with his foot. "She's making me watch this show, and the first episode is really questionable."

"He knew what he was getting into when he agreed to this," Meg protested. "He looked up the reviews."

"And the reviews were better than this first episode. Why aren't you making Steve watch this, too?"

"What are you two watching?" Steve asked when he finally able to get a word in.

"Buffy the Vampire Slayer."

"Good luck with that one," Steve told him. "I told her she's on her own with that one, I'm gonna stick to one series at a time."

"You know she's more caught up on our show than we are, right?" Tony reached over to grab his
tablet, hoping to bring up a video chat.

"Probably a little easier for her when she's not off saving the world." Steve smiled at him from the screen of the tablet. "There's a handsome face."

"I haven't actually thrown up in like, two weeks, please don't break that streak," Meg said from her spot on the couch, checking her phone.

"Perfect time to take a raincheck on the show," Tony said as he hopped up from the couch. "I'm gonna go whisper dirty words to Captain America now."

"Whisper?" She raised an eyebrow at him. "I can't imagine you whispering."

"But she's okay with you corrupting Captain America," Steve said, rolling his eyes a little. "According to the Smithsonian I'm a symbol of courage, honor, bra-"

"Captain Sassypants!"

"You're ruining my image, Tony." Tony grinned when he saw Steve biting his lip to keep from laughing.

"Have a good night fellas!" Meg waved at Tony headed for the elevator with his tablet.

"How are things in our nation's capital?" Tony asked as the doors shut

"Still annoyingly cold," Steve responded, and the camera moved a bit as Steve crawled into his bed.

"It's really grinding on your nerves that you can't run outside, yet, isn't it?" Steve moaned and dropped his head back onto a pillow, causing Tony to chuckle.

"It was hard enough having to move, again, but the building doesn't even have a gym." Steve lifted his head back up. "How fast can you buy the building and put in a gym?"

"You should know better than to tempt me like that, Rogers." Tony walked towards his bedroom, schematics of Steve's apartment. "I could easily shift the washers downstairs to make room for a gym. It wouldn't exactly be amazing, but it would have a treadmill."

"I don't actually want you to buy the building," Steve said with a little smirk.

"I don't know, that face, and your whining, tells me differently." He propped the tablet up on the dresser as he pulled his shirt off. He did it just to see the little leer on Steve's face. "I have to say that I'm pretty proud of how quickly you've grasped onto the finer points of video chat."

"Still not having video sex," he told Tony.

"Then I think that you need to come back here."

"Tell you what, keep your weekend open."

Tony grinned at Steve. "I'm holding you to that."

March 2012
Tony had his phone clutched in his hand, legs dangling off the bed, when Steve walked in silently to his bedroom. It was almost four in the morning, but he couldn't help but smiled when he saw him. They had been texting several hours earlier, and now he knew why Tony stopped.

Something had been bothering Tony for the past few days, and Steve was trying to get a couple of free days so that he could come back to the Tower to check up on him in person. It had been over a month since they had last seen each other in person, and Steve missed him something terrible.

Steve gently crawled into the bed next to Tony, but the motion woke the genius anyway. He looked around, eyes moving quickly as they scanned, before Tony caught sight of him. He visibly relaxed and offered an almost shy smile. "Hey, handsome," he said with a sleep laced voice.

"Hey, beautiful," Steve said quietly, leaning over to kiss his forehead. "Missed you."

"Missed you more." Tony yawned, and stretched out his body, before turning more fully towards Steve. "What are you doing here so late? Thought you couldn't find an excuse to come back yet."

"Meg had the twins," he said, running his hand through Tony's hair. He could still smell the embers from the welding machine of Tony's workshop in his hair, he must have been working in there before all the excitement.

"Mmmm," Tony hummed with a little smile. "About time. She's been at the hospital for over a day. How are little Anthony and Stephanie?" Steve snorted a little. "I assume that we get naming rights."


"I didn't actually think she'd name her kids after us, I was just joking around."

"Well, she isn't joking with the names." Steve let out a breath as he wrapped his arms around Tony, dropping his head onto Tony's shoulder. "I missed this, too."

"How long are you here for?" Tony asked, sounding like he might drift off to sleep again.

"I'm here for Pancake day." He dropped a kiss onto Tony's head, fingers massaging his scalp. They both deserved a few hours of sleep before breakfast time. "I have to leave Sunday morning."

"Then Saturday night we'd better have a fantastic goodbye," Tony mumbled with a smile, eyes slipping shut again.

"Wanna feel the Universe again?" Steve said with a slight chuckle.

"I felt it, Steve," he said with as much seriousness as he could muster in his sleep-ridden state. "I actually felt it pulse. It was weird." Steve couldn't help but frown a little, but then Tony's breathing evened out as he fall asleep, curling around Steve's arm, before sleepily whispering- "Who'm I gonna watch Buffy with?" Steve snorted into Tony's hair softly and closed his eyes.

"The time is Seven-Thirty in the morning." Jarvis' voice brought Steve out of his slumber several hours later, and he yawned. "Young Master Peter is about to awaken, and Mrs Parker is currently making the pancakes."

"Why does Jarvis still called her Parker?" Steve mumbled, turning to try and bury his head into Tony's hair.

"Because she didn't want to change her name, and then Peter didn't have to change his name to either
Coulson or Stark," Tony said, his voice muffled by Steve's chest. "'Parently Agent doesn't mind." He yawned against Steve. "Peter's down on her floor, so we have some time before we actually have to get up."

"Good." Steve closed his eyes again. He shifted his legs and found that they were harder to move. Peeking one eye open, he glanced down and saw that in the night Tony had tangled his legs with Steve's. Tony had claimed to not be a cuddler, but when they slept in the same bed, Tony did his best to become one entity with Steve in the middle of the bed.

"Rachel and William are taking Peter and Wade to Disney World at the end of April," Tony said, but didn't move from his position around Steve. "I talked to the school, and they said that if they keep their grades up until the week before, then they'd be able to go, and move on to the fifth grade." Tony let out a little moan. "Uhn, my son is almost in Middle School, he's almost half way through his basic school career." Tony moved to snuggle in a little more with Steve, and he happily obliged by wrapping his arm, the one Tony wasn't already laying on, tighter around his waist.

"You don't sound too excited about him going on a vacation." Steve said as he kissed along Tony's jaw. "Are you upset that you aren't going to be the first one to take him there?" Steve hadn't been to Disney World yet, either, he knew it could be different with a parent and their child.

"No," Tony said with a little snort. "I could buy Disney in an hour if I really wanted, too." Steve didn't deny that was possible. "I don't know, just, a feeling I can't explain," he shrugged. "Didn't say no, though. I know they'll have an amazing time." Steve kissed him softly before Tony tucked his head under Steve's chin.

Tony pulled Steve down towards Bruce's lab after breakfast. Steve had been shooting him concerned glances all morning, and he'd known that something had been bothering Tony before he had even come back. He figured he'd better fess up about what he and Bruce had found out. The first part would be easy.

"We've slowly been getting some information about AIM." Tony felt pretty confident calling them that, even if he didn't know what it stood for yet. He didn't care at the moment. "Nothing about this lab, yet, but I think we're close. Probably closer than you and Natasha."

"Something's up in DC," Steve said with a frown, which caused Tony to frown. "We're getting railroaded with benign missions from the WSC. What have you been able to figure out?"

That bad feeling in Tony's guts rumbled around a little more. "Well, we've been able to figure out the formula that they've been using for the knock-off Serum." Tony held up his hand before Steve could get too excited. "It's the one that Bruce developed with Howard. They have some of Howard's journals."

Steve's eyes widened. "How did that happen??"

"Still trying to figure that one out myself," Tony said with a sigh. "But wait, there's more!" Steve glanced over and saw Bruce walking in from the back of the lab. He nodded to Steve in greeting.

"When those animals were unleashed, they were actually out collecting DNA samples," Bruce said as he picked up the conversation. "Everyone who had gotten attacked, or scratched in some way, it was collected by AIM." Tony watched Steve start to put something together. "You, Clint, and Natasha were involved in that fight."
"So, they’ve taken Bruce's base formula, and now they're trying to splice it with your own Super Serum DNA," Tony finished, hopping up to sit on the counter of the lab. He caught Bruce looking at him, willing him to spill the rest, but Steve was already starting to look like he might lose the color in his face. "Luckily, Clint found a nifty thumb drive that has lots of information on it. Bad news is, each folder is hit with its own encryption barrier." Tony leaned back on his hands, before leaning forward again a few second later. He was feeling extremely restless now. "It’s slow going, trying to unlock off of it, but I’m making progress. Which is why I’m sure that I’ll manage to find a list of locations, and find that research lab for you.” Bruce’s stare was still on him.

“What are we going to do about the Serum that they’ve already got?” Steve asked, looking between the two scientists. “They might already be using that on people, right?”

“There’s a chance,” Tony said with a nod. “Since Bruce is very familiar with what they’re using, we’re working on a counter-active agent.” Tony could stop right there, and not continue. If it wasn’t for Bruce’s fire like gaze digging into the back of his skull. Honestly, he had been trying to ignore the test results that he had been given a few days ago by Bruce. “You should totally let us get some blood samples from you, Cap, so we can work on that.”

“Tony,” Bruce said softly, almost as if he were chastising him. Steve's brow furrowed, and he was looking at Tony for answers.

"Tried using my blood to try and work on the counter measures," Tony started, looking down at his hands. "Turns out, apparently, I'm not a good test subject." He jumped down from the counter as Steve took a step towards him. "The man has been dead for more than Twenty years, and yet somehow, Howard Stark still manages to fuck around with everything."

Steve grabbed Tony's hands, stilling him, making him look up into his face. "What happened?" Steve asked, and it was enough to almost make him break down right there in the lab.

“Dear ole Dad didn’t want to wait for Bruce’s okay on test subjects,” Tony almost spit out. “Don’t know how he did it, but he was already trying to change me.” He could feel his hands shaking in Steve’s, and he wasn’t sure if they were shaking in rage, or denial.

“In order to test if something would work, we would try to contaminate the sample,” Bruce explained, taking the focus away from Tony for a second. “The plan was to take a clean sample of Tony’s blood, contaminate it with the formula that the scientists were working on, then start testing to see what could counter act it, if something could counter act it.” Tony was trying to take deep breaths to calm down, thankful that Steve never let go of his hands. “I found, traces, of my original formula already in Tony’s blood.”

“Already been contaminated!” Tony said, a little hysterically. “And you think that would be the easy part, just go ahead and use that, but no, Howard was a special sort of-“

“Howard obviously altered the formula,” Bruce cut off Tony’s tirade. “I think, that he altered it to be ingested orally, through food and drink, since the only other alternative would be direct injection into the body.” He started to clean his glasses out of nervousness. “Nothing’s really changed, it’s lying dormant, in fact, but it’s still there. Has been for years.”

Steve looked into Tony’s eyes, hands warm around his smaller ones, and Tony knew he’d see the wetness building up. “He put my son in danger,” Tony whispered, his expression crumpling into pain, to hurt. "If it hadn't been dormant-" Tony's clenched his jaw, pain shooting down. Steve pulled Tony into his chest, wrapping his arms around him tightly.

"Shh, I got you," Steve whispered to him. He glanced over at Bruce.
"Peter's clean," Bruce answered for him. "It didn't pass to him."

Tony's hands fist in Steve's shirt tightly. It would be so easy for him to lay the blame at Steve's feet. Howard was dead and gone, and Tony kept find new reason to be thankful for that, and the reason that he had put time and money into the research was holding onto him. The man that he was constantly compared to as a child, said he would never live up to, to always be a disappointment in his father's eyes, was whispering in his ear. It would be so easy.

But, Steve Rogers had been frozen in the ice long before Tony had been born. He had no clue what Howard would turn in to, how obsessed, and reckless, he would get. And so far, this man had done nothing more than try to support him once he found out. This wasn't the Captain America, the Steve Rogers that Howard had told him about. This was a far better man, one that Tony was starting to believe really cared about him.

It took several minutes, but Tony was able to pull himself together enough, and leaned away from Steve's arm, but slid one hand into the bigger one. Bruce was watching them, now with curiosity.

“When did this happen?’”

"In October," Tony answered. "Right before Peter's birthday. We told Peter about it officially on Christmas Eve."

"Well, that explains a lot of the behavior," Bruce said with a nod. "But it's all official now?"

"It's been almost six months." Bruce's eyes widened a little at Tony's words. "I know," he groaned a little, and felt Steve's hand squeeze his a little. "I never remember dates, and here I am, counting months." He wrinkled his nose a little, and Steve chuckled lightly. "Only other ones who know are Peter, and no doubt Wade, Mary and Agent, and her parents. I'm sure Steve told Meg as well, but none of the other Avengers. Wanted to make sure that we weren't going to bite each other's heads off." Bruce raised an eyebrow. He was the master of non-verbal communication with Tony. "Okay, well we still do, obviously, but it's not serious, or anything. Kiss and make up, and move on. It's all very frighteningly domestic, Bruce. We watch Supernatural on date nights!"

"I can't wait for the others to find out," Bruce said with a smirk and turned back to his computer.

Tony's mouth dropped a little, and he turned his head to look at Steve who just shrugged. He let out a huff of breath as Jarvis pinged the tablet in the lab. "Sir, I've broken through another encryption. This file seems to be of a relatable importance." Tony let go of Steve's hand to walk over and pick up the Starkpad.

"Early reports of human experimentation." Tony glanced up to both Steve and Bruce. "Think we may have found the ring leader."

"We might finally be getting somewhere," Steve agreed. "I'm getting real tired of this dragging out, putting more people at risk." He leaned against Tony's shoulder, both skimming through the information.

"Nazi sympathizer, Baron Strucker. Yeah, that sounds like a douchey name." Tony slid his finger along the screen, scrolling through the information. "There's no affiliations listed, but this guy is definitely the one who's funding these guys."

"Now, we just have to find him," Steve said lowly.

Tony turned his head a little, leaning up to kiss Steve's cheek. "Let me work my magic, babycakes." Tony could feel Bruce's eyes roll at the pet name. "Jarvis is already working on the next file, and
Bruce's machines are still running possible compounds. Nothing much we can do now until we get more information."

"I'll let Bruce take a couple samples, and I think I know what I'd like to do," Steve said, pushing his sleeves up.

"I'm really hoping that I'm not about to hear anything about a sex life," Bruce let out a little moan. He grabbed another needle and Tony smirked at Steve.

"I think I know exactly what you're thinking. Great idea, I'll make some popcorn." Bruce raised an eyebrow at Tony. "We have to see how the Winchester boys stop the Devil." Steve grinned.

"Can we try that flavored salt on the popcorn this time?"

"You got it," Tony said with a nod as he moved through the lab. "Default date night initiative is go. I'm rooting for Dean." Bruce looked between them, not sure what to make of the easy back and forth they had they, how natural it worked for them.

"You always root for him," Steve shot back.

"Dean Winchester is a kindred spirit."

"You were right, Tony." The genius looked back at his friend. "It's really domestic, like, maybe too domestic." Tony stuck his tongue out at Bruce. "When are you two getting the second kid?" He grinned and ducked from the pen that Tony threw at him, while Steve just shook his head with a quirky smile.

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April 2012

"I find myself spending less and less time down in my workshop," Tony said as Mary pushed him out of said workshop. "I'm trying to make a statement."

"By brooding?" She asked, tilting her head at him a little.

"I'm not brooding," Tony said as they stepped into the elevator. "I'm working, I still have stuff that I need to make for my company." Mary looked at him. "I'm not brooding."

"No, I imagine you won't be for much longer." Tony raised an eyebrow at Mary's tone, and her smirk.

"I think you've been spending too much time around Meg since she came here," Tony accused.

"Steve has good taste in friends," she agreed, nodding, as the doors opened for them. Mary pulled him along this time. "Peter wants to show off how he's able to hold a baby."

"You know, all you had to say was Peter, and I would have come up here myself." Tony couldn't help the smile that started to spread across his face.

"Yeah, but this way was more fun."

As the front door opened Tony sniffed the air and smiled. "You all play dirty, that's the smell of good coffee." His feet brought him to the kitchen first. "What is the baby Mama doing up in the kitchen?" He asked as Meg handed him a mug.
"I needed to stretch my legs." She handed another mug to Mary and took a sip from her own. Tony wrinkled his nose at her when he noted that it was tea and not coffee.

"Daddy! Come look!" Peter called from the living room, and the older Stark was turning on his foot obediently. He opened his mouth then stopped when he saw Peter sitting on the couch, arms squarely around the little baby boy, and sitting next to him was Steve with a baby girl in his arms.

Tony put his mug down on the closest flat surface and almost skipped over to the couch, leaning in to give Steve a kiss, then kissing Peter's head. "Look at my two favorite boys, holding babies all on their own." Tony grinned and vaulted over the couch, then settled on the floor in front of them. "You're growing up too fast on me, Petey. Look at how awesome you are at holding him."

Peter grinned at Tony. "Mama taught me how to hold him the right way. You have to support the head, cause they don't know how to hold them up yet."

"That's right," Tony smiled at him. "They'll get the hang of it though, and we can teach them." Steve moved a little and Tony shifted to sit between him and Peter. "You were like that when you were a tiny little baby." Tony pushed Peter's nose making him giggle.

"It's true," Mary said as she came out, sitting in a chair next to the couch. "Do you remember how small and cute our little Peter was?" She noticed Tony looking around.

"I could fit him in one hand!" Tony chuckled, leaning against Steve's shoulder. "He was like a hamster!"

"I wasn't a hamster!" Peter protested.

"I'm noticing a trend," Steve whispered in Tony's ear. "First he was a bunny, now he's a hamster."

"My son is cute, so I compare him to cute animals." Tony smiled, making deliberate eye motions of checking him out. "You look good with a baby in your arms." Steve kissed him softly.

"You wanna try feeding Conor?" Tony glanced over at Mary, who was leaning in towards Peter. She tossed over a bottle to Tony, then held out another bottle to help Peter.

"How are you holding up with a two week old in your arms?" Tony asked, turning more towards Steve with the warm bottle.

"It's fun remembering how to do this," Steve told him, moving his arms a bit so he could take the bottle from Tony. "Bucky's oldest sister, she had a kid, before she moved. I got to hold him a couple of times."

"You need to stop surprising me with these visits, I'm going to expect them every couple weeks." Tony was hoping that Jarvis was taking pictures of this moment, Steve really did look good with a baby in his arms.

"And inflate your ego a little more?" Steve smirked at him. "Did Meg ask you?"

"You mean, ask me if I would be a joint godfather with you?" Steve smiled and nodded, and Tony couldn't help but chuckle at his excitement. "You're like a little puppy, you know that? You're going to spoil them as Uncle Steve."

"And I'll get away with it," Steve beamed.

"You are a menace, Rogers."
"I hope you aren't thinking that this is a new development," Steve said with a raised eyebrow. "I've been told that I've always been like this."

"I can believe it," Tony nodded. "You've been like this almost as long as I've known you. What would the world do if they knew that their paragon of virtue was not nearly as innocent as they believe?"

"To be fair, Captain America is a pretty upstanding person." Steve grinned at Tony, before looking back down at Rowan in his arms. "Steve Rogers on the other hand-"

"Steve Rogers is a little shit," Tony said as he leaned in to kiss him again. "And I have taken on the burden of keeping you from corrupting the rest of the world. I really should be given an award, I'm thinking the Silver Star, or the Purple Heart."

"You're not in the military, Tony."

"But I'm dating a Captain, that should count, right?" Tony slid his arms in to take Rowan from Steve after the bottle was empty. "Throw that towel over my shoulder," Tony nodded to Steve's lap. "You're not questioning why the Silver Star?"

Steve put the towel over Tony's shoulder and watched him burp the baby girl. "I'm actually wondering why the Purple Heart. You should be honored to get to date me."

"I'm taking a hit for the team! The team of America, the team of Earth." Tony smiled at Steve. "And you should be honored to date me. I'm a billionaire, consistently on every important list of Sexiest Human of the year. Do you know how many people would kill to be in your position?"

"You're such a sweet talker, Tony," Steve said with a fond roll of his eyes. "A regular bee-charmer."

"Bee-charmer?" Tony turned his head to look at him, hand still patting away on Rowan's back. "Really, honeyed words?"

"Buzz buzz." Steve snorted, almost coughing on a laugh.

"Oh, oh no," Tony shook his head. "Mary, you need to take this man away. This burden is too big for the amount of cheese he just sliced."

"That was bad, Tony," Mary retaliated. She was holding Conor, burping him, Peter sitting in her lap. "You're both horrible, you deserve each other. Please, don't inflict yourselves on the world anymore."

Tony was about to open his mouth when Rowan let out a particularly loud burp for her size. "Ha! Tony grinned, lifting her up in his arms. "I win!"

"I wouldn't do-" Mary started, then winced, Steve backing up when Rowan spit-up on Tony's chest. "Ewwwww!" Peter turned his face into Mary's side.

"Oh." Tony slowly lowered the baby in his arms, and Steve took her back. He grabbed the towel from Tony's shoulder, that somehow missed getting ruined, and wiped her face. "There's baby barf on my shirt."

"And some spots on your neck," Steve informed him. Tony shuddered, closing his eyes. "And your arm..."
"You're not helping, Cap." Tony glanced around. "Where is the Mom? She should know what her child did to me."

"I sent her to take a nap," Mary smiled at him. "I think she's earned it. But, maybe I'm re-thinking that now. She would have loved to have seen this."

"Do all babies throw up like that?" Peter asked quietly. Tony took the towel back from Steve, wiping up his shirt as well as he could.

"Not all the time," Mary told him, running a hand through his hair, trying not to smirk at Tony. "They have sensitive stomachs, and your Daddy moved her too fast. It's like a really fast roller-coaster ride."

"It's really warm," Tony muttered. Peter scrunched up his face in disgust. "Learn from my mistakes, Peter."

"I'm not gonna feed a baby until I'm much older," Peter said confidently. "I don't wanna get barf on me."

"A very good philosophy," Steve said, smiling at him.

"I'm gonna go change my clothes," Tony said, trying to get his shirt off without getting dirtier. "And maybe take a shower.... or three."

"That would be preferable. If you do that, then I'll actually get close to your again," the blonde said, pulling a pout from Tony. "That's a no go, Tony. That's gross, no matter what way you spin it, and I'm staying here, playing the dutiful Uncle."

"I repeat, an absolute menace." Tony leaned in to kiss Steve, but he leaned back.

"Shower first, kiss after." Steve smiled at him.

May 2012

Tony was fidgety. The bad feeling that kept him up at night was only increasing, which made no sense. He had finally cracked the last file, and found a list of coordinates. Jarvis was running them and sending them on to Steve and Natasha. He hadn't heard from Steve in over a day though, and while that wasn't unlike him, he had told Tony that he would call.

Instead, Tony went down to Bruce's lab, to check if any of the other information on the thumb drive had helped in his experiments.

"I can feel you moping," Bruce said as soon as he walked in. "I thought you had talked to Steve last night."

"No, something must have come up," Tony mumbled, leaning against a counter. "He still had uneasy feelings about some of the missions that SHIELD was sending them on, and he was still pretty upset about the new Helicarriers being housed at the Triskelion." Tony had helped Fury with the designs to upgrade the camouflage tech, and the engines. He switched them over to his repulsor technology so that there was less of a chance of a repeat performance from nearly a year ago. "Something isn't sitting right, Bruce."
"Sir," Jarvis interrupted Tony and Bruce's conversation. "There's activity on Captain Roger's playlist."

"I'm pretty sure that's something that can wait, J," Tony said, a small frowned forming though.

"The way songs are being added seem to be erratic," Jarvis continued. Bruce looked at Tony.

"How can adding songs be erratic?" Tony asked, but grabbed his tablet to pull up the playlist. He scrolled down to the new songs, watching another song being added as it refreshed. "Ew, he added his own theme song? And Coldplay? Who introduced him to them?? You were right, Jarvis, this is a travesty."

**Star Spangled Man**
**Trouble** - Coldplay
**Hurt** - Christina Aguilera

Bruce leaned over to look at the screen as a fourth and fifth song appeared. "They're being added kind of quickly," he commented. "Not even enough time to listen to the full song."

**The Hydra Battle** - Disney's Hercules
**Shield** - Ben Frost

"I've never heard of this song," Tony said with a hum. "Never even heard of the artist."

**Help!** - The Beatles
**Iron Man** - Black Sabbath

Tony frowned when he saw the sixth and seventh song appear, then the songs ended. A knot started to form in Tony's gut. "I already added that song, to the other playlist. Jarvis, who has access to this playlist?"

"There are four active users, not including Young Master Peter." Bruce looked at Tony.

"Four?" Tony asked, eyebrows up in curiosity. "Show 'em to me." A list appeared next to the playlist, and each song had initials next to them as to who assigned the song. M.R. were next to the seven most recent songs. Steve Rogers. Tony Stark. Mary Parker. Meg Rosenfeld.

"Jarvis, is Meg's phone active?" A hologram appeared, showing a blip on the map. "Contact her, right away." Tony sat on the stool behind him, crossing his arms.

"You think something's wrong," Bruce stated more than asked.

"I think something's wrong," Tony confirmed, Jarvis connecting the call. No one was saying anything, but they could hear the sound of wind, and talking in the background, as if someone were walking down a busy sidewalk, or something, outside. "Is this the hooligan adding songs to my boyfriend's playlist?" Bruce looked at Tony at the use of the word 'hooligan'.

"Tony?" The female voice sounded very hesitant, quiet, and possibly a little shaken. Something was wrong.

"Yeah, it's me," Tony confirmed with a frown. There was an audible sound of relief.

"Oh, gods, it worked!" She breathed out. "Do you know how hard it is to try and find songs that will try and get out a message? And then hope that it actually works? I mean, there was probably at least a seventy percent chance that my idea wasn't going to work, even though I know that your mind puts
together a hundred different choices a minute, and you mess with his music all the time, and how else was I supposed to try and contact you on the DL."

"Hey," Tony said loudly, cutting off her frantic rambling. "What's happening? What's wrong?"

"Did you even look at the song titles?" She asked. Bruce was working with Jarvis, trying to track the exact location of the woman. "Titles, not Artists. For once that doesn't matter."

"Yeah, but-"

"But did you actually Look at them? Just, trust me on this. Take a second look," she muttered. Tony looked at the songs again. "There's a damn theme, an Important one."

She was being very specific to not say something. Tony didn't like that. Star Spangled Man, that was obviously Steve. "Is Steve in trouble?" Was she being very obvious with the songs?

"Yes!"

"I don't understand what the Disney song has to do with anything, though," Tony confessed. And did the Shield song have to do with Steve's actual shield, or the organization? "Jarvis, can you get Mary down here?"

"I'm afraid Mrs Parker is leaving the building." Tony raised an eyebrow. "She is on her way to the New York SHIELD building, it seemed rather urgent."

"No!" The woman suddenly shouted over the phone. "Don't let her go! It is so ridiculously not safe there right now. You should totally do lock down procedures yourself, or something, I don't know."

Bruce tapped the screen, showing Tony a dot in Baltimore. "Shit, I'd rather be dealing with our silver armed friend, right now." That was raising red flags in Tony and Bruce's mind. The talking over the phone stopped, and there was the soft click of something. "Hydra, freaking Hydra is inside SHIELD," she started to whisper over the phone. She had obviously entered a different room, locking the door.

"What?" Tony blinked rapidly. "That's a pretty outrageous claim. And what are you doing in Baltimore?"

"Says the man who helped with an alien invasion," the woman bit back. "Alright, short version, I'm in Baltimore bringing the twins to see their paternal grandparents- Long story, I'll explain later. And I knew that Steve was still in DC, and he told me a couple days ago that I should stop by, and we'd have lunch, and he could see how big their getting, not the point. Point is, I called to let him know I was in town, that the twins were secure for a few hours. He picked up, but didn't say anything, and the line went dead. He calls my back phone three times, not letting it ring enough for me to pick it up though."

Bruce looked at Tony, frowning. That was very suspect behavior from Captain America. "Well, I didn't know what to do, then a couple minutes later he calls back, and I'm actually able to pick it up. I told him I was in Baltimore, on my way to DC, and he practically yells at me to not do it. Says Hydra's in SHIELD and tells me that I gotta try and get a message to the Avengers, but I gotta be careful about it. Then hangs up! Hydra's supposed to be gone!" She whisper shouted. "But, Tony, he sounded dead serious, and worried."

"Sir, I can confirm that Captain Rogers’ phone did make the calls," Jarvis informed his creator. "I am unable to track his phone." Tony's body went cold.

"He probably destroyed it. Oh, that sweet beautiful phone," the woman murmured. There was some
banging and a whispered curse. "I also can't be sure that I'm not being followed, and I locked myself in a bathroom," she whispered. "My self-defense skills are on par, but I'm barely two months out of a pregnancy, and I'm only good against one attacker at a time."

Tony hopped up from his chair, dashing towards his workshop. "Jarvis, flight time to Baltimore?"

"Thirty minutes."

"I can't keep myself locked in a bathroom for that long," she whispered back. "And Steve is the one in trouble."

"Steve's a big boy who can last a little longer than you can," Tony told her, Jarvis trailing the call through the speakers as he ran to one of his suits. "J, can you get into the cameras where she's at?"

"I'm transferring the feed to the suit, now, Sir." Tony nodded and saw that Jarvis had already gotten the Mark XL ready for him. He stepped inside, the suit feeling like it was taking forever to properly assemble, but only taking a few seconds. "Dr Banner has been able to reach Mrs Parker, and she is coming back to the Tower."

The HUD flickered to life and Tony saw the footage in the corner, a flight plan to Baltimore next to it. "Tony?" She whispered. "You're still there, right?" He was able to match up the banging on the video feed to the banging over the phone. There were two females standing outside of the bathroom door of the store she was in, and Jarvis was able to identify one weapon.

"Alright, I'm on my way," Tony answered, shooting out of the Tower, pushing the power to shorten his flight time. "Does the door swing in towards you?"

"Uh, yeah," Meg answered.

"I'm gonna talk you through this. There's two people outside the door, but you went into a pretty crowded store, so good job." Tony was letting Jarvis take autopilot in the flight while he focused on this. He saw a message from Bruce; He was unable to get a hold of Natasha or Clint as well. "Still got some adrenaline pumping through your veins?"

"Pretty sure that I could stand to use one of the toilets in this bathroom, actually," she quipped with a slight tremble in her voice, but she wasn't about to back down.

"Save it. Listen up, you're gonna unlock the door, and let them open the door." She squeaked quietly in indignation. "Stick close to the door, and when I tell you, slam the door forward and then get the hell out of there, okay?"

"If I can stab an assassin, I think I can do this." Tony heard her take a couple of near silent breaths. "Okay, I'm doing it now." He heard the lick of the lock, and watched the two agents on the camera push the door open, each pulling a pistol into their hands. The first woman was halfway in, the second woman right behind her.

"Now, slam all your weight into it!" Tony saw the door fly forward, slamming into the first woman and knocked her off of her feet, and into her companion, both landing on the floor. "Run!" Meg appeared on camera, jumping over the first woman, attempting to get past the second, when a hand went out, grabbing her ankle. Tony heard her gasp in surprise and watched her hit the floor, putting her hands out to try and catch herself, and saw the phone slide across the floor. She screamed for help and Jarvis gathered another camera feed to show others heading towards the bathrooms. Meg kept screaming, kicking back at her attackers, while a crowd gathered.

A couple of men jumped forward, separating the woman, and Meg grabbed her phone, out of breath,
and pressed back into the crowd that was gathering. "Use the commotion to get out of there," Tony said, not even sure if she could hear him. "Jarvis, does she have a Starkphone?"

"The same model as Captain Rogers," his AI confirmed.

"Good, she's going to need a ride out of there. Hey, Megs!" Tony shouted, hoping to get her attention.

"That is a horrible nickname," she breathed out, catching her breath as she pushed through the crowd. "I have had worse though, so it can't be as bad as-" She was cut off by screams, and the sound of two pops. Gunshots.

"Get to the parking lot, run there. Now." Tony said, trying to keep his voice as calm as possible for her. "Jarvis, first car that you can lock on to, unlock it, start it, and get her into it." The AI confirmed, showing Tony which car he had triggered on the screen. Back on the camera feed, Tony could see that the two women were up and had fired their guns up into the air, the crowd scattering. There were a few hero wannabes though, and Tony closed the screen as he saw the pistols being aimed. She wouldn't need to know about that if something happened. There was nothing they could do right now.

"There's a car going ape-shit out here," Meg said as she hit the parking lot.

"That's your ride, get in it," Tony told her. He had already shaved five minutes off of his flight time. "Start driving, immediately, get to a busy road."

"I don't know where the hell I'm going," she said quickly. "I'm from Michigan, not even one of the big cities! We're asshole drivers, not experts on traffic. I barely know my way around Philadelphia yet!"

"Jarvis will pull up the GPS, he'll guide you." Tony was running the possibilities through his head. There was a high possibility that the two women after her had been Hydra, if what Steve was saying was true. It was obvious that they were after her, because Steve had contacted her. And last they knew, Steve was in DC, where Fury was as well, with SHIELD. SHIELD that now seemed to be more Hydra than anything else. This could explain the weird missions.

With one of the options, Tony was going to be taking a risk, and not just with his safety, which he wasn't concerned about as much. He was Iron Man, his suit would protect him. If there was a chance that it could go bad quick, he couldn't chance it, but Tony didn't have much of a choice.

"J, is the call connected in the car?" Tony asked, bringing his attention back to the present. He pressed his legs as close together as he could, arms tight to his side, making himself as fast as possible.

"Yeah, yeah, I can hear you," Meg answered instead of the AI. "Thanks for picking an automatic, would have some issues with a stick." He could hear the shake in her voice, but so far she was still holding it together. "Feel kinda bad about stealing someone's car-"

"Jarvis will get the information, don't worry, I'll take care of it," Tony assured her quickly. "Listen, got an idea, but gotta run it by you."

"Yeah? Okay, shoot. I think your AI is just leading me in some kind of complicated loop to try and drop any tails, anyway."

"Well, I can't let you go back to your family, not safe enough yet," Tony said, She had probably figured that out, and there was no way that he would put the twins in danger. "So, we need to come
up with a route for you, someplace to go that's safe."

"No shit."

"Sir, there is an incoming call from a blocked number," Jarvis interrupted.

"Not now-"

"Not to your line, Sir." Oh. "Okay, okay, yeah, put it through, mute my line until we know who it is."

"Mute your- What?? You're just gonna pick up on my line??" The woman shouted, voice getting higher pitched. "I'm being chased, and you're just gonna-"

"Meg??" That was a voice they both recognized.

"Steve! You crazy bastard! Oh my gods!" She shrilled out, and even Tony winced a little, unmuting his line.

"She's not wrong. Where the hell are you??" Tony asked right away. He wanted to know why the hell he didn't give him a heads up that shit was going down, but now wasn't the time.

"Tony! Good, she got a hold of you!" Steve let out a breath of relief, but sounded uneasy.

"By some force of miracle," the woman in question breathed out.

"Steve, where the hell are you? What's going on?" Tony interrupted.

"I got Natasha, and Sam, we're heading back for the Triskelion," Steve said quickly. At least Steve wasn't alone.

"I'm on my way to you, Cap," Tony said, watching Jarvis re-set his flight path. "And who the hell is Sam?"

"No way, you're in danger, too, Tony. You need to get Meg somewhere safe, maybe the Tower," Steve argued.

"Say what now." It didn't sound like she was happy about the prospect of another house arrest situation.

"The Tower is too far away, she's got tails," Tony told Steve. "You're closer." There was a beat of silence, then two voices started talking at the same time.

"Are you kidding me? You want to send me right into the fray?" "She's a civilian, you can't possibly being thinking about doing that!" "I'm not getting involved in this shit fest! I want to get Out of it, in fact!" "This is far beyond anything that we could have imagined as it is, and all of the Avengers are-"

"Sir!" Jarvis called out, muting the lines, startling Tony for a second. "Mrs Parker is on your line."

"Patch her in, immediately."

"Tony," Mary's voice came through, and Jarvis unmuted the other lines, the two voices falling silent now. "We've got problems."

"Of the mythical creature variety? Yes, I've heard," Tony said, swerving in the air to avoid going over a small airport.
"We've locked down the New York office, but I can't get a hold of Fury," Mary said grimly.


"Steve, he's going to be coming after you-" Mary started but was interrupted by some shouting from Steve's line. There a couple of pops and the line went dead. "Steve??" Tony cursed, willing the suit to move faster. "How far out are you Tony?"

"Not close enough," Tony said with a tight jaw.

"I'm lost, pretty freaking scared, and I just wanna get my kids." Meg's quiet voice said, reminding Tony that she was still there.

"Meg?" Mary asked.

Tony answered right away. "She's in Baltimore, possible Hydra tails." He let out a breath. "Just keep following the GPS, we'll get you back home." They heard her let out a breath, then there was a crunching noise, and a shout. "What was that?"

"Someone just rammed the car! Shit, my classes didn't teach me how to handle this!" There was another crunching sound. "They don't prepare you for this in Driver's Ed either, and I've really only been in one accident my whole life, and that was-" The call dropped.

"I've lost connection with the vehicle, Sir. I'm sorry."

Tony put all available power into the thrusters, already taking off another two minutes of his flight time. "Tony, you should head to DC, I can find people in Baltimore," Mary told him over the comms.

"They won't get there in time if it's actually Hydra that followed," Tony told her. He checked the map, Jarvis showing that he was about to cross state lines into Maryland. "I can get there in a matter of minutes. Try and get back in touch with Rogers. He was right, she's a civilian, not equipped to handle what we do every day."

"Be careful Tony, I'm not going to ruin Peter's vacation with a phone call saying that you got hurt," Mary said to him, reluctantly giving in.

"I've got the suit, just worry about finding out what the hell is going on." He paused a little. "Mary, who's the Winter Soldier?"

He could hear her take a breath. "We recently confirmed that the Winter Soldier is the assassin that's been trying to attack you. He's practically a ghost, Tony. You are lucky to still be alive." Mary cut the line with Tony and Jarvis took over on the HUD. Tony hated when his bad feelings were right.

The highway that Meg was on was coming into view and he was searching for the car. The smoke was probably a dead giveaway to their location. Curving down and to the right, Tony made his body like a missile to get there as quickly as possible. Jarvis zoomed in to show two people pulling Meg out of the car, kicking and flailing and generally making it hard for them.

A beeping in his ear, and a red signal was all the warning Tony had before he was trying to roll away from a target lock of a rocket. The rocket clipped the side of his arm, sending Tony tumbling down towards the highway, correcting his course just before crashing into the concrete. He stood up, hand out as his repulsor charged and saw two people with rocket launchers pointed at him.
"Stand down, Iron Man," a voice called out to this side. He barely turned his head, catching sight of a man with an arm around Meg's shoulders, and a gun to the side of her head. "We have the Captain's friend, and I'm sure you don't her blood on your hands."

"You're sadly mistaken if you think this isn't a situation that I can't get out of," Tony taunted. "And I know you're not going to kill her, you just admitted that you want to use her as leverage, and not against me." The man just smirked, not moving, and Tony didn't like it.

"Pierce wants him alive," the man said, taking a couple steps back. That was all the warning Tony had before one of the men in front of him fired another rocket. Tony fired from his gauntlet, stopping the first rocket, but was unable to get another shot off before the second one slammed into him. He was thrown to the ground, rumbling over the concrete before slamming into a SUV. He fired the rockets on his boots to get him before he was hit with another rocket. When the HUD went dark he knew that this one had been a high powered EMP. "Get the suit off of him!"

"No! Leave him alone!" Tony could hear shouting, then a single gunshot and he felt the anger building up inside of him. He was rolled onto his back, shadows moving in front of the eye slits of the mask, and he readied himself. One face passed through and Tony grit his teeth. He had seen the man in the SHIELD office last month. There was no way that there were working with SHIELD. If Hydra really had infiltrated SHIELD then it wouldn't take them long to find the emergency releases of his suit, and Tony would be ready.

As soon as the suit opened Tony was up and swinging fists. He caught the younger man that he recognized in the jaw, and turned on his foot to bring a roundhouse kick to the next guy. Tony was startled when a bullet just missed his head, sinking into the car that was behind him, and it was enough of a pause to let two bigger guys slam him back into the vehicle. He gasped, clenching his jaw, when someone slammed a tazer into his stomach.

"Restrain him," the first spoke, coming closer to Tony. "We'll take him to Strucker for now. Pierce should have the Captain and Widow." Tony took a deep breath and tried to pull away from the two men holding him. He let out a shout, his whole body tensing as another shock went through his body, then he went limp. Tony could hear, but he couldn't follow the faces of the men who were talking.

"I thought we were to wait for the Asset?" Another man spoke as they started to move Tony.

"There was a complication. Make sure you bind him, too. Get moving!"

Chapter End Notes

Edit// I have been persuaded to post the next chapter tomorrow (Sunday), instead of making you all wait until Tuesday. Let it be known that I can be as kind as I can be evil! (Lovely in the comments have talked me into this surprise. I love it, seriously guys. :D)
May 2012

Chapter Summary

Surprise extra chapter! If you did not read the cliffhanger from Chapter 9, go back. Angsty, with a surprise, (or three), but doesn't end in a cliffhanger!

Chapter Notes

Alright guys, here's how much I love you all. I'm still laying down in bed, Tony Kitty tucked next to my head, (I also have a Bucky Wolf, and Steve the Unicorn, they're on my Tumblr page), and I literally just woke up. I was moved by the comments yesterday, (and maybe frightened by a few of them ;P), and I couldn't leave you guys hanging till Tuesday. Although, your pain gave me glee...... Evil and good, see, there's a whole dichotomy.

This chapter is Angsty. Capital A. Hurt Tony for sure, some Hurt Steve. Everyone's Hurt. It's a heavy chapter in terms of things being revealed. I'll put Trigger Warning, for description of a nightmare, but I think that's being generous.

Anyways! Here you all go! Enjoy! Bwuahahahahaha

Unbeta'd, and Marvel owns more of this than I do. Also, all music/movies/tv shows belongs to those that wrote/performend/produced/etc them. I use them for humor and good times.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sam Wilson. Steve knew he could depend on him, owed him after all this, too, after dragging him into this mess. Counted him as a friend. But he was going to get a swift fist to the face if he didn't let go of Steve's arm. "Think it out, Cap, you can't go." Steve growled, turning the full force of his glare on the man next to him. There might have been an actual flinch, but Sam still wasn't letting go. "We have to get Pierce, and stop those 'Carriers, and you know it. If we don't, then there won't be anyone for you to worry about getting too."

Steve swallowed, hands opening and closing into fists. He'd seen the amateur footage of the highway, someone's cell phone from the about fifty feet away. Tony's suit had gone dark, then gone down. As several men had their hands on Tony's suit, the man who had been holding onto Meg pressed his gun to her back and suddenly she was dropping to the ground. Tony was fighting, but he wasn't strong enough to take two blows from the tazer stick they had. Steve still had bruises from his own encounter with it.

He closed his eyes tightly, palms rubbing at his face, and he could see them shoving Tony into a car in his mind, and driving off. Because Steve's day couldn't get any worse. The first time he saw the metal armed assassin on the roof, rage coursed through his body. He almost called Tony right then, to make sure that he didn't leave the Tower, but everything was already going to shit, and he couldn't risk being tracked.
When Natasha told him the assassin had a name, and who he was, Steve felt something heavy in his chest. From everything he heard, there was no way that he or Tony should be alive still. That didn't sit right with him. Then there was their own uncoordinated attack on the highway.

"Steve, he's going to be com-" Mary's voice got lost on the phone when the car suddenly jerked, and windows were smashing. The steering wheel was ripped from the console and Steve saw the flash of metal.

"Too late, Mary," Steve muttered as he grabbed his shield that was by his feet. The bullets started flying, and it didn't take too long to notice that the bullets weren't aimed just at them.

"I thought he was on their side!" Sam shouted as they took cover behind the concrete partition. Hydra was trying to take out the Winter Soldier as well.

"You two focus on the Agents," Steve told them, watching the Soldier jump over a car, locking eyes with him. "I have a feeling he's after me this time." Steve was up and running, shield up, drawing fire for Natasha and Sam, and drawing the assassin away. There was the pop of bomb being launched and Steve was jumping off the highway to the streets below, the fire from an explosion chasing him.

He turned in time to catch a metal fist coming down, but was throw back, tumbling on the street. Steve jumped to his feet as the man was running at him. "Should have killed you earlier," Steve heard the man say under his breath. He tried to slam the shield up, but the Soldier was moving too fast, blocking all his hits, getting in hits of his own.

"Can't let you kill Tony," Steve grunted out as they fought. This fight was personal. Steve had too much on the line to lose this one, there were too many people he loved in danger.

"He needs to die so they won't use him." Steve frowned at the choice of words, and then they were both rolling back as gunfire from above hit the streets, the shield, and the arm. Steve ducked behind a van, looking across the way as the Soldier pulled out two pistols from behind him, and was standing, letting out three shots with precision. Familiarity warmed through Steve at the motions, but he didn't know why, didn't have time to figure it out. As soon as the other attackers were down, the pistols were turned on him. The shield deflected the shots, but he was up on his feet and throwing his body into the dark haired man. The edge of the shield caught the flesh arm, causing him to drop the guns, but Steve already knew the man was a master of hand to hand as well.

The Winter Soldier grabbed the edge of the shield and Steve's feet were leaving the ground as he tried to separate him from the shield. His shoulder strained, but Steve flipped with it and threw a punch at his head. The heavy booted foot kicked out and slammed into Steve's chest, and his arm slid out of the leather straps as Steve was sent down to the ground.

Steve's eyes widened a little as he got up and running, the shield sailing past him, andducking away just in time to miss the edge of his own shield. He felt the wind as it flew by, saw it embed itself into a vehicle, but Steve didn't stop. He was starting to regret not taking Natasha's advice about possibly having another weapon on him when he saw the Soldier pull out a knife, but again, not the time for thoughts.

"You're going to give them exactly what they want," the man growled as they fought.

"You're the one working for them," Steve countered as he tried to disarm the man. The metal arm
was really working hard, he could hear the power source working overtime to counter-act Steve's attacks.

"I don't work for anyone!" The assassin was pissed now and worked with a renewed vigor that had Steve taking more steps backwards then he would have liked. The metal hand grabbed Steve's throat and lifted him up effortlessly. "They're going to use him to make more, and you've provided them with the distraction needed. You drew him out of hiding."

Steve swung his feet up and kicked the Winter Soldier in the face, and the momentum was enough to force him back and let go of Steve. "You'll get him taken, and her killed."

The metal arm was coming down on him and Steve was able to turn just enough, but reached his arm up to grab the back of the Soldier's neck and used the momentum to slam his face into the ground. He heard the heavy clang and when the Soldier moved again, the face mask was gone. Everything for Steve screeched to a standstill.

"Bucky?" He heard his own voice say, but he didn't remember moving his mouth. It wasn't possible, but that's who he was looking at. James Buchanan Barnes. The twisted expression of anger was not what he had expected though. They stood frozen, looking at each other, then suddenly Bucky was pulling another pistol to aim, but was knocked off his feet as Sam slammed into him from above.

"Cap! We gotta go!" Sam was shouting, but it was all background noise to Steve. His shield was being shoved into his hands, and suddenly he couldn't see Bucky, he was gone. Sam was wrapping his arms around Steve's chest and they were up in the sky, sirens starting to blare in the background.

When Steve saw the footage, the words from the assass- Bucky, made sense. There was a good chance that he had just gotten his friend killed, and Hydra had Tony. Hydra had always been obsessed with recreating the Serum. Hydra hired AIM. And now, they had one of the men that was intimately familiar, in more ways than one, with the formula they had been working with. Had Bucky really been working to try and stop that? All the thoughts tumbling around Steve's head were starting to give him a headache.

Agent Maria Hill was pressing a phone to Steve's ear then, pulling him out of his thoughts. "-eve? Steven!" Mary? "Captain Rogers!" Her tone always had Steve standing to attention when she used his rank.

"Ma'am," he answered on instinct, hand coming up to take the phone from Agent Hill. "Mary," he said softer this time, voice full of a lingering anguish.

"Steve, listen to me, don't interrupt. I've got people with Meg, she's on her way to the hospital. Tony's suit is being transported back to the Tower. Bruce is already working to try and track Tony, and Coulson is already calling in favors to get more eyes open for him." Steve felt himself sinking down, someone guiding him to a chair. "Let me help you take care of this, because right now, you're the only one who's able to take care of Project Insight." Hill and Fury must have updated her on everything. "You've got to do this."

"Find him," Steve said, opening his eyes when he hadn't been aware they were closed. "Find him for me, Mary." At that point Steve wasn't sure if he was talking more about Tony, or about Bucky. Everything was feeling conflicted inside. He knew that Peter would be safe, so he didn't have to worry about that. It was becoming clear that he wouldn't have been a target, just him and Tony. Steve wanted his best friend back, but he couldn't let Bucky find Tony first. That man wasn't his best
friend, not right now. The Bucky Barnes he knew wouldn't kill a man without batting an eye. Even when he was a sniper with the Howling Commandos, Steve could see that every kill weighed a little on him. He didn't lose much sleep over it since they were Hydra targets, but Bucky never lost that bit of his soul in the job.

As he put the phone down, he saw Natasha, Sam, Hill, and Fury all looking to him. Steve took a deep breath then stood up, arms straight, hands fist. "Let's make a plan."

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Tony woke with a gasp, head whipping back, and his eyes shot open. He groaned in pain when he tried to move, and found that he couldn't actually move that much. There was a slight buzzing in the back of his head, but he swallowed and willed himself to look around. A cell, because of course it was. Tony felt like his life really couldn't get more cliche. In fact it looked almost medieval, complete with old bricks and stones for the floor and walls. Except for the very high tech glass wall that served as the entrance.

His hands were chained in front of him, and his chest and legs were bound, not that tightly he noticed, to the chair he had been propped up in. There was a hiss as part of the glass swung out, and someone was walking in. A familiar face as of recent for Tony.

"Mr Stark, I had wondered when you might be joining us," the German accent flowed.

"Strucker," Tony said flatly. "I was right, the name sounded douchey, and it seems to fit you." He looked over the man as stealthily as possible, but froze when he saw the Hydra symbol on the shoulder of his jacket. Fuck.

"I was very specific with them, to not aim for your head when they brought you in," the man continued like Tony hadn't said anything. "I am glad to see they listened. I need your mind intact."

"Taken for my smarts and not my good looks? Now isn't that a twist." Tony noticed that he was alone in the cell.

"We did not need the woman anymore," the man said, noticing that he was looking around. "So we dispatched of her." He spread his hands wide as Tony jerked once in the chair, clenching his jaw. "We are going to be spending a lot of time together, Mr Stark." Strucker walked over, sitting down on the cot that was against the wall. "Your friends and family will not be able to find you, at least not easily."

"I don't know," Tony said, not turning his head to look at the man, wanting to appear indifferent. "Put a fire under Cap's ass, and you reap what you sow."

"If your Captain manages to stay alive." Tony arched an eyebrow. "You have missed all the fun while we were transporting you. Captain America is facing off against the entirety of SHIELD, excuse me," he smirked a bit. "Hydra."

"He did it once before, I'm not too worried about him." Tony was incredibly worried about him.

"The Captain will find that Hydra has changed since he last remembers." Tony felt the ropes around him loosen, and Strucker grabbed the chain between his hands, pulling him up to his feet. Then, to Tony's incredible amusement, he turned his back on Tony, and started heading for the door. As soon as the door was open the tiniest bit Tony was moving, one hand holding onto his fist, swinging up, coming down to slam against the back of Strucker's neck and-
He shouted when something sharp stuck his wrist from the cuffs around them, electricity shooting through his body again. It only last for a second, but it was enough to send Tony down to his knees, panting for air.

"I was so hoping you would try something." Tony turns a glare up at the man that is standing over him. "Come now, I will give you a tour of where you will be working from now on. Hydra is pleased to welcome you to our ranks."

Steve leaned against the wall of the hospital room, curtains drawn, door closed, thankful that the night staff was quiet. Not that they'd see him in the room unless they were looking for him. Natasha was waiting outside the hospital for him, keeping an eye out, hidden as well. After she had released all of Hydra's secrets on the internet, everyone knew who she was, and now who Steve was. Jarvis was working, along with Bruce, to grab and hide other details, but that was something that Steve couldn't help with. He had learned how to use the tech of the Twenty-First century, but that didn't mean he knew the first thing about hacking.

He could already hear Tony preparing a lecture about calling it hacking.

He let out a sigh, looking down at the ground, before bringing his eyes back up to look at the woman in the bed. Steve couldn't help but feel guilty. If he hadn't of called her, gotten her involved, he wouldn't be looking at Meg in the bed, recovering from what could have been something fatal. Natasha had gotten a copy of the reports for him to look at. She'd recover, a minor surgery to her lung that had been nicked by the bullet, but they said she'd been lucky. She was asleep, had been since they finished surgery nearly ten hours previous, but her vitals were strong and promising.

Steve had been the one to go and explain to the couple who were caring for the twins what had happened, in disguise of course. He was going to have a talk with her later about the elderly couple, but they had agreed to keep the babies with them until she was discharged. He had had to convince them to do it.

"I could always get Coulson over there," Natasha said quietly in his ear, comm unit on. She always knew what he was thinking about.

"No," he shook his head a little, whispering. "Not yet, at least. We'll wait and see what happens."

"I know it bothers you when kids are involved."

"A lot bothers me," Steve retaliated.

"Yeah, but one of them has your name, oh right, and they're your godchildren." He swore he heard the little smirk in her voice.

"Let's wait and see. Feels like I'm not really in any position to actually step in on this one." Steve didn't feel the need to voice the other part of that thought. 'Since it's my fault this happened.'

"Your place or not, can't let kids get ignored. Specially not so young." Steve hummed almost inaudibly. "Security's doing another sweep, powering off for five."

Steve nodded, pressing a finger to his ear put the ear piece into sleep mode. His eyes ticked up suddenly when he noticed that there was a sliver of light coming from the hallway, past the door. That had been closed just a few seconds ago. He straightened, his whole body on alert, only to be slammed back against the wall, a metal hand at his neck.
"What were you thinking?" Steve had a hard time associating the hissed voice in his ear with Bucky, but the man was standing in front of him, threatening him again.

"Buck-" He gasped when the hand tightened.

"Stop calling me that." They both stopped moving when a cart went past the room, but it didn't stop. "You've forced them further underground, now I can't find them." He pressed against Steve with his body. "You almost got her killed." Steve's hand flew up to grip the metal wrist, trying to pull it back, even just enough to pull in a single breath. "What were you thinking dumping that information?"

"Had-" Steve pulled in a breath when the hand pulled back a fraction of an inch. Seems he wanted the information from Steve more than he wanted him dead this time. "We had, too. It was the only way Bu-"

"Don't," he growled, giving Steve a shake.

"Stop." The raspy voice caught the attention of both men. Bucky let Steve go, but didn't move away, keeping him crowded against the wall. "This is why neither of you will babysit Conor, don't need him having the wrong male influences."

"Meg." Steve went to move towards her, but Bucky pushed him back with a hand to his shoulder. Confusion clouded Steve's face at the action. Was he protecting her from Steve??

"He's a giant puppy, let Steve go." The head of the bed was starting to move up, and Bucky slowly, almost painfully, brought his hand back down. "We figured out that he likes to be called James, if you have to call him anything at all."

Steve frowned now as he moved closer to her bed. "I think you'd better explain what's going on." He noticed a bit of guilt flash through her eyes.

"You've probably figured out that he wasn't under any orders by anyone to kill Tony, or yourself." She took a breath, putting a hand to her right side. "He found me again, a couple weeks ago, but dressed as he is now." Steve glanced over at his best friend, now standing at the foot of the bed, and sure enough he was in civilian clothes. The world didn't have the face of the Winter Soldier yet, so he was able to walk still relatively safe. "I've only seen him a couple times, when I go out with the twins."

"Why?" Steve felt himself asking, and looking to Bucky, James, now. He felt detached from the moment, like he could wake up at any time, and hopefully find himself back at the Tower, asleep on the couch with Tony and watching Supernatural.

"Apparently, my former boyfriend, the father of my children before he died, used to be one of his former Handler's." Steve looked back to the front of the bed. "That's why he was following me before your visit in January. I didn't know anything about it."

"You said he was in the military."

"That's what he told me," she told the Super Soldier. "I dated him for five months, Steve," she said quietly, almost imploring him to not think that she was a spy, or something else. "He was abroad most of the time, I didn't know what he was doing, or who he was working for." Steve pursed his lips, arms crossed over his chest.

"Hydra was sending people to watch anyone you had contact with." Steve looked over when Bucky started talking again. "I," Bucky paused for a second. "I remembered her.
"So you went and found her again," Steve finished. "But, why just her?" Bucky gave him a deadpan look, and Steve was reminded of the Bucky from Brooklyn that he almost stumbled. "The babies...."

"They would have taken them, trained them to be killers," he growled. He was about to say more, but his head moved just enough, and Steve heard what he did. Footsteps coming. Bucky grabbed Steve's shirt and threw him into the bathroom, stepped in with him and closed the door silently as the nurse walked into the room.

The bathroom was dark, but they were close enough that Steve could still see Bucky glaring at him. They heard the nurse start to talk with Meg, getting vitals and asking questions now that she was actually awake. "Help me, Bu-James," Steve whispered to him. "Help me find Tony." Then let me help you, he wanted to say.

"Your team made a mess," he whispered back. "I have to stay here. They know now that there are two kids of a dead Hydra Agent. They're a target." He put a finger on Steve's chest. "Keep them safe."

Steve frowned and they vaguely heard the nurse leaving, closing the door again. "What do you mean? They're not with the Avengers." Bucky straightened and left the bathroom, whispering a question to the woman in the bed. Steve stepped out as Bucky was already moving, Meg looking a little pale.

"The grandparents are Hydra, too." Steve put his hand to his ear, turning the comm unit back on, and Bucky was grabbing his wrist. "Have someone waiting outside the house." Then he was out of the room.

Steve took a breath, watching him leave. "Romanoff, call Coulson."

Tony was very purposely not doing anything. Except breathing. He was sitting on the counter of a lab that Strucker had brought him too, glass walls of course, and he was doing nothing. He obviously wasn't going to do what they wanted him to do, and they could shock him all they wanted, but he wasn't going to bend to their whim.

Tony watched Strucker coming back towards the lab, a woman with dark hair, and a nasty glare in her eyes, walking behind him. He suddenly thought of the 'Human Experimentation' part of Strucker's file. He opened the door and allowed the woman to walk in, then closed it, leaving the two of them alone. She looked young, maybe in her teens, early Twenties.

"Tony Stark." She had a thick accent, but it was the way that she said his name that had him sliding off the counter. There was anger there, with a hidden sadness, and fury. "I have waited a long time to meet you."

"Can't say I have the same pleasure," he said, watching her circle around a desk.

"I'm told that I can't kill you." But I want to, isn't said. "But that they need you to do something."

"Yeah, good luck with that," Tony said, circling around the counter, trying for casual, and not running away. He had turned his back to her, confident that she actually wouldn't kill him. "I'm not a team player, I don't work well with others, well, there's a whole file about it." Tony turned around and bit the inside of his lip when he saw how close she was then. Her eyes rimmed in red and she brought her hands up towards his head, wisps of red energy trailing after her fingers.
"I can be persuasive."

Tony shook his head, taking a step back, feeling like someone had clapped in front of his face. He frowned and looked at the woman as she studied him back. He heard a low keening noise behind him, from something large, and he turned around. Letting out a shout he stumbled backwards as a Chitauri Leviathan flew past him. When he turned back around he wasn't sure if he wanted to cry, or throw up. There they were, everyone he cared about, had pulled into his home, his life, they were there, dead, on some god forsaken rock in space.

He saw the Avengers, they went down in battle, they fought, like they were expected too. As Tony walked closer he saw a woman slumped over, familiar brown hair falling over her face. Mary had been reaching out to someone, something. When he saw the shield, the familiar shield, lying broken in half on the ground, he fell to his knees next to the body. Tony couldn't breathe, his hands were shaking, but he forced himself to reach out, to check for a pulse.

"Come on, Cap," he whispered brokenly. "You made a promise."

The skin was cold, but he desperately searched for a pulse. And then Steve's hand shot up and grabbed his arm. "You could've saved us." He was dying, Steve was dying in front of him, and it was his fault. Steve couldn't breathe, he was covered in blood, and it pained him just to get the words out. Tony was unable to look away as those once bright blue eyes faded, the spark dying. "You let him down," he heard Steve's voice whisper, but the man in front of him was dead.

Tony pushed himself back, only looking away when a light caught his eyes. Another portal was opening, and he could see the army, could see the earth. They were going to destroy the Earth, like they meant too the first time, and he had lead them there. He would be left here, with the bodies of those he had gotten killed, those that he had loved. No, not everyone. Peter was still on earth. He had let him down, just like Steve said. He had let him down, and now Peter was going to die, and Tony would be left to rot in the darkness of space.

'Not alone.'

Tony gasped and shot up, the illusion disappearing and reality snapping back into focus. His chest was heaving, body searching for breath, and sweat was dripping down his face and down the back of his neck. He spotted the woman and started to lunge towards her, but the cuffs let out another shock and he tumbled to the ground.

"What did you do to me?" He ground out, moving his eyes to look at the dark haired girl. Her own eyes were wide, the red fading. Then it turned into a sickening grin.

"She will keep going into your head, Mr Stark," Strucker's voice filled the lab now. "Until you decide to work with us, and not against us."

Tony felt his limbs shaking, his jaw trembled, but the anger that was coursing through him fueled his glare, and was all that allowed him to push himself up to his knees. "I'm not going to work for you. You'll fry my brain before I give in. I did three months in a cave, and everything you think you can show me, is already stuff I've showed myself. Bring. It. On."

"It's going to be a long night, Mr Stark." He looked at the girl. "Continue, Wanda."

Tony didn't move, he watched her drop to her knees in front of him, and bring her hands up to his head. He was defiant in his gaze, watching her eyes light up with red again, throwing them both into his head of horrors. Neither of them were expecting what happened though.
He looked up, back in space, but now, someone was walking towards him. Tony's feet started to push himself backwards against the ground, hands still chained, unable to get up in time. It wasn't a who, it was a thing, covered in golden armor, a dark hood pulled over its grotesque face. It moved faster than Tony, and a grey hand with one too many fingers reached down and grabbed onto Tony's shirt, hauling him to his feet.

"*How long we have waited for you to come here, Anthony Stark.*" It was the same voice from the Chitauri attack, the same smile that always looked like it was filled with dark blood. "He'll be pleased that you came to Him."

"You're not real," Tony whispered, his body frozen in fear.

"Are you sure about that?" There was a chittering sound that echoed across the space, and a shiver raced down his back. "There are many ways that we can reach you, can hurt you." It pulled his face closer, deep voice whispering with a twisted glee. "He is willing to make a deal with you, to save you some suffering for what you've done to Him."

"No." Tony shook his head, and tried to pull away from the grip of the cold hand. The other hand of the creature flew up and grabbed the side of Tony's head.

"You will either do so, or we will make it happen." Blue power started to circle around them and Tony's eyes widened.

He found himself suddenly sliding across the smooth tile floor of the lab, and the girl, Wanda's, eyes had a blue tinge, and she looked,... concerned.

"What was that?" She whispered, before moving to crawl closer to him. "I could not see where you were, but I could feel something." She held up her hand and saw a shimmer of blue swirl through the red. "You have been controlled before." She smiled at him again. "I can use that."

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Steve smiled at Peter and Wade, holding onto the Starkpad. "Hi Mr Steve!" They both chorused together.

"Hey boys." He had practiced this smile in the mirror. "Having fun in Disney World?"

"Yeah!" Peter said immediately, hopping on the bed a little. "Granpa let us ride the Tower of Terror today!"

"It was super awesome!" Wade shouted, grinning. "I almost threw up!"

Steve blinked a little. "Is that a good thing?"

"Duh!" Wade rolled his eyes a little. "The ride has to be really amazing if it almost makes you barf!" Steve's eyes flickered to Peter who was nodding in agreement.

"Well, then I'm glad you enjoyed it. Never been on a ride like that myself," Steve told the boys. What else do you have planned on your last few days down there?" He was really hoping that he would be able to get Tony back before they got home. Downstairs Mary and Phil would talking to her parents on video call, briefing them on what happened, and that they were still searching for Tony, but not to tell the boys.

"Tomorrow, we're gonna go to the Star Wars stuff." Peter's eyes were dancing with excitement. "I
"I want a red one!" Wade exclaimed. "Then Pete and me, we're gonna be Jedi, only he'll be on the Light side, and I'll be on the Dark side."

"They're gonna teach us how to use the light sabers, then we can have our own fights." And as if they needed to demonstrate, the two boys jumped up on the bed, and started pretending, holding onto nothing but air, but they were making the noises themselves. Steve couldn't help but laugh as he watched them.

"I'm gonna be a young Obi-Wan Kenobi!" Peter shouted to Steve as he jumped around Wade.

"And I'm gonna be a bad-ass-" Wade started.

"Language," Steve threw in.

"-kick-butt Boba Fett!" The older boy amended his words, but never stopped the play fight.

"But, I thought that Boba Fett was a bounty hunter," Steve said with a little frown. He had only seen one of the Star Wars movies so far. Tony kept telling him to wait, that he was going to make a big night out of it, because the movies had to be done in style. "Don't only Jedi has light sabers?"

"Bounty Hunters could steal one!" Wade grinned.

"Daddy would be Han Solo!" Peter rolled across the mattress. "The coolest space outlaw around!"

"What about me?" Steve asked with a smile.

"You're obviously Episode Four Luke Skywalker," Wade responded, and Peter nodded. They both suddenly dropped back down on the bed, flopping on their stomachs, out of breath.

"You and Daddy should come down here," Peter said with a smile, and Steve fought to keep his from faltering.

"I've still got some work to take care of, and so does Daddy," Peter nodded a little as he spoke. "Tell you what though, we'll go down there again this year, yeah? Maybe over to Disney Land instead. It'll be the three of us, and maybe we can get Wade's Mom to say yes again."

"Awesome!" Wade arm-pumped, and Peter smiled brightly at Steve.

There was a knock at the connecting door in their hotel room, and Steve could hear Rachel telling them they had to change clothes. "We gotta get ready now, Mr Steve. We're going to get some dinner, and we're gonna be eating with Winnie the Pooh." Wade was already scrambling off the bed, but Peter sat up. "Tell Daddy I said Hi, and that I miss him. I miss you, too."

"We miss you, buddy."

"I'll be back in a few days. Bye!" He waved eagerly and Steve waved back before the screen went dark as the call ended. He let out a sigh and dropped back on the couch.

"Tony, where are you?" he said quietly to the ceiling. Steve wanted to put on his suit, grab a quinjet, and just start searching, everywhere. He'd kick down the door of every location that Tony had found in those file, and gets answer one way or another, but he knew it'd be useless. Steve had given the list of coordinates that had been on the thumb drive to Meg, to give to Bucky, since it was obvious that he was making himself scarce whenever Steve was about to show up. The response he had
gotten back was that most of them weren't Hydra locations, but that they'd probably be cleared out by now anyway. He had hinted that they should be looking overseas, though.

"He'll find you when he's ready," Meg had told him as she flipped through the pictures that Phil and Mary had taken of the twins. "I don't know any more than you do, but he'll come."

"Did you know who he was when he found you again?" Steve asked her quietly, studying his hands in his lap.

She put the tablet down and shook her head. "Not until a couple of days before everything went to shit. I had only been able to find out that his name was James, and then he remembered his last name. I didn't get a chance to tell you."

"You were going to meet me in DC." He looked up at her then.

"And I was going to tell you then, I swear," She played with a ring on her finger. "He didn't mention Hydra until right before the attack, too. When he found me, in the park of all places, I was ready to bolt, pepper spray in hand. That's when he told me that he knew my ex, and it all got very weird after that."

"You weren't even supposed to be going out," Steve mumbled.

"My kids need to see the outside world at some point. Tony and I can only watch so much Buffy while under house arrest without going crazy." She let out a little sigh. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner, about meeting up with him, or when I found out who he was. He asked me not, too, anyway. He's just, trying to remember things. I meant it, he'll find you."

Jarvis had informed Steve that a lot of files on the Winter Soldier had been released in the Hydra internet dump, still no pictures, and that he could access them whenever he was ready. Steve would wait for Bucky to tell him about it, but it didn't mean that he wouldn't look for his best friend.

"You have some nice digs." Steve sat up on his elbows when he heard Sam's voice. "Living in style under Stark's roof."

"I don't even stay on this floor that often," Steve told him and sat up on the couch. "We're usually up on his floor." Sam raised an eyebrow at him as he dropped into a large chair. "We're an item, is that still a good term? It sounds weird to say."

"It sounds weird coming from you," Sam said as he nodded. "So you usually shack up in his place, then."

"We moved date nights up there," Steve explained. "Most of the time we get interrupted for one reason or another, and we'll just sit and watch Supernatural." Sam's eyebrow was up again. "Tony says that it's depressingly domestic, but he's hooked on the show, I can tell." He shrugged a little. "We watch it up there, because we have more warning if Peter's gonna be coming out to the media room."

"Don't wanna inspire any nightmares?" Steve nodded. "Can't say it's a bad idea. Was that his kid you were just talking, too?"

"Yeah, him and his best friend Wade." He leaned his shoulder against the back of the couch. "I can't let him down, Sam. I gotta get Tony back here."

"We'll get your boys back," Sam said as he sat up in the chair. "Both of them." Steve gave him a grateful smile and nodded. "But, we're not doing anything until the morning. Unless your super
intelligent AI wakes us up."

"I guess I can agree to that."

*Three days.* Tony thought he was going to go insane. He actually might. Three days of being trapped inside of his mind, thanks to Strucker's Enhanced. He was aware of everything, saw and heard everything, and sometimes he could break through enough to say what he wanted, instead of just nodding, or shaking his head.

The girl, Wanda Maximoff, had stumbled on the part of him that had been affected by Loki's scepter, and apparently it was like an exposed nerve. She hadn't seen what he had, dealing with the Other, but she had seen a weakness to exploit, and now instead of blue eyes, he had red eyes as he was forced to work on Hydra's Serum.

Tony found a few moments every few hours, when Wanda would lose focus, talking to her brother, where he could break free of the control. He started programming a distress beacon, hidden inside some sub-program. He had activated it that morning, and he hoped that Bruce had found the signal.

A book dropped in front of him on the desk, and he glanced up to see Strucker, and his stupid monocle. "Wanda, let him read it. I think that he has earned a reprieve." Tony gasped when he felt the control slip from his body. The chains were gone, but the cuffs were still on, threatening to give him a shock if he tried to step out of line.

The book was leather bound, well-worn, but not thin. He reached a hand out and slowly slid it towards him. When he opened the cover he saw familiar hand-writing. "How did you get a hold of this?" Tony growled out. His father's journal, another one.

"We've always had it," Strucker told him. "Read it." He turned and left the room, Wanda trailing after him. Tony glared at them, but looked back down at the journal. He slowly turned the pages, eyes skimming over equations, and inventions, weapons that had eventually been produced by Stark Industries.

'Ve've finally found a use for Anthony.' Tony frowned, and glanced at the date of the journal. He had been nearly five when this one was written. 'His circuit board shows immense mechanical talent. I showed it to Zola, and he agrees, Anthony will be an excellent mechanic for The Asset.'

Tony's hand was unsteady as he turned to a different page. 'Anthony rebuilt one of the car engines today, and actually increased the intake, and horsepower. Next week, I'll make sure he finds something that resembles the Soldier's arm. I don't have enough time to keep rebuilding the, and we don't have much time left to train him now, and to work on a Serum for him. Although, I'm following the progress of a promising young scientist, and I believe that progress will be made.'

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath before reading anymore. Howard had been testing him as a child, had been cultivating his talent? The pages made it sound like his father had been working with Arnim Zola, the man who had helped the Red Skull. But why?

'Banner wants to wait, but I don't have time. I've decided that every night I'll have to slip the serum into Anthony's drink. Hydra is becoming impatient, and Maria is becoming nosier by the day. They want their Mechanic. I'll have to take the rest of the Serum to a different location, hide it. If we're going to use my son to work the arm I created, I'm going to make sure it's done right the first damn time. Have to get it done before Anthony thinks that he can do something like get a job after MIT.'
Unfortunately, the beatings didn't turn him into the obedient boy we had hoped.'

Tony leaned back in the chair, opened his mouth, and tried to wheeze in a breath. His father had been Hydra. He had worked with them. And they were going to use him like just another tool. But, wasn't that what they were doing with him now? They were using him to stabilize the Serum, with the formula that Bruce had made, provided to them by Howard, and they were going to use it on humans.

The door hissed back open and Tony's head shot up. Another scientist walked in behind Strucker, holding onto a clear container with white cloth inside. He put it on the lab counter before leaving.

"It was your father's idea to bring in Zola, to SHIELD. It would make it that much easier for Hydra to grow." Tony swallowed, biting the inside of his cheek to keep from charging at the man. He walked to the side of the lab and tapped on one of the vials holding a blue liquid. "We have your first test subject, and we're very positive about the outcome of this test." He felt Wanda's gaze from behind him, outside of the glass, and he was forced to get up from the chair to approach the container. Tony hoped that it would be another animal.

The fabric inside the container moved, and as Tony moved closer there was a cold knot forming in his chest. A soft whimper caught his attention first, and when Tony was made to look inside, he saw a baby, with blonde hair and blue eyes, staring back up at him. Inside he slammed against the control of his body.

"This is finally the perfect specimen we have been able to create," Strucker crowed, grinning as he looked at the baby. Tony thought that she couldn't have been older than six months. All he knew was that this couldn't happen, he couldn't do this. "It was a pity that we couldn't have collected a sample of your DNA earlier when you didn't join the fight against the animals, but, this was so much better." His body jerked as he fought against the control, but Strucker didn't notice. Wanda did. "Captain Rogers truly has a gift, and hopefully it wasn't lost with this clone. Don't kill it with the Serum, Stark."

Tony's hands gripped the edge of the counter, knuckles turning white, and he growled. "I won't-" he forced out. Strucker turned back to him, but the door was pulled open by another soldier.

"Sir," he managed to get out, trying to catch his breath. "It's the Avengers, they're here!" A low boom could be heard overhead, punctuating his statement.

"Get the artifacts out!" Strucker started ordering, heading for the door. He left the room giving commands, and Tony knew that he didn't have long.

He heard the baby give another whimper and Tony opened his eyes. They had created a child, it was living, breathing, moving, in front of him. And they wanted him to use it like a piece of trash, make it into another tool for them. No matter how Tony felt about the science of clones, they had created life, and this was a part of Steve. He wasn't going to let them doing anything to her.

Tony growled, then screamed as he pulled against the mental restraints. There was crack, a large pop, and he was stumbling forward onto the counter. With a glance back he saw Wanda on her knees, hand to her head. He didn't delay, scooping an arm in to wrap about the baby and the blankets, and held her to his chest as he moved to the other end of the counter to scoop up the vials. Turning in a semi-circle he reached around the grab the journal, and small knife, from the desk and bound out of the room and into the hall.

Gunshots and explosions were above him, so he knew that he was underground, but now he ran into the problem of getting out without some of the soldiers doing a double-take. "Why does this place
have to be made out of concrete in all the wrong places?” He muttered. There was a tug on his shirt and he looked down to see blue eyes staring up at him. "These are not the type of people we want seeing your good looks, sweetheart. Help me find a way out, yeah?” He ducked down underneath a desk when he heard boots running towards them. Six soldiers ran by, carrying several large containers that Tony didn't have enough time to look through.

Crawling out he ran towards where they came from. "Wherever the loudest boom is, that's probably where Steve is. Steve is, uh, well, your Dad? That's gonna be weird until we talk about this. Anyway, that's where your handsome, DNA originator is." Tony blew out a breath as he found some stairs. "This is the most awkward conversation I've had with a baby. And I had a lot of awkward ones with Peter."

Tony ran up two flights of stairs before he thought he saw sunlight. "Oh, this is gonna hurt my eyes. Hang on." Reaching down he pulled a piece of fabric up and out to be a cover over the baby's eyes, but not lay over her face. "Listen, usually I'd say, make your displeasure known, wail away if the sun hurts, but that would be really counter-intuitive to escape." An explosion rocked the floor under Tony's feet, and he instantly curled his body over hers. "He's close, that's for sure." Tony checked to make sure the leather journal and vials were still tucked in some folds of the fabric, before reaching out for the door.

Except there was suddenly a grip around his wrist. Tony looked up to the other Maximoff twin, Pietro, standing there. "I don't think you're allowed to go anywhere."

Tony turned his body away to put distance between him and the baby girl. "Don't do this," he told the kid. "Get your sister, walk away while you can. This isn't-"

"We will be walking away." Wanda came up the stairs behind him. "But you are not done here." She looked at him holding the baby and her lip pulled up in distaste. "What right do you have to hold that child?"

Tony felt his back straighten, and he held himself differently. The twins noticed this immediately. "What right do you have to force me to experiment on her??" He hissed out, pulling his wrist away from Pietro. "You know, you may have volunteered for whatever Strucker did to you, but she did not. She didn't even have a right to her creation."

"So you're going to take her out of here?" Pietro looked him up and down, clearly judging him. "And do what?"

"Give her a chance at life," Tony growled at him. And then Wanda's hands were at his head again and he was backing up into the wall.

"Daddy!" Tony's eyes widened when he heard Peter's voice. He whipped his head around to look, but nothing had changed around him. Wanda backed away then, fingers over her mouth.

"You have a son," she nearly whispered.

"Let me get her out of here." Tony would never admit it, but his voice may have taken a pleading edge. Pietro looked to his sister, ready to grab Tony, to stop him from walking out the door. She shook her head to him once, he frowned, but he stepped away from the door. Tony didn't wait for what came next.

As he pulled the door open, he threw an arm up to cover his eyes and he started moving again. "I wonder if this counts as your first kidnapping," Tony idly wondered, quietly. He didn't want to let anyone else know where he was. There was more gunfire, and shouting, but it sounded a bit away.
"I mean, this is a rescue, but you weren't taken from a safe home. This is, literally, the opposite of safe."

Tony turned the corner and saw three men lift their rifles at him. He froze, both hands around the bundle in his arms. They walked towards him, obviously high enough up in the ranks to recognize that he shouldn't be killed on sight. Something flew between them, bounced off the stone wall, slammed into the helmet of one man, and back from the direction it came. Tony had never been so happy to see the blur of Captain America's shield. He was not thrilled when he saw a man in black jump down from the roof, land on top of one of the other soldiers, then turn and catch the last in the gut, throwing him from the building, with a metal arm.

Tony turned around and ran, but a hand was already on his shoulder, turning him around and pressing his back to the wall. There was no defending himself from the assassin this time, not with the child in the middle. Cold blue eyes stared at Tony, but something seemed different about them this time. The black mask was still in place, but it didn't muffle his words when he spoke. "Did you make the Serum?" Tony didn't answer and the hand on his shoulder tightened. "Did you make it for them?"

"No one can get their hands on it," Tony told him, voice tight and angry. He wished he had had enough time to destroy the entire lab, to take the research out with it, but he was only able to wrap the vials in the fabric that covered the little girl.

The Winter Soldier let go and Tony and headed for the door that Tony just came out of. He went to shout at him, but Steve was leaping over the railing, landing between the Soldier and Tony. They two locked eyes, and Steve nodded, before turning back to Tony and running over to him.

"Tony," Steve breathed out, wrapping his arms around Tony. Before he could hug him too tightly, Tony angled his chest away. When Steve started to frown, the genius motioned downwards with his head. Steve's eyes widened when he realized what he was looking at.

"You're just going to let that lunatic go??" Tony felt there were more pressing matters at issue. Captain America let their would-be assassin go!

"Details later, he's going to destroy the lab and any research," Steve said and put his arm around Tony's back, ushering him back towards an exit. "Time to get out of here, now."

"I could not agree more," Tony said, practically flying down the stairs with Steve at his heels.

Chapter End Notes

Tuesday, you can looking forward to a fluff scene. I mean, it's kind of short, but it's Diabetes inducing, or something. I cried tears of sugar while writing it.

Love you all!!
May 2012

Chapter Summary

Not so much Angst. Baby Girl gets a name!

Chapter Notes

The past two chapters were a trip, weren't they? Well, here we've got some comfort going on, and, one of the most sappiest scenes in this story. Diabetes inducing, tooth rotting, sweetness. I am not paying for the medical bills that you'll all incur because it was so sweet.

On a side note, I've finished a rough outline for the rest of this story. Good news, Bad news. This story is probably at least half way done now, but there's going to be a part three. I fully intend on following Peter into his adventures as Spider-Man, because how is Tony Stark going to handle a teenager, a teenage superhero no less?!

You're all amazing, and I love you! Enjoy the chapter!!

Unbeta'd, and Marvel owns more of this than I do. Also, all music/movies/tv shows belongs to those that wrote/performe/produced/etc them. I use them for humor and good times.

It wasn't until the back of the quinjet was up, and they were in the air, did the little girl tucked in Tony's arms started making noise. She had started to wiggled, unhappy sounds coming from her mouth, arms pushing up. Tony tried to soothe her, but he was kind of out of his league on how to deal with an unhappy baby. Tony was still arc reactor free, and a relative asshole, when Peter was this age, and he only saw him a few times a month.

Steve was sitting next to him, leaning over a bit, wanting to help but not knowing what to do. He was still in shock at the fact that Tony had emerged with a baby from that place. Once Bruce had found Tony's signal they had been moving. Bucky was somehow already on the jet waiting for them, and told Steve that he was going to destroy everything inside of the facility. When Steve offered to wait for him he declined. He'd make his own back to the States.

Clint and Natasha were up front, and Bruce was secluded to the side, his headphones on, trying to unwind from a Code Green. Steve and Tony were on their own with the unhappy baby. Tony glanced at his sight-for-sore-eyes boyfriend and made a decision. "Let me try something."

Steve looked at him, cowl off and by the shield, and raised an eyebrow. Tony shifted on his seat, moving closer to Steve. His elbow bumped up Steve's then suddenly he was sliding the baby into his arms, hovering below, and watching as Steve practically curled around the baby to make she he didn't drop her. His eyes were wide as he looked at Tony. Tony vaguely thought that this was how Mary felt when she did the same to Tony so many years ago. It had been fun.
As Tony adjusted Steve's arms to properly hold the girl, she almost immediately stopped. Tony hummed under his breath, watching them. He was struck by how good Steve looked with a baby in his arms. He was looking back down at her, a sense of awe in his expression, like he couldn't believe that something as precious as this life existed in the world. It was soft and open, and Tony couldn't help but think a little vulnerable.

"She was being held by Hydra?" Steve had whispered his question.

Tony rubbed the back of his head, wincing a little. "Well, kind of." He took a breath. "There's really going to be no easy way to say or explain this." Steve glanced up at him. More than anything he just wanted to grab Steve and start kissing him, wrap him up, get back to the Tower, and never let him out of his sight again. He wanted to forget about Hydra, about the visions that he saw, and what he was forced to make.

"Remember when Bruce and I said that AIM had been working on cloning?" Steve nodded at Tony's question. "Good, that makes this a hell of a lot easier. Steve, that's your little baby clone."

Steve stared at him in silence, barely blinking.

"I'm sorry, I'm not sure I'm following you?"

"I'm sorry, that was awful. I'm so tired that it's making me more a dick than usual." Tony waved his hands a bit. "They had some of your DNA, from the blood from that one fight, with the animals. And, I can't be sure, but they tried a lot of tests with that..... And she's the one that came out on the other side." Tony rubbed his hands together. "They tried to clone you, I guess? And...." He trailed off as Steve looked back down at the baby.

"They-" Steve stopped. They what? They tried to remake him? They created life? How did any of that sound good? When the truth was that they had tried to make another Super Soldier, and they were going to use an innocent life for experiments. As he looked down at her though, the bright blue eyes, blonde hair, strong jaw line, he couldn't deny that she looked like him. In that moment, Steve knew what he was going to do. "She's mine."

Tony watched him carefully. He saw the moment that Steve fell in love with the baby, saw it in his eyes, saw in his stance, even seated. "Yeah, Cap," he said quietly. "If you want to do this," he added, and Steve looked back up at him, a small wrinkle between his brows. "I'm just, giving you all the options, even the unpopular ones. You know what it's like to help with six year old, how to handle that. But, a six month old, that's all different."

Steve shook his head, holding her a little closer. "I don't think it'd be right, giving her up." Tony tilted his head a little, and something just clicked. The look that Steve had, that was the look that he had captured from Tony in some of his drawings with Peter. He let out a breath and slumped back into his seat a bit more. No wonder Steve liked to draw him when he was with Peter all the time, that look was enough to knock Tony off his feet.

"You'll have to think of a name," Tony said quietly after a few moments. "We'll, ah, get a room put together, too, at least pick up a crib on the way, she'll need somewhere to sleep."

"There's already an extra crib at the Tower," Steve said. "Two of them, but we only has to use one at the moment." Tony's brow furrowed in confusion. Steve looked up at him when he didn't say anything. "For Conor and Rowan."

Tony felt like someone had punched him in the gut again, all the air rushing out of his lungs. How could he have forgotten? His body didn't want to follow what his brain was screaming, saying that he need to get more air into his body. Voices were saying something, but it was all fuzzy, like he was
underwater. He slipped from seat, but suddenly Natasha was in front of him, hands on his cheeks, and her mouth was moving, but he couldn't make out her words.

He should have done more, he should have saved her. He orphaned two newborns, and of course they would be at the Tower, Steve would want to take them in, it was his friend. Tony didn't get the right to say that he might have been her friend, not anymore. And here he was, telling Steve that there was another baby, even though it was no one's fault, but-

"Tony!" Tony's eyes widened and he blinked, a sharp pain on his cheek. "Can you hear me now?" He nodded once. Natasha gently turned his head back to look at him. "She's alive." He frowned. "They didn't kill Meg, she's alive." Tony didn't think it was possible, but his body slumped more. Lost all form was more like it, sliding down on the floor, but in relief this time.

"Tony." Steve's voice sounded vaguely distressed.

Tony started shaking his head. "Not here, we can talk about the mean and nasty stuff they did later. Not here." Natasha helped him back up into his seat before heading back to the cockpit. Steve had shifted and wrapped an arm around Tony's shoulders, pulling him in and kissing his head. Steve's arm was doing its best to tuck him against Steve's body, and Tony found his face closer to the still awake baby in Steve's other arm. They locked eyes and suddenly she was moving her hand forward and patting Tony's nose twice. "She's going to be just like you, Rogers."

"I think you predicted this, actually," Steve told him, smiling a bit.

"You were the one who said that if you were going to have a kid, it was going to be a girl," Tony retaliated, unable to look away from the baby. She still managed to have that smell that all babies had, Tony called it that 'new-human-smell.' He vaguely remembered huffing Peter like an expo marker when he was this small. He wondered if it was just a Universal law that all babies, clones or natural, needed to small that good.

"And you said that we would all be doomed," Steve recited, remembering their talk at Mary and Coulson's wedding. "She would be just like me, and that's not even worrying about when she's old enough to date."

"I was right, though." Tony tilted his head up a little, going from one set of baby blue eyes to another. "We're already doomed. Did you see the way she pat my nose? Like she was trying to comfort me? The death of me, Steven Rogers, the two of you is what you will be." Steve smiled fondly down at him and Tony felt his heart melt at the sight. That was a smile just for Tony. Well, he might have to share it with the new addition, but Tony had gotten it first.

"We're still a couple hours out from the Tower, why don't you try and get some sleep," Steve suggested. "I'm not going anywhere, and you like to use my side as a pillow."

"When you offer it up like that, how can a fella say no?" Steve snorted softly and moved his arm so that Tony could rearrange. He laid out along the seats, resting his head on Steve's thigh, then leaning it against his side. His eyes closed and he smiled softly when Steve ran his fingers through Tony’s hair a few times. "I missed you," he whispered, knowing that Steve would hear him.

"Missed you more."

Tony had never been more thankful for an uncomfortable position when trying to sleep. He had nodded off a few times, but never fell deep enough to sleep that he could dream. He tried pushing
every aside, just enjoying that Steve was actually there, he was warm, and alive. He'd be going home, and he see his son, his Peter. He could try and pretend that none of it happened, at least for a little bit. That's all he wanted. To keep pretending that he was going to be okay, that the only thing he needed to worry about was that he was turning thirty-five in a couple weeks.

The jet landed and Tony slowly leaned up, trying not to groan when his back and hips protested. "I'm going to redesign these chairs," he grumbled, stretching a little. "I shouldn't be more sore when I'm getting up, no new places of hurt." A much more rested Bruce approached him and he shook his head a little. "I'm alright." He grabbed the little bag he had made from a piece of fabric from the baby and handed it to his friend. "Present for you, though." Bruce looked with a question in his eyes, but Tony just waved a hand before looping his arm with Steve's, following him off the jet.

Just inside, Tony barely had time to prepare himself for an armful of Mary Parker. She didn't say anything, just hugged him, which sadly pulled him away from Steve. When she pulled back a little, looking him in the face, he gave her a little smile. "You need to stop disappearing."

"Not nearly as long last time though," he said, thumb rubbing her cheek a little, before patting her back. "We're going to need a few things for Steve's floor, I understand that it might be on your floor at the moment."

"Have to do with the baby with in his arms?" She asked, nodding her head back towards Steve who was only standing a few feet away.

"Just about everything," he nodded. "Even in the suit, he looks good as a Dad, don't you think?"

"We'll be talking later," she told him quietly. "Go with him, help him out and we'll get what he'll need for the night." She pat his cheek and pulled away. "You'll have to go out tomorrow to get more stuff, preferably in the morning before Peter gets back."

"I don't actually know that much about the everyday care of small children," Tony hissed as she started to walk away. "Remember, me, not actually there, shadow passing in the night, only stepping up after the kid could walk and talk and pee."

"You kept Peter alive when he was a baby," Mary told him with a smile. "Now, shoo."

Tony watched her go then went back over to Steve, who was holding onto the baby in one arm, sitting up more so she could curiously look around. "You took to holding her pretty fast."

"Bucky's oldest sister," Steve reminded him as they headed for the elevator. Tony leaned in to press on the touch pad and the little girl was trying to lean forward when she saw the lights flash.

"She's a curious one," Tony said with a smile as Steve adjusted her position. "I'll hold her while you get dressed, maybe take a quick shower. Mary is rustling up all the stuff you'll need, at least for tonight." Steve took a deep breath and nodded before they stepped onto his floor.

It took Steve a second to actually see that they were on his floor, instead of Tony's, but when Tony stopped in the living room, he was staring at Sam napping on the couch. "Uh, you didn't get to meet him, but that's Sam."

"The one that you mentioned over the phone?" Tony asked and Steve nodded.

"He's been crashing here, helping try to find you, and keeping me sane," Steve mumbled, a faint blush crawling up his neck. "Come on," Steve said and they headed for his bedroom this time.

Tony pushed the door closed with his foot, plopped down on the bed and held his arms out. "I'll take
her, check her diaper, wait for Mary with hopefully some blankets, while you get all freshened up.”

Steve leaned down to pass the baby to Tony, but stayed there for a second before he was kissing Tony, hand cupping his cheek. "I'll try not to take too long," Steve told him, smiling before heading for the bathroom.

"You're making it really hard to not follow you into the shower," Tony muttered. Steve laughed as he walked in, closing the door. As the water started, Tony gently fell onto his back, bring the baby down with him, resting her on his chest. She was still as she laid on top of him, looking at him, then looking around the room, her attention span never long focused long enough to stay with one thing. Tony gently moved the soft hair around on her head, letting out a sigh.

"I'm going to have to talk to Steve about this, about you," he said quietly. "And I'm not going to like it, so that means he's not going to like it. I hate having serious conversations, specially ones that involved feelings." Her blues eyes looked back to his brown ones. "You didn't know that yet, so, I won't hold it against you. Not like you asked to be, well, here," he finished lamely. "But listen up," he levered himself up a bit with his elbows, making sure that she didn't slide or roll off of him. "That guy in there, he's taken on this big mantle, one even bigger than Captain America. He's become Dad, or you know, whatever you end up calling him as you learn to talk. I still think he's just a baby himself, but I'm old."

A little hand reached out to touch his nose again, and Tony couldn't help but kiss the tiny palm when it came back down. "This might be tough for him at first, so try not to hold that against him. He didn't have time to prepare for this, and now he's being given another full time job. He won't regret, I know him, so try to go easy on him if he starts to look tired, or something." She made a soft sound and started to smile. Tony moaned a little. "Of course you're going to have his smile, I can see it already." Tony took a breath and licked his lips. "I care a lot about him, I mean, so much that I can't even comprehend the level of what I'm feeling, so I'll be there at his side. All the time. And that means that I'll be there if you ever need anything, too. I'm going to protect you." Tony brought his hand, thumb brushing over one of her round cheeks. "He won't let you down," he whispered.

Steve shut the water off, and looked in the mirror as we wiped a spot clean of the steam. He hadn't gotten much sleep while they were searching for Tony, and he was wondering if Bucky was okay, but luckily it didn't show too much on his face. He towel dried his hair and thought about what he was going to do. Getting Tony back was top priority. He was forced to take a step back when it came to Bucky, but that still garnered a lot of his attention. Now though, now there was a child out there, an innocent life that he was stepping up to take care of. Thinking about having a family, and suddenly having one, well, it was a little frightening, but not nearly as scary as he thought. At least not if Tony was there by his side.

In DC he had a lot of time to think about Tony, to think about what they had started out as, (barely even friends), and what they were now. Steve couldn't see himself without Tony, now, but they had to talk about a few things. Spending that time in DC, the new information about Hydra and SHIELD, about who they could trust. He rolled his neck a few times and slipped on his shirt before leaving the bathroom. Tony was still on the bed, lying on his side this time. He looked up and smiled at Steve, then waved him over.

"Come here, you gotta see this." Steve walked over, and sat down behind Tony, his leg pressing against Tony's back. He looked over him and saw the baby on her stomach, looking at Tony. She was making little noises that Steve could only guess were determination, and she was moving her arms and legs. "She's starting to crawl."

Steve grinned, leaning down and then she was looking at him. "You're fast, aren't you?"
"I think she's going to be an athlete of some kind," Tony said as Steve leaned over his hip to get closer to the baby girl. "Peter was a quick learner, but he wasn't this active of a crawler. Hey, J? You recording this?"

"Of course, Sir," the AI chimed in, lowering the volume to not frighten their new resident. "Shall I create a new folder?"

"Yeah," Tony nodded a little. "Set it up on Cap's private server."

"Give Tony special permissions," Steve added, throwing Tony a smile. "I think I have a first name for her."

"Hey, don't tell me." Tony turned, twisting his body underneath Steve. "Tell her." He used his knee to nudge Steve off of him. "But, I'm gonna stay here cause I still wanna know, so you kind of are telling me in a way."

Steve snorted and rolled off Tony and brought his legs underneath him, seated right in front of the, his, girl. He reached down, paused for half a second, then picked her up. Tiny fingers wrapped around his thumb and he sucked in a breath. Tony was suddenly leaning in towards Steve's ear. "Peter did the same thing to me," he said softly.

"Jamie," Steve said with a smile on his face. "I'm going to name you Jamie. I don't have a middle name for you yet, but, to be fair, you did surprise me." There was a soft knock at Steve's bedroom door and he felt Tony getting up to go answer it. "Named you after my best friend, a guy I know always has my back. I'm gonna try and do right by you, okay?" Her mouth opened and she gave what Steve considered to be an impressive yawn. "So now you're finally tired, huh? You have all that excitement and barely react, but I tell you your name, and you're ready to sack out on me?"

"Take it while you can," Tony said as he came back over, dropping a diaper and a onesie in his lap. "She'll wake you up in the middle of the night, and then forget about it when she figures out how to crawl out of a crib."

"She'll be doing that pretty quick, won't she?" He moved her carefully onto her back, taking the stuff that Tony gave him to help with the diaper change.

"Wouldn't be surprised if she's figured out the jail break routine before Thanksgiving," Tony smirked.

"Don't say stuff like that." He made a face as he looked at the diaper. "I'm getting cloth diapers tomorrow."

"Brave man."

"That's what Ma used," Steve said as he double checked that he had put on the diaper right. Jamie was starting to kick her legs about as he fumbled a little. Tony smirked a little when he heard the Brooklyn accent pop a little. "It's what Buck's sister used, too."

"We're gonna have to make a list of everything you need." Tony sat down on the edge of the bed, watching Steve try to get restless legs into the outfit. "This is fun to watch."

"No tips?" Steve shot at him. As soon as he got one foot in, Jamie was taking it out as he moved to the next foot.

"Oh, no no no," Tony shook his head. "I was lucky enough to work with two piece outfits. And in California, most of them were shorts, so I didn't have to go through this trouble."
"You should be learning with me, then." Steve managed to get both little feet in, then quickly slid the outfit up her legs before she could wiggle out.

"You get first dibs," Tony offered with a hand wave. "I'll go out with you tomorrow to pick up what you need though. We'll take the SUV, less of a hassle then trying to get things delivered right away."

It was much easier getting the top part of the onesie on, and he snapped up the front, then picked her up again. "That has to be so much warmer, yeah? Doesn't that feel better?"

"J, raise the temperature by six degrees in the bedroom," Tony called out. Steve raised an eyebrow at him as he stood up. "Yeah, you're not supposed to put a blanket over top a baby, or under, or even any pillows or stuff like that, avoiding suffocation and the like.. So since she can't sleep with something warm over top, I want to make sure the room is plenty warm, cozy, even."

"When can you put a blanket or pillow in?" Steve asked as he walked over to the crib that must have been brought in while he was taking a shower.

"We'll have to watch her tomorrow, see if she can roll over yet." Tony stayed on the bed, watching Steve rock back and forth gently to lull the baby girl to sleep in his arms first. "If she can roll pretty well, and if she can push away at stuff, like stuffed animals or blankets, then you should be okay. I think I read something about needing to know that they could roll over if they accidentally smush their face into the fabric."

Steve gently laid Jamie down into the crib, watching her for a moment to make sure she was going to stay asleep. "Jarvis can send video feed to your phone or tablet," Tony whispered.

"Don't have a new phone yet," Steve told him, eventually able to tear his eyes away from the crib. "Tablet should be in here, though." He walked over to the stand by the bed and pulled open a drawer before pulling out tablet.

"High tech baby monitor." Steve nodded at Tony's words. "Come on, I need some coffee, and I'm sure you could use something to drink, too." Tony got up and gently slipped his arm around Steve's to try and lull him out of the room. "She'll still be here in fifteen minutes, and you can watch and listen to it all with the tablet. Less of a chance that we'll wake her up with any talking as well."

Steve followed him out and to the kitchen, walking quietly past the still sleeping Sam. "Must be familiar for you?" Steve asked Tony as he instantly moved to the coffee maker. The older man glanced back at him, eyebrow raised. "Taking care of a baby?"

"Only in the broadest of senses," Tony told him. "I can never remember if I've mentioned this, but I was just that guy who shows up for the first two years of Peter's life. I maybe saw him a grand total of thirty-five times a year. A Year, Steve." He poured in some fresh coffee ground, and grabbed the pot to get water. "I missed out on a lot, and I didn't really learn the basics that well. The most I did was a change a diaper, but I can literally count the number of times I've done that on both hands." He sighed a little and started to coffee maker. "Mary keeps telling me that I'm not allowed to say this to myself anymore, but I really wasn't a great father. But, I stepped up. Took a really shitty reason, but I did it, and I wish I could have kicked my younger self in the ass for wasting those first two years. I'm never getting those back."

"At least you were there," Steve told him. "You could have given up altogether." Tony hummed and nodded a little. "Then, I guess we learn together, on a lot of things."

Tony looked back at Steve. "You said that already..... You keep saying together." Steve could see something in Tony's eyes, something crumbling, shaking his foundation.
"Well, I mean, yeah," Steve nodded. "Sure, there are some things that we have to discuss. A lot has happened in the past week alone, but-"

"Don't make any promises," Tony interrupted him with a soft voice. "Not until we talk." He rubbed his face with one hand, then opened a cupboard above the sink and pulled out a bottle of aspirin. "Like, the first thing on my mind is apparently we're friendly with our assassin? Well, my would-be assassin." He dry swallowed a couple of pills, then turned to look at Steve.

Blue eyes closed, and he took a deep breath. "Not exactly you're assassin anymore." He opened his eyes to see Tony just watching him, expression blank. "It's, really complicated, and I don't know many details, not yet anyway."

"You acted like you knew him, Steve," Tony threw in. "Which, I really don't want to think about any possible implications that you hired a hit on me. I haven't updated the Will to include you yet."

"Tony," Steve frowned but Tony was waving it off. "I kind of do know him," Steve confessed, and it was now or never. "It's Bucky, the Winter Soldier is Bucky Barnes." Tony stared at him. He made very deliberate movements then, getting a mug, and pouring his coffee into it. "Tony?"

"You're positive?" Tony asked in almost a whisper, and Steve nodded. "He knows you, then?"

"I'm not actually sure," Steve said uneasily. "I haven't had a chance to ask him that. Like I said, I don't know much, but I know that he wasn't under any orders to attack you." Tony's expression screamed 'Is that supposed to make me feel better?' "He was trying to make sure that AIM, and Hydra, didn't finish their Serum or other experiments."

"So, killing me was his solution?"

"I didn't say that it was a good solution." Tony rolled his eyes and took a drink of his coffee. "He and Meg have been talking." Steve jumped back when Tony spit out his coffee, wide eyed. "Would have been my reaction, too." "She's been talking to him?! Is she crazy??" Tony hissed, remembering that there were a couple people sleeping past the kitchen.

"Has she told you anything about her ex?" Steve asked, and Tony furrowed his brows, shaking his head.

"The most I know is that his parents are still alive, and that's where she was headed."

"They dated for a bit, and she told me that he was in the military on active duty." Steve was still trying to put together all the pieces of this as well, but he figured he won't get that until Bucky decided to talk to him. "Still iffy on the exacts, but he actually worked for Hydra, and was one of the Winter Soldier's Handler's. Bucky sought her out last week."

Tony started rubbing his nose. "Why is this our lives?" He muttered under his breath. "Okay, so, how do we get more information?"

"Wait for him to come to us," Steve said, and his tone couldn't have sounded more defeated. "Or wait for Meg to make him do it?" Tony set down his mug and walked over to Steve, rubbing his arm a little. "Feels like everything is changing."

"I think world shaping situations have a tendency to make someone feel that way," Tony commented. "I didn't find out much where I was, a few comments in passing, but what exactly happened to SHIELD?" He knew what he read from Howard's journal, but he was hoping that
"Officially? There is no more SHIELD," Steve told him gravely. "It had been infected by Hydra, by Zola. Alexander Pierce, he was leading the charade." Tony grabbed his mug so he didn't give away his thoughts. He wasn't sure how to tell Steve about Howard being part of Hydra, not while he was still trying to process it. "We put all of SHIELD and Hydra on the internet." Tony's eyes widened. "Jarvis and Bruce grabbed a lot of stuff about you and your work, and other dangerous information. But, it's all out there."

"Including your face, and name," Steve nodded. "Shit, Steve."

"It had to be done. Those Helicarriers you helped with, they were going to use them to kill so many people." Steve ran his hands through his hair, remembering seeing some of the names that were on the list, part of Zola's algorithm. "They were going to take out those that could have stopped them, that could have stopped Hydra. Bruce and Mary were on that list, even Wade's name, and you and Peter." He shook his head a little as he tried to calm his nerves and anger. "We had to stop that from happening, had to stop that from ever happening again."

Tony suddenly grabbed Steve's hands. "I'm going to send you to art school, for whatever classes you want. I'll make you a school to teach at, if you want. Make you a studio to work in, and we'll get your stuff into Galleries all over the world. Whatever you want to do, whatever you want to try. You and Meg, cause you're both artistic types. Just, whatever you want to do, so you don't have to keep doing shit like this, and-" Tony stopped as Steve cupped Tony's cheek, pressing against the warm skin.

"I think we both know that I would have gotten restless," he leaned in to rest his head against Tony's. "If I quit, that's not going to stop others from doing bad things, from killing others, or from another invasion. I have to still be there, to stop them from hurting you, from hurting Peter, from hurting Jamie now." Steve let his thumb rub against Tony's cheek, using his other arm to pull Tony a little closer. "I don't know who to trust anymore, not after what happened with SHIELD, what's happening with Bucky. I never thought I would find myself doubting Natasha, but I did, in DC, on our missions. But I know I've never had to doubt my trust in you."

"Careful," Tony whispered, a ghost of a smirk on his lips, an empty one. "One might think you were getting attached to me." He nodded his head towards the bedroom door before Steve could respond, and he was talking again. "You've got a bigger responsibility now, Steve. There's a little girl in there, one that needs someone, and you said yes to that. She, shit," Tony ran his hand through his hair. "She's an innocent in this, someone who didn't even ask to be brought into this world. I have so many complex thoughts on cloning, but...."

"You saved her," Steve told him, pulling back a bit to look in his eyes. "You could have run, left her there." Tony gave him an offended frown. "Doesn't change the fact that you saved her. You didn't do what they were forcing you to do."

"I think there were more," Tony told him. "I don't think they made it, but the way he talked...." The brunette looked down at the floor, before Steve was lifting his head back up with his fingers. "They have two Enhanced, they're just kids. The girl, she has these powers, and it makes me hate magic even more, but, she can get into minds." Steve frowned a little. "She was able to control me, like Loki's scepter did." Tony was gripping Steve's arms tightly, closing his eyes and counting to five in his head.

"We'll have to check her over," Tony continued, changing the subject, feeling a panic attack buzzing at the edge of his eyes. Steve didn't saying about it, but the concern written in his eyes was plain to see. "They only had me working on their Serum, and I've given all that Bruce. Right before you
attacked the base, that was the first time I saw her, so I don't know if they've done anything else. Also, cloning is still a fairly vague scientific field, with not one accepted way of handling it, not that AIM or Hydra would follow those guidelines anyway."

"I'm sure Bruce will know exactly what to do," Steve told him, trying to reassure him. "We'll watch her tonight, and Jarvis will be monitoring her, too." Steve ducked his head then. "She, uh, she kind of really looks like me, doesn't she?" He asked with a shy smile, and Tony couldn't help the little laugh that bubbled out of him.

"We're doomed, all doomed." Tony leaned in to kiss his nose. "Okay, we should make a plan for tomorrow. I have an early morning meeting that I can't put off, and then we should."

"You need to get some sleep, Tony," Steve interrupted. "You've been with Hydra for five days."

"I'm not getting sleep anytime soon," Tony told him, but kept going on so Steve couldn't question him. "And getting stuff that you'll need for Jamie is going to be more important. So, while I'm at my meeting, which has nothing to do with the business, you should take Jamie to Bruce. When I get back we'll go out and buy probably too much stuff, and I won't even bother to listen to you try and tell me to not spend the money. And when we get back, we'll have to prepare for Peter coming home." Tony had effortlessly moved from Steve's arms to grab his coffee again, mouth still moving a mile a minute. "And we'll have to contact the hospital in DC, because we can't leave Meg down there for long, and we have to find out when she can be discharged. Let's just convert the floor above my workshop into an artist studio for both of you. I'll need your input and direction, but I think it would be good. You can take Peter there for lessons-"

"Tony."

"-I know that he would love the space as well. I was also thinking that we're going to have to convert some rooms up in the Penthouse. I'll make the Penthouse two stories, complete with a spiral staircase, because we'll need more bedrooms, and at least another bathroom."

"Why are you going to need more room up there?" Steve asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Because if we're going to have two bedrooms up there for the kids, then we need to have more room. With four of us up there, we'll need at least three bathrooms, specially with me, and when Jamie grows up." Tony looked at Steve, now with both eyebrows up. "Move in with me?" Tony rushed out. Steve blinked a couple of times at him. "...Or not, just a suggestion. It's probably too fast though, and we've both just gotten back from some really big things. I'm probably really not thinking with a clear head, but I thought that you could paint a mural-"

"I love you," Steve blurted and Tony stopped, back straightening in shock.

"You what?" He asked, turned to face Steve. The blonde's face was turning pink, but he never looked so determined, shocked, but determined.

"I love you, Tony Stark." Steve moved forward, sliding his hand across Tony's arms. "I am in love with you."

"You- bu- wha?" Tony felt like his brain had shut down. "I just talked for like, five minutes, probably without taking a breath."

"You always do that," Steve countered. "I kind of expect you to do that, it's part of who you are. You also just asked me to move in with you, with Jamie."

"Yeah, I uh, I guess I did." Tony took a long gulp of his mug. "I mean, yes, I did that, and I'm not
"You don't have to say it back, not right away," Steve told him, and Tony tried not to wince, guilt pooling in his chest. "It kind of just fell out of my mouth, but I've been thinking about it a lot."

"Of course I love you, too," Tony told him. He wondered how long they could go back and forth with interrupting each other. Setting aside his now empty mug, he slide his hands up to rest on Steve's shoulders by his neck. "I think I jumped the gun when I asked you to move in." Tony knew he had to act quickly when he saw the rejection start to flood Steve's expression. "There's just, there's something that I found out, and that you should know, and it could change your mind." He reached into the inside pocket of the jacket he had on and pulled out Howard's leather journal. "You should read this."

"What-"

"I'm sorry to interrupt, Sir, but Mrs Fitzpatrick is calling." Jarvis had entered the interruption game.

"Right, I'll take the call in the guest room." Tony pressed the journal into Steve's hands. "Read it, I'll be back."

"Whose is it?" Steve asked as Tony stepped back to head for one of the empty rooms.

"It's Howard's," he said and left the kitchen. He couldn't help but peek in Steve's room to see if Jamie was still sleeping before moving down the hall to the guest room.

Tony made a motion with his hand for Jarvis, and he heard the call pick up on the speaker overhead. "Tony?"

"Hey, Rachel," Tony said, taking a seat on the edge of the bed. "Is everything all right? Nothing happened with the boys, did it?"

"Oh, Tony," she let out a flustered little sigh, but it almost sounded like she was smiling. "I was going to ask you that." Tony blinked a little at the admission. "Mary told me that you were back. I wanted to see how you were handling being back."

"You're calling to check on me?" Tony asked, a little dumbfounded.

"I know that we've had our, rather extreme, differences over the years-"

"You've borderline hated me."

"-but a part of me has always cared about you." Tony raised both eyebrows in surprise. "If I actually hated you, or didn't care about you at all, I wouldn't give you the time of day. I know there have been times I could have been nicer-"

"I could have been less of a dick sometimes."

"-but I know that you take care of my family." Rachel's voice got a little a softer as she went on. "Peter adores you, and he's talked about you the whole time we've been down here. He's very excited to come back home, to tell you about everything that he's seen and done." Tony licked his lips, briefly biting the corner of his lips. He missed the soft guitar starting to play behind the call. "I also, I wanted to thank you for letting us take the boys, especially Peter, to Disney World. I know you weren't thrilled, and that you probably don't get to see a lot of moments, some of the firsts, because of your life, and, I really appreciate it, Tony. I wouldn't have any other man be the father to my grandson."
Tony thought he felt his lower lip tremble a little, but he swiped a hand across his face. "Thank you, Rachel," he said after a second. "I, I really needed to hear that."

"We're family, like it or not, and I'm realizing that I could have been liking it for a hell of a lot longer." They both shared a laugh and Tony smiled.

"I'm going to be okay, Rachel," Tony told her. He raised an eyebrow when he heard low level singing, queuing in on the song playing. "May have gotten a shit hand dealt to me this week, but, I think I just got a new deck, and it's looking more favorable."

"Good," she said, and Tony could imagine her nodding her head to punctuate the statement. "You've got more people in your corner than you know." He could hear her take a little breath. "We'll see you tomorrow, should be right before dinner."

"Can't wait," he said, and finding he really meant it. "I'll talk to Pierre and Marcello, and we'll all have a big family dinner."

"I think that's a really great idea, Tony. Goodnight."

"Safe travels," he said before they hung up. Tony listened as the music picked up in volume, and he got up, heading for the hallway. Tony was pretty sure he recognized the song, something that was released earlier in the year. Not a slow song, but it was easy listening, something that would probably be on Tony's guilty pleasures playlist. He stepped out and saw Steve standing there, waiting for him. Tony's mouth dropped a little he heard that it was Steve singing with the music.

"Cause even the stars they burn," Tony's brows went up, not really knowing that Steve had a set of pipes on him. "Some even fall to the earth. We've got a lot to learn, God knows we're worth it." Steve took a couple of steps closer to Tony, reaching out to take one of his hands. "No, I won't give up." Tony let himself be pulled closer, gently.

"I don't wanna be someone who walks away so easily, I'm here to stay and make the difference that I can make." Steve took Tony's other hand. "Our differences they do a lot to teach us how to use the tools and gifts we got, yeah, we got a lot at stake." Tony swallowed, Steve's blue eyes locking onto his, feeling what Steve was putting behind the words. "And in the end, you're still my friend at least we did intend for us to work, we didn't break, we didn't burn. We had to learn how to bend without the world caving in. I had to learn what I've got, and what I'm not, and who I am." Steve rested his forehead to Tony's as he held out the note.

"Steve," Tony whispered. I won't give up on us. "What are you doing?" Even if the skies get rough.

"I'm singing to you," Steve whispered back. I'm giving you all my love. "Thought that was kind of obvious." I'm still looking up, I'm still looking up.

"Well, I won't give up on us," Steve picked back up in the song, a small smile on his face. "God knows I'm tough enough." He started to sway with Tony in the hallway. "We've got a lot to learn." His hand slid down to Tony's waist. We're alive, we are loved. "God knows we're worth it." And we're worth it.

Tony put his hand on Steve's chest, smiling as he teared up. "I won't give up on us," Tony sang back to him in a whisper. "Even if the skies get rough. I'm giving you all my love, I'm still looking up." Steve leaned in and Tony eagerly met his lips for a kiss. It was warm, and tender, but strong, and everything that Tony needed, and wanted. "You're such a fucking sap." Steve smiled at him, his whole face seeming to light up. Tony wrapped his arms around his neck and they kissed again, Steve's arms winding around his waist, holding them close. "But, you're my sap, cause I'm in love
with you, too."

"You know," the two men jumped at the new voice in the hallway, but they didn't let go of each other completely. Sam Wilson was leaning against the wall, his arms crossed over his chest. "That's the song you have to pick for the first dance at your wedding." Steve chuckled, kissing the top of Tony's head, before dropping his cheek on his hair.

"Steve made a deal with Coulson that he has to dance to 'Star Spangled Man'," Tony commented, pulling a groan from the blonde.

"That is, just awful," Sam said as he tried not to grin at Steve's discomfort. "Really, Steve, that really is a horrible thing for you to do. But, if that's how it is, then I will be telling everyone about this horrifically sweet moment my eyes had the simultaneous pleasure and displeasure of witnessing. Preferably in a toast, at your wedding, in front of everyone you know and love." Sam pushed himself back up, rolled his eyes up in thought. "And probably tomorrow, too. Yeah, I'll be telling them tomorrow, too."

"Tony, this is Sam Wilson," Steve said in introduction, one arm waving towards Sam. "Sam, Tony Stark." He looked towards the man. "What are you doing spying on us, anyway?"

"Wasn't spying," Sam stated. He pointed to a door that was between them. "I came to use the bathroom. Not my fault that you thought the hallway was the best place to have a touching moment with your billionaire boyfriend."

"I don't date him for his money," Steve murmured, turning his face into Tony's hair.

"Oh yeah, not with that little nest egg that you're sitting on," Sam commented with a smile, going into the bathroom.

Tony raised an eyebrow, poking Steve's side. "What nest egg?"

"Nest egg is completely not the right word," Steve said. "The Army finally calculated my back pay, from when I was frozen in the ice." Tony raised his eyebrow, awaiting the answer, and Steve fidgeted a little. "Just a little over five," he mumbled the last word and it got lost. Tony poked him again. "Million."

Tony whistled low and long. "Yup, no more bitching about how I spend my money on you," Tony said with a nod. "And you are so picking up the ice cream and pizza tab on Supernatural nights from now on!" Steve laughed and kissed him again. He tightened his arm around Tony's waist and started to move them back towards the kitchen.

Tony saw the journal sitting on the counter, and he tried not to tense, but Steve felt it anyway. Their hands tangled together. "I heard that song a couple months ago," Steve started to say, and Tony looked away from the book. "After I was already in DC, after Valentine's Day. Maybe it was because I would have rather have been anyway but in DC at that time, closer to you, but I thought of us with that song." Tony looked up at him. Steve Rogers was incredibly sappy when he wanted to be. "I've been holding onto it for just the right time."

"Got it in one," Tony told him quietly.

"This," Steve touched the top of the leather bound book with two fingers. "The only thing that changed after reading this, was how strong I see you. What was planned for you, what they were doing, and to see where you are now? To be able to be here with you? That's what really matters."

"We'll be discussing the more important issue at hand with Mary and Coulson, right?" Tony said.
"Oh, hell yeah," Steve nodded. "Yeah, kind of can't be ignored how deep Hydra really was." He kissed the end of Tony's nose. "But, that's not here or now."

"Alright sap, listen," Tony chuckled, poking Steve's chest. "We're going to back into your bedroom-
"

"I don't wanna hear anything!" Sam called out to them as he walked past the kitchen. Tony couldn't control which finger he sent in reply.

"-and you're going to lay down and get some sleep." Tony finished and grabbed Steve's tablet. "I'm going to lay next to you, and use this, and stare adoringly, and creepily, while you sleep."

"Glad to you know that you're very straight forward in your responses." Steve snorted at Tony's grin, wrapping his arm around his waist again. "Wanna be a co-parent with me to a little baby girl?" Steve whispered against his ear as they walked towards Steve's bedroom.

Tony's hand lifted to pat Steve's cheek. "Wouldn't have it any other way."
Tony stepped out of the door of the Stark Tower. He really should just make it official and name it Avengers Tower, seeing as he left the singular A up at the top. He saw the black town car pulling up to the curb, and smiled. Then everything froze. The others cars in the streets, the walkers on the sidewalk, even the sounds seemed to freeze. He frowned and turned around, still heading for the car. Something wasn't right.

He reached out for the door handle, there was someone important inside the car, someone he needed to keep safe. When the door opened, Tony stopped. There was no one inside. He straightened back up and turned around just as a sharp pain erupted in his chest. Tony gasped and his hands flew up to press at the pain source, face crumpling when he pulled back his hands to see them covered in red. Looking down at his shirt, it was quickly stained with blood.

"He will make you suffer. There are many ways to make you hurt, Anthony Stark."

"No!" Tony shot up in the bed, eyes wide, heart pounding in his ears.

"Tony?" Steve's soft voice pulled his head to the side. He was standing by the crib, Jamie in his arms as she drank from a bottle, Steve helping to keep it up. "You alright, babe?" He walked over, sitting on the edge of the bed.
"Uh," Tony ran both hands through his hair, quickly catching his breath. "I will be, yeah," he nodded. He rubbed his hands dry on the blanket, realizing they were sweaty, (and there was no red on them), he reached out to adjust the blanket that Steve had wrapped Jamie in. "How long have you been awake?"

"Only about ten minutes," Steve told him, kissing his cheek. "She's very quiet," he said with a look down to Jamie. "Jarvis actually had to wake me up, because she just didn't cry."

"Blessing and a curse," Tony mumbled. "Did she sleep alright through the night, J?"

"Very well, Sir," Jarvis confirmed. "She woke up two times, but quickly went back to sleep on her own." Tony pursed his lips a bit, but nodded. "Dr Banner is still in his lab, and I have informed him that the two of you are awake. He awaits your arrival at your convenience."

"Jarvis, classify new arrival as Young Lady Jamie," Tony said, shooting Steve a small smile. "Full name to go on record, later this week."

"Very good, Sirs."


"Sounds too Dominatrix," Tony said, reaching for the tablet that was on the bedside stand. "Jarvis prefers Lady as a proper title. I made him too stuffily British."

"I shall start putting in regular breakfast orders for scones and tea, Sir." Steve noted that it vaguely sounded like a threat from the AI.

"I'm thinking," Tony drawled as he stretched his arms, trying to shake off the last of his nightmare, "I'll go take a shower first, while you keep feeding her. Then I'll come out and take over so you can get cleaned up."

"Then a quickie breakfast before you go off to your mystery meeting?" Steve asked, getting up so Tony could slide out of the bed.

"Sounds like a plan," Tony said with a nod. "I promise to tell you all about the meeting when we meet up to go baby shopping."

"Nothing bad then?" Steve leaned in to plant a kiss on the back of Tony's neck.

"Hopefully very good." Tony smiled at him as he slipped into the bathroom.

Tony pulled on the sleeves of his jacket as he got out of the car. He'd been to this house dozens of times before, there was no reason he should be feeling nervous now. The door was already opening before he could knock, and Julie Wilson had a look of relief on her face. "You look good for a missing man."

Tony smirked at her a bit and walked in when she stepped back from the door. "Pepper will be putting out a statement in another hour about that," he told her. "Steve told me that there was a cell phone video of the attack on the internet."

"I know that the boys haven't seen it yet," she assured him. "Coffee?"

"Please, you saintly woman, you." He plopped himself in one of the kitchen chairs as she went to the
coffee maker. She was still in her sleepwear, some long flannel bottoms with what looked like unicorns on them, (courtesy of Wade), and a short sleeve tee. Tony noticed that it was looking a bit loose, and knew that had lost a bit more weight from the treatments. "I'm hoping to keep it from them for as long as possible, but at least Peter will see me before he sees any reports."

"That'll keep him calm," she nodded. She came over and put a cup of coffee in front of him, and held onto one as she sat across from him at the table. "To what do I owe the pleasure of a morning visit?" Julie smiled at him.

"A few things, actually," Tony said, both hands around the mug. "We're having a big family dinner when the boys get back, so I'm extending a formal invitation to you as well, because I'm told that's polite. We both know you're always invited, anyway"

She chuckled and nodded. "Thank you, Tony. I'll be sure to stick around, since I know Wade won't want to leave."

"No, he does love his food," Tony agreed. "I'm making sure to put chimichangas on the list." Julie laughed. "Seriously, that is a weird favorite food."

"And there's something normal about my son?" Julie grinned as she said it.

"Touché." He took a drink of the coffee, then reached over to add a little bit of sugar to it. "Also, I promised Wade I would ask you something a few months ago." Julie raised an eyebrow at her. "And, he kind of made his case quite elegantly."

"We're talking about my son? Recently turned ten year old?"

"Same weird child that stares at people until they wake up." Tony scrunched his eyes up a bit. "Seriously, that's creepy." Wade's mom only shrugged. "Well, yes, he made his case, and I can't find a fault in it. I'd like it, and I know I'm not the only one, if you and Wade would take up residence at the Tower." Julie blinked slowly at him, not moving. "Doesn't have to be anything huge, like the penthouse that I have, and you wouldn't have a mortgage. Peter and Wade are constantly having sleepovers, and doing homework together until either you, Mary, or myself come pick them up, so this would be easier. They could ride together to school, so they leave at the same time, and not be late." Tony took a little breath. "And, there would always be someone nearby, for when you have to go to the hospital," he said gently.

"When I first met Mary, and I found out that Tony Stark was Peter's father, well, I was surprised." She stirred in some sugar and creamer in her own coffee. "At that point, all that was known was that you had just come out as Iron Man not too long before that, and you still had rumors of your party and playboy ways floating around." Tony nodded a little. "I thought Mary was crazy when she said that you were active in Peter's life, and that you actually tried to make time. I mean, the press didn't know about him, and there were no pictures of the two of you together, so I figured it was the bare minimum.

"Then you showed up on Valentine's Day two years ago, with cupcakes and chimichangas." Tony smiled softly, remembering the disaster those first cupcakes had been. Until Steve came and saved the day. "I couldn't help but think to myself, 'This can't be Tony Stark. Stark would never be caught cooking to help anyone, much less some kid, give back a present.' And the food was pretty decent. The cupcakes were delicious."

"Steve made those, I just iced them," Tony told her. "I can't bake worth a damn. Or cook anything that's not Italian....."
"Well," Julie cut him off with a smile, "to say I misjudged you would be an understatement. Bonus point when you didn't come over with a Non-Disclosure Agreement for us to sign."

"Mary said I could trust you," Tony tried pass it off with a shrug. "No need to go digging where there was no dirt."

"Just the things that you've done for Wade and I over the last year... I don't know how to ever thank you, Tony." Tony tried not to squirm, uncomfortable, and unused to genuine praise from outside his close knit circle at the Tower. "The offer to live there--"

"Is a great deal," Tony finished. "I mean, free electricity, the building generates its own. And I've got enough business and companies subletting the bottom floors to render rent from anyone nearly obsolete. In reality, I have these living spaces that are just wasting away because no one's there to live in them. You'd be doing me a favor." He leaned on the kitchen table, pushing his sunglasses up. "I know you've had to change a lot of things around here, it's been getting harder for you to keep a full-time work schedule, I know." He watched her lean back in her chair, holding her warm close to her hands. "You're under pretty intensive treatments."

"Makes it hard to pull even an eight hour shift," she admitted. "Wade's really observant, too, about when I'm having a bad day." She smiled a little. "He's a smart kid, that boy of mine."

Tony reached inside his jacket and pulled out an envelope. Opening it, he slid some papers out, straightened them, and slid them over to Julie for her too look over. "You know that the hospital sends me reports of your treatment. I'm a stickler like that, want to make sure that you're getting the right treatment." She nodded, frowning a little as she leaned in to read the papers. "This was, just an idea that I had. You can completely reject it, shred the papers, do whatever you want, but, I thought it would be something worth looking at."

There were a couple minutes of silence as she looked through the paper, Tony quietly sipping his coffee. Julie looked at him when she was done. "You can do that?"

"I have the best lawyers in the world," Tony told her. "OJ Simpson wishes he had my people, his trial would have ended after three days. Revoking parental rights in this case would be the easiest thing they've done for me all year." Julie looked back down at the papers. "We both know the prognosis," he said quietly. "We both hope that it's wrong, so wrong that the word wrong becomes useless. But, I'm willing to bet that you don't want to be caught unprepared, just in case."

"I probably won't see my son graduate High School," she said softly. Tony leaned back in his seat, looking off to the side a little. He had been thinking about this since Wade asked if he could get his Mom to agree to move in.

"Like I said, so wrong that we change the definition of the word. If we aren't though...."

"I want you to become his Guardian," she told him, looking up at him. Tony straightened in his chair, eyes wide.

"I'm sorry, I think I misheard you." He made a little show out of rubbing his ears. "I thought you said that you wanted me to become Wade's Guardian, instead of Mary. Mary Parker, married to Phil Coulson, the better parental figure."

"It's only until he's 18," Julie told him with a little smile. "Because we both know that you wouldn't be able to adopt him."

"Don't say it," he pointed at her, eyes narrowed.
"Because then how would Wade and Peter be able to date?"

"Gah! Dammit woman!" Tony threw his arms up in the air. "First Steve, then Mary, now you??"

"Oh, puh-lease, Stark!" She rolled her eyes at him. "They've had a crush on each other since second grade."

"School yard crushes," Tony said with a pout, crossing his arms over his chest.

"You're so adorable when you're in denial." Tony's face scrunches up in mock offense. "That looks just like a face that Peter makes."

"You are cruel to me," Tony muttered, as he straightened back out into an adult, and finished his coffee.

"I'll accept your offer to move," Julie started and Tony's eye brightened a little. "If you'll accept the position of becoming Wade's Legal Guardian."

Tony rolled the words around his head, thinking through all the possible outcomes "You really shouldn't trust me with that responsibility," he said slowly. "I was just kidnapped for five days, and spent four days with an evil organization that tried to control the world through manipulation."

"The US Government kidnapped you?" Julie gasped in mock outrage and Tony couldn't help but laugh. "Trust me, Tony, you're not the only one that's been thinking about what happens, after."

Tony looked at her for a minute, then nodded a couple times and took back the papers. "Alright, seems we have a deal then." He folded the papers back into the envelope. "We'll this ball rolling this week, there's a notary in the building, and my lawyers will have all the details worked out."

"And when will we be moving?" She asked out of curiosity.

"I have movers on stand-by?" Tony flashed her a grin.

Tony had sent Steve a text, along with a new phone for him, saying that a driver would be taking him and Jamie to where Tony would meet them, outside of Manhattan where there would be less of a chance to be seen by the cameras and the tabloids. They probably wouldn't be able to escape the fan on the streets, but that was something they could deal with.

He examined the outfit that Mary had given to him, then looked at the little girl propped up in a sitting position with a pillow behind her. "It's got a lot of ruffles on it," he said, holding up the little blue dress. "Baby clothes didn't have nearly as much going on where I'm from." He sat down on the bed in front of her, and put the dress down in front of her.

Jamie leaned forward as much as she could, and grabbed at the dress. Her little hands were messing with the ruffles, but she wasn't throwing it. Steve shrugged and counted it as a win. "Okay, but here's the deal, I need you to not make a fuss when I put it on you. And I will be putting socks and shoes on you, so, you know, don't kick those off." She looked up at him as he spoke, still holding onto the dress.

"If it weren't for Tony, I'm sure I wouldn't be doing this," Steve started to talk as he grabbed the socks and shoes. "The talking out loud," he clarified, mostly for himself. "Not the getting you dressed, or, taking you in. That's a bad phrase, 'taking you in.' Makes it sound like I'm doing you a
favor." Steve gently pried the dress from her hands, and she made a grunt of protest, but nothing else. "I'm still technically young, you know, still in my Twenties, and it's kind of weird to think about. That's something I'll explain when you're older." She let out a little giggle when Steve pulled on her hands to get her into a standing position, pulling the dress down with one hand while the other was on her back.

"I'll admit, that I really don't have the first idea of what to do, but while you were down with Bruce-Uncle Bruce?- I was asking for Jarvis to send me stuff to my phone." Even though Steve knew that she couldn't understand a word of what he was saying, it felt better saying it. He and Tony hadn't exactly had a lot of time to do all the talking that needed be done the night before, and he'd talk to him later, but Steve felt the need to get some of it off his chest. And a lot of what he was thinking was for Jamie.

"I've got the basics down, so no worries there," he flashed her a smile. Jamie reached one hand out to touch his lips. "Ma would have loved you." He gently lowered her back down to a sitting position and grabbed the socks. "I might not get everything right at first, so a little patience, but I'll never stop trying. It's kind of my MO, being a superhero and all. Which is another weird thing. I don't think of myself as a superhero, I'm just someone who wanted to make a difference, and stop bullies, and right now that means making a difference in your life."

Steve was able to get one sock on, but she kept trying to grab the other sock from his hand, liking to have bare feet apparently. "Not going to lie, I'm actually pretty scared. Maybe scared isn't the right word, but I'm a little freaked out. Felt like just the other day I was watching Tony with Peter, and I thought to myself that it would be nice, to have someone to come back too at the end of the day. Now, here you are, and I'm kind of afraid that I'm going to do the wrong things, or that I won't be able to keep you safe enough. You didn't exactly come from a safe place, and I'm sure they're not happy you're gone."

He wrangled both feet into socks and quickly slid the little shoes on before she could pull them off. Steve held up an elastic headband with a flower on it, and watched her nose scrunch up. He chuckled and tossed it over to the bedside table. "I'm sorry that you're already in danger because of who I am. I made some enemies, and it seems that they didn't disappear when I did. But, I promise that I'm going to try my hardest." He let out a breath then picked her up to hold her in his arms. "I think I have a better appreciation for how Tony feels about wanting to keep Peter safe. Tony is your other dad, and I hope that Peter will be your big brother. He's an amazing kid, one of the best." He dropped a kiss on her forehead and she let her body rest against his chest.

"Alright, we should see if we can't figure out this carrying method, huh? What did Mary call it? A moby wrap?" He looked down at Jamie. "We should probably go to her for help....."

Steve smiled as Jamie played with his fingers, seemingly to be content in the wrap that was around his chest that Mary had helped him with, while they waited for Tony. She assured him that the wrap wouldn't start bothering his back until after they got a stroller, but this would better. Steve wasn't complaining. He got to watch Jamie up close, watch her peer around in curiosity while she held onto his shirt, and reach out for something when he got too close.

Bruce was running some blood tests, and they both noticed when she made the smallest of whimpers when the needle was used to draw blood. He warned Steve that he wasn't that kind of doctor, and he really didn't know much about kids, but that socialization would probably help.

"Yeah, probably don't feel very happy with a group of bad guys, huh?" Steve said to her, wrinkling
his nose happily when she put two of his fingers in her mouth. "My hands probably don't taste very good, and you just ate half an hour ago." Steve shivered a little he felt something warm press against the back of his neck.

"Maybe people just like putting their mouth on you." Tony kissed his neck again, smiling against his skin. "With a baby attached to you, I know I can't keep away from you." Tony moved around to the front of Steve, red sunglasses on, dressed down in jeans, an old band tee, and a black jacket, smirking at Steve, and he ran his fingers through Jamie's hair. "Can I just parade you around with me? That's it, I just want to show you off."

Steve snorted and kissed him. "We have to get some shopping done before the boys and Mary's parents get back. And we absolutely have to get a car seat."

"Someone came prepared," Tony teased. "What did the good Doctor have to say?" He asked and started to lead him down the sidewalk to their first store.

"Well, I was a little worried that she's so quiet, and he thinks that it probably has to do with being kept in the base," Steve told him, one arm secured around the baby girl, who had let go of his fingers to look around as they walked. Tony reached inside the bag that was resting on Steve's hip, grabbing a towel, and wiped his fingers off from slobber.

"So, letting her see the real world should be a good way to break that evil shell?" Tony nodded a bit, holding the door open for Steve. "Sounds like a solid plan. She stills seems plenty curious, so that's a good sign." He watched Steve look around the baby store, eyes wide with all the different departments, and the choices within. "We're having a family dinner tonight, so we'll try that as well. You're feeling overwhelmed all of sudden aren't you? Any word on if Natasha would be coming back soon? Is she still looking for our resident archer?"

"Natasha found Barton, but they won't be coming back yet. There's so much in this store," Steve said as he looked around.

Tony pulled out his phone, brought up a list, then pointed in a direction. "We'll head that way first. Better grab one of the flatbed carts." Steve nodded and Tony pat his back, smiling. "Only have to do the big shop only once. The rest is just to buy way too many clothes, and restock on supplies."

"Mary did warn me that I would probably be buying a lot of clothes," Steve said. Tony was resting his arms on the bar of a flatbed, and he blinked, not even aware that Tony had gone off to acquire one.

"Did you tell Dad that it's because you're going to grow like a freaking weed?" Tony said looking at Jamie, smiling as she smiled at him. "Yeah, you're gonna grow super fast, and I should probably just hire a tailor for you."

"We're not getting a tailor." Steve shook his head a little and they headed for the furniture department first. "Although, I was looking online, and I think that's where we should order the cloth diapers?" Tony smiled as Steve went on, naming things he knew he wanted, and then talking about a color theme he was thinking for her future bedroom. Tony couldn't stop thinking that it was all terribly domestic, and wondering if he'd be able to steal Jamie away from Steve as they continued shopping.

As it turned out, he was able to get Jamie, and she promptly fell asleep against his chest a few hours into their excursion. Tony was leaning back in the booth of the diner Steve picked, fingers rubbing circles on Jamie's back as she slept. Steve had fed her while Tony ate his food, then when Tony took her to burp her, Steve was able to eat his food, and she had fallen asleep soon after.
"So, where'd you go this morning?" Steve asked a bit quieter than usual, munching on some fries.

"I went to go see Wade's mom," Tony said, looking over at Steve. He was actually feeling kind of comfortable, even with someone sleeping on his chest. "Remember when I told Wade I'd ask her to reconsider moving in?" Steve nodded. "Well, I got her to say yes. She should be moving in a lot of their stuff right now. It'll probably take another couple days to get everything in, but, it's a start."

"Wade is going to lose it," Steve said with a chuckle.

"I'm just hoping that he won't be there hovering over my face anymore," Tony commented before reaching over to steal one of Steve's fries.

"You have fries on your plate," Steve pointed out.

Tony just smiled at him. "But yours are better."

"I'm pretty sure they're the same fries, Tony."

"Nah, yours are better." Tony glanced down at the sleeping girl.

"How do you think Peter's going to react?" Steve asked when he caught where his sight was.

"I'll say that I'm glad that Wade's moving in at the same time." Steve raised a questioning eyebrow. "He's almost eight now, but acts like a twelve-year-old, and now introducing a new baby in the mix? I don't know." He shrugged. "I can't predict this one. I was an only child, and I didn't have parents that paid the right attention to me." Tony felt Steve's foot nudging his and he smiled a little. "He's had shared attention from Mary and I, and he took it really well when Mary got married, and when we got together."

"Just a couple more people in his life," Steve added.

"Lots of positive attention," Tony agreed. "And now he's something that takes some of that away," he said with a little scrunch to his features. "It's either going to go surprisingly well, or be a tremendous disaster, and I'm hoping for something in the middle." Tony caught Steve's look. "He's an extraordinary kid, well behaved, but he can have an epic tantrum if he wants. I've only seen it a couple of times, but I'd rather it not happen at all. Maybe I spoiled him with too much? Bringing his family and friends here?"

"No," Steve shook his head. "You might have been over-compensating for something you didn't get enough of as a child, but everyone else who's moved in has had the option to say no. If anyone thought that it would be detrimental to Peter, Mary and Phil, or Rachel and William, wouldn't have moved in." Steve reached over to steal one of Tony's fries now. "You're right, mine are better."

"Told you," Tony mumbled under his breath. "I'm hoping that Peter hasn't inherited my wicked skills of not coping with things."

"We'll tackle it," Steve told him, smiling that smile that made Tony feel a little fuzzy inside. "Like couples do."

"You're just dripping with sap," Tony bemoaned lightly. "I mean, it just oozes from your pores." He smiled when Steve laughed. "It's a good thing you ask me to co-parent with you."

"Why's that?" Steve asked, mirth dancing in his tone.

"Because, someone has to teach this little girl the ways of being a badass."
"I'm going to start a swear jar, soon," Steve threatened and Tony gasped.

"You don't have enough money now? You need to milk me for mine?" Steve rolled his eyes and went for the last fry, but Tony grabbed it first. "I mess up around Peter sometimes, but he's been pretty good at not repeating those words."

"Mary and I made a list for him," Steve confessed. "A list of words that he's already heard, and not too repeat. We're hoping he shared it with Wade."

"Well, considering that Wade asked if we were having sex several months ago, I'm gonna assume he's ignored the list." Tony snorted a little. He looked down when he felt Jamie started to squirm. "Ah, someone's starting to wake up. Does Dad want to go check her diaper?"

"He doesn't want to." Steve slid out of the booth, grabbing the new diaper bag that Steve had packed up before they went into the diner, and leaned in to take Jamie from Tony. "But he will." Tony watched her face scrunch up as she yawned herself awake, turning to lay against Steve's chest as she was transferred. "She's going to be a creature of comfort."

"Yeah, well, she takes after you." Tony smiled as he straightened in the booth, watching them head for the bathroom. He pulled out wallet to drop a bill on the table, and yelped when he saw someone sitting across from him where Steve had recently been. The man had his head down, face covered mostly by the ball cap he was wearing, and a worn looking jacket over his shirt. He was wearing a glove on his left hand and Tony narrowed his eyes a bit. "Sorry, I'm getting ready to leave, but I'm sure there's another table you can sit at."

"Not here for food." The man looked up a bit and Tony felt his body tense. "You took all the vials you made?"

"That's how you start a conversation?" Tony raised an eyebrow, hand twitching towards his watch again. "No, 'Sorry I tried to kill you?'"

"It was the right move at the time," Bucky told him, and Tony gaped a bit. "They wanted to make more Winter Soldier's, they still do."

Tony watched him for a minute, the blue eyes moving every so often, noting every movement in the diner. He shifted a bit, his eyes glancing over towards the bathrooms more often than not. Bucky hadn't wanted Steve to see him. Tony could work with this.

"Well, I grabbed what I made, but they didn't leave me in that lab all the time." Tony took a drink of his pop. "I didn't have time to mess with their computer systems, but I tried not to record the entire formula for them. Aren't you supposed to be watching Meg?"

Bucky looked back at Tony at that. "They're getting ready to move her from the hospital, staff is clean." He went to slide out of the booth and Tony quickly raised his leg to stop his progress. Bucky glared at Tony.

"Steve's gonna pretty upset if you keep appearing to everyone but him," Tony said easily, keeping his eyes on Bucky's. "Specially since he's a new Daddy. Named his kid after you and everything." Bucky seemed to move, fingers flexing a little. Discomfort? "Can't imagine Cap's best friend trying to avoid him."

"I don't remember him," Bucky cut in. "At least, not that well." He looked away from Tony, calculating the new movement, the people leaving and coming in. "I'm not who he remembers, who he thinks I am."
"Yeah, but avoiding him isn't going to help with tha- Ow!" Bucky shoved his leg, knocking his knee against the table, and slid out of the booth. "She lives at the Tower you know," Tony said to him before he could get too far. "If you're going to continue being around her, for whatever reason, you're going to run into him." Bucky grunted and he was out the door.

Tony drummed his fingers on the table. He didn't like it. Pulling out his phone, he checked his messages, and Jarvis brought up the orders to show that they were moving Meg to a hospital in New York, and would likely be there for another day of observation before being discharged.

His head snapped up when heard the giggle of baby and he looked over to see Steve walking back towards the table. His face was glowing, and Jamie was laughing, making the most noise they'd heard in the past two days. "What did you do??" Tony asked as he slid out from his seat to meet them.

"I found a tickle spot," Steve said, pressing his lips to the side of her neck and blowing a raspberry. She squealed and kicked her legs, and now Steve was laughing with her. "Look at that face!" He leaned in to do it again, but her hands were pushing at his face, still giggling though. Tony was holding his phone up, recording now. "You don't want that?" He blew a little raspberry on her hand and she was pulling them back with renewed laughter.

Tony bit his lip as he smiled, watching them and recording. Steve leaned in to get her neck again and Jamie's hands were pushing at his cheeks. When Steve tried leaning down again, she pushed her head up, putting her lips to his cheek, and tried blowing her own raspberry against him. Tony laughed when Steve's face scrunched up with a smile. Tony's laugh seemed to make Jamie's even louder, pleased that she did the right thing.

"I think I'm rotting from the inside out with all the sweetness," Tony said to them. Steve looked at him with an open face of raw happiness, and Jamie took that moment to press her face to his neck, burring her lips as hard as she could. Steve's eyes widened and he yelped in laughter, trying to tuck his head down. "You have the same tickle spot!"

"Time to get back to the car!" Steve declared, starting to head for the exit. Tony laughed, following him, putting his phone back in his pocket.

"I'm using that to my advantage, you know this, right?" Tony grinned as he slid forward to grab the door for them.

"You're evil."

"The smile on your face says otherwise."

"Daddy is a weird one," Steve said, looking at Jamie in his arms. "That's why we always ask me before doing what Daddy says." Tony leaned in to Steve, giving him an inquisitive look. "I've decided that you should keep the name Daddy, and I'll take Papa."

"Oh, you have, have you?" He fished the keys to the SUV from his pocket and unlocked the doors "Did you talk this over with her in the bathroom?"

"Well, she didn't say no," Steve smirked at him, then moved to put Jamie in the car seat.

"That's cheating," Tony pointed at him, making his way around to the driver's seat. "It's cheating and you know it."

"I think it's called tactical advantage," Steve said, sliding into the passenger seat. Tony glanced in the mirror, looking at Jamie in her car seat. He could easily replace the bags next to her with Peter,
seeing in his mind the way he'd probably be talking about his latest art project with Steve, or asking Tony if he could go down to the workshop to see the bots. He shook his head a little, clearing away the thoughts, and started the car. "I have to be prepared for every possibility." Steve was still talking, the cheating smirk on his face.

"Bet you're not prepared for tonight," Tony accused as they pulled into traffic. "Family dinner with Peter, Julie and Wade, Mary and Agent with the twins Rowen and Conor, Bruce, Sam and Rachel and William. And us, with the newest addition. Fresh from a trip to Disney World, and not telling Peter or Wade about my kidnapping."

Steve was quiet as he looked out the window. "There are no battle plans for that." Tony snorted, driving them back to Manhattan.

Julie was already there, with Mary and Agent, on the communal floor usually only saw action when there were Avengers meetings. This time there were two tables pushed together to make a square, and the table was already set with dinnerware. Tony was directing some Tower staff on where to take the larger pieces they had bought, and was no doubt taking the bags himself. He had sent Steve off with the diaper bag, an outfit for Jamie, and Jamie herself.

Steve stepped onto the main floor, and saw Julie on the floor with the twins. Jamie made a little cooing noise of curiosity that melted Steve's heart every time, when she saw the two other babies. "There's another one!" Julie said when she looked up. "She's so adorable." Steve smiled and headed over towards them, settling himself down on the ground next to Wade's mother. "It's a pleasure to see you again Captain Rogers."

"Just Steve is fine," he smiled at her. "It's nice to see you here, too. I hear you'll be around more often." He sat Jamie on the ground, on her back at first, and watched her roll herself over onto her stomach.

"Tony certainly has a way with words," she chuckled. "I haven't heard about this little cutey though. Wade's only mentioned the twins."

"She, ah, just got her last night." Steve smiled at Jamie, watching her work out the basics of crawling, moving her arms to prop herself up. "Her name's Jamie."

Tony watched Steve from the safety of the hallway by the elevator. Saw him talking with Wade's mom, playing all three babies, and watching Jamie start to crawl. He tilted his head back a little when he felt someone come up behind him, soft hand sliding on his shoulder.

"He's really taken to the role, hasn't he?" Mary said softly as she came up beside him.

"Like a cat to milk." Tony turned to face her. "But you're not here to talk about Steve." She shook her head and they headed back down the hall. "I can tell you that you're not going to get much out of me, not if you want to ask me what happened."

"I figured as much," she said as she followed him. "Heard you and Steve were moving in together." Tony glanced at her. "That's a big step Tony."

He stopped, leaning his back against the wall, crossing his arms in front of him. "He told me he loved me." Mary's eyes widened a bit as she looked at him. "Really, I think the timing could have been better, but I asked him to move in with me first, and that was horrible timing first." Tony looked up at her, but she could see his eyes dancing in excitement. "Then your mom calls, and he comes by,
and does this just, sickeningly romantic thing. I mean, really, he can't be human with some of the stuff he does."

"He makes you think," Mary said with a smirk. "About more than yourself, or heaven forbid, even Peter."

"He scares the hell out of me," Tony admitted quietly, looking down at the floor. "Scares me cause, well, I like it. Damned fool makes me happy, like, really happy."

Mary cupped Tony's cheeks. "That's a subset of love, Tony Stark."

"Yeah, yeah," he waved her hands off, but caught one of them. "I know. After he sang to me," Mary raised her eyebrows, "I had to tell him I loved him, too. I told you, just sweet on a whole other level. I actually think he's trying to make me the woman in the relationship." Mary smacked his arm and he chuckled. "Now, I'm a Daddy to someone else, and all I can think about, when I'm thinking about that, is, am I gonna screw up?"

"I think you're doing pretty well with Peter," Mary told him, rubbing the top of his hand with her fingers.

"Yeah, exactly." He sighed a little. "I'm handling that, got a routine down, after how many years? Now, let's throw in another child, a baby, one that I almost-" Tony took a breath. "They wanted me to experiment on that girl, that baby out there learning how to crawl. They were going to make her into a weapon, and they were going to make me do it." His eyes trailed down the hall a little, words echoing through his mind. "What right do I have to her? Just another life to screw up with a past that won't seem to leave me alone."

Mary pat his cheek a few times, pulling his eyes back up to her. "You are not allowed to get mopey tonight, you hear me?" Tony gave her a weak smile. "This isn't just a family dinner because the boys are coming home, it's also because you're back home. Steve's been in love with you for a while now, he just didn't know how to say it, or when. A lot happened over the course of this week, and I think that he realized that it's better sooner than later."

"It's a popular adage."

"He was scared, and I think that scared him even more."

"Scared?" Tony frowned. "I know he couldn't have been scared of Hydra-"

"Scared that he might lose you," Mary cut him off. Tony opened his mouth, then closed it. "In another universe, maybe he doesn't take the chance. Maybe he doesn't get unh thawed from the ice and he loses you before he even gets a chance, or maybe you don't figure out the palladium and he watches you die."

"I get it," Tony cut her off, not harshly. He looked at her, always admiring that she could look him straight, not get cowed by his expressions. She once told him that his face was very expressive, it could give him away if one knew what to look for, or if he was unguarded.

She brought his hand up, holding it with both of hers. "What did you see, Tony?" His eye brows knit together, and he vaguely wondered what she saw in his eyes now. "The Maximoff girl, she got to you." Tony jerked back slightly, enough to tense his body before he could catch him. "I've seen the files, what she's capable of."

"She did a lot." Tony pulled away from her slowly. "A lot of other horrible things happened, like finding out that my father helped usher in Hydra, and was conditioning me to be Mr Fix-It for the
Winter Soldier." Tony moved away from the wall before she could say anything. "There are probably a lot of things that need my attention, but I need to make sure that those I love are safe. Peter, and now Jamie, I need to keep them safe from those that want to hurt me, that would try to use them against me."

"You're not alone, Tony," Mary said from behind him, following him down the hall. Tony turned his head to look at her, then stopped where the hall opened up into the floor, looking at Steve. He could still feel it, still see their bodies, lifeless on that rock. How cold Steve was, watching the light die in his eyes, watching him die. "You don't have to do this alone."

"Yeah." He nodded once, putting his hands in his pockets, hoping they weren't trembling. "Well, right now, priority is making sure that Hydra isn't going to come back for Jamie, or the Serum. Or, apparently, the Winter Soldier who has defected from his overlords."

"You've seen him?" Mary raised an eyebrow. "After the raid on the base?"

"Yeah, he's back in the States," Tony said, turning back to look at her. "I guess he needed to make sure that he didn't miss anything when he destroyed the lab. He's keeping his distance from Steve. I'm thinking there was a whole new level of torture and brainwashing, if he's trying to pick up the pieces of his memory." Mary hummed, nodding. "Right now, he's still high up on my list, but not enough to be on a constant look out."

Mary grabbed Tony's shoulder again, this time squeezing it a bit. "Getting real tired of not being able to sleep," he confessed to her. "But, world keeps spinning, things keep moving, and in the end, I still have a job to do."

"Just don't make me hunt you down again, and pull an emotional confession from you." Tony made a face and she chuckled.

"That wasn't fun for anyone," Tony said.

"I don't know, it eventually lead to you starting a real relationship." She smirked at him.

"I've had relationships before," he tried to argue.

"I hope we aren't talking about George."

"They only thing that he counts as is another name added to the restraining order list," Tony spat. "I did not paint him a pretty picture in that press release."

"I know, I have it framed." Mary grinned and Tony couldn't help but laugh. "Is Steve prepared for this?" She motioned towards the table that was starting to fill up with food.

"I'm not even prepared for this, Mary," he turned a deadpan look to her.

"I expected you to not be ready. But, Steve, he's the man with the plan."

"If I can go like, two years, without having someone make that joke to me, it'll be amazing."

"I have so many expectations for this relationship."

"I'm going to go down, highly anticipating the arrival of our darling son!" Tony called to her, heading for the elevator. "You are allowed to join me, if you stop talking about my relationship."

"But, it's such a rare occurrence," she continued as she followed him anyway. "The great Tony
Stark, officially ending his playboy ways, seemingly set straight by the secret love child, only recently come to light."

"Jarvis will help me get away with your murder," Tony said as the doors closed.

"I'm afraid that I can't comply with that, Sir." Tony turned a glare towards the ceiling, the direction where he knew the cameras were. "I am to protect Young Master Peter, and the death of a parent would violate that."

"Ooo, low blow, J."

"Also, I do enjoy the company of Mrs Parker."

"You're sweet, Jarvis," Mary said with a grin, turning to pointedly look at Tony.

"I'll just input another AI system, they'll help me," Tony muttered as they rode down to the ground floor.

"Yes, Sir, of course." Tony huffed out a breath. They walked through the empty lobby, the business side of the Tower closed for the night, and Tony and Mary offered a greeting to the night guard. Although the Tower could go into lockdown mode, and offer more than enough security measures through Jarvis alone, the others working in the building felt better with security around, and Tony didn't mind the extra bit of precaution.

"How are the girls, Todd?" Tony asked, pausing a bit at the security station. He stuck his hand out as Todd stood up, both men smiling as their hands met. The single father that Tony had met at the community center before the press conference about Peter, right after the Battle, had indeed called Tony to take him up on the job offer. The Tower was being rebuilt and so Tony offered him a position in the city, and almost a year later the man was working his way up to head of security in the building. He and Happy talked a lot.

"They're good, thanks for asking Mr Stark." He always called Tony that when he was working. "Spending the night with their grandparents, tonight."

"Ah, that would explain why I'm seeing you on the night shift." The guard nodded.

"Picked up an extra shift, then I get to sleep in in the morning."

"Aww, did you hear that Tony?" Mary asked sweetly, and Tony turned an incredibly unamused expression to her, barely stopping himself from sighing. "Sleeping in. Something you won't be able to do for a good long time." She grinned at him, entirely all too pleased with herself. "Perhaps he can report to you later just how nice it feels."

"You know what, Parker." Mary giggled and danced a few steps away from him.

"You see, Todd, Mr Stark has taken on the mantle of fatherhood again." Mary leaned on the desk, smiling at the guard. She enjoyed the man because he always greeted Peter, and watched out for him and Wade when they were playing the Tower. "He's the proud father of a second child, a little girl."

Todd smiled brightly at Tony. "She's going to be a handful," he said instantly and Tony groaned lightly. "I have two of them. But, I wouldn't trade them for the world."

"This one is going to be all Rogers," Tony informed him.

"You're doomed."
"That seems to be the general consensus," Tony muttered with a little smile. "Well, I'll give you the heads up, Peter is returning with his grandparents and Wade, and we're having a large family dinner upstairs."

"So just another quiet night of controlled chaos?" Tony knew there was a reason he put this man in this building. He liked him.

"You think it's going to be controlled?" Mary asked, and Tony snorted.

"Stop on up on your break, snag some food," Tony told him as he took a step back away from the desk.

"Lord knows that Tony had them make too much!" Tony started to push Mary's back towards the front door. Todd offered a salute and Tony got Mary walking again.

"You're cheeky," Tony accused.

"I know." He groaned and rolled his eyes as they stepped outside.

He glanced down street and saw the black car rolling up to the curb. Tony held his breath, shock running through his body suddenly. He had seen this scene, seen it just this morning. Mary stepped forward and the back door opened, and an excited Peter was throwing himself into Mary's arms. Tony was glancing around, looking for something, anything.

"Daddy!" Tony was pulled out of his thoughts, and grinned at Peter, stepping forward to gather the boy in his arms.

"You're back!" Tony grinned. He had to put Peter back on the ground, still feeling a bit of the bruises left over by the tazers from the original attack, but he knelt down to keep hugging Peter. He spotted Wade jumping out, hugging Mary, and Rachel and William more calming getting out as well.

"I missed you sooooo much."

"I missed you too!" Peter wrapped his arms around Tony's neck. "I had so much fun, and I can't wait to tell you about it!"

"I want to hear everything," Tony told him, Peter's smile infectious. He then reached out one arm to snag Wade around the neck to pull him over to them. "I saw you trying to sneak up on me!" Wade just giggled, a little maniacally Tony thought.

"You saw nothing!" Wade's smiled betrayed his words. "Mom said I get to stay for dinner."

"Yeah you do," Tony nodded, standing back up, hands resting on both boys head. "In fact, everyone is staying for dinner, and they're all upstairs."

"Grab your bags first," Mary said when she saw that they were poised to run inside. "You can drop them off in Peter's bedroom first. We're eating on the family floor."

"That's the big floor!" Peter whooped as they ran to the trunk of the car. They each grabbed their backpacks and a duffle bag, and Tony peered inside. The trunk was full, with at three bags of what Tony could only assume were souvenirs.

He whistled a bit as William walked over to Tony. "Looks like quite the haul," Tony said with a nod to the trunk.

"Peter wanted to get a bunch of stuff for you," William said with a chuckle. He put a hand on Tony's
shoulder, giving it a little squeeze. "Good to see you looking so well."

"Feeling a hell of a lot better than I was last week." Tony watched the boys run inside the building, knowing that Todd would walk them to the private elevator. The two men walked over, Mary and Tony helping grab the extra bags. Rachel smiled at Tony, rubbing his elbow a little. Tony was a little shocked, but he returned the smile easily. "They didn't find out, right? Peter had fun the whole week, right?"

"More fun than should be legal for a seven-year-old," Rachel replied.

"That would be the Stark genes," Tony grinned. "We know how to enjoy ourselves."

"So the internet says." William snickered a bit, Rachel backhanding his shoulder a little. "Are you going to try and intercept Peter before he gets back to Steve?"

Tony looked at him, raising an eyebrow for just a second before his eyes widened. "Shit." He turned and ran back inside, laughter behind him as he tried to get to Peter before he saw Steve with Jamie. "Jarvis, tell Steve to meet me on Mary's floor!" He pulled opened the door to the stairs, seeing Todd walking back from the elevator and knew that it was already moving. He thought that he and Steve would have had time to talk about how to introduce Peter to Jamie before he got there. "Have Wade go see his mom on the Communal floor, but keep Peter on his floor."

"Of course, Sir," Jarvis' voice echoed from his watch as he took the stairs two at a time. At the fifth floor he was informed that the elevator would be waiting for him up on Seven.

"I'm getting too old for this," Tony wheezed out a bit when he was able to get on the cart.

"I'm not sure what you were thinking taking the stairs," Steve said from the back of the elevator, making Tony jump. Jamie giggled softly. "Mary lives on the Eighty-Fourth floor."

"I'm already dying, no need to add a heart-attack to it!" Tony leaned back next to Steve. "Peter's upstairs."

"I had kind of figured when Jarvis asked me to bring Jamie with me." Steve rubbed Tony's back as he managed to stand up straight again. "We didn't exactly plan this moment out, did we?" Tony shook his head, looking at Steve with an undercurrent of panic.

"To be fair, we haven't exactly planned out a lot in the past two days. While that's usually my standard MO, I'm feeling pretty at a loss here," Tony confessed. "I figure, I'll go in first, and I'll lead with you moving in. Then maybe you can come in? I don't know." He groaned and rubbed his face. "Play it by ear?" He leaned back against Steve's hand that was still on his back. "I would die for this kid, I'd do literally anything for him, cause that's my baby boy on the other side of these doors, but I'm just really hoping that this doesn't crash and burn."

Steve kissed Tony's cheek. "You can do this, Tony," Steve told him. "I know you can. I've seen you with Peter, and you're so much better than you think you are. This probably isn't going to be easy, but if anyone can handle this with him, it's you."

"Thanks," Tony said quietly, then gave a little nod. At the nod the elevator doors opened and the two men stepped onto the floor. Tony kissed Steve lightly, then rubbed Jamie's cheek in his arms a little, before stepping further into the apartments. Wade and Peter were sitting on the couch, having changed clothes.

"You know your Mom's upstairs, right Wade?" Tony asked as he walked over, plopping himself down next to Peter.
"Yup," Wade said but didn't move, staring right at Tony. Tony knew that protective look all too well. "I know you wanna talk to Pete, but you know he's just going to tell me everything right after." Wade was too smart for Tony's own good.

Tony just turned his attention to Peter to see curious hazel eyes looking up at him. "Before we all go eat, I just wanted to tell you about a few things that happened while you were gone." Peter tilted his head in curiosity. "You know how Mr Steve and I are dating?"

"Yeah," Peter said with a smile. That was one thing Tony never had to worry about coming between him and his son, and that had been such a load off his mind. "Even my art lessons got more fun!" Tony smiled, running his hand through Peter's hair a bit.

"Well, I asked Mr Steve to move in with me. Is that okay?" It was important to Tony that Peter approved, even if he already approved of their relationship. He had told Steve before, and he'd stick by it til the end of his days, but Peter came first. Always.

"He's going to be living upstairs now?" Peter asked and Tony nodded. "In one of the other bedrooms?"

"Well, he'll share a room with me," Tony told him, and he ignored the way Wade's nose wrinkled. "You still got your room, that won't change. It's just that Mr Steve will be up there now, too, when he isn't working. And that doesn't mean that we still can't have our father son time, like we do down in the workshop-"

"That means I don't have to visit two different floors now," Peter worked out, stopping Tony's speech. "That's gonna be a lot easier, Daddy." Tony let out a little snort, trying to bite back the bubbling laugh. "Yeah, I think it's cool that Mr Steve move in with you." Peter grinned and Tony kissed his head.

"Okay, so, that's awesome." Tony nodded his head a little. "What if, maybe, Mr Steve wasn't the only one moving in?" Peter and Wade shared the same little frown of confusion. He caught Steve walking in from behind them, his expression calling out Tony on the crappy conversation transition.

"Well, okay, so, you know how Miss Meg moved in, and now she has two babies?"

"They're kinda cool," Wade said and Peter nodded. "Still way too small to do anything yet, though."

Tony glanced at Steve, and at the same moment Jamie was looking over at them, and let out a curious noise. The two boys turned around on the couch at her sound, and Tony winced a tiny bit.

"That's not one of the twins," Wade said, looking at Steve, then down to Jamie. "This is Jamie," Steve said, walking over to the couch so the boys could sit properly again. "Just like Rowan is Miss Meg's daughter, Jamie is mine."

"You have a kid??" Wade was leaning forward when Steve sat down next to Tony. Peter was frowning a little, and that was all Tony could focus on. He was looking at Jamie, and Tony could see the little gears turning in his head, his mouth pressing together, lips moving back and forth, as he tried to figure out how he felt about another new baby in the Tower. The twins had been a little bit of an adjustment, but it didn't seem to really affect Peter, since they lived on a different floor, and he didn't actually see them that often. But this was different.

"She needed help," Steve was starting to explain, pulling Tony back from his thoughts a little. "And your Daddy found her, and saved her from some bad people."

"So, she'll be living upstairs, too?" Peter asked carefully, pulling his eyes back to look at Tony. Tony
nodded a couple of times. “Are you gonna help take care of her?”

"Ah, yeah," Tony said with a little nod. The hesitation in Peter's voice was what he was afraid to start hearing. He hadn't expected the boy to be jumping in excitement, but this could go downhill pretty fast. "She's Mr Steve's, so she'll be with him, and I'll be there too, to help, raise her. Like I do with your Momma." Steve nudged Tony's side a little, but Tony already knew that his words were floundering. He could talk circles around people at meetings and press conferences, but when it really matter, Tony had a lead tongue that didn't know what the hell to say.

"I have to share you even more?" Yeah, that's what Tony didn't want.

"Just a little bit more," Tony told him, pulling him up to his lap, wrapping him up in a hug. Peter wiggled a little, but he didn't fight to get away. "We'll still have boy time, and we'll still hang out in the workshop. That won't change." Tony bit his lip a little. "Maybe one day, she'll be like a little sister?" Peter whipped his head around to look at Tony with what should have been an adorable frown, but it was there, the wrinkle between his eyes. "Yeah, you're right, one thing at a time." He kissed Peter's head, holding onto him. "It's just going to be some adjustments, that's all."

"Babies need a lot of attention," Peter said, both Tony and Steve detecting a bit of pouting in his tone. He turned his head to look at Jamie, and Jamie was now looking right back at Peter. "She's still small, I bet she can't even walk yet."

"You weren't walking until you were One, mister," Tony told him, scooting a bit with Peter so Jamie could see him better. She was leaning a bit in Steve's lap, finding Peter fascinating. "She can crawl though, so it shouldn't be too much longer."

"Yeah, she's going to need our help," Steve continued the conversation when Tony paused for a bit. "But, that doesn't mean that we don't love you any less. And I bet if you helped, she'd learn faster."

Wade leaned in to whisper to Peter's ear, and Tony frowned when he caught bits of words, but it wasn't in English. Wasn't a language that Tony could recognize at all. Peter wrinkled his nose and looked at Wade, the two of them having a conversation with their eyes now. Tony glanced over at Steve who had only raised an eyebrow. Jamie was trying to reach out now, because Peter wasn't looking at her anymore.

Peter turned his head back around and looked up at Tony. "I'll help if you can talk Wade's Mom to moving in here." Both Peter and Wade crossed their arms over their chests, as if they were making a final offer to a deal. Jamie was reaching her arms a little, then bringing them in to her chest, almost as if she wanted to mimic the movement.

"Are you trying to strike a deal?" Tony asked, and Peter nodded.

"You're a businessman," Wade said matter-of-factly.

"I'm also a father," Tony said with a tiny smirk. He looked between the two boys. "Alright, you've got a deal." He put his hands out, each boy shaking one of them. Jamie let out a coo, then was finally able to reach and pat Peter's leg with both of her hands.

Peter looked down at her hands, then up to her face. He leaned in a little closer to her face. "He was my Daddy first," Peter told the little girl. Tony was about to open his mouth, but Steve held his hand a little, watching Peter intently. "You're lucky, cause he's one of the best around, but just remember, he's mine first." One of Jamie's hand rested on Peter's nose and he was wrinkling his face and pulling away.
Tony looked at Steve, letting out a breath through his nose. They seemed to share the same thought; it could have gone worse.

Chapter End Notes

Also, I've been thinking about it for a bit, but it's always good to tell other people than myself: I've been thinking about making a Patreon, for writing. I do a lot of original stuff as well, and I dabble in lots of other fic subjects as well. I'm mulling the idea around in my head, and getting around to posting my original stuff, probably on Wattpad. There'll be a link soon. :D
Chapter Summary

Family dinner, and a surprise!

Chapter Notes

Hello beautiful people! So this chapter, I tried something a little different narrative wise in one part, the family dinner, and I think it works. It's cute.

But then I remind you all that I'm evil. But, more Bucky! And Peter and Wade! I am slowly, slowly, starting to give Tony space to breath. And eventually we'll leave the month of May..... May usually seems like a busy time in this series.

I'm a big freaking nerd, and it shows in this chapter.

Unbeta'd, and Marvel owns more of this than I do. Also, all music/movies/tv shows belongs to those that wrote/perform/produced/etc them. I use them for humor and good times.

Wade ran over to his Mom when they all got back up to the communal floor. The smell of food was wafting through the air, and the table had been set, complete with pitchers of different drinks. Steve noted that the twins were already seated at the table, he also didn't miss the look that Mary had shot over towards him and Tony. Her and Tony must have silently worked things out, as was something that he noticed they did a lot when it came to things involving Peter, because she was wrapping Peter up in a hug when he ran over.

"How did it go?" Steve glanced over as Bruce and Sam came up besides Tony. Tony made a silent strangled sound in his throat. "So, could have been better, but no one died." Tony nodded.

"How do you do that? You're like a Tony whisperer," Steve said to Bruce, who just smirked a little.

"We have a shared language of Science!" Tony proclaimed.

"I've known him for over a decade, that usually helps," Bruce added in. "My silent language with Tony is much different than the one that he has with Mary, or even with you." Steve hummed a little, nodding. "Tony, you can also use Sam as the Steve interpreter."

Sam raised an eyebrow at Bruce, then looked at Tony when he felt the genius' gaze. "Hey man, we just shared a moment of brotherly bonding while fighting Hydra."

Steve snorted and shook his head a little. He glanced down when Jamie pat both her hands on his chest. "I do have some good news for you about your little one, though," Bruce added in.

Both Steve and Tony were watching him attentively now, except when Steve shot Sam a look when he tried to steal Jamie from his arms. "It doesn't appear that they had used anything on her, where the
only trace of a serum that I could find in her system are the markers that match those in your blood."

"So, she still has the Serum?" Steve asked, hand wrapping around her back a little, more protectively.

"The same that you have," Bruce clarified. "That was expected though, as she was created with your blood."

"There's no way they would have been able to replicate the exact serum that Erskine made, so the next best bet would have been to just make another Steve," Tony said with a little nod, taking in the information. Jamie took one of Steve's fingers, as if she could sense that he was a little agitated. He flashed her a smile, one that only grew when she answered with her own smile. "Even with Howard there to point them in the right direction, his notes wouldn't have-"

"What?" Bruce looked at Tony and frowned. Steve glanced at Tony and realized that he hadn't told Bruce about Howard Stark being part of Hydra. Tony must have just remembered that by the way his eyes had widened marginally.

"We'll talk about it after dinner," Steve said quietly to them, noting that Wade was stalking over towards them, eyes pinched and staring in Tony's direction. "Head's up, Tony."

Tony spotted the boy and he got down to one knee, looking right at Wade. He stopped less than a foot away from the older man, and Steve had a feeling that he had just found out that he had been played by Tony Stark.

"You're evil."

"No, I'm a business man," Tony said with a smile. "I also tried to give you a chance to find out before you and Peter decided to try and make a verbal contract."

"You knew that she had already agreed," Wade accused.

"I did indeed," Tony nodded. He stared evenly back at Wade, then extended one arm and Wade moved in to hug him. Steve caught the whispers from Tony to the boy because of his enhanced hearing. "Everything's taken care of kiddo."

"I wanna know everything that's decided," Wade countered back, still hugging him tightly. Bruce and Sam silently stepped away, heading back towards the group by the tables.

"Fine by me, but I'm going to defer to your Mom, kay? I'm Peter's parent, not yours, so I don't get overrule those decisions." Tony ruffled Wade's hair a bit. "I got your back though, you and your Mom's."

"Thank you," Wade said quietly before pulled back. "Also, you're still evil."

"You know I'm not replacing Peter, right?" Tony asked Wade, a little more seriously. Wade looked at him then nodded, before running back over to Peter, who was busy going along with Coulson behind him to each chair, probably assigning seating again.

Steve took Tony's hand as he stood back up, balancing Jamie on his hip, and kissed his knuckles. "It's probably just bad timing," Steve told him. "He doesn't know what happened, and he just got back from a vacation."

"Yeah," Tony nodded, and watched Peter. "I knew that might happen." Steve saw the weariness in Tony then, saw how it weighed on him. The two of them had basically been keeping up a long
distance relationship for the past four months, with visits as much as Steve could keep up, and then everything sort of metaphorically, and literally, blew up. Tony had been kidnapped, and as soon as he got home there was the prospect of a baby to take care of and keep safe, and Peter coming home. Tony had barely slept, and Steve had recognized that a nightmare had woken him up that morning, not aware of it until just moments before it was too late, and he still wasn't able to relax. How Tony was keeping it all together at this moment was beyond Steve.

Tony squeezed his hand and looked back over at him. "Come on, we should try and figure it out where Peter put us. Dinner is definitely going to be interesting."

"He's still excited to be home," Steve told him as they went to rejoin the group. "You'll see." Somehow that managed to pull a smile from Tony.

Sam stared at Steve from across the table, not really knowing how big this 'little' get together could actually get. Steve and Tony had Jamie between them on one side of the table, Peter at the corner of the next side, closest to Tony, with Wade next to him, and Julie next to her son. On the other side close to Steve was Mary and Coulson with the twins between them, and Sam sitting between Bruce and William, with Rachel next to her husband by Julie.

The food was in the middle, making it easier to pass around, although the chimichangas were staying suspiciously close to Wade the whole time.

"You should tell your Dad about Star Wars," Steve said to Peter when the boy took a breath to actually eat.

"Yeah!" Peter was bouncing in his seat, eager to tell everyone about everything that they did in Disney World. "Daddy! I got a blue lightsaber, and Wade got a red one!"

"So is Wade a Sith?" Tony asked, leaning back in his seat a bit to watch Peter. His not-so-secret inner nerd was paying attention. He was still planning a Star Wars day for Steve.

"No way!" Wade made a face and shook his head. "Not all Dark Side are Sith."

"Oh, excuse me!" Tony laughed. "You're right, my bad."

"I'm a Bounty Hunter, who stole a lightsaber!" He grinned, reaching over for another chimichanga before Julie grabbed the plate to help him.

"But they figured out who you and I would be," Steve told Tony with a smirk.

"Oh, this should be good," Bruce smirked a bit.

"Mr Steve is New Hope Luke," Peter told Tony seriously.

Tony turned his head to look at Steve, studying him, before nodding. "Yeah, I have to agree. Good job calling that one, Petey." Peter grinned. "But, if he's New Hope Skywalker, that means he would get a blue lightsaber?"

"No way! I'm a young Obi-Wan, and I have the blue lightsaber. Mr Steve gets the green lightsaber," Peter said with complete seriousness. Steve glanced at Tony, starting to get lost, but wondering just how in depth this went.
"But, Luke doesn't get his green one until Ep VI," Tony pointed out to his son. "I don't think Steve is at that level of Luke, yet."

"No way," Wade shook his head. "But we can't have two blue lightsabers!

"Stark, how much do these kids know about Star Wars??" Sam couldn't help it, he had to know about the geek fest going on.

"We're currently going through the expanded universe," Tony told him. "So," he turned his attention back to Peter and Wade, "we've decided that he's New Hope Luke, but with Return's lightsaber." Both boys nodded. "Alright, fair game."

"Crazier stuff happens in the books," Wade said and Tony had to nod.

"True facts, my young friend. Alright, so who am I then? What color lightsaber do I get?" Tony rubbed his hands together. Jamie had been watching him, and she looked at Steve, clapping her hands together once, and trying to imitate Tony. Steve took her hand and rubbed them together a little to make her giggle.

"You're Han Solo!" Peter exclaimed happily.

"Aw, hell yeah!" Tony grinned. "Wait, does that mean I don't get a lightsaber??"

"Obviously you steal one, like me," Wade said.

"Yeah, and you probably wait, looking for the coolest one," Peter continued. "We haven't decided what color for you yet."

"Oh don't worry, I'll figure that out," Tony grinned. "Steve, my boys made me a pilot! A scoundrel even! I'm so proud!"

"I'm going to take your word for it," Steve said with a laugh. "I'm sure it'll all make more sense when I see the movies."

"Yeah it will. It'll be a thing, a whole big thing."

"Who's his Chewbacca?" Julie asked the boys, and Mary shot a her a look, begging to not encourage them.

Peter and Wade looked at each other, having a silent conversation, before they both nodded and spoke as one. "Uncle Rhodey." Tony started to cackle and leaned back in his chair, tipping it back a little. Jamie looked pleased as she watched Tony's face.

"I'm telling him that! Jarvis, you recorded that right??"

"Shall I send him the video, Sir?"

"Yes, immediately. Oh, be sure to let him know that his new nickname is going to be Chewy-Bear. No, Wookie-Bear!" Tony started to laugh again.

"Is this normal?" Sam asked, looking over towards Steve.

"There is nothing normal about Tony," it was William who answered him though. "But, if it makes Peter happy, I'm okay with it."

"This is a rare treat," Bruce said on Sam's other side. "He's able to relax completely, and he's able to
enjoy some of his nerdier features with his son, and Wade.”


“Language,” Steve intoned again and Tony slowly turned his head to look at Steve, and amused smile on his face.

“Did you just ‘Language’ me?” He smirked, and leaned his elbow on the table, about to put his chin on his fist, but Steve pushed his elbow off the table. “And you got my elbows off the table!”

Mary let out a loud snort with a laugh before she was able to cover her mouth. Steve shot her a look, and her grin widened underneath her hand. “It’s not polite to have your elbows on the table, Tony,” she managed to get out without laughing too much.

“Sure, but we’re going to ignore that Cap just said, Language?”

“He said it to me, too!” Wade piped up. Tony looked at Steve and pointed to Wade, as if somehow proving a point. Steve just let out a little sigh.

“Yeah, but you’re still too young to be saying what Tony says,” Julie said, shooting Tony a meaningful look. “It was probably called for.”

“This is like watching a whole new Rogers,” Sam piped up as he took a drink from his glass. “All manners, and language over here. Where was all that in DC?”

“I think circumstances were a little different,” Steve told him, grabbing a little bowl of applesauce. He was going to see if he couldn’t get Jamie to finish it.

“Saving the world from bad guys is a little different than a dinner party,” Phil said with a smile.

“Whoa, saving the world??” Peter looked between Steve and Sam. “You were on Avengers work in DC?”

“Is it technically Avengers work if Captain America is doing most of the heavy lifting?” Mary asked, looking between Steve and Phil. “Is that just Captain America work?”

“Black Widow was there as well,” Coulson reminded her.

“She was doing undercover stuff, the stuff that Steve and I would never be able to do,” Sam chimed in. “We’re about as stealthy as an elephant.”

“Are you an Avenger too?” Wade asked, and both boys were looking over at Sam now. He had told them earlier that he was pilot with a special suit, different than Iron Man’s though.

“Nah,” Sam shook his head. “Just a guy with a cool pair of wings.”

“Give it some time,” Tony looked over at him. “I’m sure we can print up a patch or something. We should do that,” he looked at Steve. “Get patches, put them on uniforms. We could get special cards! Then it really is like a secret club!” Tony tapped a hand on the table and nodded. “That’s it, that’s a great idea, Cap.” Steve raised his eyebrows a bit. “I’ll rename the Tower, Avengers Tower, and I’ll make up special cards and the lot. Put the big A on it. Done deal.”
“How much coffee have you had?” Bruce asked with a smirk, as they all let Tony ramble.

“Not nearly enough,” he said as he reached for the coffee carafe to refill his cup.

“Is there a limit?” Rachel asked, noticing how he emptied the carafe.

“Coffee is a magical elixir that should never be limited.”

“Sir is not allowed to exceed twelve cups in one eight hour sitting.” Jarvis said, selling him out. “There are even restrictions on the size of the cups. Miss Potts learned that lesson early on.”

“Traitor,” Tony mumbled, slouching a bit in his seat. “Alright, what happened after Star Wars,” Tony asked Peter and Wade, turning back to them. “Did you get to the castle?”

“Yeah,” Peter said, sounding a little unimpressed. “Cinderella’s way overrated,” Wade declared, the shoved a huge bite of chimichanga in his mouth. “We got to eat with Mulan though!” Peter said, and Wade warbled out a reply that only Peter could understand. “And we saw Rapunzel and Flynn Ryder! She had her frying pan, it was pretty awesome. That was a lot more fun than seeing Cinderella.”

Tony put a hand over his chest, sniffed, and wiped a fake tear from his eye. “Tony,” Mary warned with a smile. “No.”

“You don’t know what I’m thinking,” he said back to her.

“You can’t take them to China, and you can’t build another Tower,” Mary countered and Tony pouted.

“That’s your first thought??” Sam looked at Tony with big eyes.

“I bet if he shows any interest in the new movie coming out soon, he’ll want to go to Scotland,” Bruce said to Sam. Tony just smiled. “Tony, we have enough projects together, not including all the solo ones you have, that you don’t need to add another to the list.”

“Voice of reason, so not welcome sometimes,” Tony said and pointed at Bruce. The doctor just shrugged with a smile.

“And you live with this?” Sam looked over at Steve. “This stuff is normal?”

“Fairly normal,” Steve said after a moment to think about it.

“Then your stay in DC must have been boring by comparison.”

“On your left,” Steve said and laughed at the glare that Sam shot him.

“This on ‘On your left’ guy??” Tony asked, then flashed a smile at Sam. “Seriously, how many times did he lap you?”

“That’s not funny, Stark.” Sam was shaking his head.

“Did you know that for fun, he’ll take the elevator to the lobby, then run up the stairs, back to his floor?” Tony told them, and Steve’s cheeks turned a little red. “He lived on the Eighty-Third floor.

“I have to take a couple of breaks,” Steve confessed. “Lindsay on Fifty-Two makes some amazing
donuts on Wednesdays.”

Tony gasped. “You’re eating donuts without me??”

“Go exercise with him, and I’m sure he’ll share,” Mary said with a smile.

“That’s okay,” Tony shook his head. “I like not dying from exhaustion, thank you very much.”

“I’m sure a little exercise wouldn’t hurt, Tony,” Rachel piped up, sharing an identical smirk with her daughter.

“Ouch, getting ganged up on! William? Little help?”

“Ha!” William grinned, putting his arm around Rachel’s shoulders. “I’ve learned to never get in the way of either of these women. You’ll learn soon enough, Tony.”

“Yeah, with that new little spitfire over there,” Julie said with a nod towards Jamie, who seemed to be drawing in the applesauce that was on the tray of her high chair now. Steve had given up and had a towel in his hand for when she was done.

“You shouldn’t talk about Steve like that,” Tony said with a put upon pout. “He’s not little. Not little at all. Anywh- Oph!” Steve had reached around to poke his side.

“For gosh sake’s, Tony,” Mary smirked. "Watch your language!" The adults around the table started to laugh and Steve let his head drop down to his chest.

“That’s not going away anytime soon.”

Phil caught Tony in the elevator on his way down to Bruce's lab the next morning. They nodded to each other. "We gathered a protection detail around the city, and we have vetted agents searching for any hints on where Hydra, or Strucker, might be now.”

"Pretty sure he's going to want to get his hands on Jamie again," Tony commented. "I'm half way sure he had used the last of Cap's DNA, so he can't try another clone." The both walked out towards the lab when the elevator stopped. "I wasn't able to get more information about what they were doing down there, but it seemed like a pretty big operation."

"They had a lot of items that should have been in SHIELD lock-up," Coulson said, holding the door to Bruce's lab open for Tony. Bruce glanced up from his computer and Tony put a cup of coffee in front of him. "Got away with more, and wiped their servers, those that weren't destroyed."

"Not my call," Tony said, pulling up a chair to a screen on the other side of Bruce. The Serum that Tony had been working on was pulled up, Bruce having had tests running all night. "Didn't argue with the Soldier who made that call though. I had an armful of baby, and a desperate need to get out of there." He nodded to the screen and directed his next question to Bruce. "Is that part of what they used on the Maximoff kids? Because, I'm finding it hard to believe that Strucker was able to get them abilities like they have, but he couldn't figure out the Serum with all of Howard's notes."

"No, something else is going on with them," Bruce told him. He took off his glasses to rub between his eyes. "Tony, how do they have so much of your Dad's stuff?"

Tony glanced at Bruce, and he could feel Coulson just behind him. He sighed, closing his eyes a bit.
"He was working for Hydra. He and Zola were the ones that got Hydra started inside SHIELD."

Tony opened his eyes to see Bruce's wide eyes. "Everything he had you doing, everything he was doing to me, it was for Hydra. Willingly." Bruce was about to say something and Tony shook his head. "Not the thing to focus on right now, gotta keep them from getting Jamie." Tony also hadn't had enough time to go through the rest of Howard's journal.

"Or the twins," Bruce commented and Coulson nodded.

"The twins?" Tony frowned, looking between the two of them. "Because the Baby Daddy was Hydra?"

"So were the grandparents," Coulson told him. "We caught them as they were trying to escape, or rather the Winter Soldier caught them. We can only assume they were going to take the twins to another base. We have them in custody right now."

"Barnes is still watching Meg, and I'm assuming he'll be a constant shadow around the building when she gets back, too." Tony ran his hand through his hair. Dinner had been a nice distraction, but he could feel everything starting to pile up again, and he was one step away from becoming too overwhelmed. "Jarvis, we should think about updating a few security protocols so that alarms aren't blaring every time he touches a window."

"Of course, Sir," the AI agreed.

"The Serum is stable," Bruce said, moving to the next topic. "But, in a dormant stage, like your own." Tony nodded a little.

"That's what I was trying to go for, I think." He rubbed at one side of his temples. "Put in microwave to activate."

"Makes sense," Bruce added. "Howard had used the Vita-Rays to activate Erskine's original formula, give a jump start. If you were working with my base formula, and Howard's notes, that would have the most obvious path to take."

"But, that would have stayed dormant inside a normal person," Tony leaned in. He knew Bruce had thought of this as well. "What would have happened if you added that to someone that already had an active Serum in their bloodstream." Like Steve, or a clone of his.

Bruce brought up a screen, using the holographic controls to slide it over to Tony's screen and Coulson leaned in as well to look at it. While he wasn't sure what exactly he was looking at, Tony had an idea. "That doesn't look nearly as stable," he murmured out. "You used Steve's sample for this test?"

"I'm testing it with Jamie's as well," Bruce said with a nod. "I'll send those results over when they're done."

"It looks like water boiling," Coulson said as he watched the screen, the simulation on repeat.

"The active cells are triggering the dormant ones," Tony said, pulling up another screen to the side of the results, in formulaic form this time. "Add a few more corn kernals to the hot oil, and just wait for the heat to distribute. It's like, steroids for a Super Soldier. I wouldn't have been able to calculate for that." Bruce looked at Tony then, catching his eyes, knowing where his thoughts were headed.

"Tony, don't go down that path."

"They would have made me-" Who knows what would have happened to Jamie, so small, so young.
"But you didn't," Bruce told him forcefully. "You didn't, and nothing happened. To either of you." Tony nodded a little.

"It's safe to assume that Strucker knew everything that Howard had tried, right?" Coulson asked, leaning away from the screen now. "He'd know that Howard had given Tony some form of the Serum." Both the scientists nodded. "So, why not activate Tony's own Serum?"

Tony blinked a little. He hadn't thought of that. "He needed Tony to finish the Serum first, to do the tests," Bruce spoke up. "Don't mess with the only one who's able to figure it out, until you know you don't need them anymore."

"Then he probably would have finished Howard's plan," Tony said under his breath. "Think of all the things that Hydra could do if they were able to control me, which they were, and if I was their own little Soldier." A thought hit Tony, and he turned in the chair to look at Coulson. "Where is Loki's scepter?" That had Bruce's attention, too.

The Agent grabbed his phone, tapped out a few things before a frown crossed his features. "I don't like that look, Agent."

"It's unaccounted for." Tony groaned and almost banged his forehead against the desk. "I'll put out the order, that's going to be one of the top priority finds."

"Please," Tony breathed out. "Please do find it." Tony scrubbed his face with his hands, then got up from the chair. "I'm going to go get Peter, take him down for some time in the workshop."

"Try and smooth over the surprise with Jamie?" Bruce asked, pushing his unfinished coffee towards the engineer.

"Try and show him that things will stay about as normal as they can," Tony nodded. "Also, I missed him, like, a lot. So, you'll know where to find me, but please try not too until later in the afternoon." He gave a salute to the two men in the room as he left, heading up to grab his son.

Tony woke up later that day not feeling right. He was asleep on the couch in the workshop, his arm around Peter who was still asleep. They had spent nearly the entire day together, Tony's attempt to show him that things wouldn't change that much, and he was sure what was Peter's attempt to make sure that he didn't spend more time with Jamie.

"Sir?" Jarvis' voice was a bit quieter, but Peter just turned into his chest, still asleep. "Miss Rosenfeld has been discharged and is currently enroute to the Tower."

Tony rubbed his face with his free hand. "Did you tell her that we would have picked her up?" His voice was still laced with sleep, but anymore sleep and he would have started to have a nightmare, and he couldn't do that with Peter in his arms.

"I did, but she was pretty insistent that she was ready to return back home, and, I quote, 'Couldn't be bothered to wait another second.'" Tony snorted softly. "I do believe that Sergeant Barnes is shadowing her vehicle."

"Because that whole situation is going to be fun to handle." Tony turned a little, pulling Peter's body to rest on his stomach, the boy practically dead weight as he slept, snoring softly. "He gets his sleeping habits from Mary, obviously."
"Of course, Sir." Tony glared a little at the AI's voice. "I do believe that Mrs Parker, Mrs Fitzgerald, and Ms Wilson do intend to meet Miss Rosenfeld outside. Shall I tell them that you will be joining them?"

"Yeah, might as well. Might be a little easier than just popping up." He ran his fingers through Peter's hair, tousling it a little bit. "He needs a haircut. Remind me to bring that up with Mary. How's Cap doing with Jamie?"

"Captain Rogers and Young Lady Jamie are enjoying a snack up in the Penthouse, Sir. I would recommend that perhaps Mr Fitzgerald take Young Master Peter while you step outside."

"Awesome idea, J," Tony nodded, still holding onto his son. "Go ahead and give him a call, open the door when he gets here. He can pick up the sack of coal that is Sleepy Peter." Tony loved that Peter could feel safe enough to sleep so heavily, though. He was a tough kid, and the past couple years had thrown some unfair things at them. Tony had been convinced that Peter would be plagued with nightmares, especially after last year, but the bad dreams seemed to luckily be few and far between. And if Peter was willing to drop off like a rock when he slept, usually just around family, then Tony wasn't going to complain.

Tony lifted his head a bit when he saw William walking over, leaning over the couch a bit. "I think there's something on my stomach, but I can't tell. Does it look serious?"

"It's very serious," William said, nodding as he tried to keep a grave expression on his face. "Incurable, in fact." He crossed his arms over his chest. "It's a very common thing, called 'Fatherism.'"

"No!" Tony gasped. "Not that!"

"I'm afraid so, son," William nodded again, moving along to the front of the couch. "There are things for temporary relief, but nothing permanent."

"Tell me, Doc! Tell me the choices."

"The most reliable one, Grandparents." The older man smiled as he leaned in to pick up Peter, the boy's head flopping onto William's shoulder as he held him. "Has he gained like thirty pounds since yesterday??"

Tony stretched, groaning a bit as he sat up. "He's asleep, dead to the world," Tony told him. "It's like his body just naturally ignores the laws of physics and gravity."

"How long's he been asleep?" William asked as Tony stood up, and they headed towards the door out.

"He fell asleep a little before I did, so about two hours." Tony held the door open for him and they went for the elevator. "I would think that he should be ready to wake up anytime. I'm willing to bet that if you put a Wade within ten feet of him-"

"He'll pop up like a puppy," William nodded. "Rachel went to go get Mary and Julie anyway, so I'm sure Wade will be in search of his best friend."

"I have a bad feeling about those three women getting together," Tony said after hearing that they were traveling in a pack. That usually spelled trouble for Tony Stark. He could only hope that Pepper didn't think that now would be a wonderful time to come back from Malibu and join up with them. He would be even more doomed.
"They're going to recruit a fourth into their group," William told him ominously. "This only spells trouble for you. Mary already likes her and she's been telling Rachel about her, and now the newest house guest." Tony blinked and looked up at him. "I'm only telling the truth. You're doomed."

Tony hummed, annoyed, mostly with himself. "Yes, I'm starting to sense a theme in life," he muttered under his breath. "Thanks, William. If he wakes up before I get back, tell him I'll be here soon, just making sure that Meg gets settled. Can't be sending her back off to the hospital."

"I'm sure she'll be much happier once she has her children in her sights," William predicted as the doors opened to his and Rachel's floor. "Good luck, Tony."

"I think I'm going to need it," he chuckled and waved a bit as the doors closed again, and was headed down to the lobby. He briefly wondered if it would look odd bringing the security guard out with him. Todd would be-

Sitting right at the security station. Tony frowned a bit as he walked out, and over to the man. "I thought you were going to be sleeping in today," Tony said as he walked over. The man looked a bit tired, but seemed to have a second wind going.

"I did too, Mr Stark." Tony could smell coffee coming from under the desk. "Front desk called me with a no show, so I came down until we could get a replacement." Tony glanced at his watch and Todd grimaced. "No replacement either."

"Alright, after this, I'm putting you on a one week paid vacation,' Tony told him. "I'll call Happy, set it up. This is a long double shift you just pulled, and I know you were looking forward to sleeping in."

"Was looking forward to seeing my girls, too."

"When you clock out, stay home." He tapped the desk and head back for the front doors again. "Paid vacation, mandatory! Don't want to see you here until Monday next week!" Tony didn't hear the man's reply, probably to try and refute it, and stepped outside, quickly catching sight of the three women he was looking for.

Julie was holding onto baby Rowan, while Rachel was cooing over baby Conor in her arms. Mary stood between them, glancing down the road. "You three look like you're about to spring a trap," Tony said as he walked over to them. "Dangerous."

"You'd better think we're dangerous," Mary said to him. "We're gathering out lost Sister into the Sisterhood." Tony took a step back from her. "When is Pepper coming back to New York?"

"Never now!" Tony exclaimed and Mary cackled.

"I don't know, I'd like to meet her," Julie said with a smile. A devious smile Tony decided.

"This is completely unfair," Tony uttered, putting his hands up in defense. "Your numbers are starting to increase, and it's not fair to the boys in the Tower." The three women looked at him, and he gulped a little. "It's like being hunted by velociraptors," he whispered to himself. "Oh look! A car!" He breathed out when he saw a car pulling up to the curb. It was one of the company cars, so it seemed that Meg had probably talked to Jarvis so she could leave as soon as possible to get back.

Tony was the first to sweep forward to the car and pull the door open. He locked eyes with Meg and they both smiled at each other. Taking her hand he helped her slide out. "You're looking good,
"You're looking a hell of a lot better than I imagined," he replied, helping her stand, then hugging her with one arm. "Kind of a sight for sore eyes."

"Dead is a not a look I plan on taking on for a good many years," she told him softly. "Alright, now let me get to my babies." Tony chuckled and she stepped onto the sidewalk. The car drove back towards the garage as soon as Tony shut the door. He turned to look as Meg was taking Conor from Rachel, Julie coming closer with Rowan. Tony frowned a little, and Rachel looked over to catch the expression.

"Tony?" She asked quietly, taking a couple steps closer to him.

Tony froze, gasping when a sharp pain lanced through his shoulder. He brought up a hand to press to the spot, then pulled it back to see it was wet with blood. There was a intake of breath and he looked at Rachel and his eyes widened. There was a scream on the sidewalk and Tony was lunging forward to catch Rachel as she started to fall back. He could see the shaft of what looked like a small arrow protruding from her chest.

"Mom??" Mary rushed over as people started running from the spot. She took her mom from Tony's arms as Tony saw Todd running out of the building, another arrow striking the ground as he pulled both Meg and Julie back towards the front doors. Tony turned and caught sight of the sun glinting off something metal on the roof of another building. Tony growled a little and took off running across the street, noting that he saw a man with a metal arm running across the roof. Bucky wasn't the shooter, but he had eyes on the real deal.

Tony didn't hear his name being called as he ran through traffic, sliding over the hoods of a couple of cars. He ran past the first building, then ducked in the alley of the next one, lifting himself up onto a dumpster, and jumping up to grab the ladder of a fire escape. he heard the scuffled feet of the runner up above and Tony forced himself to move faster.

Up on the roof he saw that Bucky had tackled someone just before they were about to jump to the next building, and they were grappling with each other. Tony ran over as Bucky pushed down on the person's shoulder, growling. It was a man dress in Army camo gear. Before either of them could say anything though, the man smirked, looked at Tony, then moved his jaw and cracked his teeth down on something.

"No!" Tony shouted and rushed forward, but the mans eyes were already rolling back, his mouth bubbling from a cyanide pill. "Dammit!"

"He wasn't Hydra," Bucky said as he stood up, looking down at the man. "He left a bag from the spot where he shot." Tony nodded a little, then turned around.

"Grab his stuff, go the lower garage entrance. Give Jarvis, override code Alpha-Zero-Four. Take it all to my workshop." He didn't wait for a reply before he running back for the fire escape. Bucky would take care of that stuff, he needed to get back to the Tower. The sounds of sirens hit his ears as he ran back across the street.

Drawing up short, Tony felt his body run cold. His steps were slow and deliberate as he saw Mary rocking on the ground, holding onto Rachel, sobbing softly. He swallowed when movement caught his eyes, the doors opening and William and Steve were coming out. Sound was washed out as the older man ran over to his family, and Tony only saw his mouth moving, calling a name and there wouldn't be a response.
Tony's view was blocked when Steve's hands were on his arms. He looked up to see Steve saying something, but there was just a ringing in his ears. A sharp pain had him looking down, he saw a growing red spot on his shirt, and the world tilted suddenly. He was falling into Steve's arms before his eyes shut on their own.

It was the sound of soft whispers that greeted Tony back to consciousness. He was on something soft, so he figured it had to have been his bed, and his brain was working to catch up with what had happened. Why shouldn't he be in his bed? He had been sleeping right?

He went to turn on his side and a sharp pain in his shoulder had him crying out. Hands were suddenly there to shift him back onto his bed, and Tony opened his eyes. Steve and Bruce were there, Steve looking worried, both looking, sad? Tony sucked in a breath as everything that happened outside suddenly rushed back to his memories.

"Rachel!" He gasped, trying to sit up, but Steve was holding down his good shoulder.

"Tony," Steve forced out, his voice tight. Had he been crying?

"No," Tony shook his head, frowning. "No, Steve, tell me it didn't happen." Steve looked at him, biting his lip, and shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Tony," he said quietly. "She's in surgery, but, they're doing everything they can."

Tony seemed to collapse back onto the bed, shock overpowering his body now. He vaguely heard Bruce excusing himself, and Steve was on the bed next to him, holding his hand in one of his, the other running through Tony's hair.

"The arrow had no fletching, thin and made of metal," Steve told him, his voice soft. "It went right through your shoulder. Bruce says you didn't lose much blood, though." Tony slid his eyes to the side to look at Steve. He looked a mess, he looked tired, and so damned sad.

He squeezed Steve's hand once before he was pushing himself up again, brushing away Steve's other hand that tried to stop him. "I have to- Downstairs- I've got his stuff. I need to go through it, need to know why."

"Tony." Steve reached out for him. Tony took a step away.

"I need to figure this out, I need-"

"You need to rest," Steve told him, stepping closer, but didn't try to grab him again. "You didn't pass out from blood loss, you passed out from Stress." Steve took a breath, pressing down on the mess of his emotions. He would be too quick to anger if he didn't take the extra three seconds to think about what he was going to say. "You haven't slept since coming back home, or when you do it's only for a couple of hours before you're up and running again. You haven't really processed what happened, haven't told me everything, and your body can't handle that anymore. Tony, you're running yourself into the ground."

"I can't stop." Tony turned to look at Steve. "I can't stop, or more bad things will happen. These things, they happen because of me! Who's going to be next?? If I can figure out why-" Tony covered his face with one of his hands. "I can't sleep! I don't have time, and-"
"You do!" He reached over to pull Tony's hand down. "When we started this relationship you said you would talk to me, to let me help you! There is so much going on right now that you can't afford not to do that right now."

"There is so much going on, you're right," Tony retaliated. "There is another child involved in this, and you stepped up to take up the mantle!"

"And I'm Scared!" Steve shouted. "I'm freaking out, Tony! This is so much different than just babysitting Peter, or holding a newborn for a couple of hours. This is- I'm her Father, and I'm responsible for her. And I can't find you to talk to you when I start thinking that it's getting too hard!"

Tony's shoulders slumped a little. "Steve-

"You're not the only one feeling like this, Tony. I wish I could have stopped what happened, could have stopped them from taking you, but I got you back." Steve took the last step forward, hands gently taking Tony's wrists, and he felt the man tense a little, wanting to run away. He let out a little breath when Tony instead reached up to let his hands slide against Steve's cheeks. "We can help each other, that's how this works, it's why we're moving in together."

"That Maximoff girl," Tony started after a second. "She really did a number on me, Steve. And, I uh, I don't know how to really handle it. I'm afraid to talk about it, because it'll send me right back into that head space, and I can't do that." He looked up into Steve's eyes. "I'm really just a shitty boyfriend-"

"No you're not," Steve told him quietly, but confidently.

"I haven't been there for you, not when you needed me." His thumb started to rub one of the lobes of Steve's ear. "And my volcano is erupting, but you're still here. I don't deserve that, but it doesn't change the fact that you didn't run. I'm gonna be there, I Swear to you, I'm gonna be at your side, coaching you through this, but Steve," Tony closed his eyes, trying not to beg. "I need to know why I got someone injured, or maybe killed, someone I cared about. I can't go and face that family without having an answer."

Steve frowned sadly, watching the man in front of him, still holding onto his wrists. "They're your family, too," he said softly. Steve pulled Tony's hands down a little, planting a kiss in each palm. "Go, work quickly. Peter and Mary need you."

"You need me, too." Tony leaned up to kiss him, then wrapped his arms around his neck. Steve slid his arms around his waist, giving him a squeeze.

"You'll find me." Tony nodded, kissing him one more time before pulling away to head down to his workshop. Steve ran a hand through his hair, taking a minute to just breathe.

He released one more breath and pushed himself to move. He needed to get Jamie from Julie, needed to check on Peter, who was with Wade. He knew that Phil was with Mary and William at the hospital, and Steve would wait for the word from the Agent before venturing down there. After he lost his own Mother, he knew that sometimes you just needed space, but he still held out hope that the surgery would go well. As Steve moved to the elevators, he was already thinking of ways to triple check the security measures with Jarvis.

"What level of lockdown is the Tower in, Jarvis?" He asked walking down the hall.

"Partial lockdown, Captain Rogers," the AI responded. "Security teams are still sweeping through a five block radius, while three guards at placed at each entrance and exit to the building. The building
is restricted to employees only, with ID Badges only, and all appointments have been canceled."

Steve nodded stepping into the metal box, hands resting on his belt in default stance. "You'll update me as soon as Tony has anything on the shooters stuff?"

"I will indeed, if Sir does not find you himself." The doors opened and Steve stepped down the hallway to the Wilson's apartment, not needing to knock as Julie had left the door open. Steve would have thought it a security risk, but no one other than the Avengers or other private living area residents would have access to this floor.

He still knocked quietly before stepping inside. Julie was sitting on the couch, holding onto a quiet Jamie. On the loveseat next to the couch was Wade, holding onto Peter, both looking asleep on the couch while some movie played softly in the background. Peter had his knees drawn to his chest, arms wrapped around his legs, cheeks and eyes a little puffy from crying.

Julie stood up quietly and Steve easily moved his arms around to take Jamie from her. She let out a quiet noise of distress, picking up on the melancholy feeling, and laid her head on his chest. "How are you doing?" Steve asked the older woman quietly, not wanting to wake the boys. '"How's Peter?"

"He just drifted off to sleep," she told him, glancing back at the boys briefly. "Wade won't let him go. Jarvis told us that Tony was awake, and that seemed to calm Peter down enough." Steve nodded a little, rubbing Jamie's back. "They haven't really said anything, though. It's going to be rough."

"We'll have to get them talking soon, but we'll just keep an eye on them for now." Steve pulled his eyes away from Peter. "Tony should be up in a little bit, he has the stuff from the shooter...." Julie nodded tightly. "He's, he'll be up." She rubbed his arm a little. "I should get her a snack, try and get her to sleep soon," he said, moving his arms a little to indicate he was talking about Jamie. "Let me know if I can do anything, though."

"I don't think there's much to be done just yet," Julie said gently. "You know where to find us, but try and get some rest yourself." Steve nodded and silently turned on his foot to leave.

He murmured soft words into Jamie's hair as he walked down the hall, but stopped when he heard muffled talking from Meg's door. He frowned a little and moved a bit closer. He picked up her cadence, a bit higher, but then there was a lower voice, and it wasn't from the TV. Steve glanced at Jamie then very quietly pushed the door open.

"-to know there was someone there? You said that he wasn't Hydra." That was Meg. He inched in slowly.

"Bucky?" Steve called quietly, standing a bit straighter as he stepped inside the apartment. The talking stopped as he headed for the living room. There was shuffling, then a grunt, and he saw that Meg had her hands on Bucky's hands, keeping him on the couch. He looked like he wanted nothing more than to run away, all with a glower on his face.

"I live here, and he's my friend," Meg said looking at Bucky. "I'm not keeping it from him when you come here, so get used to it." Bucky's eyes narrowed a little at her, but not in anger. More annoyance. Sometimes he saw that look on Tony's face when directed at Meg. There was some rustling suddenly from the baby monitor on the coffee table, and some soft cries from one of the twins. "Oh look at that, my Not-Dealing-With-This-Bullshit alarm is going off." She got up from the couch. "Talk it out, because I'm not coming back until you two have come to some kind of agreement. There's already too much tension in this building."
Meg got up, nodding to Steve, and letting her hand rest gently on his arm before going for the
nursery. Steve looked at Bucky and they heard the door close. The brunette stood up to face Steve,
but was able to keep the couch between them at least.

"How long have you been here?" Steve asked him after a moment. Jamie had turned her head to
look at Bucky, two sets of the same blue eyes looking at him now.

"I tailed her transport," Bucky said with a nod to the nursery door, before turning his eyes too look at
the baby in Steve's arms. Steve followed his eyes, his arm bringing her a little closer to his chest.
"Stark got her out of the lab."

"They were going to use her," Steve said carefully. In complete opposition to how the two men were
acting, Jamie reached an arm out towards Bucky. "Her name is Jamie." Bucky looked back up at
Steve.

"I'm not the man you're looking for," he told Steve, taking a small step backwards. "I'm not that man
you remember."

"You're in there, though, I know it." Steve walked closer to him, stopping just before his touched the
couch. "If you were the weapon that Hydra was using you to be, you wouldn't be here right now.
You wouldn't being protecting those three," he motioned back towards the bedroom.

"They'd take the children, use them, train them," Bucky argued. "She really could have picked
anyone better to date." Steve snorted softly, nodding.

"I can hear you assholes," Meg's voice crackled over the baby monitor still on the table.

"Next time don't sleep with a Hydra Agent," Bucky fired back. Steve smirked a little; That was his
Bucky's wit and fire coming through.

"Allow me to vet any future partners. Should I make a questionnaire?"

"Would be preferable." Bucky caught Steve smiling and furrowed his brows just a smidge. He
leaned down then to turn off the monitor. "I've seen what they do to kids," he told Steve. "If the- If
he was still alive, he would have tried to get her over to Hydra's side first. It's easier if they give the
kids up for training voluntarily." Steve frowned, but didn't say anything, not wanting to interrupt
him. "If not, probably would have just killed her and taken the babies anyway."

"That's why you found her." Bucky nodded. "I've read some of the files.... How did you get away
form them?"

"They sent me with some AIM scientists, when they were first setting up the lab with some of Stark's
notes." Steve raised an eyebrow. "Howard Stark. They were important, and there was a possibility
that SHIELD would have seen their movement. I was there to make sure that nothing happened." Bucky
was resolutely trying to ignore the inquisitive look he was getting from Jamie. "I was there when they set those animal experiments lose, watched your team fighting. After you put a kink in
their plan, they decided to keep me stationed with AIM, to protect their work."

"That was last year, Buck," Steve said, thinking back to when he could pinpoint the origin of this
mess.

"It was the longest they kept me out of Cryo, and out of the Chair." Bucky had stated it like it was
fact, but Steve didn't miss the little crinkle of distaste of his nose. "AIM was too engrossed in their
work that they didn't follow instructions. I started to break away, break the conditioning. Just
enough."
"You knew what AIM and Hydra were trying to do, so you went about stopping them however you could," Steve finished for him. "What about your memories?"

"Rogers," Bucky started, shaking his head. "You don't-

The front door was pushed open, banging against the wall, and Steve moved, leaning over Jamie to cover her body, and Bucky was pulling out a dagger in one hand and a gun in the other, pointed at the intruder. Tony slid to a stop on the floor, eyes wide. Bucky straightened and put his weapons away with a grunt.

"It wasn't me," Tony said in a rush, hurrying over to Steve was who was standing back up straight with a confused Jamie. "He wasn't after me." Steve frowned and Tony thrust a piece of paper towards his face. "We stepped in the way of his target."

Steve shift Jamie a bit to free up one hand and took the picture. He looked at Tony then back to the paper. "He was Private in the Army, dishonorable discharge, and served under a Colonel Wilson." Bucky was stepping over to them now, taking the picture from Steve's hand. "One ex-husband of Julie Wilson." They looked back at the picture of Julie holding onto a younger Wade.
May 2012

Chapter Notes

I promise, I'm being nicer to them now! I'm starting to take things and make them right, wrap up some loose ends for the boys. I'm making them happy again! You'll see! There's gonna be some feels in this chapter, specially towards the end. Just remember, happy good times are coming soon! :D

You're all beautiful and I love you.

As usual, Unbeta'd, Marvel owns stuff, music/movies own stuff, you know the drill.

Tony was sitting on the couch now, running his hands through his hair. "But, this man wasn't discharged by Wilson?" Steve asked, pacing behind Tony. He was pacing in front of him, then Tony had growled because he was setting him on edge. Bucky was holding on to Jamie, out in front of him, letting her legs dangle, both of them staring at each other. "Wilson was his CO, though."

"It was a General that discharged him," Tony said, lifting his head back up to lean back against the couch. "General Ross, who is one of the doucheist Generals around." Tony glanced at Bucky, sighed, then made a motion with his hands. "For pity's sake, Barnes, she's not contagious. Give her here." Bucky stepped forward quickly to hand off Jamie to someone who would hold her properly. "Wilson couldn't be the one giving the order, then it would tie the man back to him."

"Are we sure that that's what we're going with?" Steve stopped and looked at the back of Tony's head. "Wilson wanted his ex-wife murdered?"

"He's one step away from a dishonorable discharge himself with the allegations behind the divorce." Tony set Jamie in his lap, pulling his legs up around her. "The military doesn't like it when one of their higher ranking Officers comes back with abuse charges against a spouse and child." He lifted his head a little to look at Steve. "And I'm not convinced that Wade isn't in his cross hairs, too. I did have lawyers send over papers stating that his parental rights to Wade had been terminated, he's probably pretty mad."

"I'm sure that'll do it," Bucky grumbled out, and Tony rolled his eyes.

"So what happens now?" Meg asked, walking in from the kitchen, handing a bottle to Tony to give to Jamie. "I mean, you have to tell them."

"I don't want to worry them until we have more facts," Tony said, putting Jamie's back to his chest, letting her take most of the weight of the body in her hands.

"Having the facts or not isn't going to change that they might still be in danger," Meg argued.

"What does this Wilson look like?" Bucky asked and a holographic screen was projected a few feet away. He took a step backwards, the only sign that it might have caught him off guard, studied the picture.

"You have the information now, you should tell them what you know." Steve and Tony looked over at Meg. "I know I'm a poster child of not telling right away, but my secret wasn't actively trying to
kill anyone.... At the time." Bucky snorted again, now looking through information on Wade's father. "Mary deserves to know, just as much as Julie does."

"Ouch, hitting that guilt nerve," Tony muttered, keeping Jamie from falling on her back as she drank from her bottle.

"You can tell them not to worry about it," Bucky said after a couple moments silence. The others looked at him. "He won't be sending anyone else."

"Bucky," Steve frowned, sharing the same expression as Meg.

"I know that we're not about to jump on board and defend a beater," Tony looked over at the two. He found it a little weird that he might be defending the person who had tried to kill him a couple of times, but there were more important things, people, to worry about at the moment.

"We're not defending him," Steve quickly said. "But that doesn't mean that he should be killed."

"No kill order has been issued," Bucky murmured, sounding more soldier than human. Tony watched him out of the corner of his eye, picking up Jamie to burp her. Steve looked at Meg. They all saw the blank look come over his face, ready to assume a new mission.

"Why are you looking at me? I'm no one's Handler," she hissed at Steve. "I just had the bad taste in men."

"He obviously listens to you, and I'm starting to get creeped out," Tony told her quickly. Bucky hadn't moved a muscle since the last time he spoke. "He obviously looking your way, probably waiting for a command."

Steve was fidgety, looking over at Bucky, then back to Meg. She cursed under her breath and ran her hands through her hair. "This is so not what I signed up for. I was expecting to come home, see my kids, and maybe try and get some more rest."

"That all changed when you literally let Hydra into your bed," Tony commented.

"What exactly am I supposed to do?" She looked between Steve and Tony.

"Try giving him an order?" Steve shrugged a little. "Have you read through any of the Winter Soldier files that were released?"

"Some, yeah, he wanted me too." She wrinkled her nose a little and looked over at Bucky. "Report." All eyes were on Bucky now.

"Waiting for mission details," he answered her, rolling his left shoulder a little, the gears whirring in the arm. "Confirm target, Colonel Michael Wilson?"

"Non-lethal, uh," she waved her hand a little as she thought, searching for a word. "Reconnaissance only. We need to know where he is, and if he sent the shooter after Julie and, or, Wade." Steve tilted his head a little at her, silently asking what she was up, too.

Bucky, the Winter Soldier, kept looking at her, as if waiting for something else. "If the target becomes hostile?" He eventually asked.

“Oh, uh, still non-lethal. Um, just, incapacitate him.” She looked at Steve and Tony. Tony shrugged but nodded a little. Tony pulled out his phone with one hand, tapping something out. “We’re trying to keep Julie and Wade safe.”
Tony held up his phone and Steve took it. He frowned at the words, but Tony waved his hand. “I want to see if it works, give it to her.” Steve pursed his lips a little, then handed the phone over to Meg.

“Mission details confirmed,” the Soldier said, turning to go.

“Wait,” Meg called out while looking at the text on Tony’s phone. The Soldier stopped, and Meg frowned at Tony as well. “If you want this, you’ll probably have to use my proper first name,” she muttered. “Report any known information on Margrit Rosenfeld.” Tony and Steve both raised their eyebrows. “It’s German.”

“Romantically linked with former Handler Emil Dittmar,” he started to rattle off easily. “Of direct German heritage. Graduated with a degree in Art and Art History. Considered of value and a likely recruit for training with Hydra, to report directly to Handler Dittmar. Name entered into Hydra databases at time of birth by Jacob Rosenfeld. Surveillance held, but no contact made until recently.” Tony couldn’t help but tense a little. He felt like Hydra was suddenly everywhere.

He took a breath to continue, but Meg shook her head. “Enough, mission confirmed. Go be stealthy.” She tossed the phone back over to Tony on the couch as the Soldier left the apartment, barely making a sound. Tony had gotten up and walked around the couch, going to stand next to Steve, both staring at her intently.

"That's a lot of information that I definitely didn't know," Tony commented. Jamie reached out for Steve, distracting him long enough to break the sharp look that he was giving Meg. The little girl seemed to be perceptive of emotions in a room. "Something we should know?"

She took a breath and placed a hand on her injured side, before leaning against the wall. “I was born in Germany, just outside of Nuremburg. Jacob was my father,” she told them. “I didn’t know him, he and my mother died before I was even three, and I was shipped off the US to live with my Aunt.” She looked at them, and they could see that she was as troubled with the information as they were. “I was always told that they had been killed in a burglary gone wrong, and since I had been sleeping so quietly that the burglar didn’t even know I was there. And I never had a reason to look them up.”

"You changed your name?" Steve asked her.

"Not legally," she shook her head. "My Aunt always called me Meg, so I just started going by that. It's how I was always registered at schools, too, so I always have to fill out that little tab of 'Other Names' on applications and forms." Meg pushed herself from against the wall. "I need to go check on my kids, and then I'm going to lay down. Lock my door, put Jarvis on sentry mode, I don't care. Just, let me know if something happens?" Steve nodded a little and they watched her make her way back to the nursery.

Steve nudged Tony's shoulder towards the exit, Jamie's head laying down on his own shoulder now. "I don't know what's going on anymore," Tony moaned a bit, rubbing his face when they were out in the hallway. "Jarvis?"

"I am currently tracking Sergeant Barnes, and running the new information," his AI responded, trying to ease his creator's mind. Tony nodded a little. His eyes closed when Steve reached up with one hand to rub at the back of his neck.

"Go to Peter," he said, kissing his temple. Tony looked at him, eyes glancing to a steadily sleepier looking Jamie. "I'm not going anywhere, and you always feel better when you've got Peter with you. And he'll feel a little better when he sees that you're alright." Tony leaned up to gently kiss him.
"I'll find you," he promised. He leaned over and kissed Jamie's forehead. Steve watched Tony walk down the hall towards the other apartment where Peter was, and Steve turned to head for the elevator. When the doors closed he let out a long breath, letting his head drop back briefly.

"Captain Rogers," Jarvis called out and Steve opened his eyes again. "Miss Potts is calling for Sir, but I felt that it would be an inopportune time to bother him." Steve smiled a little at the AI. "Would you be willing to take the call?"

"Yeah, thanks Jarvis," he said with a nod. "I'll take it in the Penthouse, let me just put Jamie down for a nap first." If anything, Steve figured that the call would be enough of a distraction until some news, about just about anything, would be coming through. Steve hated not being able to do anything.

It took a couple extra minutes to get Jamie to sleep, but she was quiet, with a hand curled around the corner of a blanket, and peacefully asleep. Steve went out to the living room, dropped himself onto the couch, and Jarvis connected the call. "Steve?"

"Hi, Pepper." He always felt a little weird about calling her Pepper, because he hadn't had nearly as much interaction with her, but she had insisted. "Tony's with Peter."

"How is he?" She asked immediately. "Jarvis told me what happened, luckily before the reports started coming in."

Steve frowned. "I think we'll know more when, well, we know more from the hospital. What reports?"

"An attack just outside of Stark Industries doesn't stay quiet for long," she told him. "I'm trying to stay ahead of it, to keep Rachel and Mary's identity out of it, but there are a lot of reporters looking in to this. There are pictures of them from every smart phone within a three block radius popping up on social media, including one of you carrying Tony back into the Tower and refusing an ambulance for him."

"He wasn't as hurt as Rachel was," Steve argued weakly. He also knew of Tony's intense dislike of hospitals, and he didn't want Tony anywhere that wasn't as secure as the Tower. "She's still in surgery as far as we know, and Tony's already awake."

"Do you know who attacked?" Steve could hear some papers shuffling in the background, and knew that she had to be in her office in California. Probably going to be working overtime for the next couple of days.

"We have an idea, but we're not sure yet," Steve admitted. "We're looking into it now, but I highly doubt that it's going to be information that we want released."

"That never comforts me, Steve," Pepper sighed.

"It looks like Julie's ex-husband may be involved."

There was a beat before Pepper responded. "I was right, I'm not comforted."

"As soon as we know something, you'll know something, promise." Steve told her, pulling a pillow from the couch and shoving it under his neck

"I love promises from Captain America." Steve snorted softly and the call disconnected. He closed his eyes and threw an arm over his face. Steve Rogers was tired.
Tony let Peter sprawl over his chest, palm firmly over the arc reactor and his fingers curling a little. He was half asleep, but his eyes weren't closed all the way, and Tony let his hand rub gentle circles on his back. "I'm going to redo the penthouse," he said quietly, and Peter shuffled his head a little to look at Tony. They were back down in the workshop, on the couch, where they had been napping earlier in the day. "There's going to be a lot more room."

"It's big now," Peter replied sleepily. The boy was exhausted, but now he couldn't fall back asleep.

"We need more room up there," Tony said simply.

"Because of Jamie?" Tony raised an eyebrow when Peter seemed to curl up a little more on top of Tony, tilting his head down. "Cause she's gonna need so much attention now?" Peter was not warming up to the newest addition.

"You were that small once," Tony told him, trying for a difference tactic. "You started walking for me on your first birthday, but you still needed help."

"You're gonna ignore me, cause she can't do anything," Peter huffed out, and Tony could see a little scowl forming on Peter's face. Tony ran his hands through Peter's hair. "Mr Steve won't be able to give me art lessons anymore because of her."

"Did he tell you that?" Tony kept his voice soft, but firm.

Peter shook his head. "No, but it's gonna happen. He always has her."

"She's been here two days, Peter." His finger tapped Peter's back lightly. "We're not going to ignore you, Petey-pie."

"But, I'm not gonna have all of your attention," the little boy argued.

"No, you're not," Tony said and Peter looked up at him. "But you don't need all of it like you used, too." Peter's features scrunched up in a mix of anger and confusion. "You're growing up so fast, and I'm gonna sound like the sappy Dad here, but it's true. You're really smart, and you're able to do a lot without my help, or Mama's help, anymore. Do you like when we hover over your homework?"

"No," he mumbled into Tony's shirt. "I can do my homework myself."

"And you know that if you ever need help with it that you can come to us, right?" Tony asked, and Peter had to nod. "Well, if you don't need help with your homework, then that means that I've got time that was Peter Time, and it's an empty slot now. So while you're busy doing homework, I'll go check on Jamie to make sure that she isn't doing something silly, like crawling into the dishwasher, or eating all of the soap." He could see Peter trying not to smile at the thought. "What I'm trying to say is that, yeah, Jamie needs a bit more attention than you do, but she's tiny still. You are growing up to be an awesome young man, so you don't need as much attention. But that doesn't mean that I'm not always going to be there. I'm still going to try and help you with your homework, even if you don't want it."

Tony and Peter were quiet for a bit after that, Peter moving so that he could tuck his head under Tony's chin. "I love you Daddy."

"And I love you, Peter," Tony said, pressing a kiss to the top of his head. "I'll never stop, and I'll never love you less. If anything, I'll only love you more and more." Peter snuggled into him and Tony wrapped his arms around his son.
"I still don't like her," the little boy mumbled and Tony chuckled lightly.

"We'll give it some time, maybe she'll grow on you." Peter stuck out his tongue and Tony smiled. He could deal with a slightly jealous son for now.

"Why haven't they called about Granma yet?" Peter asked quietly.

"Surgery can be a long process," Tony tried to explain. He didn't know what was happening, and he was just waiting for an update or phone call himself. "Surgeons sometimes need time to make sure that everything is working just it used, too. They won't let Granma leave until they're positive that she's going to be good as new." Tony tapped down on the panic that was trying to crawl up into his chest. He had no idea what was wrong, didn't even know if the chances were good in her surgery. Steve hadn't look all that optimistic when he had woken up.

"Are they Doctor's like Uncle Bruce?"

"Better," Tony answered and Peter looked at him like he was crazy. "There are lots of different Doctors," Tony told him. "I'm technically a doctor, but I'm not a medical doctor."

"You can be a doctor and not have to work in a hospital?"

Tony nodded. "Some teachers are Doctors, and I'm a Doctor in Physics, mechanical and electrical engineering." Peter stared at him for a few second with big eyes, but a blank look. "All the stuff I need to know to make the Bots, Jarvis, and the Iron Man suit." That did the trick, his eyes lighting up. "There are even people who are Doctors of Art."

"Is Mr Steve a Doctor of Art?" Peter asked immediately.

"No, but he should be, shouldn't he?" Peter nodded. "I want to put an art room in the new Penthouse."

"One for Mr Steve and me?" Tony nodded, running his hands through his hair.

"Yeah, a place where you two can have your lessons, or you can go too whenever you want." Tony thought about the plans he had been finishing. "And maybe Miss Meg can do some work in there. She can teach you about some new ways to do art."

"She showed me some ideas she drew for sculptures," Peter told him. "She said I could watch her work on it, when she started."

"I hired her to make some stuff for my company." He smiled a little, loving when Peter talked so easily about a subject. He really seemed to enjoy art, even more now that he was getting exposed first-hand to different mediums. "Pretty cool, huh?"

"Do you think that I could make art, and get paid for it?" Peter looked up at Tony with big eyes.

Tony grinned at him. "I think that you could do just about anything you wanted, Petey. If you want to make art for a living, then go for it. I'll help you get everything you need to start." He played with a longer, curlier, piece of his hair. "You got time to figure out what you want to do with your life though, so there's still a lot of things for you to have fun with."

Steve had been right, he always felt better after spending some one-on-one time with Peter. This was his little boy, his son, one person calming army. He had to keep a little bit of optimism that the next call they got would be good news about Rachel. Or news about who was behind the attack.
"Your birthday is coming up," Peter said, pulling him back from his thoughts. "Are we going to have a party?"

Tony bit his bottom lip a little, knowing what came just before his birthday. One year on from Loki's attack and the Chitauri, and New York was slowly repairing itself. Tony himself though, that was a longer process for him. "I don't know," he replied honestly. "I hadn't actually thought about it. What do you think we should do?"

"Last year was fun," Peter said. "A big dinner with everyone there. But, it's your day, Daddy." Tony smiled at him. Peter was a big proponent of the Birthday tradition; The birthday person does what they like, and doesn't have to do any chores.

"Well, I've still got a couple weeks to think about it." Tony ran his hand through Peter's hair again. "You need a haircut kiddo."

"So do you!" Peter leaned up to tug on some of Tony's longer hair. He giggled when Tony's eyes widened a little at the sudden action. "The hair's starting to grow over your ears."

Tony hummed and ran his fingers through his own hair along the side of his head. "It is starting to get a little long, isn't it? I suppose I could get a trim. You like it when my hair is shorter?" Peter nodded, smiling. "Alright, how about we both go together, like we did a couple years ago."

"Matching haircuts?" Peter asked hopefully.

"Why not?" Tony smiled at him. "Everyone says that you look just like me."

"Granma says I look more like Mama," Peter told him.

"Granma likes Mama better, cause that's her daughter." Tony pushed Peter's nose a little. "She's biased, and cannot be trusted in a looks contest. But, if ever asked, Granma is much prettier than anyone else. Got it?" Peter nodded seriously, then giggled once.

Steve started to wake up slowly, something not sitting right. He remembered falling asleep on the couch up in the Penthouse, Jamie down for a nap, and Tony with Peter. He pulled in a breath through his nose then opened his eyes. And promptly yelped, jumping up and falling off the couch onto the floor.

Wade merely took a couple steps back so Steve didn't fall on him and looked down at him. "You always do that." "You shouldn't be that close to my face while I'm sleeping!" Steve pushed himself up to a sitting position and looked at the ten year old.

"This is the third time I've done it, you'd think you'd be used to it," Wade argued, really not doing a great job at keeping the smile off of his face. Steve rubbed his face with his hands. "Everything okay?" Steve asked. There really was no use in trying to explain to Wade, again, why he shouldn't hover over someone while they slept.

"Yup," he nodded, then looked past Steve for a second. "They didn't want to wake you up, so I said I'd do it when I got up here."
Steve had been in the process of getting up to sit back on the couch and frowned at Wade's words. He turned and saw Bucky and Meg standing by the arm of the couch. Steve jumped again, putting a hand to his chest. "Stop scaring me!"

"We didn't do anything," Meg said. "Like he said, we didn't want to wake you."

"The child has interesting methods," Bucky added. Wade seemed to smile, taking it as a compliment.

"His name is Wade," Steve muttered, leaning back against the couch. He was more tired than he thought if three people had been able to startle him like that. "Peter is down with Tony in the workshop, Wade. Why don't you go find them."

"Okay!" The kid took off running for the elevator. Steve motioned to the chairs as he disappeared and Meg moved to sit down, Bucky staying standing.

"I assume there's information?" Steve glanced at the watch on his wrist. He'd only been asleep for about three hours.

"Wilson wasn't even attempting to hide," Bucky told him, and Steve raised an eyebrow. "He still has a condo in New York, although it looked like he was getting ready to leave when I got there."

Steve sat up a little straighter. "Did you confront him?" He knew that Bucky was still fighting whatever conditioning he had been through, and they had let him go off on his own. He didn't want to add to another body count.

"Non-lethal," Bucky reminded him. "He confessed to hiring the shooter."

"Ballsy son of a bitch," Meg muttered under her breath. She looked about as tired as Steve felt. He felt a little bad, she looked much older than when Steve had met almost a year ago, and part of that felt his fault.

"He's going to leave the state." Steve turned his attention back to Bucky. "I don't think he'll be doing anything else to his ex-wife or son." Steve was about to ask what he meant when his saw Bucky's body tense, his head turning to the side a little. Turning around Steve saw Wade standing in the archway to the living room, and his stomach dropped when he knew that Wade had heard most of, if not all of, their conversation.

Wade was frowning heavily, confused, but upset. "My Dad did this? He attacked Peter's Granma?"

"Wade." Steve stood up, walking around the couch towards the boy. Wade took a step back from Steve, a slight glare on his face.

"I heard him, whoever he is," Wade said motioning towards Bucky. "He's talking about my Dad." Steve crouched down to one knee and nodded. "He made someone hurt Peter's Dad and Granma?"

"No," Bucky spoke up and Steve whipped his head around. Meg was already getting up to try and stop what they knew Bucky was going to say. "He wanted to hurt your mom." Steve saw Bucky was going to say. "He wanted to hurt your mom." Meg slumped against Bucky's back, hitting his shoulder with her fist. She muttered something that made Bucky frown, not understanding. Steve turned back to look at Wade.

His face was worryingly blank. Wade looked at Steve, and when he spoke his voice was even and strong. "You'll stop him from hurting anyone else, right?" Steve nodded right away. "You'll stop him from coming back?" Steve saw his jaw start to wobble a little and he reached out to gently take Wade's arms. "He hurt me and my Mom, and I swore I'd never let him do it again. When he left, I swore she'd be safe."
Steve pulled the boy into his arms and Wade started to cry against his chest. "We're not going to let anything happen to you, or your mom," Steve told him, rubbing his back. "This is the safest place for you." He wanted to promise that they'd be safe, but they'd been attacked just outside of the doors to the building. Steve wanted to talk to Tony later tonight. He watched Meg and Bucky silently leave the room, nodding to them once, but not letting go of Wade. He knew he'd have to Julie what was happening now.

Tony met Steve in the hallway on the way to Julie's, Peter in his arms, asleep on his shoulder. He had gotten a call from Coulson that Rachel was out of surgery, but the next twelve hours would really be the most telling for her condition. She was stable, but not awake. They would be staying at the hospital overnight. Steve then texted him to meet him upstairs, than it might be better if Peter spent the night with Wade. Something was up.

"You were right," Steve whispered to him. "It was Wilson." Tony looked at him then nodded. Steve opened the door to Julie's apartment, and they walked inside. "Wade is in his room, trying to get some sleep."

Julie was in the kitchen, making some coffee. Tony could tell that Steve had already told her, but there was probably more that needed to be said. He slipped inside Wade's bedroom, saw the boy had already claimed one half of the bed, leaving the other open for Peter. As he leaned down and pulled back some of the blankets, Wade cracked his eyes open. He put Peter down on the bed, close to Wade, and Wade shuffled a little closer. Tony reached out to run his hands through Wade's hair once, resting his hand on his head.

"His Granma is out of surgery," Tony whispered to him. "They'll know more in the morning, but she's stable." Wade nodded, then closed his eyes again, trying to go back to sleep. Tony watched both boys for a couple more moments before he left the bedroom, leaving the door open just a crack.

In the kitchen, Steve was sitting across from Julie, three mugs of coffee set out, one waiting for Tony next to Steve. He sat down and glanced between the both of them. "He's been living in New York all this time," Steve told Tony. "Only five miles away from their house." Tony frowned. In the divorce it had been ruled that Colonel Wilson had to move outside of the city that Julie and Wade were living in. It was no secret that he probably had more than one residence, but Tony was more than a little upset to hear how he had been able to hide at least one place from everyone.

"So, I assume that he fessed up?" Tony asked, and took a drink of coffee. The caffeine was a welcome addition to his system. "Did he say why?"

Tony saw Julie watching Steve now, and figured that this is what he must not have told her. "He got the order saying that his parental rights had been terminated, and he wasn't happy about it." Steve had gone back to get the rest of the information from Bucky after bringing Wade back down to his mother. "Apparently he's been keeping an eye on them, and he's seen you coming around, too."

Tony raised an eyebrow when Steve looked at him with the last sentence.

"Oh, you have got to be kidding me." Tony instantly saw where this was going. "He thought that I was making my move?" Steve nodded. "So he goes full tilt crazy ex? Some sort of 'If I can't have them, no one can have them'"

"In as few words."

Julie was rubbing her face with one hand. "I knew he didn't take the divorce well. He was overseas
when he got the papers. But he sent them back, signed. I knew he'd be upset, but he never tried to contact me."

"Probably because he couldn't at the time," Tony said. "I looked through the package your lawyers had set up, there was a restraining order in there. Smart thinking on their part in my opinion."

"It's been over two years though," she looked at Tony. "Why would he wait this long to do anything?"

"Because he was able to keep an eye on you," Steve spoke up this time. "Your routine hadn't really changed that much, I'm assuming, and maybe for a while he was content that it didn't look like you were moving on."

"Probably thought that he just had to bide his time, wait out the restraining order for legal sake-" Tony picked up.

"And to keep his military record clean," Steve threw in.

"-and he'd try and get you back," Tony finished. "He keeps company with the likes of General Ross, so I wouldn't put anything past this man personality wise."

"Am I going to have worry about going outside every time now?" Julie asked, her tone showing a bit of her worry.

"No," Steve shook his head, and Tony looked over at him. "We've got eyes on him, and he's leaving the state now. He was packing up, most likely cleaning out before anything could be traced back to him. He hadn't known that the man he had hired had been caught, or well, at least that his stuff have been found. But, I have it on good authority that he has enough incentive to not try this again."

Tony could read between the lines; The Winter Soldier.

Julie nodded, leaning against the table they were sitting at. "I can still send a bodyguard with you when you go out, with and without Wade," Tony told her. "There's a nice man named Todd who'd be willing to help you out, and I trust him. They can go with you to make sure you get to your treatments, and keep an eye on Wade. Todd already does half of that anyway."

"I think I'd like that," Julie said with a nod. "I think it would make me feel a bit safer."

"Consider done," Tony told her. "In the morning we'll get everything settled away. Todd's really good with kids, too. He's got two girls that are around Peter and Wade's ages, and Wade already knows him."

"I think I've heard some disgruntled stories about him." Julie had a small smile on her face. "Wade's told me about how he's foiled their plans to get into trouble about the Tower."

"That would be the same one."

They left Julie feeling a bit more secure, the boys asleep, and Tower still under partial lockdown with a full lockdown for the residential floors. Steve and Tony hit the elevator and Tony was turning to look at the blonde. "Wade overheard everything, didn't he?" Steve nodded and Tony sighed. "That kid, we need to put a bell on him."

"He gives Natasha and Clint a run for their money in the stealth department, that's for sure," Steve muttered. "Speaking of, they're on their way back here. Should be here tomorrow night or the next morning."
"Can't say that I won't be glad to have them around," Tony nodded. "Now we're just missing our favorite Demi-God and it'll be a full reunion."

"Careful, or it might happen," Steve warned him. He reached out and took Tony's hand, lacing their fingers together.

"You've been thinking," Tony murmured under his breath. "I can feel it, you're half way to Captain America." Steve raised an eyebrow. "You're more 'Man with a Plan', than Steve Rogers." Steve opened his mouth, but Tony cut him off. "Do not say that Steve Rogers is also a man with a plan, because I know for a fact that you did not plan our first date. Or the first time we kissed, or even the second time."

"I kind of had a plan for the next time," Steve said and shuffled his foot on the ground. The elevator stopped at the Penthouse and they walked out, still holding hands.

"You did not, stop it." Tony pushed Steve's arm. "Alright, let's talk. Let's get this off your chest."

"Well, we do have to make a plan," Steve said as they sat on the couch. Tony grabbed the tablet that was on the coffee table before Steve could, checking on the camera feed that was Jamie's temporary room. She was still blissfully asleep. "We have a lot of enemies popping up, a lot of surprises, and we need to make sure that we have all of our blind spots covered."

Tony looked at him, then gave a nod. He knew that Steve was right, they did need to have a plan. They were the Avengers, Steve was kind of the official leader, and they were dealing with a lot. Hydra topped that list by far, what with their experiments, probably their hunt for Jamie and possibly Bucky, and their supposed interest in Meg. They couldn't be sure that they hadn't already tried approaching her, so that was something they would have to figure out. Tony needed to read through Howard's journal just so he could see what kind of information they still had, and he needed to puzzle out how much they knew about the Serum in his own veins.

Of course they would have to figure out what to do with Strucker's Enhanced, and what it mean that they had let Tony go. Were they still with the man who was at the top of Hydra command? And was Strucker even the top? Jarvis had collected as much information from the SHIELD/Hydra dump as he could, and he knew that Coulson and Mary had been doing as much as they could to piece together what they could of the organization.

Then there was this new threat of Colonel Wilson. Apparently he wasn't all mentally present, and Tony needed to keep Julie and Wade safe. He was sure it was the same thoughts that had spurred Steve into his 'Captain' state. And that wasn't even including the fact that Tony hadn't gotten a decent amount of sleep in the last forty-eight hours at least, and didn't want to stop to think about what he had actually been through while at the Hydra facility. He wasn't ready, not mentally.

Tony felt utterly exhausted, in every single way. He wished that he could just ignore everything, bury himself in his workshop until he passed out from exhaustion and got some sleep, let others deal with everything on their plate. But he couldn't, he knew he couldn't. This was rapidly becoming an Avengers problem, and they needed to put a stop to all of this before it got even more out of hand. It wouldn't be long until the government was knocking on their door, and Tony knew that a lot of the blame would be coming his way. He was the government's favorite scapegoat.

"Okay," Tony nodded, running a hand through his hair. "Coulson said that they have teams out there looking for the objects that Hydra took from SHIELD, and looking for Strucker. Jarvis will keep an eye on that, send us locations as well."

"We've also got scans out for the Maximoffs," Steve told him. "They have a vendetta against you,
and they made their play obvious."

"I couldn't tell," Tony deadpanned. "While she was, doing what she does, her brother came in. Told me all about my weapons that almost killed them... I know what happened. Do you think that they're going to be a threat, to come after me?"

"I'm not really sure," Steve told him honestly. "I'm not writing it off though, but you know more about them right now." Tony saw the line for what it was, Steve wanting Tony to talk about what happened. But there was also no pressure behind it.

"Just what we need though, one more person to look out for," Tony let out a little sigh. "I don't know if we have to worry about them coming here, though." Steve raised an eyebrow at him. "When I was escaping the compound, they caught up with me just before I got outside. I'm not exactly sure what happened, but they let me leave."

"Not sure how to take that," Steve uttered. "Well, they're still kind of high on my list."

"Fair enough."

"I assume you've got Jarvis on full surveillance downstairs?" Steve asked, leaning his side against the couch. Tony could see that Steve was starting to look tired, too. Everyone was looking tired. They just need a break.

"You mean down in 'Former-Hydra' Central?" Tony snorted a little. "Yeah. Starting to think that I'm gonna need to add a second AI or something to try and help Jarvis out with all of this."

"The action wouldn't go unnoticed, or unappreciated, Sir," Jarvis spoke up and Tony rolled his eyes fondly.

"Yeah, he's keeping an eye out on them." He glanced at Steve, noticing his shoulders were a little tense as he thought about his best-friend-turned-assassin downstairs. "I'm not gonna lie and say that it wasn't risky sending him out to go after Wilson-"

"Yeah, but what other choice did we have?" Steve asked wearily. "By the time one of us, or anyone else on the team, would have gotten out there, Wilson would have been gone."

Tony tapped his teeth together a couple of times. "You know that it could have ended worse."

"Trust me, I know." Steve was looking out towards the windows. "He'll talk to me when there's a mission to report on, but I can't get anything else out of him. I know Bucky's still in there-"

"This is a conversation that we can finish later," Tony cut him off, leaning in a bit closer. He didn't want Steve to jump on his back because he thought Tony was being crass, but they didn't have time to debate what should, or even needed, to happen with Barnes. "And it'll come, don't worry. Jarvis will be watching to make sure that there aren't like, any Hydra plants still active in his head."

"And for any hidden ones that might be in Meg's?" Steve asked, tilting his head to look back towards Tony. Tony only nodded.

"Not saying that she would lie to us, or try and hide anything...."

"Yeah, I get it." Steve leaned in towards Tony a little as well, leaning his cheek on top of Tony's. "I'm tired, Tony."

Tony reached up and started to run his hand through Steve's hair slowly. "Me, too," he breathed out.
They sat there, just leaning on each other, taking comfort in being able to feel each other, until the tablet screen between them lit up. Jamie's soft cries could be heard, and Steve was already moving to get up.

Tony stood up with him, pulling him into a soft kiss. "You go get her back to sleep, and I'll meet you in the bedroom, okay? We'll try and get some sleep."

"Will you?" Steve looked at him. "Try to sleep, that is?" He ran his thumb softly under one of Tony's eyes. "Much longer and it's going to look like you got into a bad fist fight."

"If you're there, I'll try," Tony told him, bring his hand down to kiss his palm. "Go on, go check on baby girl." Steve kissed him one more time before leaving the living room for Jamie's room.

Tony waited, watching the way he walked off, and when Steve didn't come back in, Tony headed in another direction. The lights behind him started to dim down as Tony approached the bar. He leaned down, grabbed a crystal decanter and set it on the counter. Empty glasses were sitting off to the side, upside down from being washed, ready to be used, and he knew that there was ice in the mini-fridge that his knees were touching.

He could never really give up alcohol, not completely, but when Peter was around it was easier to forget how much (he thought) he craved it. It was hard to wipe out nearly Twenty years of habit, always being able to reach for a glass, have a drink or ten when he didn't want to think about something. Tony remembered, nearly a year ago, when Tony had brought Steve to his father's office at the mansion, how he wanted that drink even then, how he had been so close to taking a drink. And later when Steve told him, had firmly believed, that Tony would have started drinking again if he really had no control. How flying through a wormhole would have been the one thing to make him do it. Tony wished that had been true.

It hadn't escaped Tony that he had been having nightmares of the attack. Were they nightmares? When you dreamed about something before it happened? The car pulling up, the door opening, then suddenly pain. When Peter had come back from his vacation, Tony felt that little piece of anxiety, that fear that something was going to happen, but wrote it off when nothing happened. He had been nervous to tell his son about Jamie, right? So why didn't it occur to him when Meg was coming back that something could happen? And what exactly did it mean? Would it happen again? Tony was not ready to handle everything this entitled mentally. Should he blame himself for not changing things up? Taking more precautions? But, then wouldn't that mean that he have to acknowledge that it was a premonition, or something? He'd have to know beforehand.

The stopper had been pulled off of the decanter, his right hand reaching out to rest on one of the glasses. Tony took a long breath in through his nose, closing his eyes when the familiar scent hit. Oaky, a bit of the burned wood smell, with a hint of something almost flowery, and warm, so warm that he could feel his mouth nearly watering, his nerve endings firing up in his chest, tingling across his shoulders, down his arms, and even pooling in his stomach. The last actual drink he had, had been some kind of homebrew beer that Clint had brought over, before Christmas. The team had all been in one spot, and they had a movie night, Clint excited to show off his first batch of homemade beer. It hadn't been half bad. Tony had stopped himself after two bottles.

He wasn't sure how long he stood there, one hand on the glass, the other holding onto the container of scotch, but it must have been just a little too long. A warm hand slid over the one on the glass, gently pulling it away, while another put the stopped back on the decanter. Tony's hand tightened around the container, and he almost let out a whimper at the loss of the smell.

"You don't need it, Tony," Steve's voice whispered by his ear.
"You don't know that." Tony opened his eyes, looking ahead, feeling Steve behind him. "Used to be a time that I couldn't even get function without alcohol. Who knows, maybe I'll be better if I go back to that." Steve's hand squeezed his right, his left resting on top of Tony's now, but not trying to pull away from the decanter. "Won't have to think, that's for sure, won't have nightmares because my brain will too busy drowning itself with too much activity, or maybe too little, I'm not really sure."

Tony dropped his head down a little. "Snuck this bottle up here a while ago, after you left to DC. Don't know why I did it, but I knew it was easier. Peter was in school a lot, staying down at Mary's more often than not, I was either here or in the workshop and couldn't exactly leave the Tower. Only person who would really come up here would be Pepper to get some signatures, and that's easy enough to avoid if I needed too." His eyes flickered over to the side when Steve's thumb started to rub his knuckles. "My liver is still pretty shit. I once spent an entire week, seven full days, drunk. I mean, just constantly drinking, keeping that feeling going, never sleeping longer than two hours so I could keep having drink after drink."

"It's been five years since you've been drunk," Steve reminded him.

"Could be fifty years, the time doesn't really make a difference," Tony told him. "I mean, sure, it's harder in that first year, really saying no to a drink, but after that you hit a plateau. Well, for me I did, I'm sure it's not the same for everyone, not everyone else is a functional alcoholic like me. That's why it was so easy to keep getting drunk, to get away with it. Functional. Hyper functional even."

Tony felt himself lean his back against Steve's chest, and decided the liked the warmth of Steve a little better than of the scotch. But that was just the smell, a little part of his brain told him, perhaps the taste would be a better warmth. "Steve," he closed his eyes, feeling his throat close a little. "I have been fighting this feeling since I got back. You don't know how many times I've caught myself looking over at this bar, or thinking about it. The motion of pouring a drink is second nature, you know. Could do it one handed."

"What's the difference between drinking a beer, and drinking this?" Steve asked, ever so gently tugging Tony's hand away from the crystal decanter.

"There's a distinct difference in alcoholic drinks," Tony told him. He knew Steve was distracting him, but it was kind of working, so who was he to complain about it. "Beer, champagne, even some wines, much lower alcoholic content. They're overrun with other ingredients, going more for taste. That's what a lot of people appreciate about them, the taste, make you forget that you're drinking something that the kiddos can't have. Just enough to get the dopamine in your head rolling around, make the party just a little bit more fun." He looked back at the amber liquid in front of him. "But this, this is made in a very particular way. Almost like an art form. And there are those out there who drink and appreciate that art, the taste, the way it's made, and aren't alcoholics. Fair game to them."

Tony licked his lips a little, then lifted his head up. "I don't drink alone. Beer, champagne, whatever, if I'm not getting drunk, I don't drink when I'm alone. That is a one way road to disaster, and my kid, kids, don't need to see me going to rehab, again. If there's even one out there that would take me." He let Steve wrap their arms around him, pressing him more firmly to Steve's chest. He took a breath, feeling it waver on the way back out. "It's just so damn hard right now. I'd fight you, Steve," he said with a wobble in his voice, pin pricks behind his eyes as tears threatened to form. "If you tried to deny me the drink, I would physical fight you over it, and I wouldn't stop."

Steve kissed the side of his neck, but didn't say anything. He slowly turned Tony around so they were facing each other now. Tony brought Steve's hands to his chest, resting just above the arc reactor. "I can't sleep, Steve, but I wish I could. And it's getting real tiring of saying I can't sleep. I'm done with nightmares, and I wish there was an easy fix." Tony's vision wobbled, tears filling up. "I
want to sleep, preferably next to you, and close my eyes when it's dark, then open them when it's light out again. Peter's done with school, and the damn perceptive kid is gonna notice if I'm collapsing from exhaustion in the middle of the day. He asked me what I wanted to do for my birthday, today. I don't know how I forced myself to give him an answer that wasn't, 'Drown myself in a couple dozen bottles.'"

His hands tightened around Steve's and he closed his eyes tightly, forcing some of the tears to slide down his cheeks. "I don't want to celebrate my birthday, because that means I would doing something that might potentially be nice. I'm so scared that something is going to happen, to take that away from me. Something that will take you away, or Peter, or even Jamie. I don't want to take that chance."

Steve pulled Tony close, as close as he could, not moving their hands. He leaned his head against the top of Tony's, pressing his lips to Tony's forehead. Tony let out a choked sob, no longer able to keep it in. "I saw you dead. It was my fault. I killed everyone, and you were there, I watched the life leave your eyes." He felt Steve's hand tighten around his. "I didn't do enough, I let everyone down. You were dead."

"I'm right here, Tony," Steve told him, lips moving against his skin. "I'm right here, with you. I'm not going anywhere."

Tony let out a couple more body shaking sobs, catching his breath. He opened his eyes, keeping his head tilted down, eyes meeting Steve's chest. Tony turned Steve's hands a little, so that his palms were resting against him. Then, he started to slide his hands down, until one palm rested completely on the arc reactor. He felt Steve tense a little, but then the fingers curled slightly around the reactor, pressing against the skin around it. Tony shivered, fought the feeling of rising panic, and didn't move.

"Tony," Steve whispered. "Are you sure?"

"I trust you," Tony told him, trying not to look down at Steve's hand. He trusted Steve, with his life. And that meant not looking down, not letting the paranoia of being betrayed by those he loved infect his relationship with Steve. Steve wasn't like any of them, wasn't like Howard, or Stane, or anyone else. He wasn't the dead man telling him that he had failed Peter.

Steve's palm pressed a little on the arc reactor as Tony tilted his head back up to look into his eyes. Those fingers weren't going to rip it out of his chest, he knew that logically, but having Steve's hand there now, he had to trust that. The few times they had had sex Steve had stayed clear of his arc reactor without Tony having to ask. He didn't hide it from Steve, but they both knew that only Peter was allowed to be near it.

He held onto Steve's other hand, then leaned up a little to kiss him gently. "I trust you." Steve wrapped his arm around Tony, trapping his hand on the arc reactor between them, and kissed Tony again, deeply, pouring how much that statement actually meant into the kiss. Tony couldn't help but melt into it, knowing that Steve got it. He knew what Tony was giving with the action, knew how hard it was, and he just, got it.

"I love you, Tony Stark." When they pulled away both were panting slightly. "I don't plan on going anywhere for a long time."
Chapter Summary

Things get figured out.

Chapter Notes

Hello lovely people! This chapter was finished about five minutes before it was posted, because all the characters in here decided to hijack it and turn it into nothing that I had planned. Good news is the name of this chapter though!

For a surprise, I'll give you a sentence that I wrote in my fanfic notebook from the planning of this story:
"Steve smothers Tony back to happiness"

:D

Still Unbeta'd, and others own more than me, like Marvel.

Tony watched Steve feeding Jamie in the kitchen, pushing his phone back into his pocket. He had talked to Happy, now in charge of S.I.'s Security, and still over in California, and was setting up a security detail for Julie and Wade. He called Todd personally and told him what was going on. He had promised the man a long vacation, and he felt bad for calling him, telling him that he needed him. Tony told him to still take a long weekend off, that no one was going to be leaving the Tower unless they were an Avenger, and he'd make it up to him.

He walked over and pulled up a chair next to Steve, sitting down as he watched Jamie trying to take the spoon from Steve. "I think she's going to cut a couple more teeth soon," Steve told him, managing to get her to eat some of the baby food. And then not release the spoon from her mouth.

"How many does she already have?" Tony asked, raised an eyebrow at the little girl. She seemed to have a devious glint in her eye.

"I counted four at the family dinner." Steve gave a tug, and she turned her baby blues back to him. "Come on, let go. Please?"

"You think that she's going to mature faster than other babies?" Tony asked as he leaned forward and placed on finger under Jamie's chin. She watched him again. "Because of the serum?"

"I feel like that's a question that I should be asking you. What are you doing?" Steve glanced at him.

Tony started to rub his finger in circles under her jaw. "Peter used to think it was a game to not let go of the silverware, too. I started letting go of it and then he'd just let it drop out of his mouth. I had too many sets of kid utensils than was necessary."

"Still doesn't-" Jamie started to softly giggle and Steve was able to pull the spoon back. "Oh, I see.
How old do you think she is?"

"She looks about six months," Tony said as he sat back in his chair again. "But she's already
crawling, and getting better every day so far, and her teeth are coming in fast. Maturity wise she
could be almost eight months." He shrugged a little.

"Jarvis asked me this morning for stuff for the birth certificate," Steve said quietly, continuing to feed
her. "I don't know what to put for a birthday."

"Not October," Tony looked at him. "Definitely not October, not if we want Peter to ever continue
speaking with us."

"He's not thrilled, is he?" Steve wrinkled his nose a little.

"He doesn't like her because he thinks that we're going to start ignoring him," Tony gave a parsed
down version of their talk. "Whatever you do, do not stop the Art lessons unless it's serious. Like
Avengers, or broken bones. He already thinks you're going to stop those."

"I'd never do that," Steve said with a shake of his head. "Peter loves those lessons, and he's got some
real talent." Tony leaned in to kiss Steve's cheek, smiling a little when Jamie put her hands over her
mouth and nose.

"You are too young to be embarrassed by us kissing," Tony exclaimed, pulling a little smile from the
baby. "She is her Papa's daughter, that is for sure."

"Let me guess, whenever she does something wrong-"

"Oh, all the blame, on you," Tony said with a nod. "Your genes running through her. Literally, just
yours. She'll probably have a penchant for throwing round things, too." Steve snorted, rolling his
eyes. "Ouch, I felt that Sass."

"Good, you deserved it." Steve smirked while nudging Tony's foot.

"Sir," Jarvis spoke up and Jamie perked her head a little at the pleasant voice. Steve took advantage
to get her to eat a couple more bites of food. "I have news from the hospital. Mrs Fitzgerald has
woken up." Tony let out a deep breath of relief, slumping a little in his seat.

"It's about time we started getting some good news."

"Wilson is out of the state, headed for DC," Steve added in.

"Probably to add his support to the mess that's going on down there." Tony was glad that they didn't
have to figure out SHIELD, that was on the still loyal Agents. Tony would just help in tracking
down Hydra, for obvious reasons. "I'm gonna start going through Howard's journal today. I might
just flip to each page and let Jarvis scan it, honestly."

"You should go through it after you take Peter to go see Rachel," Steve suggested. Tony looked over
at him. "Start off the day with something good," he shrugged a little.

"You'll be okay here with the trouble maker?" Tony asked as he watched Jamie take the empty bowl
from Steve, swiping her fingers around to get any that he missed.

"We're going to be spending some time in the kitchen," Steve told him with a smile. "I want to start
moving her up to more soft foods, see what she can handle."
"Experimenting with Jarvis to get some kind of gauge of old she might be?" Steve nodded. "Did you figure out what name you're putting on the birth certificate?"

Steve smiled at him. "Jamie Antonia Rogers." Tony's eyes widened a little. "Well, she wouldn't be here if it weren't for her Daddy." He wrapped his arms around Steve's neck, pressing his forehead against Steve's.

"You're too good for me, seriously," Tony murmured quietly. "You're also horrible for my ego."

"I'm also really good for it," Steve smirked, pressing a kiss to the corner of Tony's mouth. He froze then, pulling in a sharp breath after a distinct 'plop' sound. Tony was biting his lip, trying not to laugh as he watched the small dollop of fruit puree slide down Steve's neck. Jamie was smiling, her fingers in her mouth.

"Look, she already has good aim." Tony grinned widely, shoulders shaking slightly.

"You're going to end up with this on your shirt if you aren't careful," Steve threatened as Tony pulled away from him.

"She's all out of food." Tony giggled and shot up from his chair running for the bedroom when Steve went to reach out for him.

Steve looked back over at the too-pleased-with-herself Jamie. "Alright, we gotta have a talk about throwing food. We don't do it."

Tony held Peter in his arms as they walked through the halls of the hospital, thinking to himself that this was the absolute oldest that Peter could be while being held. Tony wasn't weak, not by far, and Peter was still small compared to other kids his age, but he was almost eight and he was a lot bigger than he was at four.

They still had Rachel in ICU, now just for monitoring before moving her to a regular floor, so Tony had to meet the others in the waiting room. Or the meeting room that was across the hallway, to give more privacy. William and Coulson were in there waiting for him.

"Hey, Pete." William smiled as he took Peter from Tony's arms. "Wanna go back and see Granma now?"

"Where's Mama?" Peter asked, looking around the room, waving at Coulson who was sitting down. Phil smiled at him, giving a wave back.

"She's waiting for us to come to Granma's room." The older man told him. "They only want two grown-ups and one Peter back there at a time," he quickly explained when he saw Peter look back at Tony.

"I'm not going anywhere, Petey," Tony said as he ran his hand through his hair a little. "I'm gonna stay here and talk to Agent while you visit, and then I'll come back, okay?" Peter nodded. William put him on his feet and took his hand as they headed for the ICU entrance.

Tony took a seat across from Coulson, watching until Peter and William were out of sight. "Did Steve call you?"

"Clint filled me in, actually," Phil told him. Tony glanced over at him and saw that he was looking
pretty tired himself. He was dressed in jeans, a solid black tee with a black jacket over it, and his glasses. Tony still found them kind of odd. "He and Natasha are on their way back to the Tower."

Tony nodded a little. "Yeah, Steve told me that much."

"How's your shoulder?" Coulson asked with a nod towards said shoulder.

"Hopped up on some painkillers," Tony told him. "I had Bruce give me a shot before I left. It works wonders when Peter wanted to be carried." He leaned back in his chair now, trying to relax a little. "Where has Clint been anyway? We hadn't heard from him after everything went down in DC."

"He was at home," Phil said, a little bit of a smile tugging at his lips. "He recently adopted a dog, so he's been taking care of that."

Tony blinked slightly. "Barton is in charge of living creatures?" Coulson nodded. "That's almost as absurd as me being allowed to be a father." Coulson smirked, but didn't deny it.

"Speaking of fatherhood, how is Rogers?"

"That was an amazing segueway, Agent."

The two men eventually fell into a comfortable silence, both checking their phones for updates every so often. Tony glanced up when William walked back out with Peter. "We're going to go down to the cafeteria," he announced.

"I'll come with you," Coulson said, standing up from his seat to come up on the other side of Peter. Tony was able to take the hint that it was his turn to go and see Mary and Rachel, without little ears listening. "Room Four." Tony nodded and left the room, heading the opposite direction as the other three men.

Tony wasn't sure what to expect when he walked into the hospital room, but it was better than any of the scenarios his mind had been making up. Rachel was sitting up in the bed, her and Mary looking to be playing a card game on the tray over her lap, with Mary herself sitting on the end of the bed with her mother's feet in her lap. There was another chair next to the bed that he assumed William had been sitting in.

"Tony, finally," Mary called out without looking back at him, looking at the cards in her hand. "I need your help."

"No, that's cheating," Rachel told her daughter. "You can't have Tony Stark help you with strategy." He merely raised an eyebrow and walked over to take a seat.

"Depends on what game you're playing," he told the women, moving the chair so he couldn't see either of their hands.

"We're finishing up a game of Go Fish," Mary told him. She looked at him and smiled. "Mom took over Peter's hand, and he was beating me! I need to make a comeback."

"Wish that I could help, my dear, but alas," Tony said putting a hand over his forehead, "my talents will be of no use for you."

"I bet he counts cards," Rachel whispered conspiratorially.

"She's not wrong," Tony said. "And to do it properly I would have needed to have seen the original hand, or what's been collected."
"All the pairs are here in front of us," Mary said and waved her hand over the tray table.

"I don't know." Tony scrunched up half of his features. "I feel like is Peter was winning, and he entrusted Rachel with his cards, then I can't very well help you win. Peter comes first, Mrs Parker."

"That's a low blow, Tony," Mary frowned comically at him. "I'm the mother to your child!"

"And he's my child," he pointed at her. "Still a step down on that hierarchy." Rachel cackled gleefully. "I'm not breaking Peter's little heart by telling him that his poor sick Granma lost his card game to his healthy cheating mother."

"Tony, my dear, you're in the will," Rachel looked over at him. "By name, right up front. Whatever you want, you can have it."

"I should have started sucking up to you a long time ago!" Tony aimed a grin at her. "But, seriously, you're looking real good, Rachel."

"I'm feeling better," she nodded. "I'm glad to see you up and moving though. I know I wasn't the only one shot."

"Mine was a through and through," he said with a wave of his hand, like it was unimportant. "No real damage to my shoulder, small bananas in the long run. Had I known it was coming, I would have actually tried to stop it..."

"I know you would have." She gave him a soft smile that had him suddenly thinking of his mom. The tips of his ears burned a little and glanced down at the floor. "Phil says that you figured out what happened yesterday?"

"I don't know why and Agent didn't try to recruit your mom into SHIELD," Tony said to Mary.

"Who do you think got my foot into the FBI?" Mary asked with a smirk. The two women were too much alike.

"That makes So much more sense!" Tony exclaimed. "That is so unfair!"

"Don't think we didn't notice you not answering the question," Mary retaliated. "He was on the phone with Clint this morning, so I know that you figured something out if he's coming back to the Tower. He's bringing his dog by the way, so try not to let Peter see it. He'll want one."

"That's exactly what we don't need right now," Tony groaned and Mary nodded. "Did you ever meet Julie's ex-husband?" Mary shook her head no. "Welp, that's good."

"Did you make him mad at you?" Mary asked as she threw down a couple of cards.

Tony scratched the back of his head, and both women turned to look at him. "He's not mad at me.... Or rather, he is, but I wasn't the target." Mary's eyes widened a little, and the card game was forgotten. "Colonel Wilson hired someone to try and take out Julie, and possibly Wade. He thinks that Julie's taking away his parental rights so I can move in on his territory. He's lost his mind."

"Well, that makes taking an area in the chest even more worth it," Rachel commented. Tony raised an eyebrow. "Gotta protect the Sisterhood." Tony's expression deadpanned. "Not that it wasn't a worthy cause if it saved your life."

"No, but I'm a man," Tony said and both Mary and Rachel nodded. "This is reverse sexism."
"No, no," Mary shook her head. "Just sexism." Tony's jaw dropped a little. "We are severely outnumbered in the Tower, so we're shoring up our defenses."

"Against men??"

"There will one day be an epic battle of the sexes," Rachel declared. "And then, you will understand where you went wrong when you are defeated."

"I feel like I'm in some melodramatic Romantic Comedy," Tony said as he frowned a little. "Only my boyfriend isn't here to save the day."

"He's taking care of one of our warriors," Mary grinned.

"I was wrong, this is one of those bad comedies." Tony rubbed his forehead a little. "Well, I've assigned Todd, after the weekend, to be Julie and Wade's personal guard for a while. Wilson is in DC right now, but we're keeping an eye on him."

"I'm surprised you let him get that far," Mary commented to him.

"I probably wouldn't have, honestly." Tony shrugged a little. "Everyone's favorite brainwashed assassin found his way into the Tower, and he went and confronted Wilson." Both Mary and Rachel looked at him with wide eyes. "Oh yes, everything gets better."

"I think you have a skewed definition of better."

Tony pulled out his phone, tapping the screen. "J, send the data over to Mary's phone please." Mary's phone beeped on the tray table and she tapped the screen to bring up the info.

There were a few moments of silence, Rachel reading the info upside down, and both started frowning. "Her parents were Hydra?" Tony nodded. "What about this Aunt?"

"No idea yet, we're trying to find the Aunt now," Tony told her.

"Do you know who killed the ex?" Rachel asked as Mary scrolled through some of the info, still reading it. "The one who it looks like would have tried to recruit her?"

"Not yet, but I'm betting that Barnes does. And he's not exactly the talkative type yet, not with Steve around, you know, living there." Tony leaned back in the seat, as uncomfortable as it was. "And I completely have Jarvis locking that apartment door at night right now, just to be on the safe side and we can get this cleared up. And I really shouldn't be acting as calmly as I am about everything that's happened, but I just don't know how to deal with it all." He let out a breath and actually slumped. "I've got like, two main priorities, and that's what I stick with. Keep Peter safe. Keep Jamie safe. And Steve gave her a middle name, he named her after me. Like. Me. Of all people."

"Maybe you should lay off the coffee for a few hours, you're still a little hyper," Rachel suggested, and it was enough to make Tony laugh.

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Steve sat down on the floor after depositing the dishes from snack time in the kitchen, and look at Jamie. "How did you get your socks off so fast?" She was sitting up with her legs extended, leaning forward so she could play with her toes. Her socks were nowhere to be seen. "I was gone for less than a minute. And where did they go?" Jamie just buried her lips a little and continued pulling at her toes with her fingers.
She looked over at Steve, then down at his own socked feet that she could see from his crossed-leg position. She pointed with one hand, making a noise. "My feet?" He asked and unfolded his legs, extending them so his legs were on either side of her. He twisted his ankles a bit so his feet curled around her, rubbing little circles on her back. Steve smiled when she giggled softly.

Jamie scooted on her butt a little, then carefully turned over to her knees so she could face Steve's feet now. He kept his feet still as she arranged herself, and started to pull off one of his socks. "Is this the exploring appendages stage? Or is it just all part of the curious stage?" Tony had told him to just trust his gut with Jamie. Jarvis was loaded with thousands of parenting books so he could help give advice, but when it came down to what her personality would be like, Steve had to decide how to work with that on his own.

Jamie was burbling happily, more confident in making more noise now, and almost fell on her back when she finally pulled Steve's sock off. He put his hand behind her and let her rock herself back forward. "My toes are a lot bigger than yours," he said as he wiggled them for her to see. The sock went flying to the side, and he thought he saw it land on top of a smaller sock. One sock found, one more to go. Steve turned his head the other way then yelped suddenly when he felt little fingers pulling on one of his toes. His hand flew to his mouth, laughing at himself at the shock, and saw Jamie leaning in to examine each of his toes.

"You are relentless," he chuckled out, keeping back more reactions as she pulled on each toe separately.

"She seems playful today." Steve craned his head back a little as he heard Bruce's voice. He walked into the living room where father and daughter were, and took a seat on the couch. "Seems to want to explore you more than the toys that she has." Bruce nodded over to the side where a small pile of new toys had been set up. Steve had put them together after Tony left with Peter, intent on getting Jamie to start feeling like a normal kid while they waited for more information to make a move on Hydra.

"Apparently, after snack time, it was throw away our clothes time," Steve said with a deadpan look that had Bruce smirking slightly. "Then she must have discovered her toes, and now she's putting together than everyone has them." He wiggled his toes again when Jamie put both hands on his foot, and it sent her into another giggle fit. Jamie then shifted to face his other foot, and he moved it a little closer to her, the little girl working on getting the other sock off. "What can I do for you, Bruce? Got some news about Jamie?"

Bruce shook his head, setting his tablet down on a higher table, away from Jamie. "No, I was just looking for Tony. He had Jarvis take some scans of Barnes' arm, and I thought he might to look at some of them."

"I'm sure it'd be like candy land for him," Steve said. "He's still at the hospital with Peter, but he should be back soon. He called a little bit ago and said that Rachel's looking really good. They were going to stay with her for a bit to let Coulson and Mary get a little time to get out of the hospital."

"No worries," Bruce assured him. "I can always send over the scans, too. I'd almost rather he stay in one place than keep moving around, makes him much less of a target right now."

"Jarvis has eyes on the hospital for a five miles radius," Steve added in. "He and Peter rode in one of the armored cars as well, one that Jarvis can access remotely."

"There are two suits in the back seat of the vehicle as well," Jarvis said. Jamie looked around, like she did every time the AI spoke, but quickly went back to examining Steve's foot. "Including one Sir's newest models of the suitcase armor."
"I felt ridiculously better when I first heard that," Steve admitted to the Doctor. He glanced back at Jamie. "I was thinking about a November birthday for her," he said suddenly.

"Going to stick with the six month estimate?" Bruce said, moving to sit on the floor now, his back resting against the couch.

"Well, it just seems a bit easier for a couple of reasons." Steve settled back to lean on his elbows, eyes always on Jamie. "We're still not exactly sure how she ages, physically and mentally, with the Serum, and Tony and I talked about it, and we really shouldn't have her birthday come before Peter's." Bruce raised an eyebrow. "He's not Jamie's biggest fan right now, and while I'm confident that that will change eventually, I'm really not going to be taking any chances. If there's something that I can handle in this big mess of life at the moment, it's making sure that Peter doesn't think we're going to start ignoring him, or stop loving him."

"Keep talking like that, and the universe it going to think that you can handle more than two kids, Steve." Steve shot a warning look at Bruce who just smirked. "That's some heavy-duty parent talk you're throwing around."

"Captain Rogers," Jarvis interrupted suddenly. "I must insist that you immediately make your way to the Seventy-Eighth floor." Bruce and Steve exchanged looks. Then Steve's eyes widened. That was the floor Julie and Wade lived on.

"Bruce-

"Go, I can watch her," Bruce nodded, leaning in to pick up Jamie as Steve shot to his feet.

The little girl looked around surprised, eyes big, and Steve leaned in to kiss her head. "Papa's gotta go somewhere, I'll be back!" He called out, running for the already open elevator as he spoke. He thought about grabbing his shield, but he didn't want to waste anymore time. It wasn't the first time he had fought without his shield, and it probably wouldn't be the last.

As the elevator stopped he was sprinting out and down the hall towards the Wilson apartment. He stopped and back-tracked when he saw that it was Meg's door that was wide open, and there was some yelling from inside.

Steve ran inside then stopped when he saw Clint with his bow armed, and Natasha with a gun in one of her hands, her Widow Bites already charged around her wrists. Bucky was glaring at them, growling, with Meg behind him, both backed against a wall. While Meg was holding onto Bucky's right arm, holding him back from just attacking the two Avengers, it was clear from Bucky's stance that he was guarding her.

"What the hell is going on in here?" Steve asked, but no one moved.

"Caught two Hydra Agents," Clint said, arrow dangerously aimed at Bucky's head. There was already an arrow in the wall a couple feet away from Bucky and Meg. "Didn't even look like they were trying to hide." Steve's jaw dropped a little.

"What-"

"We got the reports, Cap," Natasha threw in.

"I'm not surprised that he would sneak in to get back his Handler," Clint spat out. Clint would definitely be holding a grudge against Bucky for attacking Natasha back in DC.

Meg moved to the side a bit more, still holding onto Bucky's arm, but wanting to see more clearly
what was going on. "I'm not-" Clint let the arrow go, landing in between her and Bucky, forcing the
two to separate from each other. Before Steve could make a sound Natasha was rushing at Bucky
while Clint was leaping over some furniture to get to Meg.

It took nearly three seconds for Steve's brain to catch up to him, and process what he was seeing.
Natasha and Bucky, no the Winter Soldier, were fighting. Close quarters, and meaning that no one
could use any guns. Thankfully. Clint had folded his bow a little so he could use it as a weapon, and
Meg was putting to use her self-defense classes. Steve wondered what kind of classes she had been
taking as he watched her defend herself.

"Jarvis, where are the twins?" Steve asked as he moved further in the room.

"In their rooms, Captain," Jarvis answered immediately. "I have locked the door." Bucky let out a
pained grunt as Natasha pressed both Widow Bites to his metal arm, disarming it. As Steve moved
over to them, Natasha and Clint were suddenly moving, switching places, and Clint was using his
bow to try and bring Bucky down to the ground. Bucky kept moving though, and Steve knew that
he could handle himself for the moment.

He turned to move towards Natasha and Meg now, trying to insert himself in the fight. Meg ducked
down when Natasha tried to press the Bite to her skin, and Steve was moving in and blocking her
arm with his wrist. Natasha put a hand on Steve's shoulder and was vaulting over his arm to try and
get the drop on Meg, but the blonde was swinging down under Steve's arm at the same time to get
away. Steve was feeling like a prop suddenly.

"They're using you Steve," Natasha told him as she hit the ground and swung her leg to sweep Meg
off of her feet. Meg hit the ground and tucked her legs in to roll backwards. "That's not your best
friend anymore, and her past practically started with Hydra."

"I'm thinking you didn't read the information all the way through," Meg panted out as she tried to
block and avoid Natasha's hits.

"Natasha, stop!" Steve shouted, trying to get back in between them, but the spy moved them and
pushed Steve back. There was a cry, and Steve and Meg's head snapped to the side, the baby
monitor from the living room lighting up from the sound. The next sound of electricity sparking
cought Steve's ear, but it was Meg's hand catching Natasha's arm that made his eyes widen.
Suddenly Natasha was on the defensive and being pushed back, now the sounds of two upset babies
in the background.

Steve was moving after them, then lost his footing and hit the ground on his side when Clint was
suddenly falling against him. Bucky wrapped his arm around Meg's waist, lifting her up and backing
away from Natasha, but the mother was still swinging her arms, and started to kick her legs out to get
out of his grip. Steve put a hand to Clint's shoulder to keep him down on the ground while Steve got
up himself. He felt so lost.

"Alright, let's all just Stop," Steve growled, getting in between Natasha and Bucky. He glanced back
at Meg and saw a snarl on her face, the pupils in her eyes blown wide. "Buck-" Bucky growled a
little and Steve rolled his eyes. "Bucky," he glared back at the man, "take her to the kids. Now."

Clint was standing now, and both he and Natasha were practically glaring at Steve. "You're kidding,
right?" Clint spoke first after Bucky took Meg into the kid’s room. "You're letting them stay here,
and you're protecting them??"

"Did you see the way she reacted just then?" Natasha said taking a step closer to Steve. "That's a
conditioned response if I ever saw one."
"She was being attacked, and perceived a threat to her kids," Steve gave them a hard look. "She's not wrong though, you didn't read all of the report."

"We read it, but we didn't think that you'd fall for it!" Clint shouted at him. "It's Hydra, Steve!"

"No they're not!" Steve had too many things to deal with that actually concerned Hydra, but he didn't think that he'd be getting this violent opposition from his teammates. "There's a lot that we're looking into about this particular situation right now, but this is not the threat that we need to deal with. Right now, they aren't a threat!" Steve didn't doubt a word that he was saying. "We need to look for Strucker and Loki's scepter, and be on the lookout for Enhanced. Those are the main objectives, that's what I need you two focused on. Are we clear?"

They didn't look happy, Clint not even attempting to mask it from his expression. "Captain," he finally forced out. Steve stared at Natasha, not breaking gaze once, before she finally gave the tiniest of nods.

"Bunk down," he barked out. "Go over reports, better this time. Jarvis will fill you in, and he'll help with what you need. And you're both to avoid this floor like it's filled with the plague."

"It could be for all we know," Clint grumbled out. He still held his bow in his hand, poised for a fight if he needed it. Natasha turned, forcing his shoulder with hers, and they both left.

Steve watched them leave the apartment, hearing the doors of the elevator slide closed, then he moved back for the nursery. He hadn't heard any talking from the baby monitor that was still in the living room, so he figured that they had turned off the component inside. Steve wasn't surprised to find that the door was locked, but as he went to knock, Bucky was pulling the door open for him. It was Bucky this time.

"Sorry about that," Steve muttered quietly, looking over to see Meg in the rocking chair in the room, trying to soothe the twins. Bucky moved them out of the room but didn't shut the door.

"Widow might not have been far off," Bucky said quietly. "About a conditioned response." Steve frowned in confusion for a second. "She doesn't remember snapping at the Black Widow. Any luck tracking down her Aunt?"

Steve shook his head. "Not yet, but we haven't been giving it full resources, either. You think there's something deeper to this?"

"There's always more when it comes to Hydra," Bucky said darkly. "I don't think there's a chance that's she's been brainwashed, or anything like that." Not like me, was left unspoken. "But, she said she'd understand if-"

"Come have dinner with us," Steve blurted, not wanting Bucky to finish that sentence. "All four of you, come up for dinner." Bucky stared at him. "Tony will be back with Peter by then, and he's feeling jealous of Jamie, so a distraction would probably help him as well. And then while the kids are playing, or sleeping, whatever we'll figure that out, then we'll talk. We'll go from there." He saw that Bucky was unsure about what was happening, didn't really want to say yes. "Nothing else it going to happen today, so we might as well work on this, yeah? It makes sense, even tactically."

Bucky narrowed his eyes a little at Steve, and Steve fought to keep a smirk down. That looks was pure Bucky, the Bucky from the Thirties and Forties that Steve had grown up with. That look said that Steve was a dirty cheat for using logic against him.

"We usually eat Dinner around Seven," Steve told him, not waiting for an answer. "It's a new thing
we're trying with both kids now, and a schedule is supposed to be good, or something."

"That sounds like the Steve Rogers approach to parenting. Anal Retentive Trying." Steve didn't try to keep his grin off his face that time. Bucky pushed his arm and stepped back. "Fine, we'll be up there. I'm not going to promise the safety of you other teammates though if they try to corner us again."

"Not happy about that, but fair enough," Steve said with a nod.
"Barton and Romanoff came back." Tony leaned against the counter, crossing his arms over his chest and raised an eyebrow.

"You only use last names in a professional manner, or if they've made you mad." Tony was picking up on Steve's mannerisms quickly.

"They read through some of the reports and information we've collected since SHIELD fell," Steve started to explain, finishing with the preparations of the lasagna in front of him, and put it in the oven. "Apparently what they got from some of it was that Bucky and Meg were currently part of Hydra, and didn't know that they would be here in the Tower." Tony raised both his eyebrows. "They may have tried to attack them...." He saw Tony's hand grip his own arms, and his jaw twitched as it tightened.

"I am taking the longest vacation when all of this over," Tony said carefully. "Seriously." He took a slow controlled breath.

"You should probably watch the footage," Steve added in, motioning towards a tablet he left on another counter.

"I'm starting to think that I shouldn't leave the Tower anymore." Tony walked over to grab the tablet, noticing that Steve left the camera footage up for him. "Or maybe I just shouldn't leave you alone.-Hey." He looked down and sat that Jamie had wheeled herself over to follow Tony, bumping into his leg. "Hey munchkin! Was I not giving you enough attention? Did Papa ignore you today?"

"Excuse you, she learned all about toes today thanks to me," Steve exclaimed as he started to clean up the counter. "You will be losing your socks today, and if you find a small white sock out in the living room, let me know."

"Papa lost one of your socks," Tony whispered loudly to Jamie and turned back to tablet, using a foot to rock her back and forth on the wheels. "Sounds like someone needs more training."

Steve wiped down the counter after putting the used dishes in the dishwasher, then reached over to pick up Jamie, pushing the jumper into the far corner for now. He could see that Tony was engrossed in the footage by the small frown on his face, and figured he had another minute or so before he would notice what Steve had seen.

Getting back upstairs earlier, and relieving Bruce from babysitting duty, Steve had pulled up the footage right away, and studied what had happened. Steve checked Jamie’s diaper before pressing a big kiss to her cheek. He heard some knocking at the door and Tony waved him off to go greet their guests, eyes still glued to the tablet screen.

Peter was running to the door to open it as Steve stepped out, Jamie on his hip. “Hi, Miss Meg!” He heard Peter call out and smiled a little. As he got closer he saw Peter looking up at Bucky, who was meeting his gaze right back. Steve knew that Peter could get shy, but he wasn’t acting that way now. Steve thought it was a curious reaction. “You must be Mr Steve’s friend.” Bucky let out a little grunt and nodded.

Steve put a hand on top of Peter’s head from behind. “Bucky, this is Peter, Tony and Mary’s son. Come on in guys, the food still has a little bit of time to cook, but I’m sure that Peter can keep us entertained. What do you say, Petey?”

“Sure!” Peter nodded, beaming at the chance to show off, something that Jamie obviously couldn’t do.
Bucky hadn’t said much during dinner, but Peter made up for that easily. In a twist that neither Tony nor Steve saw, a lot of Peter’s talking and questions were directed at Bucky himself. Tony was sure to keep an eye on Peter’s chocolate chip cookie consumption, not wanting him to have a sugar rush that would keep him up all night.

After some feeding, burping, and changing, Steve and Meg had the three babies asleep, (Steve having been prepared with the spare crib that Jamie had used before), and Tony had Peter tucked away in his bed. The four adults were back in the living room, with Jarvis on strict instruction to let them know before anyone got within five feet of their location. Little ears did not need to hear what they might be talking about.

“Dinner is usually a nice way to break good news,” Meg murmured, drawing her legs up underneath herself on the couch.

“Probably not the bad news your thinking,” Tony commented. She raised an eyebrow at him. “Steve filled me in on what happened, and Jarvis gave me a little show, so I’m all caught up. I’m not gonna kick you out, but I’m gonna want all the information you know about your Aunt.”

“Of course,” she nodded. “I’ll tell you everything, but I’m just not sure where she is at all. Not too long Emil died, but before I knew I was pregnant, she went to Europe. Wanted to travel like she did in college, I don’t know.” Tony glanced at Steve. “She’d send the occasional post card, a phone call when she was able, too.”

“What about your half-sister?” Steve asked, remembering the couple of time they had talked about her.

“As far as I know she’s had no contact with any of my family. We have the same Dad, but she was born in America, and he never really wanted anything to do with her,” she shrugged. “I’ll give you her contact information, but, we haven’t really talked since the twins were born.”

“When did you start taking self-defense classes?” Tony asked next. He had an idea, and wanted to see if it checked out.

“I was young,” she told them. “Probably started my first class when I was seven or eight. It was my Aunt’s idea, thought that maybe I would make more friends if I did stuff outside of school.”

“So, almost two decades of taking fighting classes,” Bucky commented and Meg wrinkled her nose a little.

“All my teachers kept saying that I had a natural talent, so I kept moving up in classes,” she said, looking between all of them. “My Aunt always paid for the classes…. Oh. I think I see where you’re going with this.” Tony nodded a couple times. “But, she always told me that they were for self-defense. I didn’t participate in any tournaments, didn’t win any awards or anything.”

“All Handlers need to be proficient in combat,” Bucky filled in.

“In case some actually handling needs to be done?” Tony asked and Bucky nodded. Tony hummed in thought, and Meg looks like she might be sick as the pieces started to click together. “That’s enough time to sneak some subliminal messages in. And probably a lot harder to openly work with Hydra in the US-“

“So everything had to be planned carefully,” Steve finished.
“Good news, it seems there’s only a trigger if there’s a fight or flight response,” Tony added in.

“But she’s been in those situations before, and nothing changed,” Steve pointed out.

“With one big difference,” Tony said looking at him. “What changed when she went Black Widow on Black Widow?”

“The baby monitor,” Meg said. “I heard Conor waking up.” Tony pointed at her while looking at Steve.

“I know, I for one would go on a murder spree if there was a threat to Peter, and I know that you would do the same for Jamie.” Tony leaned back into the couch, throwing his legs up to rest in Steve’s lap. “I bet as soon as Buckster-” he could feel the glare from Bucky, “-took her into the nursery, she calmed right down. With that knowledge, I’m feeling a bit better about this situation, and we have a more solid idea of where to go from here, and bump this down on the list of things that will threaten our lives.”

“You seem less stressed now,” Steve told him, rubbing of his calves with his hand.

“I like when I figure stuff out,” he said with a smile. “Also, since we’ve trapped them here by keeping the babies in a natural sleep like state in a crib, it will now force you and Sergeant Mopey to talk about feelings!” Meg snorted and covered her mouth as Bucky tried to actually murder Tony with his eyes.
Chapter Summary

Good times!

Chapter Notes

Sooooo! This is a late chapter, because as I went to post this, I lost nearly 4000 words of it. This morning. To put that in perspective, usually, each chapter ranges about 8,000 words, sometimes more, sometimes less. I was left with just 2,500 words, and had to rewrite the chapter over. So, this chapter became a little shorter, and took a little longer. Sorry for the delay, but here it is! Next chapter will be happy times, and I'm going to back it up to three different places as I'm working on it!

But it's a good chapter! I swear! :D

I won nothing, blah blah, Marvel owns stuff, blah blah. Yay!

"Why don't you two go put the leftovers away?" Tony suggested to his boyfriend. "Then you can do the whole private talk where we aren't around."

"And what are you going to do?" Steve looked at him. He was probably feeling about as uncomfortable as Bucky was, even though this was something that he wanted to happen.

"Meg and I can finally get back to watching Buffy," Tony announced happily. "Seriously, I've been missing Buffy and Supernatural, I need my fix." Tony started pushing on Steve legs with his feet, getting him to move off of the couch. Meg was pushing on Bucky's back at the same time. "And don't come back here without someone either shedding some tears, or getting a black eye."

"I think that this is a horrible idea," Bucky said as he was forced to get up.

"Most of my ideas start off that way," Tony said while waving his arm. The TV turned on and the two Super Soldiers walked away. Tony then looked over at Meg and wiggled his fingers. "Come over here. They aren't the only ones who can be grown-ups."

"I don't like adulting," she murmured, but got up to move to the other side of the couch he was on.

"I can feel you stressing from here, I'm very familiar with the feeling." Tony grabbed a tablet and pulled up the series. "Seriously, I'm holding nothing against you. I don't think that you're some Hydra plant here to try and kill me and Steve, and I don't think that you're Barnes' Handler. Although, you kind of are."

"Unofficially," Meg corrected. "I do it under duress."

"The best way to do something you don't want too," he said with a nod, then looked at her. "I can kind of relate though, you know." She tilted her head a little. "Just found out that my Dad was part of
Hydra as well, and that he was trying to make me something else."

"We won the family lottery, didn't we?"

"It's why we make our own now," he replied easily. Most of his family now weren't blood related, and he wouldn't have it any other way. Those around him were people that he trusted implicitly. Rhodey and Bruce, Pepper and Happy, some of his oldest friends, and he'd never have to worry about them turning on him. Mary and Peter, even her parents, and Phil, and now Jamie. Steve had been the biggest surprise of all of them, and he would still have days where he would doubt why Steve was with him, but he found that he trusted the man, with his life, and with Peter's.

"Tony?" Meg asked quietly. He looked over and saw her playing with the hem of her shirt. "Does it get easier? Digesting stuff like this?"

"I'd like to say yes," he started, drawing her eyes over to his face. "But, I guess I'm still digesting it myself. I mean, I've been Iron Man for several years now, but that doesn't mean that I can just accept everything that happens. None of it's normal, even in my eccentric life. The most I had to worry about at once point was hoping that my baby son wouldn't throw up on me."

"I hear that not moving them after they've eaten can prevent that," she said with a tiny smile.

"Mary is a dirty blabber mouth." He pushed his feet into her lap now, using his usual pushy tactics to try and make her more comfortable. She grabbed a pillow and shoved it under his feet without touching them. "I don't actually know where I was going with this point, but try not to worry too much about it. Steve and I got this."

"You guys are already dealing with a lot though," she said. "Where did your socks go?"

"I'm not sure, if you find them let me know. They were kind of expensive." He crossed his ankles. "We're used to deal with a lot. But that's also why you might find yourself babysitting Peter and Jamie, and probably Wade, more often." He held up a finger when she opened her mouth. "You have an extra set of hands to help, so babysitting isn't so hard now."

"You want the man who won't come within three feet of a baby, to babysit?" She asked, raising an eyebrow.

"He touched Jamie," Tony pointed out.

"He held her in front of him like she might actually be actively killing him."

"You're his Handler, give him a new mission." She huffed and he smiled. "Operation: Baby-Soothing."

"Sergeant Mopey?"

"It really wasn't my best, I'm slipping. I blame the kids, and Captain Sad Eyes."

"It's getting worse."

"Shut up and watch Buffy."

"He's a menace," Bucky grumbled as he and Steve went into the kitchen. Steve nodded with a short hum, "But you live with him?"
"I do," Steve nodded again. He reached to grab some plastic wrap for the lasagna and cookies. "By choice, before you ask that as well."

"How does he not drive you crazy?" The former assassin asked, crossing his arms over his chest.

"He does," Steve chuckled a little. "All the time. That's just part of who he is though." He saw the strange look Bucky was giving him. "It's a different kind of crazy, endearing sometimes. Tony usually gets manic when he's creating, or talking about science, or something to do with Peter. And he loses himself, all the time, and sometimes it's not the best timing, but again, that's just part of who he is." Steve shrugged, a smile tilting at the corner of his mouth. "It's uh, it's a bit refreshing actually."

"As opposed to having someone who always agrees with you and seems boring?" Bucky asked curiously.

"Something like that, yeah," he nodded. He wrapped a couple of cookies individually and set them aside. "I love him, which is something I never thought I'd be able to do. Love anyone, that is. Or rather, be with someone who loves me in return." Steve pulled out a couple of containers from a crowded cabinet. He was going to make sure that Tony added more cabinet space when they remodeled the floor. All the new things they added for Jamie alone filled the spaces to max, but when Steve started cooking with Tony, he had added containers for leftovers that Tony never had had before.

"Yeah, you was always too small," Bucky said, looking down at the floor. Steve's ear perked at the Brooklyn accent though. "Always said you needed ta find a girl who'd take care of your punk ass."

Steve turned to look at him. "I said you'd need a girl to take care of you when you never stopped gettin' in fights."

"Either that or we coulda just kept living together," Steve said tentatively, not sure how much Bucky was remembering. The light blue eyes that met his said that Bucky didn't remember much, and it was a surprise to even remember that.

"I remember bits and pieces," his best friend said quietly, accent gone again. "None of it in order. Sometimes it's from when we were younger, sometimes it's from the Winter Soldier. Took me forever to remember my name was James, and any more than that I started getting headaches. I still get them sometimes."

"Buck." Steve took a step forward.

"I ain't that same guy, Stevie."

"He's still in there if you're calling me that," Steve responded softly. "I'm not looking for the same exact guy from the Forties, I ain't the same either." He caught Bucky's eyes rolling a little. "Yeah, got myself a fella who takes care of my punk ass when I keep getting into fights."

"Yeah, but he's usually joining you in those fights," Bucky fired back easily. "He needs you to take care of him, too, Punk."

"Jerk," Steve said with a smile. "Just looking for my friend back, Bucky. The guy that was always there in the alley, who had a mouth that rivaled a drunk's, and an attitude to match. The guy that didn't take no lip, or punch, for nothin' and was willing to give back twice as good as he got, for better and worse. The guy who had my back, no matter what. Till the end of the line."

"Till the end of the line," Bucky whispered back. He ran his flesh hand over his face and let out a
sigh. "I can't promise anything, Steve. I'm still working out who I am, it's hard, and it's probably going to take a while." He looked up at the blonde, seeing those blue eyes. "I can still feel the Soldier, always lurking right at the edge of my mind. I have to try and separate him, from me. Dame out there said that it would help me not get so overwhelmed."

"Meg know you call her Dame?" Steve asked with a raised eyebrow.

"No, and you ain't telling her if you know what's good for you," Bucky pointed at him with his metal arm. "She's as likely to try and hit me as you are."

"She did stab your left arm with a knife," Steve pointed out.

"Yeah, and I like having at least one real arm, thank you very much." Steve snorted softly. "Gotta try and come to terms with what I did though. You don't have to say it, cause she says it all the time, I know it wasn't really me. It's hard though, cause I remember missions sometimes, all of them. Those were my hands pulling the triggers, getting rid of people, and I couldn't stop myself."

"They played you as a puppet," Steve said gently. "Pulled all your strings. And she's right, you can't take all that blame. They tortured you, Buck. For Seventy years, they tortured you, and tried to make you forget, and for fuck's sake, they froze you." Bucky looked at him, watching Steve lose his calm exterior but keeping his voice down. "But, they underestimated you. They did big time. You didn't forget, not really, you never really lost who you were. If you had, you wouldn't be standing here in front of me, wouldn't be in this Tower. They had to keep trying to make you forget, because you just wouldn't submit, not all the way."

Bucky had clenched his jaw as Steve spoke, listening to what he was saying, and hearing the words start to line up with some of the more recent thoughts he had been having. He woke up every morning, and he wasn't expecting to see one of his Handlers there in front of him, he was getting used to the idea that he woke up on his own volition now. No one was waiting off to the wings to take him back to the Chair, or back to freeze him. He could make his own choices now, and he had help.

Steve took a couple steps closer to Bucky, not wanting to scare him as he saw him get lost in his thoughts. "I'm here, Bucky. No matter what, I got you. I'll help however you need it, whenever you need it, and even if you think you don't need it, or are too afraid to ask. I'm there."

"You got a family to look after, now," Bucky said to him. "You can't go ignoring them."

"Never said I was going too," Steve replied. "I'm expecting you to help me out with that," he gave him a smile. Bucky's eyes widened a little. "That means, you're going to have to learn how to hold a baby. I know where there are two that you can practice with, I'm pretty sure you live with them."

"Now you've gone too far," Bucky said, throwing his arms up. Steve laughed and moved back towards the forgotten food. "Hydra never even made me do that. And I don't live with them, that makes it sound like things are normal, or that something's happening."

"Obviously they had missed some perfect opportunities." Steve snorted a little as he put some lasagna in a couple of containers. "Do you have a bed that you sleep in down there?" Bucky nodded and opened his mouth to contest the point, but Steve kept going. "Then it's a place that you live. Seriously though, I got two kids that I plan on teaching them to call you Uncle Bucky. What kind of Uncle doesn't pick up their niece or nephew?"

"The smart kind." Bucky inched forward and stole a cookie from the ones that were going to put in a jar. "Punk."
"Jerk." Steve pushed his shoulder then put a container in his hand and set some wrapped cookies on top. "Those are your leftovers, for you and Meg. I want that container back."

"Don't go turning into my Ma," Bucky warned.

"Your Ma was a good woman who deserved all sorts of awards for putting up with you," Steve said, putting the empty dinner dish in the dishwasher.

"Not like you weren't there to add to that stress." Steve smirked a little.

Tony cards his fingers through Steve's hair in bed that night, listening to his even breathing in the dark of their room. But he wasn't asleep. "You have talent," Tony said quietly. "Anyone else would think that you're asleep." Steve hummed, a low rumble spreading through his body.

"It's not for a lack of trying," Steve responded, eyes still closed, enjoying Tony's fingers against his scalp.

"Sometimes you can sleep when doom and destruction are in the same room with us, and times when we've actually lessened our list of worries, you're up all night." Tony pressed a kiss to the side of Steve's head. "What's on your mind?"

"A lot of things are always on my mind." He peeked his eyes open to see the very unamused look Tony was giving him.

"Trying to be me is not a good look on you, Rogers." He kissed Steve's nose. "I know that things went well between you and your bestie in the kitchen. You even sent them back down with leftovers." Steve nodded a little. "And we're both fairly confident that our friend was being manipulated by her family, and we're all fairly safe from that threat." Another nod. "So, I'm thinking that it has to be a combination of something that's been on your mind for a little bit, or a while, and it was unintentionally touched upon in kitchen conversation?"

Steve's eyes were open all the way now, staring at Tony. "How do you do that?"

"Because it's something that would happen to me," Tony shrugged a little. "Alright, if I can talk to you, which has happened too many time, it's time for you to talk to me." His fingers played with a long lock of hair. "Have you thought about getting a haircut? Peter and I are going to get haircuts sometime soon, you should come with us." Steve gave him a confused smile, like he was unsure how Tony could be serious, then throw in something mundane. Tony found the expression absolutely adorable.

"I just had a haircut before Christmas."

"Ugh, Steven," Tony groaned out, pressing his face into his pillow that Steve's head was starting to steal. "That was almost six months ago. You are allowed to splurge and get a haircut more than once a year. You could even lighten your hair too, just a little, right at the top. It would be completely natural looking." He tilted his head so their faces were a couple inches apart. "You know I'm stalling until you feel more comfortable, right?"

"Pretty sure that you shouldn't mention that," Steve said with a soft chuckle, his arm going out to lay over Tony's waist, hand resting on his back.

"Well, I'll try not to in the future, but I was trying to make myself more comfortable, too." Steve
raised an eyebrow at him, but Tony shook his head. "No, this isn't about me right now, it's you
time." He reached out to take Steve's other hand in his, thumb rubbing over his knuckles. "Is part of
it about being a new dad? About Jamie? We never did talk about that, and that's on me. I'm-

"Don't bring yourself down," Steve said cutting him off. "It hasn't been that bad, not since things
have calmed down."

"Yeah, but I shouldn't have let it get that bad, I should have been there, watching for the signs,
talking to you anyway." He let out a little sigh. "Okay, but, I'm here now. Not going anywhere, not
even down to the workshop. Can I start off, though? Jamie adores you, and I know that's not saying
much for someone so young, but it kind of is. She seeks you out, I've noticed this."

"You always notice more than other people," Steve told him.

"Sometimes I don't notice the right things," Tony said under his breath. "Back to the talking point,
you're doing a great job so far. Better than I did when Peter was her age. You've kind of handled this
whole surprise Dad situation better than a lot of people would have."

Steve’s hand gently started to rub circles on Tony’s waist as he tried to put together what he wanted
to say. “I worry sometimes, about a lot, and stuff that I probably shouldn’t be bothered about. So, I
worry about if I’m doing the right thing with Jamie, if I could be doing it better, or different, or more
effective. That’s just the simple stuff, there’s stuff that no one else would probably have to worry
about.” Tony hadn’t said anything, but Steve could tell that he was listening, that he had all of his
attention.

“Not too long after I woke up here, and I went with Mary to SHIELD, I was working on testing the
limits of my strength. There had only been a few times in the War that I had done that, but I wasn’t
actually paying attention to anything.” Steve worried at his lip a little until Tony reached over and
gently tugged his lip down. “I mean, I had really only spent a few years in this new body of mine. I
still felt like an awkward newborn fawn, or something. I’m so used to being the sickly little five foot
nothing, under a hundred pounds, boy from Brooklyn that got in way over his head.”

“Glad to know that something don’t change,” Tony murmured with a soft smile.

Steve nudged Tony’s leg with his knee a little. “I had to know what I was capable of, specially if I
was going to be around Peter. I didn’t want to accidentally hurt him, or Mary, or anyone really. After
I moved in here, to the Tower, I asked Jarvis if he could help me, too. It’s actually been a lot better
working with him than at SHIELD.” Tony snorted a little. Steve licked his lips, glancing down
before meeting Tony’s eyes. “I’m afraid that if I’m not actively aware, that I might accidentally hurt
Jamie…. She’s still so small, so young, and I don’t want to do that. I’d never forgive myself if it was
something I could have prevented.” Tony reached out to brush some hair from his forehead, gently
brushing his fingers across Steve’s skin.

“I just want to try so hard for her,” he whispered. “I never thought I’d get anywhere close to what I
have now, a family like this. I was too small, always sick. No one thought I’d live as long as I did
before I met Dr Erskine.” He gave Tony a sad little smile. “I’m sure I wouldn’t have survived to see
the end of the War if I hadn’t. Medicine was already so hard to get, and I’m sure it would have only
gotten harder later on.” He shook his head. “Point is, the plans I had for getting older, they didn’t
include having a family. Not that I didn’t want one, nah, I always wanted to give Ma some grandkids
do tee on. But, that wasn’t going to happen. I was gonna work on my art, get a job maybe at a
newspaper, and probably be Bucky’s neighbor until he couldn’t stand me anymore. I didn’t expect to
live long enough to see having a family, if anyone even wanted to be with me.”

“Steve.” Tony looked at Steve, pulling both hands up to wrap around Steve’s face before pressing
their lips together, greedily stealing kisses from him. Steve took in a breath through his nose before pressing back against together just as eagerly, lifting his hand to rest along Tony’s neck. “If there’s anyone who deserves to have all of that, it’s you,” Tony said breathlessly against his lips. “You deserve to have a family more than I do. You selfless, fucking sap.”

Steve pulled him back in for a kiss, moaning softly when he felt Tony’s tongue tracing his bottom lip. “Tony—”

“Daddy?” The two pulled apart and Tony, almost, silently groaned before leaning up.

“Hey, Petey-pie,” he called out, looking at the little boy standing in the doorway. “Did you have a bad dream?” Peter nodded and Tony shifted a little and put out an arm. Peter ran over to the bed, letting Tony wrap an arm around his waist to help him up. He crawled over Tony to settle in between him and Steve, snuggling down into the blankets, stuffed animals securely tucked into his arms.

“Jarvis said you were still up,” he said quietly as Tony leaned back down, facing Peter. Steve reached out to gently fluff Peter’s hair, rubbing his head gently. The boy seemed to sink deeper into the bed, the motion relaxing him.

“Daddy says you’re going to be getting a haircut soon,” Steve said softly, trying to lull the boy back to sleep. Tired brown eyes turned to look at him and Steve smiled. “He says I need a haircut, too.”

“You should get the same haircut as us,” Peter say, trying to ignore a yawn.

“I don’t think I could pull off the same look,” Steve said with a small chuckle, catching the smile on Tony’s face. He always got that soft, almost shy, smile when Steve and Peter interacted. “If it’s alright though, I’ll go with you guys. We can all get a haircut at the same time.”

Peter nodded as his eyes started to close. “Gotta do it before Daddy’s birthday,” he said. “We should take him to Disneyland for his birthday.” Tony lifted his head a little to look at Steve suspiciously. “Like you said. It’ll be fun.” The little boy snuffled further under the blanket, quickly dropping off to sleep safely tucked between the two men.

Tony pointed at Steve. “We are talking about this later,” he mouthed to Steve, who was trying not to smile.

“You said you would take him to Disneyland?” Tony hissed the next morning in the bathroom. “He just got back from Disneyworld, and you said you would take him to Disneyland?”

“I said I would take him later,” Steve said calmly, eyes on the mirror as he shaved away the stubble, working along his jaw. “I didn’t know that later meant a couple weeks later.” He knew that the seven-year-old wouldn’t forget what they had talked about last week. “I didn’t anticipate he would suggest it for your birthday.” Steve glanced at Tony in the mirror, watching the man lean against the counter next to him, his own morning routine not started yet. He knew Tony wasn’t actually mad at him. “Are you upset that he wants to go back to a Disney park so soon, or are you upset that now you might actually have to do something on your birthday?”

Tony wrinkled his nose and looked up at Steve. “I’m thinking that if we go, we’ll have to take Jamie. Which normally, no big deal, but our lives aren’t normal. And I don’t think that it is a wholly awesome idea to take our still jealous son—” Steve froze and had to pull away the razor from his skin for a second. He turned his head to look at a wide-eyed Tony who had caught what he had said.
“What I mean to say, is that if we go with the four of us, he’s still jealous of her, and I don’t know want to, well, you know, it’s important that they both have fun, and I’m not sure, Peter is—“

Steve reached over to gently grasp Tony’s chin with his thumb and forefinger, stopping his rambling. “We still have almost two weeks before your birthday. And I think that taking our kids to Disneyland will be okay.” Tony took a slow breath before gently pulling away from Steve’s hands.

“I’m gonna go start some coffee,” Tony muttered quickly and pushed away from the counter. “Fuckin’ sap,” Steve heard him mumble under his breath, and he smiled as he went back to shaving.

Jacob Rosenfeld
Spouse: Etta Rosenfeld (nee Mueller)
Siblings: None
Children: Margrit Rosenfeld

Sarah Mueller
Spouse: None
Siblings: Etta Rosenfeld (nee Mueller)
Children: None

Tony tapped a stylus against his arc reactor as he stared at the screens that Jarvis had pulled up for him. Had Tony just been looking for information on any of the three adults in this search, he would have come up with a frustrating lack of information. But he had Meg’s information to go off of, and the information that they were all linked to Hydra. He used the stuff that Natasha had dumped onto the net from SHIELD, and it he was able to connect a few more dots.

There was barely any information on a Sarah Mueller. Actually, there was too much information, because there were thousands of Sarah Mueller’s in the Northwest of the US alone. But, with a little digging, a search for a Hilda Mueller born in Germany with one sister by the name of Etta, that narrowed down the search results significantly.

Meg was right, her location was basically unknown at the time. Last that she had been tracked was by passport entering France. And that was almost eight months ago. She had indeed left only two weeks after Meg’s boyfriend had died, and barely kept up any correspondence with her beloved niece. After a little more digging, Tony had been able to decrypt a file stating that Emil Dittmar, former Handler of one Winter Soldier, had in fact been killed by said assassin in Italy. Hilda had left to go look for the Winter Soldier, unaware that he had already made his way back to the United States.

They hadn’t discovered that it had been Barnes that had killed him until after he was already working with AIM, and breaking away from his conditioning. It seemed that Hilda had her suspicions though. Tony suspected that she wouldn’t be in Italy anymore, and he was fairly certain that she had entered the US again, but she had very nearly disappeared.

“Jarvis,” Tony called out, rubbing his eyes with his palm. “Run names of passports entering the US within the last eight months, look for facial recognition on Hilda Mueller.” He saw another screen pop up, code flying across the screen as Jarvis accessed the TSA’s servers. “Also, just on a hunch, run facial on those entering into Germany in the last eight months.” What were the odds that she would return home?

“Projected completion is eighteen days, Sir,” Jarvis told him and Tony sighed. Eight months was a
long time frame, and Jarvis could only move so fast if they were looking for a facial match, and that
was in the US alone.

“Keep me updated, J.” Tony spun around his chair, tilting his head back and closing his eyes.

He was convinced that Meg was being secretly trained by her Aunt, and that she wasn’t actually
active Hydra. Tony had read through the files, the few that he had been able to dig out, and they had
lots of suspected interest, but the death of Jacob and Etta had thrown their plans into chaos. Since she
was a low level interest at the time, they hadn’t really ironed out anything concrete. It wasn’t until
Hilda had started sending in reports, showing how naturally her niece had taken to her many ‘self-
defense’ classes so easily, that some of the higher ups had started taking notice. Then they sent in
Emil to seal the deal, bring her into Hydra, and take her under his wing to train.

“I’m calling this one case suspended,” Tony muttered as he got up from his chair. “Is Brucie in his
lab?”

“He is, Sir. Shall I tell him that you’re on your way?”

“Yeah, I’ll be nice for once,” Tony nodded, heading for the door. “I want to check on certain lab
results, and then I have to go collect my boys for a haircut.”

Rachel had come back from the hospital three days ago, and was recovering nicely in the comfort of
her own bed. When she stayed in it. Mary was pulling double duty or helping her parents, and
helping Coulson go through information about possible Hydra locations. Julie was getting along
exceedingly well with Todd the security guard, and Wade and Peter were in deep discussions about
how they would try to thwart his all-knowing gaze around the Tower. Tony had money on Todd.

Steve had made sure to keep Clint and Natasha far away from Bucky and Meg, and still make time
with both Jamie and Peter. He was determined to get them to semi get-along, because he was also
determined that the four of them would go to Disneyland as a family. It was endearing, even if Tony
thought that he held such lofty goals.

Tony walked into Bruce’s lap, seeing the man himself casually looking at some information, a cup of
tea next to his hand. “Hey, Brucie-bear,” Tony called out.

“Weren’t you going to be gone this afternoon?” Bruce asked, not looking up from his computer
screen.

“Yeah, and I will be leaving, in about forty minutes.” He dropped onto a chair and rolled over to the
station across from Bruce. “I wanted to check on those test that we set up a couple days ago.

“They finished about an hour ago,” Bruce told him. “I was going to have Jarvis let you know when
you got back.”

“Aww, you were trying to protect my boys day out,” Tony said, putting a hand to his chest. He
grinned as Bruce just rolled his eyes. “I’m not here to analyze details yet, I just wanna take a look.
Steve is probably down trying to get Bucky to hold Jamie again. Or trying to get Peter to actually
look at her.” Bruce gave him an appropriate sympathetic look. “My boyfriend is an idealist.”

Tony pulled up the test results that had just finished, and some older ones. He had pulled a new
blood sample from Jamie, to track progress on her growth rate after she cut two new teeth in
seemingly record time. He had also pulled up the results of Steve’s sample interacting with the serum
that he had synthesized at Strucker’s base.

He kept in the physical reaction of seeing that Jamie’s cells seemed to ‘boil’ the same as Steve’s had
when introduced to the Serum, but it didn’t stop him from mentally shuddering. Eventually everything had settled down, and the original Serum and modified Serum seemed to be adapting with each other. Tony was still working with Bruce to try and understand what that would mean in physical results, but it wasn’t as pressing as other things.

“Huh,” Tony puffed out, looking at the new DNA results for Jamie. “There seems to be a little bit of acceleration in growth,” he said to himself, but saw Bruce nodding out of the corner of his eye.

“Nothing huge, but it explains why she’s getting teeth so quickly,” Bruce added in. “Barely noticeable, really, unless one were looking for it.”

“Do you think that’ll stay like that? Or taper off eventually?” Tony glanced over to Bruce.

“I’m not sure,” he said, pushing up his glasses on his nose. “I’ve never actually dealt with cloning, not to this extent, so this is all new to me. “But, it would make sense to see a general downward trend in the aging and growth, such as what seems to be happening with Steve.”

“Mmm,” Tony said with a little hum. “Yes, my young, blonde, Adonis does seem to be looking to stay that way for a while, doesn’t he?”

“Little creepy when you say like that, Tony.”

“I’ll be sure to say that when I reach Forty,” Tony smirked. “And again at Fifty, when he’s still a young, blon—“

“I’m confident,” Bruce interrupted a little loudly, and Tony just grinned, “that her brain is also experiencing a similar accelerated pattern.”

“So, walking and talking sooner than we think?” Tony asked and Bruce nodded.

“Among other things. I’d like to get another sample before you leave for California, to compare results. Hopefully we’ll notice the downward shift in growth soon, but I don’t think it’s anything to really worry about. Especially not with you and Steve keeping an active eye on her.”

“You’re a saint,” Tony said with a smile. “Seriously, crossing things off of my stress list is the best feeling.”

“You should probably call Pepper if you plan on taking a public birthday trip,” Bruce suggested as Tony got up from his chair.

“Less of a saint!” Tony called out as he walked out the door.

Peter sat on the floor, staring at Jamie, also sitting on the floor. She had her hands resting on the coffee table, but she was staring back at him. Mr Steve was in the kitchen, getting together a couple of bottles, because thankfully, Jamie wasn’t coming with them to get haircuts. This was special, just for him, Daddy, and Mr Steve. He hoped that Daddy and Mr Steve got married soon so he could call Mr Steve something else.

“Why can’t you walk yet?” Peter asked her, not really expecting an answer. “If you could walk, then they wouldn’t need to watch you all the time.” She kept staring at Peter, and he wrinkled his nose a little. “You should learn how to take care of yourself, quicker. I was here first, you know.”
Steve put a few bottles in the diaper bag in the dining room and glanced over to see Peter talking to Jamie. He raised an eyebrow, but didn’t interrupt. Jamie looked restless though, and he wasn’t sure what she was itching to do.

“You can’t talk yet, though,” Peter said. “Because you don’t get to call Mr Steve anything other than Mr Steve, not yet. You’re lucky to get to call Daddy your Daddy, too, and I’m doing you a big favor by letting you have him.” Steve bit his lip. “And I get to keep my art lessons, cause Mr Steve is the best, and that’s all mine.”

Steve glanced to the side when he caught movement and saw Tony walking towards him. He put a finger to his lips and nodded towards Peter and Jamie. Tony saw them and tried to move silently. They saw Jamie wiggling around, moving her legs, never looking away from Peter. Tony tilted his head curiously and Steve just shrugged.

“Why are you moving around so much?” Peter asked, then got up, walking over to her. He frowned and looked down at her. Jamie moved her hands from the table towards Peter. When he got close enough she put her hands on him, grabbing his shirt. “What are you doing?” He went to take her hands, most likely to push them away, but suddenly she was moving again. Her legs wobbled, and as Peter backed up a little, she pulled herself up onto her feet, leaning heavily on Peter.

Tony’s hand shot out to grab at Steve’s arm, Steve’s eyes widening. “Did she—” Steve whispered and Tony nodded. “She stood up.”

Peter frowned, but not angrily, more confused, and looked down at Jamie. She was still holding onto his shirt, and looking up at him, giving him a smile. She babbled softly and Peter blinked. “Well,” he paused a little. “Good, then. Yeah. See, I said you needed to start walking. At least you’re listening to me.” He scrunched his face and Jamie tried to mimic the action with her own face. “Maybe, uh, listen, I’m older than you, but younger than Daddy and Mr Steve. So, maybe I should teach you what you should do first, okay? But, it’s not because I like you, or anything, it’s cause you need to learn faster.” Tony looked Steve. “And Daddy and Mr Steve still have to work sometimes. So, when they’re working, I’ll teach you stuff. Like walking. So, yeah.”

Bucky walked over to Tony and Steve quietly, then looked over at Peter and Jamie. He raised an eyebrow. “I thought he didn’t like her?” He asked quietly as they watched Peter try to get her to move her legs.

“He thinks he’s pulling a fast one,” Tony whispered back, both men not looking away from the kids. “She used him to pull herself up, and he thinks if he teaches her to walk, then she won’t need that much attention.”

“But, really, he’s just turning into the protective older brother?” Both Steve and Tony nodded. “God, those kids are all yours, every little thing just screams you two.”
May 2012

Chapter Summary

Birthday Part 1!

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay! I wrote an update on Tumblr, (it's like my own status log), and I wasn't done with the chapter because I was making this bone achingly sweet. I mean, I wanted to get this Perfect. I had a crazy weekend, and my buffer of chapters had ended sooner than I thought, but this needed some fine tuning. Also, PART OF MY TOOTH FELL OFF inside my mouth. Like, it just broke away, so like, half of my tooth is missing, while the other part is just hanging out in my mouth, all jagged edges and what not. That'll throw a kink in your day.

If I'm going to be late, I'll usually post something up on my tumblr (Megaranoelle.tumblr.com), so you can go ahead and check that out. (Or just bug me there.)

Enjoy this chapter!

As usual, I own not much, Marvel own more, Disney own some, blah blah.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You’re going to Malibu for your birthday?” Mary asked as she finished packing one of Peter’s suitcases.

“California, yes,” Tony said with a nod, sitting on the end of Peter’s bed. The car was downstairs, ready to take them to the jet. Steve had already packed up Jamie’s stuff, and everything except for Peter’s stuff had been packed in the truck of the car.

Mary looked over at him, easily reaching out to take the lump of clothing that Peter’s pressed into her arms. He ran back out of the room, last minute packing. “So not Malibu then.” Tony raised an eyebrow at her. “Peter won’t tell me where you guys are going, just that it’s going to be you, Mr Steve, Jamie, and himself. For your birthday.”

“He willingly admitted that Jamie was going?” Tony asked, not moving from his prone position on the bed.

“He said that he gave her special permission to join them. Because it was your birthday, and not because he likes her.” Every time Mary and Tony talked about Peter and Jamie, and when they would interact, (which was more often than Peter, or Wade, would admit too), Tony always saw a little smirk hidden on Mary’s face. She was enjoying that Tony had to deal with a jealous Peter, and not her. Mary and Phil had no intention of having any more kids.
“You know he totally likes her now,” Tony said, looking at the ceiling, putting his hands behind his head. “Maybe not completely, but he doesn’t scorn her anymore.”

“I don’t think he ever ‘scornced’ her,” Mary told him. “I’m not sure Peter is capable of scorning anyone who didn’t deserve it.”

“I’d rather not think about our son actually scorning people.”

“Can we stop saying that word now?” She zipped up the suitcase and Tony pushed over Peter’s backpack to her. “You’re statement for the press was very nice by the way.” Tony wiggled his nose a little.

“Would have been better if it wasn’t going to be twisted by every media outlet tomorrow.” Tony had purposely scheduled their flight on the one year date of the ‘Battle of New York.’ There had been dozens of invitations for the Avengers to come to some memorial event or another, for Tony to talk, no doubt about taking the missile through the wormhole, or for Captain America to speak. Everyone had wanted to know Captain America’s identity, and then after the Hydra/SHIELD dump speculation was running wild.

Tony had politely declined all invitations, and Steve hadn’t felt comfortable going in the Captain America uniform, rather preferring his Army uniform if anything. They decided to release a joint statement, saying that they would not be attending any public events, so as not to draw attention away from the others that gave their lives in the battle, to those that were lost, and to those that were still rebuilding. Tony was funding the memorial that the City wanted to erect. He wasn’t under any illusion though that the media would be sure to criticize them for not showing up for any events, even though Tony was adamant about not taking away from the focus on the victims of the city that were affected, and the city itself.

“You usually couldn’t care less what they say,” Mary told him. “Anyway, they’re only going to do it because of what happened with SHIELD, so even more reason to ignore them.” Tony shrugged a little.

“You’re right, I probably couldn’t care less. Anyway, I will be dubiously ignoring all media for the next five days.” Tony watched Peter run back into the room with his sketchbook, pencils, and colored pencils, and pushing them into the backpack that Mary held open for him.

“Oh! I think I left my books upstairs!” Peter took off running, heading for Tony’s floor before either parent could say anything.

“I’m a little surprised that you’re doing a vacation for your birthday,” Mary said, sitting down next to Tony’s head on the bed, looking down at him. “Do you even know what a vacation is?”

“Har har, very funny, Parker.” Tony poked her side and she tried to scoot away from his finger. “Is it my first choice? No, but Steve made comments to our baby boy, and now he’s learning the consequences of said actions, and a vacation with my son is something that really should have happened a while ago.” He caught her eyes. “I mean, when was the last time it happened?” Mary looked at him, blinking, and Tony made a noise. “See, if you have to think about it that long, the answer is either ‘Not at all’, or ‘Too long ago.’”

“Well, I know that you’ll all have fun. And Steve deserves a vacation, too.” She got up again, setting the suitcase on the ground. “This will really be the first time that he’ll be able to relax, without having to think about SHIELD, Hydra, or anything else Avengers related.”

“What about before he took the shield back up?” Tony pushed himself up on his elbows. “My
impression was that he wasn’t doing that much while he tried to figure out what he wanted to do.”

“It wasn’t really relaxing, or a vacation,” she told him. “He still had to report to SHIELD all the time. Do testing, get a psyche eval, go through training, all the fun stuff.” Tony made a little face, then remembered that Steve had told him about the nightmares and insomnia he had suffered through. Mary was right, this would be the first time he could truly relax and not have to worry about anything other than having fun.

“Okay! I think I have everything!” Peter declared as he ran back in, four books wrapped up in his arms. Mary took them to pack them into the bag before zipping it up. Tony bounced up from the bed to his feet and Peter grinned. “I’m ready, Daddy!”

“This kid here, I swear.” Tony wrapped his arms around Peter and started to tickle his sides. Peter squealed with laughter and wiggled around. “He has so much energy!”

“Daddyyyy!” He giggled tucking his arms against his body to try and block Tony’s hands. “Mommy! Help!”

“Mmmmm,” Mary tapped her chin, humming loudly. “I don’t know. Maybe I can help if you tell me where you’re going.”

“Cheat!” Tony shouted at her with a laugh. Peter was reaching out to her as he laughed.

“We’re going to Disneyland!” He cheered when Mary took his hands and pulled him away from Tony, lifting him off the ground for a few seconds. “Mr Steve said that we could go to Disneyland, and Daddy said that it would be okay to go for his birthday!” Peter was grinning like he won the lottery.

Mary looked at Tony, raising an eyebrow. “Don’t give me that look,” Tony pointed at her, then grabbed the handle of Peter’s luggage. “Alright, kiddo, grab your bag. Mr Steve and Jamie are waiting for us in the garage. If we leave soon then we can grab dinner at the hotel.”

Peter turned and hugged Mary’s waist tightly and she bent down to kiss his cheeks. “You be good, don’t go wandering off, you know, all the rules I gave you with your grandparents. And remember, you still have to listen to Steve because he’s Captain America, but Captain America still listens to me.”

“That is so unfair,” Tony muttered as Peter hugged her again, giving her a sloppy kiss before grabbing his book bag.

“We’ll call, Mama. Love you, Mama!” He grinned and started to hop out of the room towards the elevator.

Tony gave Mary a one armed hug, the suitcase rolling along behind him. “I’ll be sure to get lots of pictures, and I’ll only lose him twice.” Mary groaned and Tony grinned.

“And please don’t spend more than five thousand on him,” she added.

“I actually thought you would have said less,” Tony hummed as they walked out of the room, following behind Peter.

“It’s Disney, everything is overpriced.” Tony snorted and nodded. “Go on, have fun, have a good birthday. And relax, Tony. You’ve earned it.” She kissed his cheek and Tony gave her a small smile.
Steve fixed the wide brimmed hat he had tucked on Jamie’s head as they got out of the car in front of the hotel. The weather in California was different than New York, but he noted, not entirely in a bad way. Jamie reached up to play with the edge of her hat, but Steve stopped her from taking it off, holding her close to his chest. Peter had grabbed his backpack, sliding out of the car first, with Tony close behind him to keep an eye on him, and Steve not far behind, taking in the sight of the large building.

“Things sure have changed from my time,” he murmured, then followed behind Tony.

“This place is Huge,” Peter gaped as they walked inside. “We’re gonna stay here?”

“Sure are,” Tony answered easily, sunglasses fixed in place, hand resting on Peter’s head for a moment. “Stick by Mr Steve while I check us in, alright?”

“What room are we staying in? Is it big enough for everyone? Does it have-“ Tony ruffled his hair and smiled as he walked up to the front desk.

“It’s a surprise!” He called out to them. Steve felt like Peter a little as he looked around the lobby.

“This is so cool,” Peter said. “It’s different than Disney World.” Steve smiled at him, watching as the staff wheeled their luggage in. He had the shield settled in an art portfolio case, while Tony had brought one briefcase Iron Man suit, with another on the jet that he could activate with his watch, just in case. They were under no delusions that just because they were on a vacation meant that they were safe.

Jamie cooed in his arms and he took off her hat, tucking it into his back pocket, no longer under the rays of the sun. “She likes it, too,” Peter said, looking up at them. “I told you she was getting smarter.”

“You were right, Petey,” Steve said with a ruffle to his hair. Tony walked back over before Peter could push his hand away and was motioning them towards the elevator.

“We’re all set, I’ve got three key cards, and the room is ready.” Peter hurried ahead of them, and Tony wrapped an arm around Steve’s waist. “What do you think so far?”

“I think it’s a little early to ask that,” Steve told him as they got onto the elevator, Tony hitting the button for the top floor. “Although the lobby is nice.”

“My bad,” Tony chuckled. “Well, for dinner the restaurant is at the back of the hotel, just past the pools.”

“Pools!” Peter exclaimed grinning.

“We made good time getting here, and Jamie took a nap on the jet, so we can get settled and unpacked before we have to head down there,” Tony continued. “Head to the right, Petey-pie,” he said as the elevator doors opened. “This hotel has themed suites, and I was able to book us one I think is the best for this little wayward family.”

“Wayward, he says,” Steve said with a fond snort.

“Which room, Daddy?” Peter said when he got to the end of the hall, looking between two wooden doors on either side of him. Tony pointed to the right, and he turned to read the sign then his eyes widened. “Awesome!”
“Indoor voices,” Tony reminded him, pulling out one of the keycards. Steve caught sight of the placard outside the door that read ‘Pirates of the Caribbean’.

“We get to stay in the Pirates room??” Peter said in an awed hush. “That is so awesome!” As the door swung open Peter was the first one inside. Tony smiled at Steve and let him walk in next.

“This is huge, Tony,” Steve said as he walked in, looking left then right. “It looks like an apartment.”

“It practically is,” Tony said as he stepped in and shut the door. “The living room has a fireplace and plenty of seating, and there’s a dining room there, and even a little bar and kitchen area. And then down there is the main bedroom with an attached bathroom, and right next to it is the second bedroom, and another bathroom. Plenty of room for us and the kids, with an awesome view of the park, if I do say so myself.”

Steve had walked into the living room, looking around, then over to the windows where the curtains had been pulled open. He could most of the park, spread for miles, and a smile slowly lifted on his face. Jamie leaned forward to press her hands to the windows as she looked out, too. “It’s really something, ain’t it, baby J?”

“I knew I’d get that to stick,” Tony whispered by Steve’s ear with a grin.

“It was a slip up,” Steve retaliated, then turned around to face Tony. “I’ll never call her that name again.”

“But it fits!”

“I found what room I want!” Peter called from the other end of the suit and Tony was suddenly turning on his feet and hurrying down the hall.

“Oh no! Steve and I get the big bed!” Steve laughed as Tony caught up to Peter, and he turned to look out the window again.

“You may be too little to actually remember this when you’re older,” Steve said to Jamie softly, “but this is going to be a semi-regular thing. Us going on vacations as a family, and your Daddy and brother getting into trouble within the first five minutes. It’ll drive you nuts, but you’ll get used to it, and not in a bad way.” He kissed her cheek and she gave him a happy chirp. “Your Daddy and brother used to live here in California, so we might be coming out here more often, but I can’t find anything wrong with that notion.”

“Steve! Come see our bedroom!”

“Why do you get the big bed??” Steve chuckled as Peter cried out, the two obviously getting into a pillow fight.

“Like I said, drive you nuts. In a good way.” He turned with her in his arms, before setting her down on her feet, holding onto her hands. She hadn’t learned to walk on her own yet, but if someone were holding onto her hands to keep her steady, she could get a decent pace going on the floor. Steve helped guide her towards the bedrooms, hunched over so he didn’t stretch her arms up. As they got closer they saw a pillow go flying past an open door, and Steve nodded.

“That would be the room,” he muttered under his breath as they got closer. He glanced inside the other bedroom and saw that it had two full size beds inside, along with a dresser that no doubt held the TV, and a closet. “That’ll probably be Peter’s room, if Daddy can get him to give up the master bedroom.” Jamie let out a little urgent grunt, wanting to see the action in the room just in front of her, and Steve couldn’t help but obey, walking in the doorway for her to see Tony and Peter on the bed,
pillows armed in hands, just as Steve predicted. Steve let out a sigh as Jamie let out a surprised gasp, then a giggle as Tony and Peter resumed hitting each other with said pillows.

“Don’t we have to, actually, get ready for dinner?” Steve asked, interrupting their battle. Or at least interrupting Tony, and Peter got in a cheap hit that made Tony fall back onto the bed, eyes wide, and staring up at the ceiling.

“He’s right. Because the sooner we get back from dinner, then sooner we can start movie night, with a special movie.” Tony launched back up and hug-tackled Peter on the bed.

“What movie, Daddy?” Peter asked, laughing and catching his breath in Tony’s arms.

“Star Wars!” Peter cheered and Steve raised an eyebrow. “We have to make Mr Steve see the first three movies, the originals, obviously, before we go to all the Star Wars attractions!” Steve snorted and chuckled, smiling as he picked up Jamie when she looked up at him, wanting to be held like Tony was holding Peter. Her looks were very pointed, something Tony said was something Steve did all the time.

Somehow, Steve managed to get Tony and Peter changed and freshened up within the hour, ready to go eat in order to be back to watch a movie before it was too late for Peter to go to sleep. The walk back to the hotel room brought up some interesting conversation though, at least to Steve. They had seen a couple of Disney Princes in the restaurant and Peter had wanted a picture with them all.

“What Prince do you think Mr Steve would be?” Peter asked, holding Tony’s hand as they walked past the pools. The light was fading in the sky and the lights inside the pools started to flicker on.

Tony looked over at Steve, analyzing him, and hummed. “That is a very good question, Petey. Are we going for looks, or what Prince does he embody in values?”


“Always asking the big questions,” Tony said approvingly. “Well, the Princes from Snow White and Cinderella are just right out, they like, don’t talk at all.” Peter nodded as Tony talked. “He’s kind of like Prince Eric, but the hair is just all wrong, plus I don’t think he would have fallen for Ursula’s scheme.”

Steve watched them with a smile, having seen nearly every Disney movie thanks to his time babysitting Peter. “You’re putting a lot of thought into this.”

“Shush, dear, we’re psychoanalyzing you to compare you to a fictional character.” Tony reached over to pat his head, and Steve rolled his eyes. “Are we sticking to classic Disney? Just Princes, or Heroes as well?”

“The good movies,” Peter said confidently. “Annnnnnd, characters that can be found here, so he can get a picture with them.”

“I like the way you think!” Tony grinned as they walked across the lobby to the elevator. With so many people around they had been able to keep a relatively low profile since everyone was focused on their own vacation, also Tony kept his sunglasses on, and Steve was working on wearing some scruff that was turning into a beard. Tony had already let him know that he thought it made the blonde look very roguish, and very handsome.

“Alright, so not Naveen from Princess and the Frog,” Tony said and Peter wrinkled up his face, as did Steve. “I don’t think Prince Adam- Oh! What about Prince Philip??” The two Starks looked over
at Steve. “His hair is a little short, but that’s our fault, but I think it works!”

“Mr Steve would totally fight a dragon!” Peter proclaimed and Tony grinned slyly at Steve.

“Do Hydras count as dragons?” Tony actually giggled when Steve lightly punched his arm, the doors opening to their floor.

“Hercules fought a Hydra,” Peter said. “And he was a little guy that became big.”

“Ooooh, you’re hitting all the good points, Petey,” Tony said and pressed a hand to his chest dramatically. “Okay, so, Prince wise, he’s totally Philip. Being Sassy with his Dad, and bucking tradition, then fighting a dragon, and storming an impenetrable castle to save the Princess.” Peter nodded, and even Steve had to agree. “Hero wise though, completely Hercules. I mean, the movie could almost be modeled after your life, baby!”

“We’re going to be watching that movie soon, aren’t we?” Tony and Peter nodded with big grins. “I would not wear the Hercules outfit though, if that’s what you’re angling towards for Halloween. I’m not that keen to show off so much leg.”

“Prince Philip it is!” Peter said, thrusting his arm in the air triumphantly. Tony chuckled and opened the door to their suite. “What Prince do you think Daddy is?” He asked Steve, and now Steve was grinning at Tony.

“He could be a Naveen, but, I don’t think works that well.” Tony raised an eyebrow at him. “Daddy would totally fall for that singing voice as Prince Eric though,” and Peter was giggling as Tony raised both eyebrows now. Steve was probably going to pay for this in private. Worth it. “Oh.” Steve smiled then, then leaned down to whisper in Peter’s ear, and he started to giggle and nod.

“Yes! That’s him!” Peter ran into living room before Tony could catch him, and Jamie wiggled in Steve’s arms. She was very attentive, and attracted to, Peter’s energy, almost channeling it. Tony was probably right, she was going to be very active as she grew up.

“Alright, what have you decided?” Tony asked, crowding Steve before he could slip away into the living room.

Steve grinned at him, leaning in to kiss him. “Hello, Mr Fitzherbert.”

“Oh come on! You can’t even use the cool name?” Tony was far from disappointed with the choice though. “Flynn Rider, call me Flynn Rider.”

“Eugene Fitzherbert,” Steve insisted, biting his lip when Tony pushed back against him with his body, backing him up against the wall. “Eugene gets the girl, and becomes a Prince.”

“Flynn Rider does the Smolder,” Tony persisted. Suddenly he looked down to the side, then back up, lips pursed, eyes half closed, eyebrows pointed. Steve pressed his lips together and sucked them in, holding back his gut instinct as long as he could, before he let a deep, loud, full bodied laugh. Tony tried to look put out before he was joining in the laugh. “Ego boosting, babe.”

“Sorry,” Steve stuttered out between breaths, still laughing. “I just- You were so committed to the look! Full points, seriously.” He grinned, giggleing, and leaned in to kiss Tony, tugging on his lip a little with his teeth. Jamie made a noise and pushed at their faces. Tony rolled his eyes and kissed Jamie’s nose. “Alright, alright, let’s go watch a movie before Peter hunts us down.”

They walked out into the living room, Peter already setting up the TV, using one of Tony’s tablets to hack in and choose the movie. “You know, babe, we have to come with someone for Peter.”
“I’m Sora!” Peter quickly claimed, turning on the couch to look at them. “From Kingdom Hearts! Wade wants to be Riku.” Steve’s brow drew together in confusion and he looked at Tony.

“It’s a video game,” Tony explained, pulling out his phone and Jarvis was helpfully pulling up a picture. “Technically, he gets points, because it does include Disney characters.” Peter beamed. “That’s my son,” Tony said fondly. “I’ll get drinks, you three get settled. We’ve gotta watch *A New Hope* tonight, *Empire Strikes Back* tomorrow, and *Return of the Jedi* the day after that.”

“For such a tight schedule?” Steve asked he headed over to sit next to Peter on the couch.

“I have plans!” Tony declared. “Big plans!”

Tony made sure that Steve and Peter were occupied as he stepped into the little kitchen area, Jarvis already reading his mind and placing a call. Tony grinned.

Tony had to admit that Steve blended in quite well with his dark sunglasses on, and beard growing in nicely around his face. If someone were looking for Steve Rogers, they wouldn’t find him like this, not right away. He kept stealing glances at his ass as they walked around the park, though, looking fantastic in jeans.

They had both ‘dressed down’, jeans and a t-shirt, sunglasses, and Steve wearing his baby accessory. They had brought a stroller, of course, but they both figured that it would be easier for everyone to just use the wraps and carriers with Jamie, taking turns carrying her and going with Peter on the rides that Jamie couldn’t go on. It was easier to keep an eye on Jamie this way as well, no chances of someone, (Hydra), snatching her from a carrier. Steve was also insistent that she wear a wide brimmed sun hat, along with baby sunscreen. He was a model protective parent.

“Daddy!” Peter gasped, tugging on Tony’s hand. “Tower of Terror!” He pointed up at the big building, the faint screams coming from other tourists inside. “Pleeeeeease??”

Tony looked up at it, blinking a little. “You know what, you need someone big next to you, holding onto you.” Steve’s head whipped around to look at him, already knowing where this was going. “You should take Mr Steve! He’s never been on that ride!”

“Tony-“

“Please, Mr Steve??” Peter turned large puppy brown eyes up at the man. Tony knew he was doomed.

“Come to Daddy!” Tony said as he reached over to pull Jamie from the mobi wrap around Steve’s chest. “I’ll just take that wrap as well, you won’t be needing it for a bit.” Steve looked at Tony, a bit worried. “It’s a good thing that we had lunch a few hours ago.”

“Tony-“ Steve tried again, as Tony pulled the fabric off of him with one hand, the other holding onto Jamie. Tony smiled at him, leaning in to giving him a soft kiss.

“You’ll be fiine.” He stole the sunglasses from his face. “I’ll also hold onto these, don’t want you losing them.” Peter grabbed one of Steve’s hands. “I’ll be watching!” He said as he pointed up to the building. Peter was already pulling Steve along to the entrance. Steve looked where he was pointing and saw the sudden drop that with the riders, hearing the screams. Tony laughed as Steve’s eyes widened and he was stumbling after Peter.
Tony pulled out his phone. “J, I want recordings of that drop, and we are definitely buying that picture from the gift shop.”

“Of course, Sir,” the AI responded form the phone. Tony set the phone down on a bench along the path, then set Jamie down to sit next to the phone.

“Stay, baby girl.” He held up the material for the mobi wrap for her to see. “I gotta get your carriage ready.” She clapped her hands together with a smile and kicked her little feet. Tony snorted softly, wrapping the fabric around his chest. “You’re going to be horrible to us in your teenage years aren’t you? That’s the only explanation I can think of for why you’re so well behaved now. Or are the terrible two’s going to be truly terrible?” She babbled softly, as if trying to respond to him, waving an arm when Tony had to adjust one of the straps.

“Sir, I’d like to inform you that the delivery you requested last night is inside the suite,” Jarvis told him as he was fitting Jamie against his chest. Tony grabbed his phone and grinned.

“They did work quickly, didn’t they?” Tony plopped down on the bench, eyes up on the Tower of Terror building. “Be sure to throw in something extra to the ones who worked on them. I think tomorrow is going to be fantastic!”

“As well as the day after?” Jarvis questioned, with a hint a humor.

“I’m going to make a sass meter for you,” Tony threatened. “Alright, baby girl,” he place a hand on top of Jamie’s head. “Let’s go get the pictures of Daddy and Peter, yeah?” She pushed at his arm as Tony stood back up and headed for the building.

Tony was paying for the picture, arranging for it to be sent to their room when Peter and Steve came out. Peter had the biggest grin on his face, and Steve’s face looked a little pale, hair disheveled. Tony grinned at them, Peter running over to hug Tony.

“It was Soooooo much fun!” He bounced around then ran over to look at the pictures.

Steve stumbled a tiny bit and Tony took his arm, then leaned in to kiss him. “You were entirely unprepared for that ride, weren’t you?”

“I think my stomach jumped out of my mouth,” Steve mumbled, resting his head against Tony’s, closing his eyes. “And then, it went back up, and the rest of my organs followed the trend my stomach had set.” Tony pushed out his bottom lip in sympathy, running his hand through Steve’s hair. “I think I left them all on the ride. I am sans organs.”

“I don’t go on that ride anymore,” Tony told him. He put a hand on Steve’s lower back to lead them out, gathering Peter with them. “I have a literal heart condition.”

“You’re so cruel to me,” Steve murmured, burying his nose in Tony’s hair.

“I’ll make it up to you, I promise.” Steve hummed and Tony smiled a little. Tony had taken Peter’s hand again, feeling the energy coming from him, smiling more when Steve’s arm wrapped around his waist.

A couple hours later Tony’s phone started to ring, Pepper’s picture appearing on the screen. Steve had reclaimed Jamie, and they were inside the Lego store, Peter running rampant with excitement, Steve following him around with a couple of baskets. Tony really thought that they should have a cart, at least, but they didn’t exist in the store.

“Hey, Pep!” Tony greeted as he answered the phone.
“Tony, were you going to tell me that you were in California? Much less at Disneyland?” She asked, sounding unimpressed and tired already.

“I might have let you know in a couple of days,” Tony told her. “Was thinking about going up to the Malibu house for a day. How do you know where I am? Talk to Mary?”

“No, actually I looked online.” Tony’s brow wrinkled. “PR called me, since we were monitoring anyway for backlash to—“

“To the press release, right,” he nodded a little. Looking over, Steve gave him a smile and went back to following Peter, listening to him go on about whatever Lego set he was currently interested in.

“What’s the damage?”

“So far, just some pictures floating around Twitter mostly,” Pepper told him. He pulled away the phone, putting it on speaker as he stepped into a corner, out of the way of other shoppers, but still able to see his family. His chest warmed at the thought. Jarvis pulled up several social media sights, bring Twitter up front. “Random people snapping pictures, not sure if it’s really you or not.”

“Ooo, I’m trending in three different hashtags,” Tony noted. “I find #isTonygay the most amusing. Not to say that #sonofStark or #TonyStarksboyfriend aren’t good, even if one of them is cliché.”

“Yes, your ‘mysterious lover’ is certainly gaining a lot of attention.” Now Pepper sounded amused.

Tony hummed, looking at some of the pictures people had taken. There were a couple of Tony and Steve stealing kisses, waiting in line at some of the rides, another of Tony’s hand on Steve’s back, and one of Steve feeding Tony a piece of his pretzel. He gasped when he saw one picture, face melting with the sheer amount of cuteness being thrown at him. “Pepper! I want some of these saved, printed, framed. There’s one of Steve with Jamie, and I might die from it.” Jamie’s face was caught in a state of shock, eyes wide, mouth open in a partial gasp as Steve had been feeding her cotton candy for the first time. The way it dissolved on her tongue had been the most fascinating thing in the world. Even Peter had smiled at the squeal she had made, her arms flailing around as she tried to get more. “Although, try to suppress those that include Jamie. I knew some not so kindly people that will recognize her, and we don’t need that kind of trouble right now.”

“I think that we can keep this contained fairly well,” Pepper told him. “There’s no official confirmation that it is you, but the blue against your shirt is what attracts some people.”

“Yeah, it’s not as muffled as it could be, but it’s warm here, and I’m gonna suffer heatstroke for the sake of wearing three shirts.” Tony was glad to see that no one had connected Steve with Captain America yet, the beard and dark sunglasses going far to help with that. Although, those that were convinced that it was him in the park was frothing at the bit to find out who the mysterious man was. “No one’s really bothered us so far, so I’m gonna take that as a good sign.”

“You’re getting lucky,” Pepper agreed. “I’m working with PR now to set up a statement for when the mainstream media does get a hold of this.”

“I’m lucky to have kept Peter out of the spotlight as long as I did, so we just need to reaffirm that cameras are not to approach him, but it’s not secret. And I’ve never hidden the fact that I’m bi,” Tony pointed out. “I need to talk to Steve about this tonight, though.”

“Of course,” his friend said, voice soft. “You two do look really happy, though.” Tony smiled, thinking the same thing as he looked at the pictures. “Do you want to send over some picture of your trip, with or without Steve, so we have something to respond with if it gets picked up?”
Tony tilted his head a little, then smirked. “Yeah, I will. I’ll have some good pictures tomorrow and the day after, trust me.” If Tony was going to be out on his birthday, he was going to damn well enjoy it with his son, and now his daughter and boyfriend, and that meant going over the top. Steve was going to roll his eyes, but he’d do what Tony asked. “I’ll send you one today, but this one is for your enjoyment. I sent Steve on the Tower of Terror with Peter.” He grinned at Pepper’s delighted laugh.

“So, you plan on visiting the mansion after your vacation?” She asked him, and he brought the phone back up to his ear, looking around to notice a couple of teens sneaking his picture from across the store.

“Yeah, on the last day. It’s been a while since we’ve been there, and Steve hasn’t seen it. I figure Peter can give him the tour, and we can get a beach day in without being surrounded by several thousand people.”

“Let me know, I’ll drop by.”

“Plan on it,” Tony nodded. “You’re an angel, Pep. But I’m going to get back to three of my favorite people now….. Because Peter decides to buy the entire Lego store.”

“Have fun, Tony. You’ve earned this.” He rolled his eyes a little as Pepper mirrored Mary’s words and hung up, slipping his phone back into his pocket. He strolled over to Steve and Peter, kissing Steve’s cheek, and crouching next to Peter as he examined a couple of different Lego sets.

“Have you bought half the store yet?” He asked the little boy who looked very contemplative.

“I picked out a set that Mr Steve and I can work on together,” Peter told him. “Now I need a set that you and I can work on together.”

“We’ve decided that Jamie is still too young to work on a set,” Steve said behind him. “So she’s going to have to wait a couple of years.” Tony flashed a smile back at him, before turning back to what Peter was looking at.

“What about this one?” He pointed at a box that looked like a mechanic’s shop, complete with pieces for custom cars.

“It’s like your old workshop!” Peter smiled then reached out to take the box. “I like it.” Tony chuckled and kissed his cheek, standing back up. “Alright kiddo, we’ve got some dinner reservations to get too, then the next Star Wars movie.” Peter straightened up and turned to hustle towards the checkout, making Tony laugh.

“You’d think he was excited about something!” Steve laughed with him, the two men following him.

“What did Pepper want? Media backlash we didn’t expect?”

Tony shook his head, taking one of the baskets from Steve. “Nothing big. I’ll tell you about it back at the hotel.” Tony wasn’t sure what Steve would think about it, wasn’t sure if he would be ready to not only come out publicly, but also come out publicly as in a relationship with Tony Stark. “Some people are starting to guess that it’s me, and they’re taking pictures. Low key, no mainstream yet. There are some adorable pictures out there though that I have to show you.” Steve glanced at him as they put all the stuff on the counter to ring up, Peter hanging on to the edge. “I’ve already got Pepper taking down anything with Jamie in the pictures, just in case.”

“So, just stay alert, but no change needed?” Steve asked and Tony nodded.

“Jarvis still has eyes everywhere, and we’re prepared.”
“Good,” Steve said with a smile. “Because I’m having a lot of fun.” Tony grinned at him.

“You are going to love what I have planned next then.”

“Tony.” He ignored Steve’s voice as he slipped into Peter’s room to help him getting dressed, the little boy giggling. “Tony.”

“Can’t hear you!” He held up one of Peter’s shoes. “These are huge. They really go for accuracy, don’t they?”

“It’s awesome!” Peter exclaimed. Tony cackled as he put the shoes on him, and Peter pulled on the jacket. “I look just like Sora!”

“And you get to talk around all day like that,” Tony told him, standing up and watching Peter jump to his feet from the bed. “Alright, I gotta get dressed, and I have to try and get Mr Steve to get dressed. Go grab some breakfast, but be careful.” Peter ran out the room and Tony went back to the bedroom he shared with Steve.

When he walked in Steve had his hands on his hips, looking at Tony with a very stern, but questioning, look. “What is this?” He gestured to the outfits that he had paid out on the bed while Steve was taking a shower. Jamie was happily cooing over her own little outfit on the bed. She was in a normal outfit, but had a little red cape on, Velcro around her shoulders just in case, and a red hat with a feather, much like the one in the movie *Sleeping Beauty*. He knew that Steve was gesturing at their own outfits though.

“Our outfits for the day,” Tony said happily, going for his own. White shirt, teal vest, tan pants, and brown boots, along with a few belts. He was going to be the best looking Flynn Rider out there. Maybe better looking than the paid actor at the Park.

“I didn’t bring my suit for a reason,” Steve watched him get undressed, raking his eyes up and down his body until Tony pulled the pants, and eventually the white shirt. “These pants, might be tighter than what I wore last year.”

“Those pants are a gift from the gods!” Tony told him seriously. “They are going to frame your perfect butt so beautifully.”

“I’m not showing off my butt for everyone here,” Steve told him, hands back to on his hips.

“No, of course not,” Tony agreed, slipping the vest on, but not doing up the buckles yet. He walked over to Steve and put his hands on Steve’s chest, running his hands up and down slowly over the white t-shirt. “The red cape with cover your butt for onlookers. I get the private view.” Steve’s cheeks pinked a little and Tony grinned. “You’ll be the only one not dressed up you know. Even Peter got a costume.”

“Do I even want to know how you got these so quickly?” Steve asked, looking back over at the outfit. There were some light grey pants and long sleeve black shirt that both felt very light weight and thing, (Steve figured he wouldn’t be sweating that much then), an embroidered silver doublet with red and gold details, a red cape that looked to hang off of the shoulder and not around the neck, black boots, and some black gloves. “You’re dressing me up as Prince Philip.”

“You said you didn’t want to dress up as Hercules,” Tony pointed out with a smile. “There is an optional sword and shield, but I figured you’d have a baby with you, or you could just wear the red,
“I don’t think I want to advertise that just yet.” Steve picked up the doublet and looked it over. “How am I going to carry Jamie with this? How are you going to carry Jamie in that?”

“Here’s the beauty!” Tony picked up Jamie, raising up to make her giggle and kissing her cheeks, before cradling her in his arm. With his free hand he plucked at her red cape, lifting it up, then pulling some red fabric out. After a little maneuvering, Jamie was settled against his chest. “There are some built in straps in her outfit that go over the shoulders, and tie around our waists. No need to keep switching the Mobi wrap out, because this once, she comes with her own carrying system.”

“That’s a little ingenious,” Steve admitted. Jamie looked comfortable, and watched her kick her feet. “She does look adorable.

“Like the owl from the movie, right?” Tony grinned. “All dressed up like her Daddy!” Steve groaned, but was smiling.

“Alright! I give in.” Tony cheered and leaned in to kiss him. Steve was going to lean in more, but Tony pulled back, and undid the straps to put Jamie back on the bed. “Get dressed first, and maybe there can be some shared personal space between royalty.”

“Evil.” Steve muttered with a smile and grabbed the clothes. “I’m not shaving though. I will not be mistaken for the actor out there.”

“You probably still will!” Tony called as Steve went into the bathroom to get changed, causing Tony to pout. “These clothes were made here, official Disney sewing team, the same clothes that are worn.”

“You’re going to make us get our pictures taken with our counterparts, aren’t you?” Steve asked from inside the room.

“Oh, you bet your sweet perfect ass I am.”

Chapter End Notes

Because I had so much fun with this chapter, Birthday part 2 might be posted on Thursday, or Wednesday. It's super fun what I have planned, and they deserve it!

Also, can you imagine the fanart of Tony and Steve posing with their actor counterparts?? I have pictures up on my Pinterest of the exact outfit that Steve is wearing. Mmmm, it would be a perfect ass indeed.

Pinterest board!
Awaited Part 2 is adorable. No excuse for late chapter, I was up all night and failed to hear my alarm. :( But that's okay, cause this chapter is adorable! You will make noises. Noises of adorableness. :D

As usual not much belongs to me, Marvel and Disney own more, I have creativity with this stuff.
Enjoy!

Tony grinned, holding his phone up to take the pictures. Steve was trying not to blush as Princess Aurora kissed his cheek, and Tony reached down to high five Peter standing next to him. He had already sent the picture of the actress kissing Peter’s cheek, and kissing Jamie’s cheek, looking delighted at her little costume.

“You’re not supposed to blush,” Peter said to Steve and giggled. “That’s your Princess!” That made the woman laugh herself, staying in character.

“That’s a great idea, Petey!” Tony declared. “We’ve got two Princes!” His eyes looked over to the highly amused actor who was supposed to be Prince Philip. “They should be kissing Her cheek!” The two actors had of course recognized Tony for who he was, but the great thing about all staff at any of the parks, was that they weren’t supposed to outwardly react while they were acting. That went for any celebrity. “If that is of course agreeable?” He knew Peter was turning puppy eyes to them.

“What Princess doesn’t dream of having two Princes beside her?” The woman said sweetly, clapping her hands together. Jamie smiled, clapping her hands together in the same fashion, making the Princess and Steve practically melt.

“Don’t worry,” Peter called out to Steve. “We’ll make Daddy do the same!” Tony shot a little glare down at the boy as Steve laughed, almost cackled really, at the thought.

“It would be only fair,” Prince Philip said as he walked over to them.

“Now this isn’t becoming fair,” Tony mumbled as he took the picture. He pat Peter’s back and he ran over to get one more pictures with both the actors as Steve walked back over to Tony, taking
Jamie in his arms. She cooed and pat Steve’s cheek happily.

“Thank you!” Peter said before running back over and taking Tony’s hand. “Now we have to find Flynn and Rapunzel.”

“I agree!” Steve said with shit-eating grin aimed at Tony. “I’ll of course take all the pictures.” Peter was too happy to notice the way that Tony was promising revenge with his eyes, and Steve just didn’t care. “Peter just has all the best ideas today.”

“This is payback for trying to use guilt to make you dress up, isn’t it?” Steve didn’t say anything to Tony, but just kept smiling. “I’ve sent most of these pictures to Mary and Pepper. There will be framed ones around the Penthouse when we get back.”

“You know, you’ve taught me how to use a Starkphone,” Steve told him. “I know how to text pictures as well. And where are you going to put all the pictures? I don’t think there’s enough room on the walls to go with the drawings and paintings.”

“Remodeling, remember?” Tony reminded him, poking his arm with his free hand. “And, I’ll remind you of who has all the pockets and pouches today, so I have-“ He stopped when Steve slipped two fingers past the ties of the doublet and showed Tony part of his phone. “They put a hidden-“

“-hidden pocket in the outfit, yes they did,” Steve nodded with a smile. “And, I do believe that Peter might have more pockets than you. His pockets are at least normal looking.”

“There’s nothing normal about us, Steven.”

“He says as the family walks through the theme park dressed professionally,” Steve quipped, sounding extremely put out. He snorted out a laugh when Tony landed a smack on his arm with the back of his hand. “I’ll admit, it’s a lot more fun than I thought it would be.”

“Because your beard lets all the kids know that you aren’t actually Prince Philip,” Tony said with a smile.

“That, and the fact that I’m walking around with a video game character, and someone from a different movie,” Steve pointed out.
“Semantics- oph!” Tony stumbled forward when Peter hurried his pace, catching sight of the characters from Tangled. “It’s almost like he’s excited!”

Steve laughed as he followed them at a more sedate pace. The laugh pulled a soft giggle from Jamie, and he couldn’t help but smile down at her. “Oh, you’re getting more pictures too, little lady,” he told her. “It’s all going in the scrap book, because you won’t remember your first vacation, or your first costume. I will be the embarrassing parent who shows them off to your first partner, and to your prom date, if they’re different people. Make no mistake, I can be merciless.” She tilted her head a little, then turned when she heard Peter’s voice.

Flynn Rider and Rapunzel were standing in a cove of sorts, and Peter had hopped up on the bricks that were behind them to get more height. Tony already had his phone out, getting shots of the three of them, and Steve pulled his out to take pictures one handed.

“Hey Petey, let’s get one with Jamie, yeah?” Tony suggested. Peter stared at him for few seconds, eyes blank. “It’ll be fun, and you can show off how you taught her to stand.” That seemed to be the ticket to get peter to, almost grudgingly, accept. Neither of the men had missed how Jamie always turned to look at Peter when he was talking, even if it wasn’t to her. She liked to be near him, or at least have him in sight when she knew that he was around. She was also starting to associate that wherever Peter was, usually Wade was there, too.

Steve walked over and turned Jamie then set her down on her feet in front of Peter, holding onto her hands to keep her up. She tilted her head up to look at Peter and grinned. Jamie tried to pull her hands away from Steve to make grabby hands at Peter. That pulled an ‘Aww’ from Rapunzel, and now Peter was more eager to hold onto Jamie’s hands, to show off.

As Steve was stepping back to stand next to Tony, Peter’s hands securely keeping the little girl stable, he was able to catch some of the actress’ words. “Your sister is so cute! She must really look up to you.” Steve had lifted his phone, but was watching Peter closely.

Peter smiled at her then looked down at Jamie, who was babbling softly in his direction. He wrapped his arms around her middle then picked her up so she was still facing out towards the cameras, then nodded. “Yeah, she’s pretty smart like that. I taught her to be smart like that, though.” That pulled a laugh from both actors, and Steve bit his lip as he smiled before taking some pictures of them. He zoomed in on Peter and Jamie a bit, and knew that that picture would be making its way to his and Tony’s bedroom.

Steve chuckled a little and shook his head. “What do they say? The happiest place on earth?”

“That’s cheesy as hell,” Tony said, but Steve could hear the touch of fondness in his tone.

“Speaking of,” Steve said, motioning over towards Peter. The boy was motioning with his arm, Jamie once again on her feet and holding onto Peter, for Tony to come over and take his place. “I think that it’s time to play it up for the cameras.”

“That’s something I can do, with ease,” Tony said as he slipped his phone into the pouch around his waist. He started to saunter over towards Peter, full Tony Stark, Billionaire, persona rising up. It was Tony when he was at a charity event, or gala, or doing a press conference. The smile didn’t reach his eyes, usually, and he was so overly polite that most people missed it when he insulted them until it was too late. In a business setting, this Tony Stark was ruthless, more dangerous than Captain America with his shield in the middle of battle.

Steve saw that this was much toned down, putting on the show for Peter mostly, and charming everyone they came in contact with. This was the positive side of the mask he wore, cheesing it up. But this time, the smile did reach his eyes, and he had eyes for Peter and Jamie. The two have come over to Steve, Peter picking up Jamie as he walked, then held onto her hands when she wiggled to stay standing. As Tony posed with the paid Flynn Rider, both back to back, arms crossed over their chests, he flashed a smile looking right at Steve, and Steve grinned right back at him.

In these moments, they weren’t superheroes, or Avengers, or anything special. They were two people, on a rarely, if ever, taken vacation with their kids. And that’s how Steve wanted to keep it, snapping silly pictures of his boyfriend that made their kids laugh.

Wade Wilson believed that he was the epitome of sneaky. His Mom was taking a nap, and there were still several hours before he could do a video chat with Peter while he was gone on vacation. Jarvis kept him from going down to the gym to watch the Avengers that were in the Tower train, and he wasn’t allowed in Peter’s Mom’s place while they were doing ‘work stuff’. Something about classified information, or some such nonsense.

So he found himself, slipping out of their apartment, (with a note on his Mom’s forehead, telling her where he was going, he didn’t want to worry her), and sneaking down the hallway. His destination
wasn’t far away, in fact it was on the same floor. He was on a mission, to go to Miss Meg’s floor, and sneak up on her roommate. Miss Meg had of course told him that he was welcome to come over whenever he liked, so long as the door was unlocked. Wade figured that Jarvis was in charge of the locks by the way he had overheard Dr Bruce talking with the scary red-headed Avenger. She hadn’t been too keen on them for some reason, even though Peter and Wade enjoyed spending time in Miss Meg’s apartment when their parents were busy.

The day before Peter left to go to California, they had both caught sight of the metal armed man, (Mr Steve said his name was Bucky), in the living room, furniture pushed to the edges of the room, and he seemed to doing some kind of exercises. He had a couple of pieces of slim, polished, wood in his hands, and he was flipping them about, quietly going about some kind of routine. And then Miss Meg came out and then they were sparring, quietly since the twins were asleep. They were working on some fighting lessons.

Silently, Wade pushed the door open the tiniest bit, slid inside, and shut the door again. His shoes were off and he kept himself as low to the ground as he could without actually crawling. Very carefully he took long steps across the carpet, and stopped at the wall that led into the living room, then peeked his head around to survey the area.

The furniture was in the right place, so no one was practicing. The TV wasn’t on, so the twins must have been down for a nap. There was some soft music coming from the opposite direction, from the kitchen, so that meant that Miss Meg was making dinner. But, he didn’t know where Bucky Barnes was. His eyes narrowed and he crept into the living room, eyes constantly scanning the room. No one was talking in the kitchen, so he wasn’t in there as well; not that Wade ever caught the man talking that often, but he figured they would talk if they were in the same room, right?

Wade got closer to the couch, and he saw some hair sticking up on the arm of the couch. Bingo! His target was asleep on the couch. Perfect. A mischievous smile spread across his face and he pressed his body low as he made his way over to the couch. He wondered if Bucky would have the reaction that Mr Steve did, always jumping and falling off of whatever he had been sleeping on? Or maybe he would react like Mr Tony, eyes widened and trying to become one with the soft surface he had been asleep on? He hoped he wouldn’t react like his Mom used too before he stopped trying to wake her up, arm flailing up as she yelped.

He stopped just in front of the couch, then slowly started to rise up, much like a bad horror movie haunt. Wade froze though when he came up high enough and saw two blue eyes looking right at him, his own eyes widening.

“Your heart started to beat faster when you got excited,” Bucky said, voice giving away that he had actually been taking a nap. “You were trying too hard to scare me.”
“Then teach me how to stealthier,” Wade countered. Bucky raised one eyebrow slowly at him. “Peter and I want you to teach us how to fight, too. Self-defense.”

“No.” Bucky rolled enough so that he could sit up on the couch now. Wade hopped up to his feet and stood in front of Bucky before he could get up. “You’re kids, I’m not teaching you anything. Steve’ll kill me if I start to teach his kids to fight.”

Wade raised an eyebrow at him. “Mr Steve’s not our Dad. You know who my Dad really is.” Bucky watched him carefully. “And you know that he’s dangerous. You’d be doing me a disservice by not teaching me how to protect myself.”

“I don’t teach self-defense,” Bucky said.

“We’ve seen you practicing it with Miss Meg,” Wade told him, trying to get him to change his mind. If anything, Wade knew that he was stubborn, and he would get what he wanted if he wanted it badly enough. And he wanted this. He’d be able to protect his Mom, and Peter, and himself with training.

“That’s something entirely different,” Bucky argued. “I’m not teaching her anything, she already took lessons and classes. And just cause you ain’t Steve’s blood doesn’t mean he don’t care about you two.”

“Then I’ll go and ask her to teach us.” Wade turned on his foot, every intention to go to the kitchen, and probably get turned down, but he’d do it.

Bucky snapped his arm out, flesh hand catching Wade’s arm and pulled him back a little. He narrowed his eyes at the kid a little. “You’re one of those kids that’ll do it anyway, aren’t you? Cause it’s something you think is right.” Wade nodded and Bucky let out a sound that was half groan, half sigh. “I thought I lost that damn kid back in Brooklyn,” he muttered under his breath. “Alright, fine. But I’m only teaching you self-defense, and nothing that’ll get me in trouble from your mom, Peter’s mom, or Steve and Tony. I ain’t putting my neck on the line for this, I got bigger things that’ll get me in trouble.” He pulled Wade a little closer, metal finger pointing in his face. “They tell me to stop, I’m stopping, you got me? And I’m telling them that you wanted it.”

Wade grinned and nodded his head eagerly. “Yeah, sure, whatever. Awesome! Wouldn’t be the first time we’ve gotten in trouble.”
“Stop learning from Steve, the punk,” Bucky said and let go of Wade’s arm to stand up. Wade took a couple steps back but followed behind him, like his shadow, as he headed for the kitchen. Bucky stopped and looked over his shoulder at the kid. “Why didn’t you ask Romanoff to train you?”

“She’s scary,” Wade told him, and Bucky snorted.

“I’m scarier than she is. I trained her.”

“So obviously, I needed to come to you,” Wade concluded. “And you’re so not scarier than she is.”

“I’m not approachable,” Bucky said with a frown. “What is it with kids?”

“We’re good judges of character. Most of the time.”

Bucky groaned and rolled his eyes. “Debatable.”

Tony loved his son, that would never be in question, but there were only so many hours in the day that he would be able to be dressed up in the boots that came with the Flynn Rider costume. Steve looked like he was getting close to a version of super soldiered heat stroke from his own outfit, so they headed back to the hotel to change, and shower, before they went to get some dinner, and finish the last movie of the Star Wars marathon for Steve. He let Steve take a shower first, so he could give Jamie a quick bath as well.

He pulled the boots off, and plopped down on his back on the couch, closing his eyes for a few minutes. One eye opened when he felt a tug on his shirt, and looked at Peter standing in front of him. “Hey, buddy. What’s up?” Tony opened both eyes and pushed himself up a little bit. When Peter shuffled his foot on the ground, he knew something was up. Peter had picked up some of his nervous habits.

“Uh, well, I was wondering if I could ask you something?” Peter asked him, looking up and down between Tony and the floor.
“You know you can ask me anything,” Tony told him as he sat up on the couch fully. “No holds bar. Is it something serious?” Peter wobbled his head side to side, not really nodding, or shaking his head no. “Alright, is it something that your mom would get upset about?” Peter shook his head no this time, and internally Tony breathed a sigh of relief.

“You said you’re going to make more room in your place, since Mr Steve and Jamie are moving in, right?” Tony nodded as Peter started to talk. He seemed shy about something. “And, you two love each other, right?”

Tony raised an eyebrow, but nodded. “Yeah, we’re in a relationship, pretty serious.”

“And you don’t plan on not being together anytime soon, right?”

“It’s not in the books,” Tony answered. He pat the spot on the couch next to him, and Peter seemed to hesitate for a second, before he slid up on the couch next to Tony. “You have a question about Mr Steve?”

Peter bit on his bottom lip for a second before looking up at Tony, puffing up in sudden courage. “Well, I was just thinking, that you know, they’ll be staying there, and maybe I could spend more time on your floor? Mama and Phil have a lot more work to do now, and I’m teaching Jamie stuff, too. Just so she doesn’t need as much attention, of course, but,” he shrugged and wiggled a little. “And Jamie’s gonna grow up calling you Daddy, like I do, even though I was first, but she’s gonna grow up calling Mr Steve something else, right?”

Tony blinked a little, wondering if that was what it was like when he started to ramble. Peter seemed to be picking up more and more from him. “Uh, yeah,” he nodded a little. “He’s going with the ‘Papa’ term.” Tony was a little hesitant to tell him that, not sure how Peter would take it. It seemed that he was warming up to Jamie, slowly but surely, and Steve had obviously heard something when Peter was-

“Um, do you think that maybe I could call him something like that, too?” Tony’s brain stalled when Peter asked his next question. “Because, he’s really nice, and you love him, kind of like how Mama and Phil love each other, and he’s always looking out for me, and helping me, just like you. And you two are going to stay together for a long time, because you love each other, and it doesn’t matter if you get married right away-”

Tony wrapped his arms Peter, pulling him into a hug, kissing the top of his head. “I think, that you should ask Steve yourself. But, I also think that he’s going to love the idea.” He felt the smile spreading across his face, and a slight tingle of what could have been tears. Tony dropped messy
kisses on Peter’s cheeks, pulling a little giggle from him. “I have it on good authority that he feels the same about you.” He could feel Peter’s face grow little warm, but knew that he was probably smiling. “How about you go get changed and take a shower first, yeah? He’s still going to be a bit in the bedroom, and you are a stinky boy!”

“No I’m not!” Peter gasped and wiggled in Tony’s arms. Tony tightened his grasp around him, flopping back onto the couch and dragging Peter with him. “Noooo!” He squealed with laughter as Tony tried to tickle his sides. “Daddy!”

“All stinky boys need to take a shower!” Tony exclaimed. “We can’t go eat if no one wants to be around us!”

“You’re stinky too!” Peter giggled, then managed to slip down, rolling away from Tony. Tony gasped, putting his hands over his mouth in shock. “I said it!” Tony sat up, going to get up and Peter laughed and took off running, Tony right behind him. Peter slid into the bathroom and shut the door, giggling on the other side.

“You’ve taken the only available bathroom! Whatever shall I do!” Tony lamented, rolling his eyes with a smile and turning to go into Peter’s room. He grabbed a change of clothes for the boy and dropped them by the door. “Alright, Stinky Pete, there’s some clothes out here for you. Don’t get all pruny!”

Tony made his way back to the master bedroom and saw Jamie in her playpen, the bathroom door open with Steve at the sink rinsing his mouth from toothpaste. “You are the master of the quick shower,” Tony called out to him as he leaned down to kiss the top of Jamie’s head. She had pulled herself up to her feet, holding onto the edges of the playpen. She was smelling of baby shampoo, and in a new outfit.

“She wasn’t feeling the water today,” Steve told him. “She got the shortest bath ever, and I suddenly remembered what the quickest shower in Army history felt like.”

“I promise to give you a much more memorable shower later this week.” Tony smirked, leaning against the doorway between the bathroom and bedroom. Steve sauntered over, deliberately slow, black jeans hanging on his hips and shirtless. “I think you’re good like this,” Tony said, making a show of ogling his body. “You’re even barefoot, that should be illegal how good you look barefoot.” Steve rolled his eyes, smiling at him. “Yeah, you can go to dinner with us looking just like this.”

“Or, we could order some food to the room and not have to leave at all,” Steve suggested, stopping front of Tony and resting his hands on his waist. “I don’t know if I’ve said Happy Birthday enough
times today. I could tell you more, tonight, as well. Maybe the kids will get tired early, and fall into a deep sleep—” Tony pressed forward to capture Steve’s lips in a kiss.

“Don’t get my hopes up, Soldier boy.” Tony tapped his forehead then turned back around, starting to take of his own shirts. “There is no such thing as vacation sex, unless you bring a babysitter.”

“So next time, we bring someone else?” Steve asked, and Tony could hear that he was following behind him. “False pretenses of enjoying some time off, then we foist the kids on them?”

“Now you’re learning, Cap,” Tony said with a grin. “Maybe we can get Aunt Pepper and Happy to watch the kids for a couple of hours before we leave.” He smirked when Steve wrapped his arms around his waist. “I thought I was supposed to be the bad influence here.” Steve hummed and he could feel it vibrate in Steve’s chest. “You should probably put a shirt on, much to my extreme disappointment.”

“And to mine in this moment, but why?” Steve dropped a kiss along Tony’s jaw.

“I have a very strong feeling that Peter is going to come in here as soon as he gets done taking a shower.” Tony managed to slip the vest off, and Steve was helping him pull the undershirt off.

“By strong feeling you mean—“

“I know for a fact that he’s going to come find you, because he wants to ask you something.” Tony leaned back against Steve. “If you want to take some time finding a shirt, I’m gonna get a shower real quick, then I’ll take over Jamie watching while Peter has a completely serious, and amazing, conversation with you.” He tilted his head back to look at Steve’s face, and kissed his jaw. “It’s only good, trust me. Now, watch the baby while I get naked and wet.”

“See, there you go, taking your bad influence award back,” Steve told him, reluctantly letting him go. Tony stuck his tongue out at him before moving into the bathroom.

“Can you pick me out some clothes?” He asked as he started the shower. “I’m too lazy to come back out!” He heard an exaggerated huff and smiled when Steve threw some clothes at him. “You and Peter can even order dinner together, you know what I’ll eat.”

“That’s a very vague statement,” Steve said as he opened a drawer to grab a shirt to wear. “You’ll
eat a lot.”

“But I have my favorites!” Tony’s voice was muffled as he stepped into the shower.

“Greasy food? Over-indulgent sweets?”

“Over the top sweets! I’m either feeling it, or I’m not!”

Jamie babbled, like she was trying to reply to Tony. Steve pulled on a t-shirt and walked over to her, crouching down. She tapped her hands on the edge of the playpen and smiled at him. “Yeah, and by that he means the biggest banana split with way too much whip cream, chocolate, caramel, and strawberry sauce. And way too many cherries that he keeps trying to get Miss Meg to eat.” He reached over and pulled her up, balancing on her on his hip. “I’ve been able to derail that, so far. But, your Daddy likes to do crazy things, and one day I’m going to walk into his workshop, and there’s going to be half a dozen empty cherry jars around.” Jamie pat his arm with one hand, like she was trying to comfort him.

Steve tried to wrangle Jamie into some socks, and when Tony came out she had already pulled one sock off, again. “Are we trying the socks thing again?” Tony asked, a towel wrapped around his neck. “Because I’m not looking forward to having to invest in a company that sells socks for kids.”

“She doesn’t like things on her feet,” Steve groaned, pressing his face into the bed when Jamie threw the sock across the room.

“You can’t see it, I’m pointedly looking at your sockless feet.” Steve turned his head a little to look at Tony. “Lead by example! Oh-” Tony covered his face, but Steve could see he was starting to smile. Steve turned his head the other way and saw that Jamie was on her back, trying to push her diaper off. “Maybe not that example right now.”

“Ah, Jamie!” Steve sat up and took her hands gently. “No, no, baby, we have to keep that on.” She looked at him with big blue eyes. “Nope, that’s the rule, we all have to wear underwear.” Tony coughed into his hand and he looked away. Steve raised an amused eyebrow at him. “Everyone under twenty has to wear underwear, at all times.”

“Better,” Tony said with a smile. “Although, I am wearing underwear now.”
“Oh good, at least you’re setting a good example- Where did your other sock go??” Steve blinked, unsure of how she was able to get the other sock off without him noticing. “This has to be a super power.”

“I’m blaming your DNA. Not even the serum, just, pure Steve Rogers,” Tony told him, walking over to sit down next to Jamie on the bed. He tugged her diaper up, making her wiggle, and she let out a squeak, but smiled. Tony turned to drop on his back, picking up Jamie to set her on his stomach. “Alright, lay down with Daddy. Papa is going to go talk to your brother, and order us some food.”

“I think I’m getting the brush off,” Steve said, leaning down to kiss Tony quickly.

“Was I not straight forward enough?” Tony smirked at him, pushing his shoulder with his foot. “Go, find us later. I promise, we’re not moving far.” Jamie seemed to make herself comfortable on top of Tony as he spoke.

Steve smiled at them and slid off the bed, going out to grab the menu from the bar. It wasn’t long before Peter did indeed seek him out. “Hey, Petey,” Steve called out when he saw him walk into the room. “We’re gonna order some food in to the room, wanna help me pick it out?” Peter nodded and walked over, letting Steve help him up onto one of the tall barstool seats. “Going out to eat is fun, but I think we need a night of just eating in front of the TV.”

“Yeah,” Peter nodded. “We gotta watch the last Star Wars movie tonight,” he reminded him. Steve moved the menu so Peter could look at it, too.

“Did you have fun today?” Steve asked after a few minutes. “Lots of other kids seemed to really like your costume today.”

“Yeah,” Peter grinned. “It was really fun today. Even Jamie looked like she was having fun.”

Steve smiled at him. “Looked like you were having some fun with her, too.” Peter’s cheeks pinked a little. “Well, someone has to show her to proper way to have fun, right? And you’ve already been teaching her so much, no one else better to do it.” He wouldn’t tell Peter than he had overheard what he said about Jamie to Rapunzel.

Peter nodded, then looked down at his hands in his lap and Steve raised an eyebrow. “Uh, Mr Steve? You love my Daddy, right? Don’t plan on moving out or leaving?”
“Not a thought in the world about doing that,” Steve assured him. “Yeah, I love your Daddy very much. Plan on sticking around him, and you, for a long time.” Peter gave him a shy little smile.

“Good. So uh, and Jamie lives with us, and maybe it would be a good idea if I helped her learn names and stuff, too.” Steve could hear the shyness in his voice, could hear that there was something else, so he let Peter talk it out. “Like, we can both say Daddy, and, maybe I can call you something else than Mr Steve. Don’t want her calling you that and everything.” Steve put a hand on Peter’s back, using his fingers to gentle massage the tension from his shoulders. “Can I call you something else, like, like Papa, like Jamie will?”

Steve’s jaw drops a little as he looks at Peter. He honestly hadn’t been expecting that. He wasn’t sure what he was expecting when Tony said that Peter would be looking for him, and he thought that maybe Peter would be asking when he and Tony would be getting married when he started his conversation. Then he was afraid of what turn it might take when he started talking about Jamie, a little anxiety that Peter might get more jealous than he had initially been. It seemed that Steve didn’t have to worry about that at all.

He wasn’t entirely sure, but he was sure that his eyes watered a little, and he pulled Peter into a tight hug. “Yeah, yeah of course you can. I mean,” Steve drew in a deep breath, and knew that he was probably smiling like a crazy person, “I’d really like that Peter.” Peter wrapped his arms around Steve’s neck as he hugged him back. “I’d really like that.” Steve had practically pulled Peter into his lap, and hadn’t realized it until he felt Peter trying to adjust himself without slipping. Steve lifted him easily and sat him down in his lap. “So, I think, together, we should pick out the food for everyone.” Peter smiled up at him and nodded. Steve bit his lip, trying to bring down the smile that was starting to hurt his cheeks, and ruffled Peter’s hair a little.

Steve eyed Tony the next morning, seeing his clothes laid out on the bed again when he got out of the bathroom. Tony was grinning, Peter in front of him rocking back and forth on his feet. “You love us, you can’t deny this,” Tony started and Steve narrowed his eyes a little at him, but Tony only grinned wider.

“There had better air conditioning in this outfit,” Steve grumped out eventually. He heard a squawk of delight and Tony side stepped to show Jamie on the bed. She had on a kind of orange poncho, with fur on its head, and two round ears. “You turned her into an Ewok.”

“Isn’t it adorable??” Tony crowed.
“She likes it!” Peter insisted, grinning like his Dad. Steve knew he was doomed. Again. Jamie was indeed patting the ears on her head, looking delighted about it.

“That’s not even the best part!” Tony grinned, and pulled Steve over to look at the outfits on the bed. “But, you don’t get to see that until we’re all dressed.”

“I think I suddenly understand why you had me watch the Star Wars movies,” Steve told him, looking at the tan outfit on the bed.

“I have a plan for today, Steven,” Tony insisted. He picked up a couple pieces of clothes and handed them to Peter. “You go get dressed, then I’ll pull out the rest.” Peter ran out, eager to get dressed. Tony turned and kissed Steve deep, hand curling around the back of his neck. “He’s even more excited about his outfit after yesterday.”

Steve felt himself grinning stupidly again. “I was afraid that it might have been part of a dream, thanks for reminding me.”

“It was no dream, that was all his idea,” Tony assured him, kissing him again. “The kid really knows how to surprise us, huh?”

“I’ll say,” Steve chuckled. “So, this,” he waved his hand at the two other outfits and the baby Ewok, “you’ve have this planned for a bit?”

“Since I was ‘convinced’ that we should go to Disneyland for my birthday.” Tony picked up a couple of pieces of clothes and handed them to Steve. “I was able to get a look at some of the schedule for certain events, and there’s a reason we haven’t seen any of the Star Wars places yet. Put these on first, and I’ll help with the rest.” Steve raised an eyebrow. “And, they’re made out of a breathable material, with cooling crystals blended in. About the closest I can get to installed AC.”

“You can put that in a costume, but you can’t put that in the Cap suit??” Steve should not have to suffer while on Avengers business if he didn’t have too.

“I’m working on it,” Tony said, punching Steve’s arm. “Go change, whiner. I’ve got the fuzzy creature.”
Steve retreated into the bathroom to change, and as he started to dress he could see it coming together. Tony was having him dress as Luke Skywalker from the beginning of *A New Hope*, just as they had discussed at dinner a few weeks ago. Peter was going to be Obi Wan Kenobi, from a set of movies that Steve hadn’t seen, and if Tony had his way he probably wouldn’t see anytime soon, and if Steve had recognized the blue pants correctly, then Tony was going to be Han Solo.

When he walked out he had managed to change into the pants and shirt, and was slipping the black vest on. He looked at Steve and let out a whistle. “Can we just start going out as Avengers in these outfits?”

“I think I like the protection of my Captain America suit,” Steve told him, but let his eyes linger on the bit of chest that Tony was showing off with the off-white shirt. He could see a bit of the arc reactor as well, but it was a little muffled by the shirt. “But you can wear that around the Tower more often if you want.” Tony raised an eyebrow at him, smirking a bit.

“Get over here, I’ve got the boots for you,” Tony said, tugging on one of Steve’s sleeves. He used Steve’s momentum and pulled him into a kiss, letting out a hum of appreciation. “Jedi’s are good kissers.” Jamie let out a little coo and they both turned to look at her as she tried to pull the Ewok hood down over her face. “No, not allowed!”

Steve laughed and reached over to pull it back off of her face. “Your Daddy is insistent that you not remind him that he’s getting old.” He heard Tony’s mock gasp behind him. “He’s Thirty-Five now!” He stage whispered, and laughed when Tony pushed his back.

“At least I’m not over Ninety!”

Steve turned and put a hand to his chest. “Ouch, right there, hurts right there.” Tony rolled his eyes then held up a pair of boots. “Aww, for me?”

“How did you become leader of the Avengers again?” Tony narrowed his eyes at Steve. “Seriously, how did you manage to hide all of this sass and attitude from Fury?”

“Well, I was on the stage before I was fighting Hydra,” Steve reminded him with a smile.

“Liberal Arts.” Tony threw his arms up, rolling his eyes. Peter save him from more dramatic when he ran back in the room. “Ah! It’s Master Kenobi!”
“I need my robes!” Peter declared.

“And your boots, and belt,” Tony told him, grabbing the accessories. Steve gave Jamie a little tickle as he straightened the hood on her head, then started pulling his boots on as Tony helped Peter. “The belt is the most important part, remember?” Tony reached down and pulled a bag out from under the bed. He motioned for Steve to stand up and stand by Peter as he reached into the bag. “Because, the belt holds all the most important things. My belts,” he motioned to the various belts and holsters still on the bed, “hold my blasters and tools, of course. But, for Jedi’s, the belt is the best place for—”

“Light sabers!” Peter’s eyes widened when he put it together, then saw Tony pull out two light saber hilts. He handed one to Peter, and handed the other to Steve. “It’s the right model!”

Tony looked at Steve, and sniffed, wiping a fake tear form the corner of his eye. “My son is able to distinguish between light sabers. I’m so proud.” Steve was turning his over in his hand, smiling at it, feeling the weight, knowing that Tony had diligently taken the time to craft these. “Okay, now I want you both to point them out, and then press the button there.” Tony took a step away from them and Steve raised an eyebrow.

Peter was the first to activate his, and as the sound effects started, blue light shot out, and Steve’s and Peter’s eyes were widening almost comically. Tony was grinning like a kid at Christmas. Steve pressed his button and he felt the small force of motion as green light shot out of his. As he took a close look though, he saw that the light was held captive in a thin clear cylinder. “Those are custom, and as close to a real light saber as we’re going to get. For now. Until I actually put effort into inventing one,” Tony said watching them. Peter started to gently wave his back and forth in the air, and it even made the sound of a light saber moving, the gentle hum and swish. “They’re not dangerous, but can be used in light saber battles. The fabricated plastic that contains the light it about as durable as my Iron Man suit, and it drops back down like a net when deactivated, and it shot up with a shot of compressed air from inside.”

“This is so Cool!” Peter exclaimed, grinning and moving the light saber around in one hand, then to the next hand, trying his hardest do all the smooth movements they had seen.

“And, we’re going to the Star Wars attractions today, and there’s going to be some demonstrations,” Tony continued, hopping a little on his feet with excitement. Steve smiled at him, because this was the big giant nerd that his boyfriend was, coming out right along with his sons’. “And you two will get to learn some cool light saber tricks, and, well, I don’t wanna ruin all of it, but it’s gonna be awesome.” Peter jumped at Tony and he caught him in his arms, picking him up for the biggest of hugs.

Tony looked at Steve, and wrinkled his nose as he smiled. Steve smiled back then leaned in to kiss him over Peter. “Ewwwww.” Steve laughed when Tony groaned as Peter made a face at them
kissing so close to him.
May 2012 - June 2012

Chapter Notes

I tried to be nice them all this chapter too, but I'm fluffing out man. Need to save for one more big fluff-travaganza. :D

“Pepper Potts.” Tony stared at her as the car left the airstrip. She had taken Jamie from Steve, and Steve had his arm wrapped around Peter as he dozed lightly against his side. They had left the park after one more round of park hopping, and Peter guilting Steve back onto the Tower of Terror. “I know that look. Potts.”

“Your Papa is so considerate,” Pepper said as she cooed at Jamie in her lap, ignoring Tony. “Dressing you in an outfit that I picked out. He’s a good man, yes he is.”

“What did you do Pepper?” Tony kept talking, staring at her.

“I did what you asked, Mr Stark,” she said sweetly. “I had the mansion freshened up, and the refrigerator stocked for a couple of days.”

Tony pointed at her. “You didn’t something else, something that I’m not really going to like, am I?”

“I’m not at will to really care about that, now am I?” She smiled at him. Steve watched the back and forth going on, not really ever being able witness to the infamous Stark and Potts relationship in person. “Not when a lovely video, starting to go viral, of Han Solo and Luke Skywalker having a light saber fight in the middle of Disneyland taking up most of my time.” Steve looked down, biting his lip, while Tony didn’t look the least bit ashamed.

“Neither of the kids were in the video, and I’m sorry, did you see those moves?” Tony leaned back in his seat. “And the fact that Han Solo held his own with just a light saber-“

“You’ve had more experience practicing with one,” Steve pointed out.

“-against a Jedi,” Tony continued. Peter turned, tucking himself a little more against Steve. “Fortunately, and unfortunately, Cap here has the ability to adapt to nearly anything he can use as a weapon.”

“It was fun,” Steve admitted, smiling almost shyly when Pepper rolled her eyes. The eye roll seemed to scream that she was used to dealing with this kind of stuff with Tony, and no, Steven, she did not need someone else to test her job. “Of course, now we have to make another one for Tony, and one for Wade I’m sure, because Peter wants to learn.”

“To become the true Jedi that he can be,” Tony said primly.

Pepper lifted Jamie so that she was standing on her feet on Pepper’s legs. “Listen, if this ever becomes too much, you call Aunt Pepper up, anytime.” Now Tony was rolling his eyes. “Aunt Pepper will help you.”

“Really, Pep?” Tony looked at her and she smiled, bring Jamie back down, holding onto her. “Like she won’t become a big ‘ole nerd like the rest of us.”
“That’s what I’m afraid of,” she sighed out. “I had my hopes for Captain Rogers—”

“Captain?” Steve questioned.

“-but it is clear that he was corrupted early on. I can only assume by all the time he spent with Peter.”

“Mary reads Lord of the Rings to Peter at night,” Tony told her.

“Mary is a respectable woman,” Pepper argued.

“Actually, Bucky was the one to introduce me to the wonder of sci-fi,” Steve spoke up, and Tony grinned at Pepper. “The little stories written in the magazines, we’d pool our money together once a month to pick one up. They were swell,” he said with a smile, then winced a little when Tony’s head whipped back around to look at him. “It slipped—"

“He said ‘swell’ unironically, Pep,” Tony gushed. “Next he’s gonna be calling me his best fella.”

“You two were made for each other,” Pepper said, shaking her head. “This is why I stay in California, so all I have to worry about is the company. I’m putting all of the PR team on you- no, I’m hiring a new team, just for you two.”

“That hurts, right here,” Tony looked at her, tapping his arc reactor. “Oh look, home sweet home.”

Tony reached forward to poke Peter’s shoulder as Steve turned his head to look out the window. His eyes widened a little when saw the gate opening, and the beginning of the mansion showing up down the drive. “Hey kiddo,” Tony said as Peter lifted his head. "Looky loo.”

“Is that a helipad?” Steve asked as the car drove smoothly up. “This place is huge.”

“Cool,” Peter said with a tired smile. “I missed this place a little bit.”

“Yeah, I kinda did, too,” Tony agreed with a nod. “Papa,” Tony ignored the look that Pepper gave him, “has never seen this place, so we have to show him all the cool stuff.”

“There’s an outside pool, and an inside pool,” Peter said to Steve as the older man stared out the window. “And Daddy has a path that goes right down to the water, to a secret beach.” Peter was looking over Steve’s shoulder as they came up to the front, the large statue sitting in the round-a-bout.

“There’s a lot of glass,” Steve commented, arm around Peter until they stopped, to keep him from falling.

“Daddy says he has to keep this place hidden, or else everyone will be able to look inside.”

“It’s technically smart glass,” Tony mumbled under his breath, opening the door to get out, then reaching in to take Jamie from Pepper, then offering a hand to help her out as well. “It can black out, and no one will be able to see inside.” Peter clambered out next, then Steve pulled himself out, still looking up to take it all in. “I think it’s technically bigger than the Manor back in New York.”

“This place is huge,” Steve said as he followed them into the mansion. “And you’ve lived here the longest?”

Tony nodded. “Pretty much since MIT. Had this place built after I took over SI. Didn’t really have a desire to stay out on the East Coast any longer.” Steve kissed his cheek, walking into the middle of the living room, then slowly turning around to take in everything he could see.
“Good evening, Sir, Captain Rogers, Young Master Peter, Young Lady Jamie, and Miss Potts,” Jarvis said in the house, and Tony smiled. “It is a pleasure to welcome you back, for however short your visit may be.”

“It’s good to be back, J,” Tony said, then slid down on the couch, slouching down to let Jamie lean against his stomach. “Hey, Petey, why don’t you show Papa the bedrooms and bathrooms right away?”

“Okay,” he smiled and took Steve’s hand, dragging him off towards the stairs.

Pepper waited until they were out of eyesight, then look over at Tony with a raised eyebrow. “Is there something I should know?”

“I’m sure there are a number of things you should know,” Tony quipped, closing his eyes, hand resting on Jamie’s stomach as she tried to pull her shoes off. “Quit that, trouble-maker.”

“You didn’t secretly get married while in Disneyland, did you?” Pepper asked, leaning forward.

Tony snorted and shook his head. “Two reason why that didn’t happen. That would have been a bigger story than me playing with a light saber. And, I’m getting used to this whole commitment thing as is, like, just being someone’s boyfriend, and raising kids at the same time. That’s huge, so, marriage feels like a whole ‘nother big step that doesn’t fall in step with Tony Stark. Not yet, anyway.” Tony opened his eyes when something hit his nose, and he saw Jamie smiling, holding onto one of her shoes. “You are a foot ninja! She’s obsessed with feet,” he added looking over at Pepper. “She’s going to be walking any day now, I swear, just because she’ll want to know everything her feet can do.”

Tony glanced back over to see Pepper still watching him. “Going on this vacation, just with Steve and the kids, it was, huge. For me at least, and I was more than a bit apprehensive about it. Sometimes I think that we’re moving things too fast. It’s been less than a year, and now we’re living on the same floor, and we’re parents together, which we kind of didn’t have a say in, but we said we love each other, and I’m freaking out a little. I’m always freaking out, but, I feel good with him. Everything’s weird because it’s not just me trying to do things alone, anymore. And he’s real good with the kids, both of them, a real natural, so that’s always a plus.”

“Peter doesn’t seem so hostile towards Jamie anymore,” Pepper barreled on, knowing this was how you got Tony Stark to speak. “And I know I didn’t miss it, but you’re saying Papa to Peter.”

“Oh, yes, well,” Tony nodded a little. “Peter asked if he could call Steve Papa, like Jamie is going to grow up doing. It was all very sweet, and Steve cried a little.” Pepper raised an amused eyebrow at him, smile quirking at her lips. “Okay, fine, I cried a little, too, but only because he was. It was all Peter’s idea, really. And Steve swears that he heard Peter agreeing that Jamie is his sister.” Pepper’s brows went up. “I know! I don’t know what happened, but I’m not about to argue with it, for once.”

“It’s been a while since I’ve seen such an easy smile on your face,” Pepper said warmly. “It looks good on you.”

“Speaking of things that look good on me,” Tony said, sitting up a little. “What do you think about glasses? Not sunglasses, but actual prescription glasses?”

“You’re tact at changing a conversation when you get uncomfortable never ceases to amuse me.” Pepper shook her head a little. “Why are you asking about glasses?”

“Welp,” Tony popped the last letter of the word, drawing Jamie’s attention briefly. “My contacts are
no longer good, as in, I need a different script. Somehow, Steve has never seen me actually putting in my contacts—"

“Probably because you rarely take them out.”

“-and Mary said that at Peter’s last eye appointment, the Doc said that he might need glasses in another year or so.” Pepper’s mouth made a little ‘o’ shape and she nodded.

“So, you’re getting ahead of the pre-glasses freak out, if it happens?”

“If it happens,” Tony said with a nod. “I never liked glasses, and I’ll still have contacts for public events, and going out as Iron Man if I can help it, but if it’ll help stop drama, then I’m all for it.”

“This Tony Stark,” Pepper started, motioning to him as he tried to take Jamie’s shoes before she threw them. “This Tony is different than any other Tony I’ve known before. I like this Tony Stark the best.”

Tony bit his bottom lip for a second, and looked at Jamie as he fingers curled over a couple of his. “You know what,… I kind of do too.”

There was a gasp and Tony was sitting up just before Peter’s voice shouted through the house. “There’s cake!!”

Pepper grinned and Tony groaned a little. “Pepper Potts!”

“Yes, I brought you cake for your birthday, even though I know you don’t like that.” She got up and motioned for him to get up, too. “Come, before Peter just shoves his whole face into it.”

“That happens twice, and suddenly you think we gotta watch the kid—”

“Peter, let me get some plates and forks!” Steve cried out in the kitchen and Pepper shot a look at Tony, who was trying not to giggle.

Wade tried to pull his head back, but Meg held onto his chin and put the frozen bag of peas on his cheek. He grinned at her as she clicked her tongue. “Your Mom is going to kill us,” she muttered, putting Wade’s hand up to hold the bag.

“It was awesome,” he said, kicking his feet on the barstool he sat on. Bucky was shaking his head, arms folded over his chest.

“It wasn’t awesome,” Bucky said with a slight frown. “You aren’t supposed to get hurt while doing this.”

“I don’t think you can blame the lessons on this one,” Meg said, leaning back against the counter. “He jumped over the couch, rolled across the floor—"

“-missed the coffee table!” Wade proclaimed happily. “I rolled under it!”

“And promptly slammed your face into the lamp,” Bucky finished for them.

“That’s called being adventurous, and clumsy.” She patted Bucky’s shoulder, then turned to head back to another room. “I’ll have the first aid kit ready for the next tragedy,” she called out. Bucky looked back at Wade as she disappeared.
“You do this often, don’t you?” Bucky asked the ten-year-old. “You seem like the type who likes to throw himself into stupid situations.”

“You never know, if you don’t do,” Wade said with a smile. “I know what parkour is, and I think it’s awesome. Peter and I wanna start doing it.”

Bucky closed his eyes, rubbing his face with his good hand, and groaned softly. “And there’s nothing that’s gonna stop you is there?” Wade shook his head no, grinning. “In the interest of not having Stevie go berserk every time you two end up in the hospital, which would be often, I’m going to take it upon myself to teach you how not to die.”

Wade started to giggle, which actually sounded a little bit like a cackle, and Bucky frowned. “You just played me, didn’t you?”

“You can hear me sneaking up on you from like, two miles away, but you can’t tell that I had you eating from the palm of my hand?” Wade gave him a dumbfounded look.

Bucky stared Wade down for a few moments. “Meg! I changed my mind, I’m taking my chances with the public! I’m leaving! Hydra gave me less headaches than I get here!” There was a faint snort from the other room.

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Tony walked through the living room, then stopped to look out at the water. It was calmer than he’d ever seen it, the sliver of moonlight reflecting off the surface, giving it a dark blue color. He leaned his arm against the glass, then leaned his forehead on his arm. It had been a few years since he’d been back at the Malibu mansion, but it was exactly as he had left it when they moved to New York.

Steve had been a little awed by the size of the mansion, and all the rooms that it had. But, he also thought that each floor in the Tower was too big for just him, and when Tony had shown him the blueprints for the Penthouse remodel, he thought they would have too much room. Steve didn’t stop him, just smiled and shook his head, understanding that that was how Tony grew up, and it was how he was used to living. Plus, Steve was really looking forward to the Art room.

Tony closed his eyes and took a breath, then looked back out over the water. The sound of glass cracking drew his attention to the side suddenly, and he frowned. By the time he spotted the lines rapidly growing across the windows of his living room he was already falling through, the crash of breaking glass reaching his ears too late. He gasped, then tried to take a breath before he slammed into the water below.

His eyes widened and lifted his arms before trying to swim back up to the surface. Just because he didn’t swim anymore, didn’t mean he didn’t know how too. Tony felt more in control then the last time he found himself in water, and he frowned. By the time he spotted the lines rapidly growing across the windows of his living room he was already falling through, the crash of breaking glass reaching his ears too late. He gasped, then tried to take a breath before he slammed into the water below.

Except, he didn’t recognize any of the constellations. He turned his head and realized that the stars were all around him, not just above him. Tony twisted his body in a circle, but it didn’t feel the same as if he were in the water. No, he was back in space. His feet touched ground and he suddenly fell to his knees from the surprise of something solid beneath him.
“Peter!” Tony leaned up, looking around.

“Steve?” He spoke to himself, pushing himself to his feet. It was cold, the ground was rocky and uneven.

“Jamie! No!” The shouting sounded far away, but the desperation was clear.

“No,” Tony forced his feet to move until he was eventually running in the direction he thought he heard Steve yelling from. Not the kids, he had to get to the kids. Tony tripped on the uneven ground, tucking himself up so he could roll, and was trying to push himself up again. Until a large hand was grasping his upper arm, pulling him up to his feet. “Ste-“ Tony turned, the other man’s name on his lips, but he froze when he saw who the hand belonged too.

The Other started to lean in towards Tony, but he was already shoving, pulling himself away from the six-fingered hand that had grabbed him. Tony moved backwards, as quickly as he could, rolling again and getting her feet, pushing himself off as he stumbled a couple of times. He wasn’t going to be caught here again, Steve, Peter, and Jamie were out there, he had heard the shouting. And he sure as hell couldn’t let anything else get to them.

“Steve!” Tony shouted as he ran. He could hear the cold, dark, laugh in his ears. He was suddenly jerked off of his feet, the hand reaching around in front of him to grip one side of his face, pulling him back against a chest.

“You will be His catalyst.”

“No!” Tony shot up in the bed, trying to suck in a breath. The air was too hot, the room too warm. He felt wet, and his chest hurt. His hand shot up to check for the arc reactor, to make sure it was still there. A hand was trying to take one of his and he shouted, pushing himself back, and then he was falling, landing heavily on the floor. Tony brought up his arms to cover his chest.

“Tony.” A familiar voice sounded nearby. “Tony, it’s nearly three in the morning, it’s June first, and you’re in Malibu, you’re in your mansion by the water. We just got back from Disneyland, Jamie is sleeping next door with Jarvis monitoring her, and Peter is just across the hall. They’re both safe and asleep.”

Tony slowly looked up and he watched as Steve very slowly, can carefully, slid off of the bed, onto the floor next to him. The bed. He was back in the bedroom. “Tony, you had a nightmare,” Steve kept speaking to him, his tone soft and soothing, calm and quiet. “I don’t like the way you’re breathing, can I take your hand? I want to put it on my chest, so you can try and match your breathing to mine.” That was his Steve, trying to help him, no one else trying to be him. He managed to give one nod and a larger hand, (but familiar), took his and gently placed it on Steve’s chest. After a few seconds, Tony tilted forward and put his forehead on Steve’s chest as well. Steve sussed softly in his ear, other hand rubbing his back in circles. “You’re okay, I’ve got you.”

After a while, Steve pulled Tony closer, his fingers running through Tony’s hair. “How do you do it?” Tony asked in a whisper. Steve hummed back in question. “How do you not go crazy with how everything has changed? I mean, I can barely sleep now and I was born in this modern time.” He was easing back into a normal breathing rhythm, and now his thoughts were bouncing around, to distract him from his nightmare.

“I guess lots of practice?” Steve answered after a little thought. “There was always something to worry about when I was younger. Mainly being sick, but then we had to worry about rent and food, specially after Da died.” Tony smirked a little at the soft Irish lilt, something he must have picked up from his mom. “Worrying about the next job, and being able to do it with that month’s disease. Then
there was a war, and I was in it, and that brings a whole new set of troubles.” He shrugged softly and Tony could feel it as he started to relax against him. “And you know I didn’t handle things all that well after waking up. Saw a therapist for a while, still have him on retainer actually.” Tony tilted his head a little.

“I didn’t know that,” he admitted.

“Well, not something I exactly advertise, but I do. Sometimes a quick phone call helps.” Steve leaned his cheek on top of Tony’s head. “Not saying that it’s easy, not at all. I guess,” Steve paused for a moment, trying to gather the words. “I’m getting better at hiding it, when things get too much, especially around those that don’t know, or the kids particularly. Then I go punch something.” Tony’s body jerked slightly with a snort and Steve pressed a kiss into his hair.

Tony turned the hand that had been on Steve’s chest, and laced his fingers with the hand that had still be resting there. “I hope you know that you can talk to me, too,” Tony told him. “Like what you said to me, we have to talk to each other, to keep this thing working. Not fair for me to put all my shit on you, and you not be able to return the favor.” He swallowed and pressed his head a bit harder against Steve. “And, I may seem a bit crap at all this, for a bit, and maybe a bit longer than that, but I’m trying, or I’ll really try, harder, more.” Steve squeezed Tony’s hand to make him take a breath.

“Right, but I’m serious. This is me, getting used to the fact that it’s not just me, and it’s us, and I want it to be us for a while, cause I like this. This, being happy thing, and not being alone.”

“Feels pretty good, doesn’t it?” Steve asked softly with a smile. “The not being alone part.”

“They ‘us’ part is pretty fabulous, too.” Steve’s body shook with a barely contained laughter. “Don’t know what I’d do if I didn’t have this right now, honestly. I mean, of course I can think of a few things, and they’re all generally bad things, but that’s you know, not happening, so best not to think about it.”

“This,” Steve said, the smile still in his voice, “is how I know that this is a really good thing that we have. Because a moment like this, I know that this is the real Tony, the one that I’ve heard about from Mary and Peter before I knew that he was Tony Stark or Iron Man. That this person isn’t what the press and general public make him out to be.”

“They’re not completely wrong though,” Tony murmured. “I’m can be an asshole, and brash. I have a certain expectation of people, and experiences, expect a certain level of treatment. I’m selfish, and uncaring, looking out for me and my company.”

“Yeah, you can be an asshole, but so can I.” Steve said, cutting him off. “We’re both stubborn, and I’m sure that we haven’t even encountered the worst of it from each other. You can be blunt, because you’re done with bullshit- I know, language,- and you loathe manipulative games because that’s what you’ve had to grow up with, to live with, but you also know that that’s how the world of business that you live in has to be played. Doesn’t mean you like it.” Tony lifted his head a little to raise an eyebrow at him. “Everyone is selfish in their own way, but as a whole you’re generally a selfless person. You’ve just become so good at hiding all of that, of playing the role that everyone sees, that you don’t want to pull attention to the big things that you do.”

“You seem very informed,” Tony commented to him. “Like, someone gave you a briefing packet, but I know that a lot of that wasn’t written in Natasha’s assessment of me last year.”

“Nope,” Steve said with a shake of his head. “I learned a lot of it from Mary, honestly, but I’ve also seen it firsthand. I think we both can safely say that I wouldn’t be with someone if they just wanted a status boost, or just to have some arm candy. The fact that were able to keep this hidden, for the most part, for this long is quite impressive. You were always looking out for me as I continued adjusting to
a new century, and you’re trying to keep Peter, and Jamie, away from the public eye, because you want to keep things as normal as possible for them. As normal as can be considering that they have an eccentric billionaire for a Dad.”

Tony just listened to Steve’s voice rumble through his chest, listened to his heart beat, just for a few moments. “I don’t have too,” Tony said then, causing Steve to look down at him. “To keep dealing with all the bullshit. I could step away completely from Stark Industries, without having to sell it, and do nothing for the rest of my days. I could focus completely on Peter, Jamie, and you, and not have to give up anything of my lifestyle. I could ‘downgrade’, and still be happy.”

“Yeah, but you don’t want too,” Steve said to him. “You don’t want to stop being Iron Man yet, either.”

“Skirting dangerously close to arrogance, Cap.”

“But it’s true,” Steve said confidently. “You like the challenge, because you’re always thinking, always creating, always needing that bit to challenge you. Welcoming it because it keeps things, mmm, interesting, I suppose.”

“You don’t so the same, Mr Jumps-Out-Of-Planes-Without-Parachutes?” Tony countered with a raised eyebrow. Steve chuckled and nodded a little.

“Never said that I disagreed with any of this, or found fault with it.” Steve placed a soft kiss on the bridge of Tony’s nose. “Just listening off the things I know about you, and reason why I do love you.” Tony wiggled his nose a little, and lay his head back down, against Steve’s shoulder this time.

“Thanks for putting up with all my nightmares,” Tony said softly.

“No thanks necessary,” Steve told him seriously. “I should be thanking you, actually. Yours woke me up before mine could really get started.” Tony pulled back a little to look at him. “Don’t know what it would have been this time, but when I woke up I had a familiar heavy feeling in my chest.” He ran his hand through Tony’s hair. “Helping each other, part of this whole, being together thing.”

Tony reached up, gently tugging on Steve’s lower lip, pulling him down far enough to replace his fingers with his own lips. “I like the being together thing.”

Tony was looking at his tablet as they rode back to the Tower from the airport. Pepper had given him strict instructions that he needed to get back to his actual job with SI now that vacation was over. So he picked the first thing that looked like it wouldn’t give him a headache. Peter was eagerly looking out the window, watching as they got closer, and Jamie was content in her car seat, still feeling sleepy from the afternoon flight. Tony nudged Steve’s arms and leaned over to show him the tablet.

“Look at those,” he motioned to the pictures he had pulled up. He let Steve take the tablet to look at them a little closer.

“These are the sketches for the sculptures?” Tony hummed and nodded, watching Steve’s face. He liked being able to pick out the differences between Steve’s ‘artist’ persona, and his everyday at home one, and of course the Soldier, Captain America, one. Right now Steve was looking at sketches that Meg had sent over for the commissions that they had talked about several months ago. Tony had nearly forgotten about them to be honest. “These are good. I wonder if she’s made a mock up yet.”
The car pulled into the garage, and Peter was bolting out the door almost before the engine was shut off. “Peter!” The younger boy nearly slammed into Wade and the two were instantly talking and hugging.

“I think they missed each other,” Tony said as he glanced out the still open door. Steve snorted and handed the tablet back to Tony as he unhooked Jamie from her seat.

“Whatever gave you that idea?” He slid out, Tony right behind him with the diaper bag, and his own work bag. “This is how it’s going to be for years to come, Tony. I would just get used to it now.”

“Bite your tongue!”

“You’re the only one not accepting the inevitable,” Steve said with a smirk. “Hey, Mary.”

“Are we talking about Peter and Wade’s inevitable future together?” She asked as she walked over to them, the boys behind her still talking, sharing everything they both did while apart.

“I’m afraid that he’s in some sort of denial,” Steve said gravely. “There’s nothing more I can do. But, I still accept him as he is.”

Mary nodded solemnly, patting Steve’s shoulder. “You’re a good man to take this on, Steve. I don’t think anyone else would be brace enough.”

“Aren’t you two just so funny,” Tony deadpanned as he opened the trunk. He whistled and looked over at the boys. “Peter, Wade, march on over here. You can show off all the cool stuff to Wade and the both of you take this stuff to your bedroom, and put it away where it belongs.”

“Awesome!” Wade exclaimed as he and Peter ran over, taking the bags that Tony was handing to him.

Tony raised an eyebrow when he looked at Wade’s face. “Is that a bruise on your cheek, Wade?” He missed Mary shaking her head at him as Steve turned around to walk closer.

“Yeah! Aw man, it was so cool!” Wade said with a grin. “I was jumping over the couch, and rolling across the floor, and right under a coffee table! It was awesome! Although, Bucky wasn’t too happy about it, so he’s teaching me how not to do that anymore, and he’s gonna teach me and Pete to do it right!”

“Seriously??” Peter jumped in excitement. “He said yes??” Wade grinned and Peter spun a little.

“Wait, what?” Steve said with a frown, but Wade and Peter were already off to the elevator, Jarvis helping in their speedy escape. Mary just sighed, dropping her face into her hand.

“Oh, this is going to be fun,” Tony said quietly with a little smirk. “You know, I think the staff can get the rest of this, just drop it off in the Penthouse. I have to see Meg about a business contract, and oh, hey, Steve, why don’t you come with me?”

“Why do you do this?” Mary looked at Tony as Steve was walking over to the elevator. Jamie was starting to wake up when she felt her Papa’s deliberate steps. “You’re antagonizing.”

“I miss playing with the grown-ups,” Tony said, walking over to Steve, Mary next to him. “Well, grown-ups that aren’t in costume.”

“Says the man who announced to the world that he was no longer single, by being in costume,” Mary informed him. “I think your reasons hold no water.”
“I don’t care that I’ve been outed as no longer single,” Tony told her, the three of them, plus Jamie, stepping into the elevator that had come back down. “What matters is that Steve’s beard of wonders has saved his identity in all those social media pictures. No one was able to get close enough to start matching features with Captain America. Not that there’s much to match with the cowl on.”

“I will be shaving soon, by the way,” Steve told him, watching the numbers on the elevator. Tony gave him a pout. “It’ll be harder to maintain now that we’re back on active Avengers duty, and I don’t want it to start turning into a hobo beard, and also, with the beard it’ll be a dead giveaway the next time someone gets a picture of Captain America.”

“I guess,” Tony grumped out. “I do enjoy baby faced Steve, so that’s okay.” He smiled, leaning in to kiss Steve softly. “Plus, your beard won’t scratch the skin around my immaculate goatee.”

“If you hadn’t of turned that last one into something about yourself, I would have been worried,” Mary said. “Would have thought that you hit your head or something in Disneyland.”

“No, that was just me with the light saber,” Steve filled in, and Tony shot a little glare his way.

“Oh yeah, ‘Tony Stark fights Boyfriend’ is all over the place. Congratulations, nerds.” Both men smiled at her.

“Don’t I get points for handling this with grace?” Steve asked. “I mean, I’m the one that has to deal with the paparazzi trying to hound me and figure out who I am, and probably trying to get pictures of Jamie.”

“No, you get no points, because you knew who Tony was when you started dating him.” Steve pouted a little and Mary shook her head. “Nope, nothing.” The elevators opened and Tony was the first to step out with Steve behind him. “I suppose I’ll just make sure that Peter and Wade are actually putting that stuff away?”

“If you could that would be wonderful,” Tony said, turning around to smile at her. “They might actually be up in the Penthouse, and there’s a reason for that. Also, Steve is no longer Mr Steve, he’s Papa.” Mary’s mouth dropped and her eyes widened a little but the elevator doors were already closing. “I’ll explain later!”

“You wanted the dramatic exit,” Steve murmured to him and Tony smiled.

“Who, me? Dramatic?” Steve rolled his eyes a little. “Says the man going to see his best friend, and try not to lecture him about teaching the boys to apparently do acrobatics.”

“I am not, and it could be dangerous,” Steve tried to argue. “They’re still young, and Peter’s small-“

“And I’m going to leave this rest of this argument up to Bucky,” Tony cut him off. “I have an idea of what he’d say, supposing he remembers enough, and I want to be there to hear it.” He knocked on the apartment door before opening it and the two walking in. Jamie pat Steve’s chest a couple of times as they went into the living room, like she knew what was going to happen.

“Ah, the happy family returns,” Meg called out as they walked in. “Except you’re missing one.”

“He doesn’t need to be carried,” Tony pointed out. “Also, Wade found him, and now they’re an inseparable force again. We’re all doomed as their force combine.” Tony dropped into an arm chair, then reached out towards Steve, stealing Jamie away from him. She put her head down on his shoulder, yawning lightly. “Speaking of being doomed, where is the Buckster?”

“Don’t call me that.” Tony sucked in a breath and jumped at the voice right behind him. Jamie
looked up, letting out a happy burble towards Bucky. The man just raised an eyebrow at her and poked her hand with one finger when she held it up towards him.

“Heart condition, seriously people!” Tony put a hand on his chest. “I’m going to put a proximity bell on you.”

“Good luck,” Bucky huffed. Steve was looking at him with one eyebrow up. “The kid ratted, didn’t he?”

“Did you really think that Wade would be able to keep his mouth shut about anything?” Tony questioned. “Not when he’s excited about something at least. And apparently trying to get Peter in on it, too.”

“Oh, I’m so glad I’m here for this,” Meg said quietly from the couch, and Tony couldn’t help but smile in agreement.

“From what he told me, it was both their ideas, so I don’t think there was much ‘roping in’ involved,” Bucky defended, himself mostly.

“What exactly are they doing?” Steve spoke for the first time. “Or rather what are they trying to get you to teach them?”

“They want some self-defense lessons,” Bucky said plainly, crossing his arms over his chest, still standing behind Tony’s seat. He wasn’t sure how he felt about being used as a buffer between him and his boyfriend. “Said they were going to start learning parkour as well.” Steve made a little strangled noise in his throat. “They’re gonna do it either way, and you know it.”

“Then we should make it clear that it’s dangerous, and lots of people get hurt trying to do something crazy,” Steve argued back. “Wade just turned ten and Peter is barely eight yet. They’re young, and small-“

“Oh, I know you are not about to use the small argument with me,” Bucky said, the Brooklyn boy showing just as Tony predicted he would. Bucky apparently remembered enough about Steve. “How old were you before you were begging for lessons at the boxing gym?”

“That’s diff-“

“And how many times were you kicked out for sneaking in at night to try and teach yourself?” He continued. “Until finally, Mr Streeter let you come in twice a week, only cause he didn’t wanna haf ‘ta call the cops on you. Also, cause those first several black eyes weren’t doin’ ya no favors with your Ma, or the ladies.”

Tony and Meg were watching with rapt attention. “It wasn’t like I wasn’t getting bullied-“

“You were picking half those fights yourself,” Bucky pointed at him, daring him to refute the statement. “I ain’t saying they weren’t for the right reasons, but I ended up fighting next to you more times than shoulda been happenin’. ” He huffed a little and dropped his arms. “Don’t hurt the boys to know a little bit of the right way to do things, specially not with who they live with, and who their parents are.”

“It’s not like we leave them unprotected,” Steve said to him. “We’ve always got an eye on them in some way. I’m not saying that it’s a bad idea, but-“

“Stevie, I know you see both of them as yours,” Bucky started with a little bit of softness in his voice, “but you’re not gonna be able to there all the time to protect them. Not unless you start
following them every time they leave the damn house, and don’t even think that that’s an option.”
Tony let out a puff of breath through his nose. “We all know that they’re gonna do this on their own,
since instead of showing up at the hospital every time one of them tries to jump from a roof, how
about we get them some decent training and show them the right way of doing things?”

Steve stared back at Bucky, not moving, expressions not changing. Bucky stared back in the exact
same position. These two were the Steve and Bucky from before the war, stubborn boys from
Brooklyn who both thought they were right and didn’t want to back down. Tony was sure that they
would stand there for hours if given the chance. Jamie apparently didn’t want to give them that
chance.

Little arms reached up for Bucky, pulling both men’s attention down to her. Her bright blue eyes
were staring straight at the assassin, letting her intentions be clear that she wanted him to pick her up.
Tony glanced over at Steve, watching Jamie carefully, but it didn’t look like he would move to stop
the interaction if it happened.

Bucky stared back at the little girl, then slowly reached out, hands carefully curling around her body
under her arms and he lifted her up. She pat his real arm, gripping his sleeve, wanting to be pulled in
and held properly. Meg was making no move to tell him what to do or correct him, so Tony took his
cues from her and let it happen. He was close enough if something happened, but he was sure it
wouldn’t.

Jamie made a noise of contentment when Bucky brought her in close enough for her to rest against
his chest, head on his arm. Steve let out a soft breath when he saw that, and Tony knew what he was
going to say. “Fine,” he breathed out, rolling his eyes at himself. “But that doesn’t mean that I won’t
be talking to them about this,” he followed up, and Bucky let out a snort, but never took his eyes off
of Jamie. His face said that he was afraid he might drop her, but his arms were secure.

“By all means, I ain’t gonna stop you. Wade is a wild one.”

“He’s usually so well behaved for me,” Meg commented softly from the couch.

“That’s because you bribe him,” Tony fired back at her, getting a grin in return.

“No, that’s called conditioning.” She picked up her tablet from the coffee table. “Training even, like
you do with a new pet.”

“Bribing.” Bucky muttered under his breath. The front door opened with a bang, a quiet curse, and
was shut and what sounded like a herd of elephants was running into the living room, Peter and
Wade stopping with wide eyes and looking between Bucky and Steve.

“Please don’t tell him to stop!” They both blurted at the same time. “This is something that we really
wanna do!” Wade continued, big eyes turned to look at Steve. “And I tricked him into it! See, I need
to be taught, and I want him to do it. I shouldn’t be able to trick him like that, I’m only ten! I need a
mentor!”

“We gotta learn how to protect our family!” Peter barreled on next. “If we start when we’re young
then we’ll only get better! And we’ll know how to use it all for good! How am I going to help take
care of Jamie if running and hiding doesn’t work?” Wade glanced at Peter, then leaned in to whisper
in his ear. Steve strained to listen, but frowned a little when it wasn’t a language he recognized. Peter
shook his head a little and looked back at Wade. He murmured something else quietly, then Wade let
out a little huff, then shrugged and nodded.

“What just happened?” Tony blinked. “Something important happened, and I just missed it.”
“They have a secret language,” Bucky filled in. Tony gaped at the two boys a little.

“A secret language?? And I didn’t know about it??”

“That would be the point of secret, Stark.”

Steve leaned down on one knee and motioned the two boys over to him. They shuffled over, trying their hardest to look to look innocent. “We’re not telling Bucky to stop.” They boys let out a sigh of relief. “But, no more fly by night training. If you’re going to do this, we’re going to do it properly. I’m also going to talk to your mom, Wade, because it’ll make me feel better to have permission in person.”

“We?” Wade asked tentatively.

“I can’t expect Buck to be able to handle both of you at the same time,” Steve said, trying to hold back his smile. He shared a look with Peter. “What’s one more lesson, hmm? Plus, it’ll be good for demonstrative purposes.”

“Don’t worry Stark, I’ll try not to hurt your boy,” Bucky said with a shit-eating grin. Tony let out a bark of laughter, startling Jamie a little, but her attention was drawn back to Peter and Wade.

“You hurt me?” Steve stood up to look at Bucky. “Last I remember I had the upper hand when we fought.” Bucky scoffed. “Oh?”

“Like you had the upper hand in that duel with Stark?” Bucky was smirking at Steve, an open challenge.

“Déjà vu,” Tony mumbled with his smirk. “Stevie! Tell him to put on the suit!” He almost giggled at the glare Steve sent him.

“Alright, we can settle this easily in the gym,” Steve said, his attention now back on Bucky.

“Yay, entertainment,” Meg smiled, clapping her hands.
Chapter Notes

I think some of you were onto me,..... so much happiness..... can't last. Not when an evil author has a plot to progress!
Also, this takes place roughly two weeks after last chapter.
I've posted relevant pictures for visuals on my Pinterest board. :)
As usual, I own not a lot, blah blah, Marvel, Disney, fair food, yuuuumm

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony rubbed the spot of his nose between his eyes, pushing his new glasses up out of the way, and groaned a little. He was rapidly remembering why he preferred contacts to glasses, even if he had only been wearing them for less than a day. Or perhaps it was because he had been staring for too long at holographic screens and tablets. He was going to blame the glasses.

The day after getting back from a surprisingly enjoyable vacation, he and Bruce had jumped into the test results of Jamie’s aging, and the Serum that Tony had made during his stay with Hydra. They needed to create the item that would ‘activate’ the serum, if only so they could understand if they could make something to counter the effects of the serum. Tony wasn’t convinced that there would be anything, else Bruce would have found it to try and reverse the effects of his own Gamma accident, but Bruce was convinced that any research was good research, and Tony never disagreed with that. It would also help put Tony’s mind at ease if they had something that might stop something from happen if Steve or Jamie ever came into contact with the second-rate serum.

When he wasn’t in the lab with Bruce, Tony was going through Howard’s journal, and reading that was enough to give him a migraine. As he read through everything he had Jarvis scant he pages, comparing them to other journals and notes that Tony’d always had access too. Howard had been a very active supporter of Hydra, that much was becoming obvious. It was made clear that his mom, Maria, had no idea of her husband’s loyalties, thinking that he was firmly on the side of good, working with SHIELD and his Aunt Peggy. When Tony was a teenager, getting ready to go to MIT, she had started to become a bit suspicious of Howard’s activities.

“Sir, Captain Rogers is on his way down, with Young Lady Jamie.” Jarvis’ voice brought his out of his thoughts and he grunted a little in the affirmative. Tony leaned back, stretching his arms, and listened to the carious joints cracking as he did so. He was pretty sure that he had missed breakfast and lunch, and it was probably getting close to dinner.

He turned around, slipping out of the chair when he heard the workshop doors opening and he smiled. Steve had trimmed his beard a bit closer to his face, not nearly as full as a couple weeks ago on their vacation, but it wasn’t completely gone either. Steve was holding onto it as long as he could. He had Jamie balanced on his hip with one arm, and a tray with food balanced in his other hand. Jarvis had swung the door open for them.

“Hey!” Tony greeted with a smile, making Jamie clap happily, babbling softly. “How are my two favorite blondes?”
“You’re wearing glasses,” Steve observed as he set the tray down on a clear (enough) table. Tony leaned in for a quick kiss, then planted a kiss on Jamie’s nose. “When did you get glasses?”

“They came in this morning,” Tony told him, attempting to take Jamie from him. Steve moved to the side a little and motioned down to the plate that had a several sandwiches on it, and a couple of containers with some side dishes. “Sadly, my poor excuse of a non-activated serum does not give me perfect vision.” Steve tilted his head a little, slowly eyeing him. Tony raised an eyebrow. “I was never a huge fan of frames, and it was easier to just wear contacts for all the SI public events. It was never a good look when glasses got covered in dust and dirt after a weapons display.” He grabbed half of a sandwich and flopped down onto the couch, pushing his glasses up on the top of his head. “I’ve been wearing contacts for almost two decades.”

“You look good in them, really good.” Tony smirked at Steve’s admission as he sat down next to him. “Unfairly good.” Tony snorted softly. “I never knew that you had prescriptions, but why make the change now?”

“Peter might need glasses in a year or so,” he told him, finishing the food then leaning over and stealing Jamie from him, successfully this time. He set her down in his lap, holding onto her hands. “I know that kids can get weird about needing glasses, so I’m trying to head off the possibility of a big negative reaction.”

Steve leaned over to kiss his cheek, smiling, grabbing some food for himself this time. “That might some of the most planning you’ve put into action, so far.”

“Ouch,” Tony feigned a wince, putting a hand over his chest. “Right there, Steven, right there.” Steve hummed a little with a smirk. “You had better like the glasses, because do you know how long I spent picking these out?” Steve silently stared at him, silently chewing his food. “Okay, too long, specially for just a pair of black plastic frames, but-“

“You only got one pair?” Steve asked, pretty sure he already knew the answer.

Tony’s nose twitched a little as he didn’t answer right away. “These were the first pair to arrive. They’ve been designated the workshop glasses.”

“Actually, Sir,” Jarvis spoke up and Tony’s eye twitched slightly. “These specific frames were the indoor frames. The workshop frames were the two-tone square frames.” Steve smirked a little at him, still not saying anything. He pulled off a piece of bread and handed it over to Jamie when she glanced over at him, and she diligently started to nibble on it. “There were also the two pair of solid color squares frames, one in black, the other in white, that you declared to be used for social events. You also ordered one pair of round rimmed glasses, as you stated, to break up the monotony.”

“So, five pairs?” Steve finally spoke up, finishing the sandwich. Tony narrowed his eyes at him.

“You had better think I look good,” Tony reiterated. “Because you are stuck with this.” He motioned his hand up and down his body. Jamie grabbed his hand and set it back down on his leg.

“She doesn’t like big sweeping movements right now,” Steve explained to him, leaning forward to grab another sandwich to hand it to Tony, then grabbed a container and a small spoon. “It just started yesterday, that I noticed. Hey, can Papa feed you come applesauce?”

Tony turned her so she was facing Steve now, but was still sitting on his leg. “Oh, it’s going to be very unhappy for her growing up if she doesn’t break out of the sweeping movements phase,” Tony commented. “Seriously baby girl, that’s most of my life. I’m an active talker.”
Jamie was trying to take the spoon from Steve’s hand as she saw the applesauce. He relented and held the container as close to her as possible where she could still reach it. “Her dexterity with utensils is get a lot better,” Tony said as he observed her mostly succeeding in feeding herself.

“She’s really good with spoons,” Steve corrected. “Knives are still a mystery, especially when she just rip things up with her fingers. We’re still working on the stabbing motion of forks, and I’m not looking forward to when she tries to eat spaghetti. I’m predicting sauce everywhere.”

“We’ll started with just buttered noodles,” Tony countered. “I don’t feel like coating the new kitchen in plastic tarps when she starts actually spaghetti sauce.”

“Speaking of the new kitchen,” Steve quickly grabbed a rag to try and grab the dollop of applesauce that was falling from the spoon, and missing. Tony made a face when he felt the room temperature food hit his leg. “I thought you said that the Penthouse was only going to be two floors.”

Construction on Tony’s, and now Steve’s, Penthouse had started when they left for California. Since getting back they had temporarily relocated down to Steve’s former floor, that seemed to be becoming Sam Wilson’s floor when he was in town. The floor just above Tony’s workshop was also being worked on, but Tony was hoping to keep that secret from Steve at the moment. He was turning it in the Studio that he had mentioned to Steve a month ago. Construction in the Penthouse was coming to an end though, just finishing touches on the floors and coats of paint were going up. Steve had insisted that they go out to some furniture stores in the next couple days, because he refused to all the shopping online, much to Tony’s chagrin.

“The kitchen is only one story,” Tony told him as Steve wiped off his pants.

“The Penthouse is now three floors,” Steve countered, eyes narrowing slightly to stop Tony from responding. “Three huge floors.”

“Technically, two floors with a loft area,” Tony corrected. “Most of the ceilings are vaulted and opened, to accommodate the glass windows.” Tony turned on a little pout. “We need all the room we can get, it’s almost like buying a very large house, of which we would need if we lived anywhere else. There’s four of us, two under the age of ten, and we both need offices to work out of, and places for our non-avenging, and non-company-owning jobs.” Tony made an aborted motion with one hand, behind Jamie’s back. “I need space, lots of space.”

“One day, you might find yourself in a house,” Steve said, looking at him briefly, before looking back down at Jamie. “Not a mansion, or a Penthouse a thousand feet from the ground.”

“A house?” Tony raised an eyebrow at him skeptically. “Something with less space? Like, on the ground, with a yard and all of that?”

“And a kitchen that isn’t the same size as the whole apartment that Bucky and I shared before the war,” Steve nodded. “Where the living room and dining room combined would be the same size of the living room upstairs.” Tony mock gasped, eyes going big. “I know! Shocking, that that’s how other people live!” He chuckled softly.

“Can you imagine trying to cook in such a kitchen?” Tony shivered a little and closed his eyes. “With two kids running around? There’d be no where to walk, things would be falling constantly. And if there were pets! You’re a barbarian, Rogers.” Steve snorted. “If I didn’t know better, it’d sound like you were trying to domesticate me.”

“Let’s not get too crazy,” Steve said, snatching the plastic spoon out of the air when Jamie let it slip from her hand. She pushed at the container of applesauce and Steve put it down by the plate.
“You had me worried for a second.” Tony leaned over Jamie a little to kiss Steve. “But, I was thinking that we could do that whole, normal, thing you wanted to do.”

“Buying furniture?”

“Yeah, that thing, with the not doing it online.”

“I want to know that anything that I’m going to sit on is going to feel good, or that I’m not going to slip off of it, or even break it,” Steve argued. “Also we’ll need rugs, lots of rugs. With Jamie probably days away from walking on her own, there are bound to be a lot of stumbling, or falling, and I don’t want the stone and tile hurting. Also, Peter and Wade.”

“You could have just said Peter and Wade,” Tony told him. “With all their training,” he said, eyeing Steve a little. “They’re going to be practicing that everywhere.” He gently started to rock his leg up and down with Jamie sitting on it, hand around her side. “Anyway, I’m spending too much time locked away in some windowless room, and I figured we could go out and get all the furniture bought. We can take Wade with us, and then just, make a day of it.”

“And to have Wade pick out some furniture?” Steve asked knowingly as he grabbed a little bowl of goldfish crackers. Jamie made a squeak and reached for them immediately.

“Seems like it would just make sense,” Tony said with a little shrugs, trying to stay casual about it. “Julie’ll be in the hospital for nearly a week this time, so he should just have his own room with us. Plus, there’s some kind of kid friendly art market some or other happening upstate. Should be relatively paparazzi free, for the most part.”

“You must be all worked out if you’re finding these things to do before I am.”

“Shush you.” Tony reached out to scratche Steve’s bearded jaw. “I wanna get the mileage out of this beard before it goes away.”

“Gonna be clean shaven by my birthday at the latest,” Steve murmured, eyes closed and smiling. “Although, this is making a strong argument to keep it.” Tony hummed, then bit his lip when Jamie leaned forward, reaching her arms up, wanting to scratched Steve’s face too. He grinned and lifted up his leg so she could get the height. Steve startled a little, opening his eyes when Jamie’s sharp little nails started to drag on his skin. He glanced down and smiled at her. “Still very, monkey-see monkey-do.”

“Don’t you dare!” Steve pointed at Wade who was standing in front of him, Jamie in Steve’s lap. He was sitting on one of the benches to a picnic table while Tony had taken Wade and Peter to some of the food trucks. Steve was sure that the boys were going to be hyper from a sugar rush later, but even Steve had enjoyed elephant ears, and funnel cakes at Coney-Island before the serum.

Wade had been steadily creeping closer, his hands behind his back, but Steve had seen the bag of cotton candy there already. Fortunately, Jamie had not. “Why not?” Wade asked with a grin. Jamie was looking back and forth between Steve and Wade. “Peter told me she likes cotton candy.”

“And it’s a lot of sugar for her,” Steve told him, eyes narrowing slightly when Wade shuffled forward. “She’ll never go to sleep.”

“But, if she has a metabolism like yours, then one little bite won’t last long,” Wade argued. Steve blinked a couple of time, not expecting it. “I’m about as smart as Peter,” Wade added at Steve’s look.
“Plus, I knew everything about Captain America before I met you.”

Steve glanced around, discreetly checking to see if anyone had actually paid attention to the boy’s words. “No cotton candy,” he said. Suddenly Wade was grinning, and then Jamie was gasping. Steve turned his head and Peter was leaning over the table, reaching forward with a small tuft of cotton candy. Jamie reached for it with her whole body, eyes bright as she recognized what it was, and Peter was popping it in her mouth. Wade had hurried forward as Jamie closed her mouth, squealing with her mouth closed as it melted in her mouth.

“Whoa! Look at her face!”

“I told you!” Peter said with a grin. Jamie’s face had lit up, her eyes wide, and a huge grin was bunching up her chubby little cheeks.

“Mo! Mo!” She waved her hands, looking at Peter’s hands.

“See, now you’ve done it,” Steve murmured, not unkindly.

“Are those her first words?” Wade asked carefully, sneaking his own tuft over to Jamie. Her little hands latched onto his fingers as tried to shove the cotton candy into her mouth.

“No, those are just babblings,” Tony said as he dropped next to Steve on the bench, setting down two trays with several paper plates on them. “They’re on their way to becoming words, but we aren’t counting those yet. I’m personally hoping that she’ll follow in her brother’s steps, and her first word will be Stark.”

Steve had shooed Peter and Wade over to the other bench, keeping the cotton candy away from Jamie, much to her pouting displeasure. “My first word was Stark?” Peter asked, a skeptical look in his eyes.

“Your Mama would usually call me by my last name when she didn’t like what I was doing,” Tony explained, divvying out the plates. “Which was, a decent amount of the time.” Peter and Wade both got an elephant ear covered in cinnamon sugar, and funnel cake plate with fruit covered with whip cream, and powdered sugar. Peter had requested strawberries, while Wade had gotten raspberries. Two cups of lemonade were set in front of them as well. Most of the food was set in front Tony and Steve, and Steve knew that he would eat most of it, followed up by a late night gym visit. Three elephant ears were in front of them, two funnel cakes with just blueberries, and one funnel cake with strawberries. Tony had also gotten a plate of at least half a dozen corn dogs, setting that one in the middle of the table.

“I don’t think she’ll be saying Stark,” Steve told him, grabbing a fork from the utensils pile. Tony was already cutting up pieces, knowing Steve couldn’t with one arm around Jamie. She was trying to find the cotton candy.

“Well, a man can dream,” Tony said with a smirk. “Now, we never tell Mama how much I got you guys to eat.” Tony pointed at the two boys with his fork. “They’ll both have my butt for giving you so much unhealthy stuff.”

“And Mr Steve won’t?” Wade asked before he put a big piece of the elephant ear in his mouth. He moaned a little, grinning at the taste. “This is amazing!”

“Mr Steve has a secret sweet tooth,” Tony countered, ripping off a couple pieces of the elephant ear before eating one himself.

“Mr Steve will having a workout afterwards,” Steve told him. “And I should be dragging you down
with me,” he poked Tony’s side. Tony nearly jumped and shifted to get away from his finger.

“Don’t be mean,” Tony pouted a little. Steve rolled his eyes watching the boys devour the food. “Now put that super metabolism to work and help me finish this food.”

When they finally called it a day and headed for the emptying parking garage, Jamie was still Hyper while the boys were starting to run out of steam. The art fair had been full of games for the boys to play, and Steve had gotten a few ideas for some new art techniques he’d like to try. Steve noted that Tony looked a little lighter, not as stressed as he had since they had gotten back to the Tower. He resigned to making sure Tony got out of his workshop more often, to destress.

Tony buckled Jamie into her car seat in the middle, then helped Peter up into his on the side, while Steve lifted Wade on the side. “You’re looking about as whipped as the boys,” he said to Tony as they headed for the front of the SUV. “I can take the drive from here.”

“You sure? There’s a lot of traffic around, we’re probably at least forty minutes from the Tower with no traffic,” Tony said, stopping by the door.


“All yours then, Prince Charming.” Steve couldn’t help but roll his eyes a little when Tony winked at him.

“As you wish.” Steve gave a little bow that Tony could see through the windows before climbing in behind the wheel. Tony snorted softly and leaned his head back.

Steve was buckling in and Tony turned to check on the kids, making sure that Peter and Wade had properly buckled themselves in. He went to reach for his own seat belt as he turned around, then frowned when something caught his attention in the side mirror. A horrid yellow suit, and something pointed at their car. “Steve!” Tony shouted, turning to lunge for the backseat. “AIM!” The back of the SUV lifted up as a sonic blast hit the back tires, throwing Tony back and out his seat, colliding with the windshield. He groaned when the airbags were triggered, the one in the passenger side exploding to life against his back and pushing his head up into the already cracked glass. His glasses cracked and shifted further up, a piece of lens scraping along his forehead for a second before he moved. He felt himself tugged out, collapsing against the seat as the bags deflated.

“Tony?” Steve called, trying to draw his attention back up. Tony could hear Jamie crying in the back. “Tony are you alright?” Steve asked more urgently.

“Fine,” he breathed out, waving his hand. “I’m fine. The shield is on the bottom of the car, hidden compartment. It should have popped by now. I’ve got the kids.” He thought Steve nodded, but he was moving from the car, and Tony wasn’t going to tell him that his vision was swimming and his head was throbbing. He suspected it was a concussion.

“Peter? Wade?” He called out as he pulled himself up, swallowing when his stomach roiled. Definitely a concussion.

“We’re okay,” Wade replied, a little shakily. Tony started to pull himself over the center console towards the back, noticing how both boys were unbuckling themselves and moving closer to Jamie. Tony had never heard her cry so loud, but he figured she’d never been involved in something as physically jarring. Their daring escape from Hydra had her cushioned and sheltered in his arms, not bouncing around in the back of a car.
“Daddy?” Peter asked, and Tony tried to put on a smile.

“No need to worry, bud,” Tony said, taking care not to slur his words. “Pops is out there, so we’ll be safe.” Tony could hear the tell tale clang of the shield outside the car. Jarvis would have alerted the others in the Tower by now, and he thought they could use the backup when he saw the crowd of yellow AIM suits gathering outside the SUV. He was out for the count as Iron Man.

“Alright, we’re gonna try and sneak away, okay?” He said as he started to unbuckled Jamie from her seat. As he moved to lift her out something grasped his ankle and he was pulled back and out the front door. He let out a shout when the front of his head bounced against the center dash, cries of his name ringing in his ears.

Tony tumbled to the ground, fighting back the dizziness in his head, and tried to push himself back up. A hand gripped his arm and hauled him to his feet, making his head spin. “Mr Stark, we have need of you.” He looked towards the voice, the person holding him up, and nothing could stop the yellow color even through his double vision. Wade and Peter were shouting from the car as another AIM agent was opening the back door.

“Get away from my kids,” Tony growled, free hand gripping the one attached to his arm.

“We only need the one,” the man said, not looking at Tony. The agent at the door stumbled back with a growl, arms up to defend his head. Tony smirked a little. “What’s taking so long! They’re kids!”

“You think I’d let me kids travel without protection?” Tony kicked the man’s knee, and he stumbled, but didn’t let go of Tony.

“Grab the clone, I don’t care what you do to get it!” A second agent joined the first and they went back in towards the door. “We did all the work, and Hydra stole it from us,” the man was turning his attention back to Tony. Tony grunted when the man slipped something around his wrist, then the other. A faint whine of something powering up and Tony’s wrists were locked together in cuffs.

“But, you also perfected the formula. We’ll take you, and the clone back, and you can help us recover what we lost.”

“This was your big plan?” Tony huffed out. He could easily overpower the man at just the right angle, he needed to get to the car. Steve was still fighting behind him, unaware of what was happening. They were keeping him well distracted. “Kidnap me and expect me to re-create your flawed research? I don’t think so,” Tony shook his head. “There’s a history of people blowing up when they capture me, you know.”

“There are ways of giving incentive to make your work.” The man growled and walked over towards the car, dragging an unstable Tony with him. “We should have left by-“ he grunted when he was thrown back suddenly, losing his grip on Tony finally, but Tony was also falling to the ground. He moved his arms quickly to cushion his head before it could smack against the concrete. The last thing Tony needed was to put himself in a coma as well.

Black clad shoes hit the ground just in front of Tony’s face and they were off again, jumping at the agents at the SUV’s door, a soft female grunt reaching his ears. “Need a little help?” The cuffs fell off of Tony’s wrists as one of his briefcase suits landed on the ground.

“ Took you long enough to get here, Hawkeye,” Tony mumbled as he grabbed Barton’s hand to pull him up. He swallowed deeply, ignoring the stirring in his stomach. Black Widow landed back on the ground, the second AIM agent falling behind her. “I need you two to get the kids out of here. I assume you both didn’t run here.” Barton jerked a thumb back at a black SHIELD truck not too far
away. “Perfect, get them back to the Tower.”

“Daddy!” Peter called from the SUV and Tony was nearly running, trying not to stumble, for the door. Widow steadied him with a hand to his shoulder briefly before Tony was leaning inside the car. Peter had his arms wrapped around Jamie as he held her close, Wade in front of them with his arms up, hands clenched into fists.

“You two were perfect,” Tony reassured them. “Clint and Natasha are gonna get you away from the fight, alright? I’m gonna help Pops clean this up real quick, and then we can go home.”

“You sure, Mr Tony?” Wade asked him, frowning a little. “You’re hurt.”

“I’m okay, I got a suit here.” He reached out an arm and Wade pushed Peter and Jamie towards him first. Jamie wasn’t crying, at least not out loud anymore, and she had her face pushed against Peter’s shirt, sniffing. Tony dropped a kiss on both their heads before handing them over to Clint first. He reached back for Wade, giving him a little squeeze, before Natasha took him. “Give us just a couple minutes.”

“They don’t stand a chance against Iron Man and Captain America,” Tony heard Peter telling Jamie. Wade was running after Clint to the other car, and Natasha was giving him a pointed look.

“If you don’t go and protect my kids, I’m gonna blast you with the unibeam,” Tony told her quietly as he carefully stepped back over to the suit. He unlocked it and lifted it, trying to ground himself.

“If you don’t go and protect my kids, I’m gonna blast you with the unibeam,” Tony told her quietly as he carefully stepped back over to the suit. He unlocked it and lifted it, closing his eyes as it formed around him.

“Will you be able to see me?” She asked.

“I’ll let Jarvis doing the aiming,” he bit back. The faceplate slid over his head. “Go.” Tony turned towards where Steve was fighting, letting Jarvis take a lot of the controls. “Run scan, J,” he said quietly as the suit landed on two of the AIM agents. Steve glanced over at him, and Tony motioned back towards the car Natasha was running back too. He nodded before he threw the shield again, ricocheting it off of two pillars in the parking garage.

“I would advise against continued use of the suit, Sir,” Jarvis said in his ear. “But, taking into account your propensity of stubbornness, I would suggest staying upright.” Tony made to roll his eyes, but took a sharp breath when it caused a painful spike, and a roll of his uneasy stomach. “You have a severe concussion, Sir, please do refrain from making sarcastic gesture with your eyes.”

“You are so getting rewired,” Tony muttered.

It didn’t take long for them to clear up the rest of the agents, and the backup that Clint and Natasha had called in, (remnants of SHIELD), were already rolling in, cuffing them and clearing them out of the garage. Tony noted the line of citizens leaning over from the upper floors, and watching from several rows back, and he knew that there was no more privacy for him and Steve. Cell phones were still out, and Steve was still holding onto the shield.

The faceplate lifted and Steve was moving to remove it. “Wait,” Tony said softly. He bit back a wave of nausea as he gave the command for the suit to retract, folding back up into his case. He stumbled and Steve wrapped his arm around his waist, letting him lean against his side.

“Tony, we need to get you out of here,” Steve said quietly, and Tony was thankful. “You’re heading is still bleeding, front and back, and you look like death warmed over.”

“There’s uh, there’s a dirty joke in, in there,” Tony’s words were a little jumbled as he closed his eyes, letting Steve do most of the leading. “M’head.”
“Keep your eyes open Tony.” Steve slid his arm under Tony’s knees and lifted him up, the hand holding the shield at his back. “Need you to say awake until we get back to medical.”

“At Tower?” Tony asked and he felt Steve nod. “Shit,” he breathed out. “Don’t move so fast.”

“Sorry, baby,” Steve pressed a gentle kiss to his temple. “I don’t wanna wait too long though. You shouldn’t have used the suit.”

“Had to, kids safe,” Tony said as he leaned his head against Steve’s shoulder.

“I know, and you did it.” Steve praised, and Tony relaxed in his arms. His whole body felt sluggish, and his brain was having a hard time keeping up. He was just so tired, and he hurt. “Stay awake, Tony,” Steve’s voice seemed to bounce around his ears. “Come on, stay with me.” He was shifting again, and he thought he felt other hands, smaller hands, on his arm before blacking out.

Tony took a breath and opened his eyes. His tablet was still resting on his chest, but his glasses weren’t on his nose. “You’re not supposed to be working.” Tony turned his head a little to see Steve walking in the room with a tray of food. “I moved your glasses for a reason.”

“Spoilsport.” Tony sat up a little further in the bed, putting his tablet by his glasses on the bedside table.

“Strain on your eyes will make that headache worse.” Steve put the tray down on the end of the bed, hands on his hips. “You already pushed it by using the suit.”

“Necessary risk.” Tony rubbed his temples a little, and glanced over at the other side of the bed. Jamie was asleep between a sleeping Wade and Peter. The two boys didn’t want to leave Tony alone until they knew that he was going to be alright, specially after Steve had gotten him back in the car completely not conscious.

“Coulson’s team rounded up the AIM agents from the parking garage,” Steve said as he took a seat on the edge of the bed by Tony. “They’re not talking, though.”

“They wanted Jamie and me,” Tony told him. “That’s why they distracted you with that fight.” Steve frowned, reaching up, fingers hovering over the bandage on the side of Tony’s head. “We’re all focused on looking for the rest of Hydra, and they make their move to try and round up the research on cloning, and the serum.”

“And the best source would be the one that stabilized it.” Steve let out a sigh, glancing over at the bundle of kids.

“AIM has never been very high on my list,” Tony said, pressing Steve’s fingers gently to the bandage. “They’re not very bright, and I’m not surprised that they weren’t the ones who got the most out of the research that they had. Of course they’d have to settle for petty crime, kidnapping and stealing. I’m still not worried about them.”

“They’re a little higher on my list,” Steve said softly before pulling his hand back. “It’s got you on bedrest for at least three days, and constant monitoring for a week. They got too close to them,” he said with a motion to the three kids. “They go too close to doing what they wanted for my comfort.”

“I’m pissed because they exposed my boyfriend to the public.” Steve sighed and shook his head. Tony reached over, gently scratching his beard. “Means that goes away sooner than we’d like.”
“Jarvis is already screening all my calls, texts, and emails,” Steve admitted. “And Pepper is making good on that promise to get us our own PR team.”

“The Tony Stark name is already starting to corrupt yours.” Tony patted Steve’s arm. “First thing they’ll focus on, after finding out what you look like finally, is that Tony Stark is corrupting an American symbol of wholesomeness. Captain America, no matter who is, shouldn’t be gay, that’s blasphemous. And he shouldn’t be dating the infamous playboy Tony Stark.” Steve pursed his lips a little. “This is of course coming right along the heels of who would possibly find it okay to let someone else take the sacred mantle of Captain America, and then they’ll find out that you’re still the original, and we’re right back to defacing the perfect Christian ideal of America.”

“There’s a lot of different Christian ideals,” Steve told him. “I’m a Protestant,” he said with a shrug. “I’ve got different ideals than most others, including the Pope.”

“And you’re dating an Atheist.” Tony spread his hands to give weak jazz hands.

“I see nothing wrong with the way I’m living my life right now, so I don’t care what anyone else has to say about it,” Steve said, conviction strong in his voice. “Only thing I care about is keeping my family safe. I lost a lot when I woke up from the ice, but I found more than I thought would be possible. I’m not losing anything else, not if I can put a stop to it.”

“You are too good for this world, much less me.” Tony leaned forward to kiss him gently. “Well, you can keep AIM on your own list, but they’re still pretty far down on mine. But I’ll feel better knowing you’ve always got our backs.” Steve smiled against his lips. “You’d have been proud of the boys though, they’ve been putting those lessons you and Barnes have been giving them to good use. They protected Jamie like experts.”

“I don’t like that they were in that position to begin with,” Steve grouched a little. “But, I’m glad that they had a little of the training. I feel better about it, now.”

“My precious puppy.” Tony grinned at him. “Also, you should start thinking about what you want to do for your birthday.” Steve was about to protest but Tony put a finger on his lips. “Nope, if I had to do something, so do you. You’re still young enough to enjoy doing things on your birthday, despite the two and a half kids that you’ve acquired.”

“Half?” Steve questioned with a raised eyebrow. “Wade?” Tony nodded. “And you’re not that much older than me.”

“You’re going to be, what? Twenty-eight?”

“And you’re only Thirty-five,” Steve told him. “Only seven years older than me.”

“That’s the length of a Peter,” Tony said with a smirk. “But, still in your twenty’s, so still time to enjoy the little bits of life that aren’t dedicated to a kid.”

“You spent your birthday at an amusement park meant for children,” Steve pointed out. “I doubt that was your ideal plan.”

“I’ve also been a father for a while-“

“At twenty-seven,” Steve pointed out, and he had a look that meant that he was about to shoot Tony’s point into a thousand pieces. “The same age that I am right now.” Tony groaned a little, letting his head drop back onto a pillow. He winced gently, and Steve’s hand was carding through his hair. “So, before you say anything else about wasting my youth, of which I’ll probably have a lot of, just know that I can say everything right back to you.”
“Stop making sense,” Tony whined softly, then opened his eyes to look at him. “Help me move over, I want you laying down next to me. I’m hurt, I’m allowed to make demands.”

“I can’t, Tony,” Steve said with a chuckle. “I’m debriefing with Coulson’s team in twenty, and then I have to meet with someone from PR about getting on top of the Captain America reveal.”

“By yourself?” Tony raised an eyebrow. “The press is a monster, Steve, you’ve seen that with me.”

“I trust your team,” Steve told him. “If I have questions though, I’ll be sure to bring them to you.”

“Look at you, jumping into a whole new war.” Tony let out a sigh. “Alright, but when you’re done, you’d better get back here and cuddle with me. That’s my demand for being hurt, and my demand for making me go out furniture shopping.”

“Thanks for reminding me,” Steve said as he stood up. “I need to meet some of the delivery men downstairs in a couple hours. Don’t worry, I’ll take over the rest of that ‘domestic’ necessity.”

“We’re not getting a house,” Tony pointed at him with little glare.

“Then I want a dog,” Steve retaliated, backing up slowly towards the door.

“Then I want a cat,” Tony threw back, making Steve laugh and shake his head.

“Of course you want a cat, why does that not surprise me.”

“Cats can take care of themselves, and they make for great companions,” Tony argued.

“Sure, on their time- oh.”

“Oh? Oh what?” Tony raised an eyebrow at him.

“Cats are almost like you,” Steve smirked. “You want a you, in animal form.”

“Get out of our room, Rogers.” Tony pointed at the door, and Steve left, his laughter echoing in the hallway.

Chapter End Notes

//Edit: I make no comments about religion, I’m not Protestant. I’m also basing this on this tumblr post. AU is AU, and I’m going with this.
July 2012

Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

My cats woke me up in the middle of the night to horrible sounds of killing each other, so you guys get an early morning chapter! (Everyone is alive, no worries. Boy cats. *eye roll*)

You beautiful people you! I'm here to give more Rhodey love in this chapter! Also, some Thor love. This will probably be as much as I delve into Thor: The Dark World in this story. There may be some call backs later, but meh. Everything serves a purpose. Mwuahaha. :D

(Also, I know very little about specifics with the military, I'm putting that out there now. I support all those who have the bravery to go and serve. But the rivalries are fun when it comes to,... a lot of things between all the branches. I use it all in jest for story-telling purposes.)

Not beta'd, me not owning stuff, Marvel owning stuff, blah blah, usual disclaimer.

July 2012

“Rhodey, sourpatch, pooh bear,” Tony pleaded over the phone. “Do they not understand that it’s a holiday? It’s my boyfriend’s birthday.” He could practically hear Rhodey rolling his eyes. “This man’s birthday is the best birthday to happen to me. Do you know why?”

“Because it’s a birthday you can remember?”

“Because it’s a birthday that I can remember!” Tony let out a little huff, leaning back in his chair. “So, you tell the Air Force that I want my best friend here for the festivities.”

“You do know that it doesn’t work like that, right?” Rhodey was raising an eyebrow, Tony was sure of it. He had that tone in his voice. “I can’t make it out there today, but I’ll be there by the end of the week. They’ve cleared me for some of the training that Cap wants to set up.”

“Yeah, the training that I had to talk him out of starting until after his birthday,” Tony grumped out. “The last days of a man’s year should not be spent getting sweaty in the gym. There’s only one acceptable way of getting sweaty.”

“Please, do not continue that sentence,” Rhodey begged. “You don’t need to ruin Captain America’s image even more.” He laughed when Tony groaned.
“Stop listening to the tabloids!” Tony shouted. “I’m not ruining anything! Steve Rogers was a menace all on his own, long before he became Captain America. I’m not taking the credit for that train wreck.”

“Train wreck?” Tony jumped, almost falling out of his chair when Steve spoke behind him. Rhodey started laughing harder.

“A menace!” Tony accused.

“Happy Birthday, Cap,” Rhodey said in greeting, and Steve smiled as he wrapped an arm around Tony’s shoulders.

“Thanks, James.” Tony raised an eyebrow at him over his shoulder at the level of familiarity between the two. “What? He gave me the shovel talk when he finally found out we were dating. Now we talk.”

“He didn’t even know what a shovel talk was,” Rhodey threw in.

“I know what it is,” Steve protested. “I just didn’t know the slang term for it.”

“My birthday baby is so adorable.” Tony pulled Steve’s head down for a kiss. “Rhodey’s being mean, he won’t come up for the party.”

Steve heard Rhodey’s sigh, like this was probably the tenth time they’ve talked about this. “Sorry, Cap, but my superior’s won’t let me leave early. I’ll be there for training, though.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Steve said with a smile. “I made sure to clear it with the higher ups about training. I think it’s important that we start training as a team, no matter who can or can not respond to a call out. Knowing our strengths and weaknesses will work out to our advantage.”

“You’re not supposed to be working on your birthday,” Tony told him.

“I gotta agree with Tony on this one,” Rhodey threw in, making Tony grin. “That’s sounding dangerous close to Captain America talk. Peter is very insistent that no one does any type of work on their birthdays.” Tony pointed up, to the speakers, as if Rhodes were proving his point. “How is the little munchkin, anyway?”

“Currently teaching Jamie the importance of blueberry pancakes,” Steve threw in. “Wade is helping, by eating the demonstration ones.”

“Mary must be cooking them,” Tony said with a grin. “I’m glad I stocked up on pancake ingredients yesterday.”

“I can wait to meet the mini-Cap,” Rhodey said. “Specially if Peter and Wade had finally taken a liking to her.”

“I told you they protected her two weeks ago, right??” Tony sat up a little, making Steve move with him, but smiled. “They both totally took that sibling stance. ‘No one can pick on her, cause we’re the only ones who can do it.’ Made my concussed head melt at the sight.” Steve’s hand gently rubbed the healing cut on the back of his head where some glass had cut. “Yeah, it’s an actual crime that she hasn’t met her Uncle Rhodey yet, and that Peter has seen Uncle Fly-boy in a while. He’s secretly replacing you with another fly-boy,” Tony stage whispered the last sentence. “Steve brought back his own Air Force guy. And he’s black!” Steve frowned, hitting Tony’s arm lightly.

“What is it with you white boys?” Tony cackled and Steve’s eyes widened a little. “I think I can
excuse this though. The Army man is admitting that the Air Force is better, that’s okay, that’s why he brought in another brother.” Steve blinked. Tony was running out of air while he laughed. “Hey, Captain, it’s okay, I understand, and I humbly accept this honor on behalf of the Air-“

“I did not admit that the Air Force was better!” Steve quickly cut off.

“Oh, I’m sorry, did you not want to admit that out loud?” Rhodey teased. “That’s okay, because I’ll just let our basketball teams speak for us. We won, by the way.”

“They got lucky,” Steve countered. “Everyone has to get lucky at least once.” Tony was biting his lip, wheezing in breaths as he couldn’t stop laughing.

“Is that so? Alright, let’s do an Army V Air Force rematch next week. Your boy and I will take you and your other boy on.” Rhodey issued the challenge, but Steve looked at Tony in confusion. Tony grabbed a tablet and had to spell it out, literally, because he couldn’t get the air to talk. ‘Rhodey Wilson vs Rogers Barnes.’

“You’re on!” Steve accepted. “As the Army is wont to do, we will win with grace and humility.”

“Yeah, we’re gonna rub it in your face when we wipe the court with you,” Rhodey said with ease. “Tony, I expect a regulation basketball court next week for this.”

“Okay!” Tony burst out, rubbing his eyes from the laughter tears. “I’m gonna get people started tomorrow. Oh, oh my stomach hurts. This is too good.”

“I also expect you to betray your boyfriend and be on my side.”

“Sorry gummy-bear, I’m not taking sides on this one.” Tony couldn’t help but question. Steve stared at him for a long second, before giving him a quick kiss and bounding out of the workshop, and taking the stairs three at a time. Tony launched into a new round of laughter.

Tony made his way upstairs not long after, no longer laughing, and smiled when he smelled the delicious scent of blueberry pancakes. He could hear Jamie making delighted sounds and saw Peter and Wade sitting in front of her. “How goes the birthday lesson, boys?” Tony asked, leaning against the back of the couch. Jamie smiled and cooed when she saw him.

“Well, I don’t know,” Wade answered first. “She seems interested in the pancakes, but we don’t know if she understands that they’re special.”

“She knows the taste different than the ones we get on Pancake Saturday,” Peter said.

“Give her time,” Tony smiled. “I’m sure in a few more months she’ll catch on. Hey Pete, you seen Papa?”

“He went into the kitchen with Uncle Bucky,” he told him, and they’re attention was turned back to Jamie. Tony let out a little giggle and headed towards the kitchen.
As soon as he walked in, he could see that Mary and Meg were trying to put as much space between them and the boys as possible. Bucky looked like he was ready to put a window and a few hundred feet between him and Steve.

“Come on, Bucky,” Steve asked, and Bucky sent him a little glare. “We can totally do this, it would be nothing with your metal arm!”

“I’d probably pop the ball,” Bucky told him.

“Now that I don’t believe,” Steve said. “I know you have more control than that. And Tony has been wanting to upgrade it anyway, so let him do that and I’ll bet you have even more control over it.” Bucky sighed and looked like he was about to turn him down, again, but Steve brought in the big guns. “He said Air Force was better than Army.”

Bucky’s back straightened and his eyes darkened a little. Steve smirked slightly. “We are going to destroy them.” Steve whooped and hugged Bucky quickly, and Tony started giggling again.

“Don’t tell me you’re encouraging this??” Mary questioned, adding to the pancake pile that Meg was in charge of.

“I’m not doing anything,” Tony said with a grin. “Well, except for providing the court for it to happen, but that’s because I don’t want to pay for damages to any public spot.” Tony wiggled his fingers, urging Steve closer. He let go of Bucky and walked over, putting on the coy smile that made Tony tingle in his chest, and wrapped his arms around Tony’s neck. Tony kissed him slowly, arm around his waist, giving a one finger salute when Bucky started to make gagging noises.

“Come on guys, I wanna eat these pancakes,” Bucky whined. “I’ve never known the pleasure of birthday pancakes, and the kids said it’s important.”

“Blueberry pancakes are only made on birthdays, no other days,” Mary said seriously.

“Yeah, so don’t make me lose my appetite,” Bucky warned them. “I think Meg tried to do that last night with that show-“

Meg gasped and whipped around to look at him. “Are you bad-mouthing Supernatural?” Tony turned wide eyes on Bucky. Steve kept an arm wrapped around his waist, smirking a bit at Bucky from behind Tony. “Do you understand the severity of the episode you just badmouthed??”

“The burger turned into grey sludge!” Bucky argued, looking back at her. “It almost put me off burgers!”

“That was no mere burger!” Tony exclaimed, and Bucky turned to look at him with betrayed eyes. “That burger brought about the most traumatic ending to an episode of Supernatural!” Meg was nodding along with him.

“Oh, the Turducken,” Steve said gravely with one nod. Bucky looked at Steve like he was barely clinging on to hope. “I’m going to have to agree with them, Buck.”

“You watch it, too??”

“It’s date night material,” Steve responded with a shrug. “You kind of get sucked in, and then you have to keep watching.” Bucky grumbled, but Steve knew that he wasn’t going to say he was wrong.

“Obviously, Meg started the series over for you to watch, because that’s an old episode that I know
she would have seen,” Tony tried to piece out.

“Re-run, actually,” she said, wiping a fake tear from her eyes. Both she and Tony dropped their heads in a moment of silence. “RIP Bobby.” Steve ran his hand through Tony’s hair.

“Tony,” Mary said carefully. “Is it possible for you to keep your nerd in check, for just one minute?”

“Not in the least bit possible,” Tony said and crossed his arms over his chest. “Specially when it comes to a beloved form of entertainment.” Mary let out a little sigh, and added one more pancake to the stack.

“Go get the kids,” she told him instead. “I’ve got enough for them, and I’m working on the last batch.”

“Who’s coming up this year?” Steve asked as he let go of Tony to let him get to work.

“Phil is getting my parents,” Mary started as she worked on mixing a new batter. “Meg’s got the twins, and Bucky,” Bucky shot her a look, “and Julie is on her way up. Bruce was up all night, so he said he’ll join us for lunch, and Barton and Romanoff will be back in time for the party.”

“We won’t be here for lunch!” Tony called out causing Mary and Steve to raise an eyebrow. “I’ve got plans before the party and fireworks. I’m taking Steve away from here.”

“My hero,” Steve deadpanned.

“I’m stealing your pancakes now.”

“You mean you’ll steal some of my pancakes,” Steve smirked at him.

“I have to make the same amount for Steve and Bucky alone, that I made for eight people,” Mary whined a bit. “I am not thrilled with super soldier appetites.”

“But the pancakes are divine, Mary,” Steve said, turning big blue eyes in her direction. “I look forward to these at every birthday.”

“I’m already married, Rogers,” she smirked. “I’m afraid those big eyes aren’t going to work on me.”

“I bet they work on Stark,” Bucky said with a quirk of his lips. Tony shot a glare his way.

“I don’t need to hear anything that could possibly allude to what goes on in their bedroom,” Meg whined. “I’d rather keep my appetite, thank you very much.”

“Do you actually have a plan?” Steve asked as he followed Tony down to the garage.

“Well, yes and no,” Tony said, turning a smile back to him. “Pick a car, whichever one you want to ride in.”

“Not drive?” Tony let out a scandalized gasp, a hand flying to his chest.

“You want to drive one of my babies that isn’t the SUV or towncar?” Tony pushed out his lower lip. “Baby, I love you, but I think we’re gonna have to re-evaluate how much I love my cars. There might be graphs and pie charts involved.” Steve rolled his eyes and shook his head, then motioned towards a couple cars.
“You know I don’t really have a-“ Steve paused, tilting his head when he caught sight of something down the line of cars. Tony smirked, rocking back on his heels a little. “I’ve never seen this one before.” Steve bit his lip, smiling a little. “I know this model.”

“Nineteen Forty-One Cadillac Lasalle convertible,” Tony said with a smile. “I recently acquired it. Thought it might be something, a little more, familiar for you?”

Steve ran his fingers gently along the hood of the car. “You got this for me?” Tony rubbed the back of his head a little, a shy smile on his lips. “I wanna ride in this one.”

“Your chariot awaits,” Tony said as he walked over and opened the passenger door for him. “I do kind of have a plan though, you’ll see.”

“Well, you had plan enough to shore up a babysitter for the kids,” Steve commented as he slid in the car.

“Yeah, don’t expect that to happen every year.” Tony snorted softly and hopped into the drivers seat. “I don’t want you to get spoiled by having private birthday parties with just me.”

“I share my birthday with the rest of the country, Tony.”

“Oh, so the kids won’t be too much for next year then, got it,” Tony said with a nod, slipping on his sunglasses. “We’ll have to start planning earlier next year.”

“This is a thing now, isn’t it?” Steve asked as the car started.

“Oh, it’s totally a thing. Of course,” Tony pulled out and into traffic, “now I feel like I’ve overhyped these plans of mine.”

“Considering that it’s the middle of the afternoon, and it’s a holiday, I’m not actually expecting a lot of places to be open,” Steve told him.

“Yeah, but fireworks haven’t started yet, so I can still get some people to possibly give us a private lunch if I asked,” Tony pointed out. Steve looked over at him. “I didn’t…. A lot of people like to, actually do stuff, so I let them enjoy the day. There was a voice that sounded suspiciously like yours in the back of my head.”

“That would be one of your voices of reason,” Steve informed him.

“Well, it was weird, so I went with something a little more normal, low-key.” Steve stretched his arm around along the bench seat of the car, going around Tony’s shoulders as he drove. “I’ve been thinking about taking you to this place for a while, but it’s one of those places that I don’t want ruined by a call-out, or just a date disaster in general.”

“We have enough of those to write a book with,” Steve mumbled and Tony nodded. “Wait, is that place on fifteenth?” Tony grinned and nodded.

“Old fashioned diner, all casual, no cameras,” Tony said, one hand on the wheel, the other looping around Steve’s arm and shoulders as well. “Just us, and some good food.” Steve leaned over and kissed Tony’s cheek. Tony preened a little as he managed to catch a stretch of road that put some air through their hair. “Watch out, you might feed my ego.” Tony leaned over at a stop light, kissing Steve properly this time. “Happy Birthday, babe.”
“Go Uncle Rhodey!” Peter cheered from the sides, jumping up and down as the four men played basketball.

“What about,” Steve grunted as he jumped to block a shot, knocking it away towards Bucky, “Papa?” Bucky missed the ball as Sam shot forward.

“Uncle Rhodey can play,” Peter said with a shrug, and Tony tried not to laugh. He was sitting in a chair, holding onto Jamie’s hands as she hopped up and down, standing between his knees.

“This is why you’re my favorite, Pete!” Rhodey called with a grin, grabbing the pass from Sam and tossing the basketball to land with a swish.

“Steve!” Bucky shouted. “Are we gonna let them beat us??”

“You played the game more than me!” Steve yelled back. “Do we still have a time out?”

“I’ll allow it,” Coulson said with a nod. Sam and Rhodey walked over to the other side to grab some water, and Steve and Bucky went over towards Tony. He tossed them both some towels to wipe their sweat.

“Alright, you know what, I have to try and help you,” Tony said, sitting up, and bracing Jamie with his legs. “This is starting to get sad, and I gotta give my boyfriend some love.”

“It’s not considered cheating?” Mary asked, sitting behind Tony.

“No, it’s called giving the two guys from a different century an actual shot,” Tony shot back. “Sam likes to do a lot of feinting, usually to the tight because of your metal arm,” he said to Bucky. “Steve, when you get the ball, barrel down the center, do not let Rhodey push you to the sides. Use your agility if you have too, it’s not cheating if you jump over him.”

“I’m taking this as support for the Army,” Bucky said, grabbing his own bottle of water.

“I can not let you make that claim,” Tony told him. He motioned towards Steve, and pulled him down by his tee, giving him a kiss. He tugged a little on Steve’s bottom lip with his teeth and smiled. “Alright Soldier, get-“

“Jamie! Awesome!” They all turned when they heard Wade. Tony glanced down and noticed that Jamie was no longer in front of him. Peter was holding his arms out, Wade slowly moving towards him, and between them, Jamie was babbling softly, walking towards Peter. She let out a squeal when Peter caught her.

Tony grinned and pat Steve’s chest a couple times. “Now go out there and gain your dignity back, because you just saw your daughter take her first steps.” Coulson threw the ball to Bucky and Steve ran over, kissing Jamie’s head, then Peter’s, and ruffling Wade’s hair before going back to the court.

“Don’t think I’m going to give you any slack because my awesome niece just took her first steps,” Rhodey said with a smirk. “If anything, it proves that she was waiting for me to show up, to show off.”

“I’m gonna show you how Brooklyn Boys play,” Steve responded with all the confidence of Captain America, and the cockiness of Steve Rogers. Rhodey grinned, accepting the obvious challenge.

“I am going to enjoy this, Captain.”
Coulson blew the whistle and Jamie let out a delighted squeal. Tony smirked, leaning back in his seat. Mary leaned over his shoulder. “Do you really think they’re going to win after that?”

“Oh, not a chance in hell,” Tony said shaking his head. “But, they probably will bring the score a little closer, and get that lost dignity back. Rhodey played basketball when were at MIT, and then with the ROTC. I didn’t have the heart to tell Cap. Although, those really were Jamie’s first steps, and I know that Jarvis got them recorded.”

“Of course, Sir;” Jarvis said through his watch.

“Why did you let them take this challenge?” She asked, slipping down to sit next to Tony now. They were having team training after the game, and she was eager to see how Steve handled the newcomers.

“They were just so passionate, I didn’t have the heart to talk them out of it.” Tony put two fingers to his lips, giving a whistle when Steve managed a three point shot. “Plus, it’s fun to watch Steve learn things the hard way, sometimes.”

“When, not if, when he finds out, this is going to come back to bite you in the ass.”

“Probably in the bedroom,” Tony agreed. “I’m hoping to distract him from that fact though during training today.” Mary glanced over at him, and saw him rubbing his forearms a little. “I finished the prototype of my new suit, and I figure today is the best day to try it out. Controlled environment, med baby nearby, blah blah blah.” Mary let out a sigh and Tony smiled.

Tony made sure to stay far away from Rhodey when the game was over though, sticking next to Steve, who was smirking, just a little. “There’s only one way they could have tied that late in the game!” Rhodey had said, eyes slicing over to Tony who was already on his feet and picking up Jamie. Mary took the three kids to watch in the observation deck while everyone gathered in the training room. Clint and Natasha were already there, deciding they didn’t necessarily watch Captain America playing a game with a former Hydra assassin, and Bruce had arrived just a minute before the rest. Coulson had joined Mary and the kids, and Sam, Rhodey, and Bucky stood behind Steve and Tony, on the opposite side as Cling and Natasha. They seemed to only be missing Thor, but there had been no communication from him for a while.

Everyone was suited up, except for Tony. Steve had his cowl pulled down and his shield on his back, arms crossed over his chest. “Alright everyone,” Steve said, looking around at the group. “I’ve put together some scenarios to run through that should help us understand our strengths and weaknesses. I think it’s important we know this, so that no matter who answers a call out, we can put together some kind of effective strategy to adapt to whatever’s happening.” Steve motioned over towards the newcomers. “Falcon and War Machine-“

“Don’t you even dare,” Tony interrupted, pointing at Rhodey who had looked ready to interrupt himself. “We are Not calling you Iron Patriot.”

“That’s what the President is moving to rename it,” Rhodey said with a shrug, and Tony groaned.

Steve almost sighed out loud. “Falcon and War Machine won’t be in New York all the time, but they’ll still be able to respond if we need them.”

“And the Winter Soldier?” Clint asked, sharps eyes trained on Bucky.

“Is here to observe,” Steve said, turning his gaze to the two SHIELD agents. “One day he’ll be out there with us and I don’t want him trying to play catch up.” The two scowled a little, but didn’t talk
against the Captain. “When we’re training I want us to try and stick to code names, so we keep it up out in the field.”

Tony raised his hands and Steve moved his head a little to look at him. “When I’m out of the suit, but in the field, am I Tony? Or still Iron Man?”

“Out in the field, still Iron Man,” Steve told him, then took a quick glance around the room. “Where is your suit?” That’s when Tony grinned, taking a couple steps back. He tapped his fingers on his thumbs in some kind of sequence.

“I’d stay clear of the door,” he warned the others. Steve kept his arms crossed, not moving, as Rhodey, Sam, and Bucky all backed away to the other wall. Rhodey moved the fastest. Tony rolled his neck a little, then dropped one arm out straight, raising the other behind him with a fist, looking towards the open door. Everyone watched the door in anticipation. And after a minute looked towards Tony. Tony took a breath, dropping his arms, shaking out his shoulders, then tried again.

Jarvis may have played the sounds of crickets. Tony frowned and made a motion towards Jarvis’s cameras in the ceiling. “Hang on.” He lifted his arm, seeming to bite it and Steve was taking a step towards him. “No, no, I got this.” He slammed his palm against his arm, hearing a couple of clicks and a buzz. “There we go, that should work.” He tried it one more time, and everyone was watching Tony.

Steve’s head turned when he heard a soft roar, and Tony grinned, hand out flat, and a gauntlet seemed to slam into his hand, then unfolded up to his elbow. Two more pieces flew in the room, attached to his bicep and shoulder, all coming together to form the left arm of an Iron Man suit.

“Tony? What-”

“Iron Man, Cap!” Tony said with a grin as the other gauntlet came flying in. He lifted his leg just in time to catch a one of the boots and leg piece. “Ah, hey, cool it Jarvis. A little fa-ah!” He turned to catch the other leg pieces for them to form and let out a groan when a piece slammed into his groin. He would make note of those that snickered later. Tony started to fall forward, the back piece attaching, and he used the repulsors to catch his balance in time for the chest piece to fly in, and most of the helmet. He waited for the face plate.

“Not funny, J,” he muttered when the face plate flew in, hitting the edge of the door and flailing to the ground. Steve was raising an eyebrow, expression unamused. The plate lifted, unfolding, and seemed to be having a stare down with Tony. “Come on, let’s go then.” It whirled in the air and Tony took a step forward, jumping up and using a boot and a gauntlet to flip himself to catch the upside down plate. He landed on the ground, one knee down, slamming a fist onto the floor, watching the HUD spring to life inside the helmet. He stood back up and smirked, even though no one could see it. “I’ve been working on a new suit,” he said as the face plate lifted up like usual. “Autonomous prehensile propulsion suit. I’ve got micro-repeaters-” He caught the blank look of Steve, Bucky, and Sam and twitched his nose. “I’ve got micro implants under my skin that calls to the suit, so it goes where I want it to go.”

“Implants?” Rhodey asked with a curious eyebrow.

Steve gave him a look that said they would be talking about the implants when they weren’t doing their superhero jobs. “Alright, well, not that Iron Man is suited up-“

Tony’s faceplate dropped and Jarvis brought up something on the HUD, Steve’s voice washing out a bit. “Sir, I’ve detected an impact on the window surface of the eighty-third floor.” Tony frowned, watching the security footage pop up. He could just catch something hit the window, then bounce off, like someone had thrown a rock. Jarvis sped up the footage to play live and they saw something
hit again.

“Eighty-third is Steve’s old floor, right?” Tony asked, moving the live footage to the corner and taking a moment of when the projectile hit the glass, zooming in. Jarvis answered in the affirmative. They had been staying on Steve’s floor until a few weeks ago, the last of the furniture arriving, and most of the painting done. Steve was still working on some murals for the kids rooms, but those he didn’t need empty space for.

Something larger hit the window and Jarvis turned on the sound so they could hear the loud ‘thunk’.

“Someone is very insistent. What’s the threat level on this Jarvis?” Tony brought back the live footage, trying to find a trajectory for the objects.

“The impact is minimal,” Jarvis assured him, bringing up readings. The glass was barely taking a scratch. “The new coating seems to be working according to specifications, Sir.”

“That’s good,” he said with a slight hum.

“Iron Man!” Tony jerked and his eyes unfocused off the screens of the HUD and looked at Steve, no Captain America, looking at him expectantly. He had his shield in his hand, and everyone else had moved around the room.

“Yes dear?” He watched Cap roll his eyes a little, the cowl that was up let him see that clear as day.

“Were you listening at all?” That was the annoyed Team Leader voice. Tony was sure that not only would Steve be talking to him about the implants, but Cap would be talking to Iron Man about proper training etiquette.

“No, sorry.” Tony shook his head, answering honestly. “Someone’s pelting the Tower with, well, I don’t know what, but it’s annoying.” That caught the attention of the others as well. “Someone is tracking it- Whoa!” He jerked back when something larger was sudden in the video feed, bringing his attention back to the HUD. “Jarvis, what the hell was that?”

“I am unsure, Sir. The hit registered on the shields.” Jarvis’s voice sounded in the room instead of inside of the helmet, now. “I would suggest that perhaps this be explored. It would seem to be a deliberate attempt-“ Jarvis cut off when a small tremor ripple through the floor.

“Eighty-third floor!” Tony shouted before jumping up and letting the repulsors take him out of the room and towards the nearest exit outside. “Jarvis, talk to me, what’s trying to take down my Tower now?” He flew out of the first balcony door that the AI opened for him then stopped when he saw something round and nearly half the size of him go hurtling towards the windows. He felt the vibration as it shot down the building, affecting even the suit.

“Sir, I would remind you that this suit has been untested for live-“

“Yup, reminded, now what the hell was that!” Tony growled out a little as he flew lower to see where the metal ball had disappeared too. It hadn’t landed on the ground, there were no screaming bystanders, no smoke, or horns honking outside of regular traffic, and no metal ball. There was another impact above him, and another vibration, and when he looked out he saw another ball, but this was bigger. Tony shot out of the way as it fell past him, barely missing hitting him dead on.

Tony looked down and thought he saw something rippling like water in the air, but the ball was gone again. “Iron Man, report.” Tony looked up and flew back up as Steve’s voice crackled through the comms.

“Still no idea what it is that’s attacking, but it’s definitely an attack.” He frowned and hovered by the
floor, away from the impact sight, and he could see the others reaching the floor. “Whatever’s happening, the objects get bigger each time, but they’re not landing on the ground.”

“Hawkeye, keep an eye for the next attack, see if you can’t get a bead on the trajectory and location,” Steve said, doling out moves. It was almost like training. “Falcon, War Machine, do a perimeter around the building, check for any other impact sights. Widow, scan for possible set-ups locations, even possible sniper nests.” Tony looked at Steve who was looking out the window at him. “Iron Man, do you know if we looking at something mechanical or organic yet?”

Tony shook his head, glancing back down, trying to get a scan over the ripple he thought he saw, but nothing was showing up. “They look to be a sort of metal for sure, but that doesn’t mean that the insides are the same. They won’t stay still long enough for me to get a proper reading, but if I can’t get my hands on-“

He heard the dull whoosh seconds before Steve shouted to watch out, and he moving out of the way at the reflection in the glass. Another metal ball, this one as tall as the suit he was in. Tony watched it slam into the building, then start to drop down again. He changed position and flew down next to the ball, watching its descent but stopped short when his HUD flickers and red warnings started to pop up. There was a ripple in air again, and the ball simply vanished. Tony’s eyes widened and he straightened up to rise up in the air.

“I’m detecting an anomaly, Sir,” Jarvis said once most of the warnings had disappeared. The space where the object had disappeared was highlighted in the HUD as numbers and equations started to appear next to it. “I am unable to identify what it means, but it would mostly resemble readings from the method that Mr Odinson uses to travel.”

“The rainbow bridge he’s always talking about?” Tony asked with a frown. “What did his girl call it? Einstein something, uh, Einstein-Rosen bridge. Is it like that?”

“I am comparing to the research on file now, Sir.” Tony nodded and flew back up.

“War Machine, Falcon, be careful,” Tony warned, jumping back on comms. “Getting some weird readings out here, and the last projectile just vanished in thin air. Might be looking at something like a portal that Thor uses.”

“Seriously?” Rhodey didn’t sound surprised, just resigned that this was actually happening.

“I’m not seeing anything else around the Tower anyway,” Sam reported. “Maybe it’s best we go back in before something else pops up? I’m really not looking forward to leaving Earth.” Tony couldn’t fault his logic, he hated portals.

“Agreed,” Steve said to them. “You three come back inside-“

“I’ll be fine,” Tony told him. “Jarvis pick up the readings, so I’m not going to accidentally fly into one.” The ‘Again’ is left unsaid. “I still need to know what exactly it is we’re up against. They seemed to be getting bigger and bigger, and if it gets too much, then it will actually break into the Tower.”

Tony flew back to the attacked floor and saw Steve standing closer to the window, looking like he was inspecting something, his shield on his back. Tony flew a bit closer then frowned. “Hey, Cap, are you-“

“That last one hit a different spot,” Steve said with a nod. He pointed over to his right where there were signs of slight crinkling and scratches from the hits, but there was a fainter spot.
“But why change spots?” Tony asked mostly himself. “Keep hitting the spot enough and you weaken it, making it easier to break through. The way these things are growing, it wouldn’t even take that long.”

“I’m starting to think that perhaps these aren’t deliberate attacks anymore,” Steve said. Tony saw Rhodey and Falcon walking back over to Steve, looking at the windows as well. “Anyone with half a strategy, even a last minute one, would know to keep assaulting the same spot. This doesn’t feel very organized to me.”

“This doesn’t feel very-“

“Tony!”

Tony barely had time to turn, the repulsors already working to correct his position, but not enough to stop himself from getting slammed into. He was crushed briefly against the glass before his HUD went dark, parts of the suit falling off, and he was falling down. Tony gasped, feeling like electricity was shooting through his body, lighting up all his nerves, red hazing his vision slightly. He was sure he saw a shadow above him, something extending, but then there was a ripple in the air and something else shuddered through his body.

Landing heavily on his back, all the air was pushed from chest, and he whited out for a few seconds. The ground wasn’t soft, but it wasn’t as hard as concrete. Tony coughed at the dusty wind that was whipping around him, and at first he thought he might have been in the desert during a sandstorm. Tony brought up his bare hand to his eyes, and forced them open a bit. Wherever he was it was dark and overcast, and it was not any sand that he knew. He had a brief jolt, fearing that it was the place from his nightmares, but he could still see the light of the sun trying to break through the cracks in the clouds. Not space.

“Fuck!” Tony covered his mouth and eyes with his arm and turned over quickly. As he started to get up the storm seemed to die down, until Tony noticed that it hadn’t actually been a storm, but the dust being disturbed from something falling.

Tony had lost the helmet during the fall, and as he looked around he didn’t see any other parts of the suit. He had been left with a gauntlet and one boot, and he wasn’t about to take those off yet. He might be able to get a signal out to the others with those. He turned and started heading towards what had made the mini sandstorm that he had fallen into, and frowned when saw that it was of the same metal as the things that had been crashing into the Tower.

“What the-“ Tony froze suddenly, something in the back of his mind sensing something, wrong. Something red wandered into the corner of his vision on one side, snaking up and around. It wasn’t a person, or any kind of creature, but it felt like it was alive. Tony turned, every intention to run away from it, for once following what common sense was telling him to do, but stopped in his tracks when something suddenly wrapped around his chest. The red, it felt alive, but it wasn’t natural. It was like liquid moving in the air, something moving underwater, and it was probing around the arc reactor.

A deep sonic pulse traveled through the air, and Tony gasped as it passed through him. His hands shot to his chest, the red liquid seeping through his shirt, trying to merge with his arc reactor. It was too much, it was power, it was weak and yet strong, and it needed a place, needed a body, needed a source. Tony’s eyes water a little as sharp pricks of pain started to emanate in his chest.

“Anthony!” A voice shouted. Tony painfully moved his eyes to see someone running towards him. The red cap was unmistakable. “Anthony, what-“ Thor stopped when he saw what was surrounding him. “Do not move.”
“Don’t think, I can,” Tony gasped out. He closed his eyes briefly at a sudden lance of pain. Whatever was trying to get into the arc reactor didn’t like it. He felt something moving around it, getting underneath it, probing his chest, exploring what its purpose was inside of his body. When he was able to open his eyes again, he saw Thor approaching with some kind of golden box in his hands.

“I would question how you came to Svartlheim after I remove the Aether,” Thor told him, and Tony frowned. He opened his mouth to ask what Thor even meant, but found himself gasping again, this time with a shout of pain. The red liquid was being pulled, ripped, from his body, and it wasn’t happy about it. His body jerked forward, then fell to his knees just as suddenly. A large hand landed on his shoulder and he lifted his head up a little to see Thor kneeling in front of him. He had various cuts all over his face, some still sluggishly oozing blood, but he had a faint smile, and there was a red glow coming from the now lidded box. Tony thought Thor was talking, but the words washed over him as he let his head drop against Thor’s arm, closing his eyes and letting himself pass out.

Steve had been on alert for the past hour, pacing in front of the windows. Nothing else had come to attack the Tower, but there was still no sign of Tony. Bruce had a tablet and was running through the scans that Jarvis had taken from inside the suit, and before he lost contact. When Tony had started falling, Steve had taken off down the stairs, running, and some jumping, down all eighty-three flights. There had been startled walkers, and gawkers, who had been recording what had been happening in the air when they saw Iron Man outside. Pieces of the suit were still on the ground, but as soon as Steve got near them Jarvis was able to recall them all to the Tower. Well, all but two. Tony was nowhere to be seen.

“Seems that we weren’t the only ones to get unexpected visits through portals,” Natasha had said when Steve came back up to the floor where everyone still was. “Coulson got a call from his team. Apparently Thor was having his own problems over in London, and there were reports of random portals there, as well.”

“Did things come back?” Steve asked, stepping closer to her. He wasn’t about to lose Tony, especially not to a portal, not to one of Tony’s nightmares. He’d jump off the balcony and dive through the portal himself, if it had still been there.

“Yes and no,” she responded. “Still too early to tell, not enough information. But if Thor’s involved, I’m sure he’ll know how to reverse it.” Steve wasn’t as confident in that statement, but he was confident that he’d find Tony.

Bruce and Jarvis confirmed that the portal had disappeared just under two minutes after Tony had gone through it. That would have been the same time that Steve was running down the stairs, afraid that he might find Tony on the ground after falling over eight hundred feet.

The light suddenly darkened through the window, and there were several cracks of lightning. Steve turned to look out the window, then noticed that the clouds were swirling over just one spot, and that was the Tower. That was Thor. He was running again for the stairs, this time running up. If Thor was coming, and he was aiming directly for the Tower, the best place to land would be the roof. Tony had actually semi planned that anyway, redoing the roof with enough space for Thor to land on, but never specifically saying that that was what it was for.

There was a light rumble through the building as Steve burst through the door to the roof, and his breath caught in his throat for a second. Then he was sprinting across the roof, taking the tired looking Tony into his arms. He had been leaning against Thor’s side, Thor supporting most of his
weight, but he didn’t look hurt. Tony seemed to sag against Steve once his arm were around him, and he Tony was dropping his head, slotting his face into Steve’s neck against his shoulder.

“Tony,” he rumbled out, one arm holding his up, the other up by his neck and shoulders, taking comfort that he was there in his arms.

“Hey, babe,” Tony breathed out. “If I didn’t know better, I’d say you were worried,” he said quietly.

“Captain,” Thor greeted, and Steve moved his head slightly so he could look at the Asgardian. He nodded to him, but he wasn’t about to let go of Tony. “It is good to see you again, but I think that we should move so that Anthony lies down.”

“It’s Tony,” said man murmured, but didn’t complain with Steve hooked his arm under Tony’s knees and lifted him into his arms. “Just Tony.” Steve kissed Tony’s forehead and he hummed softly. “I like that.”

“I am glad to see that there is one who cares for the Man of Iron so well,” Thor said to Steve, moving forward to hold the door open for them. “I think that your stubbornness is good match for him as well. You will probably need to draw from it, as he needs to rest for at least a day after his encounter.”

Steve frowned, glancing at Tony, who was half dozing against Steve’s chest, then at Thor. He focused on the steps as he stepped through the door, and they made their way to the elevator that was already opening. “What do you mean encounter?”

“Unfortunately, An-Tony, fell victim to the effects of a recent battle I had to defend the Nine Realms,” Thor started to explain. Steve hoped that Jarvis was recording, or at least transmitting this to the rest of the team. He didn’t feel like repeating any of this, whatever it turned out to be. “A powerful cosmic force known as the Aether caused, what I’ve come to learn simply enough as, shifts in reality, to different worlds. It would seem that they reached all the way here to your fair city.”

“That would explain why things kept coming out of nowhere to slam into the Tower, and then disappearing just as fast.”

“Aye,” Thor nodded. “I had recently defeated the enemy that had taken the power of the Aether, and was going to collect it myself, when Tony arrived. The Aether was weak, and I’m afraid it was attracted to the device that is in his chest that powers his heart, and it tried to take a new host.”

Steve’s arms tightened minutely around Tony, and Tony batted at his shoulder with his bare hand. “I was able to extract, and contain the power.”

“Told I missed a hell of a view,” Tony murmured against Steve. “Was out for most of it, but Goldilocks took me to Asgard for a quick check-up. I’m fine, just tired.” Steve kissed Tony’s head, eyes shifting to look at Thor, who gave a nod to confirm Tony’s words.

“Thank you, Thor,” Steve told him. The doors opened, back to his old floor, where everyone was still waiting.

“Friends!” Thor greeted jovially as he walked out of the elevator. Steve followed at a more sedate pace with Tony in his arms.

“Stop worrying,” Tony told him quietly, patting his chest.

“Never gonna happen,” Steve replied, and a smirk crossed Tony’s face briefly.

“Love you.” Tony kissed the side of Steve’s jaw.
“I love you, too,” Steve responded, his lips pressing to Tony’s forehead. Bruce had moved from the couch, and was piling the pillows in one place for Tony. Steve acted his pillow, not letting go of Tony.
Chapter Notes

Hi guys! Long time no see! Sorry!! Unexpected, horrendous, shoulder pain put me out of commission for nearly a week. (I still have twinges) I couldn't type, could barely move, so I'm sorry guys. (I'm behind in my school work too, since, online college and I can't even sit up to actually work at a computer.) I'm good enough to be working for a bit again, and I'm coming back with updates that I missed! The next couple chapters (which will be coming before Tuesday), are going to be good, I hope. Big plans, big plans! <3

Unbeta'd, don't own Marvel stuff, and don't the song that belongs to Kelly Clarkson. (link to song at the end)

Steve turned on his heel, eyes scanning the battlefield quickly. He needed to find Tony, heeded to have eyes on the older man. He had heard the screeching of metal against concrete, and knew it was the sound of the Iron Man suit. “Hawkeye! I need eyes on Iron Man! Widow, status on the threat!” He jogged down the empty street, but there was no reply on the comms. “Hawkeye! Black Widow! Report!” Silence.

Reaching where he thought the suit had gone done he saw a crater dipping behind some crushed cars. Steve vaulted over one of the cars and slid down the side of the crater, then gasped when ice cold water splashed up his legs. He reached up to grab the edge and his hand slid down, and when he turned his head back he saw ice instead of dirt and concrete.

“Shit,” Steve breathed out and slammed the shield into the ice and tried to leverage himself up. The shield started to ice over as he put his hands on it and he was slipping back down. Instead of his feet meeting solid ground in the water he was falling back, and down, into more water. Steve took a quickly breath before he was sinking down, hand reaching for the shield.

“Steve.” The blonde twisted in the water, feeling his cowl slip off of his head, and he saw Tony in the water, without the suit, arc reactor a ghostly blue in the water. He tried to swim towards Tony, reaching out to try and grab onto him. Tony’s face was pale, dark circles under his eyes- his blue
eyes. “You said you would keep me safe, that you would stop them from getting me.”

Steve’s chest was burning, he was in need of air, but he needed to get to Tony more. His gloved, frozen, fingers were grasping one of Tony’s wrists and then Tony’s other hand was shooting out and wrapped around Steve’s neck, and started squeezing. “Is there no one you save?” Tony’s eyes narrowed at him, blue eyes flashing, and his hand tightened. Steve was suddenly gasping for breath, eyes widening as ice water was pouring into his mouth and down his throat. He was drowning again, in that damned plane, and he had failed everyone, had failed to save anyone.

He sucked in a breath through his nose and his eyes flew open. There was soft lights above him, and there was blessedly warm air filling his lungs. A hand was gently carding through his hair, and there was humming. Steve blinked his eyes rapidly and he saw warm brown eyes looking back down at him, and then he realized that his head was pillowed in Tony’s lap. It was Tony’s fingers in his hair, and Tony’s soft voice humming to him. He sought out Tony’s other hand, wrapping both hands around it and bringing it to his chest, feeling the warmth there.

“Hey there, Gorgeous,” Tony said softly. “You know me?” Steve nodded a little, trying to swallow. “That’s good, real good. You’re safe with me, in our bedroom, at the Tower, in New York, and a thousand feet above sea level. Jarvis has raised the temperature of the room, and there’s a nice warm blanket around you.” One of Tony’s hands was rubbing his scalp, the other was rubbing his chest where Steve had it trapped with his hands. “You’re doing so good, babe, so good. Just focus on me. Are you aware of how soft your hair actually is? Because this is downright unfair. I bet you don’t even use any product.” Tony had started to ramble, but he kept his voice low and gentle, and it was very melodic to Steve’s ears, working to calm him down. “You’ll have to get it trimmed soon, maybe next month. Peter will wanted to get his hair cut before school starts, and he’ll probably talk Wade into doing it as well. If you’re not attached to Jamie’s hair, maybe we can get baby’s first haircut.”

Steve made a short whine and shook his head. Tony snorted softly, fondly, and smiled at him. “You’re going to grow her hair out until someone clues her in that she doesn’t have to keep it that way.” Steve scrunched his nose up a little. “You have to learn how to do her hair then. These hands are mechanic’s hands, they don’t do braids and ponytails.” Steve raised an eyebrow at him. “Okay, so I’ll rephrase. These hands don’t want to learn how to braid hair.” Tony leaned down to kiss Steve’s forehead. “Do you want to see our babies? Will that help?” Steve nodded a little, his fingers starting to rub Tony’s, knuckle by knuckle.

Tony took his hand away from Steve’s head and leaned over slightly to grab something. He saw Tony’s tablet come down in front of his face, and it was lighting up. “Here we go. Jarvis, lets pull up the boys first, yeah?” A camera came up, in the corner of Peter’s room, showing the interesting position that Peter had fallen asleep in. He was laying on his stomach, cheek pressed into the pillow with his mouth open slightly. Steve smiled softly. “No wonder he drinks so much in the morning, he’s drying himself out like that. I should check his pillow in the morning.”
Steve kissed Tony’s knuckles, and the camera switched over to Wade. “What….. What are we looking at?” Tony asked softly. Wade was sleeping sideways, his feet resting on the wall that his bed was pushed against, and his head and arms were splayed back and hanging off the bed. “He’s going to fall off the bed. He probably already has, honestly.” The camera then switched over to Jamie’s nursery, the camera positioned to see inside of her crib. She had managed to shuffle down to the end of her crib, almost looking like Peter in his own bed. She was on her stomach, back end lifted up a little, and cheeks pressed to the mattress. “Yeah, that one’s yours,” Tony said with a smile in his voice.

“Gets it from you,” Steve said, a little raspy from his dry mouth. “I taught her the proper way.”

“Oh, is that so, Captain?” Tony asked with a raised brow. “I think you’ve spent more time with her when putting her down to sleep. No, no, that’s all you mister.” He leaned in to kiss his head again, and moved down a little to kiss his nose. “Gives her character. She’ll be a force to be reckoned with, for sure.” Tony put the tablet down on the bed and let his free hand come up to rub one of Steve’s cheeks.

“What were you humming?” Steve asked after a few minutes. “I liked it. It sounded familiar.” Tony wiggled his nose a little, and bit his bottom lip.

“Just a song, don’t worry about it,” he waved it off a bit. “How are you feeling? Wanna get up and maybe make some early breakfast? Wanna stay in bed for a bit? Nice long warm shower?” Steve narrowed his eyes a bit and tilted his head. “What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

“That didn’t sound like one of your usual songs, at least nothing I’ve heard down in the workshop,” Steve continued. The song was something he could focus on instead of his nightmare, instead of feeling like he let everyone important in his life down. Tony didn’t think that, Tony was still here, still loved him. He would protect Tony with his life. “But I have heard it.”

“Stop focusing on the song,” Tony whined a little, curling over Steve’s head and shoulders. “It’s not important.”

“You got it from my playlist!” Steve said suddenly, cutting him off. “That’s why I know-“ Tony put his hand over Steve’s mouth, making him laugh. He stuck out his tongue, licking a stripe across Tony’s palm and making him pull it back. “You were humming a pop song!”

“You are a philistine!” Tony declared, wiping his hand on Steve’s bare chest. “You licked me! In a non-sexy way!”
“You were humming one of my songs to me.” Steve got a silly little smile on his face, looking at Tony. He reached his hands up to tangle in Tony’s hair. “I almost didn’t recognize it, because you slowed it down. I don’t get to hear your voice enough, will you sing it to me?” He pulled Tony’s head closer to his, their foreheads resting together, Steve’s arms moving to hold onto him.

Tony wiggled his body slightly and closed his eyes, but he started to hum at first before singing softly. “So, here we are. That’s pretty far, when you think of where we’ve been.” Steve rubbed Tony’s cheek with his thumb. “No going back, I’m fading out all that has faded me within. You’re by my side,” Tony opened his eyes to give him a smile, “now everything’s fine. I can’t believe-“

“You found me,” Steve joined with Tony this time, “when no one else was looking. How did you know just where I would be?” Tony let one of his hands trail down Steve’s cheek to rub his ear lobe. “You broke through all of my confusion. The ups and the downs, and you still didn’t leave. I guess that you saw what nobody could see. You found me.”

“How do you always manage to find some of the cheesiest songs, with some of the best writing?” Tony’s fingers moved to rub a spot right behind Steve’s ear. “Seriously, it’s like you have a gift with all this pop music, and it’s hurting my music sensibilities.”

“Hurting it so much that you sneak into my playlist,” Steve replied, eyes closing and practically purring at Tony’s touch. “And it’s not exactly my gift, I just get pointed in the right direction and I go with it. Meg is constantly adding songs as well. She lived the Nineties, and early Two-Thousands, so she’s the resident expert.” Tony groaned and buried his face in Steve’s neck. Steve hummed and turned his head a little to kiss the side of Tony’s head. “I love you.” He felt Tony mouth the words back against his neck and he smiled.

“Also, I want you to think very hard about who’s influencing our kids sleeping habits very hard.” Tony lifted his head enough so that one eye peeked above Steve’s cheek. “You are curled around me, our heads are upside down in relation to each other, and neither one of us is laying the correct way in the bed.”

“Fuckin’ menace.” Tony punched Steve’s arm.

August 2012
Bucky was waiting on the roof as the quinjet landed, shoulder leaning against the wall. He ignored the looks he got from Clint and Natasha as they walked past him and into doors that led to one of floors designated for the Avengers, and for Coulson and Mary’s work in rebuilding new SHIELD. Steve stepped off the jet and raised an eyebrow when he saw Bucky, pulling his cowl off and rubbing his hair with his hand, shield on his back.

“I was gone, I have no control over him, or her,” Steve started saying as he walked, Bucky falling in step besides him. “I wasn’t even in the country, I have no knowledge of destruction that did or did not happen.”

“You were very quick to dissolve yourself of anything that happened,” Bucky commented as they walked down to the armory floor.

“I’ve learned very quickly,” Steve told him. “I also know that Tony had work to do with Stark Industries while we were gone, and he’s still on this kick to make you babysit. Mary and Coulson are enjoying it because it means they can catch up on work as well.” Steve tapped in a code, and let Jarvis run a scan before the doors opened and Bucky followed Steve towards his ‘area’. “I also know that Peter is his father’s son, and Wade is intense, and you are fresh meat for them.”

“Hey, thanks for the warning,” Bucky deadpanned as Steve put the shield in its case to be polished. Steve smirked a little. “Well, they’re menaces, including your little clone, but that’s not why I was waiting for you.”

“I’m unbelievably relieved to hear that.” Steve stripped off the top of his uniform and Bucky could see the bits of exhaustion in his shoulders. He remembered seeing the same set in a much smaller body, something that had followed up on the heels of breathless coughing, sleepless nights, and too much ignoring his limits. Their team had been going out and searching for stolen relics and artifacts from SHIELD and destroying Hydra bases. Bucky was more than happy most of the time to let them go out as he was still working on his memories, and he and Meg figuring out how to actually get the Winter Soldier under control.

“I think this is something that you’re gonna like then.” Bucky was sure that Steve was going to feel better.

Steve side-eyed him a little as he pulled off the gloves, then the boots and shoved them into a locker. “Do I have time to stick my sweaty body under some water?”
“If you make it quick,” Bucky told him.

“Grab me something to wear then, and I’ll make it speedy.” Steve walked backwards for a bit, looking at Bucky, then turned and headed for the showers. Bucky was positive that letting Steve get clean would be much appreciated.

Steve had taken him on a tour of the Avengers floors last month, after one of the training sessions, so Bucky knew where to go to grab a spare set of sweat pants, socks, and a tee for Steve. He dropped them on a bench, then took a seat. Old memories came back to him every so often, and lately a lot of them were of Steve, before the serum. He and Meg had managed to find a system where he was able to almost meditate, without actually meditating, and unlock his old memories. As he did that though, he was remembering things from the Winter Soldier, and now they needed to work on a system where he could start to come to terms with what he did, what he was forced to do. Bucky needed to work on starting to forgive himself as well.

Bucky threw a towel to Steve over the bar of the shower curtain when the water shut off. “Don’t want to make Tony jealous?” Steve asked with a bit of a laugh in his voice when the towel came sailing over.

“No, just don’t want to see your naked ass again,” Bucky snorted out. “Saw enough of that even before the Army. Tony can call dibs on all that.”

“He does.” Steve opened the curtain and grabbed the clothes next to Bucky. “He does it happily.”

“We’re getting into an area I don’t need to know anything about,” Bucky said with a slight grimace. Steve stepped behind Bucky to quickly pull on the clothes, and towel dry his hair enough.

“You haven’t told Tony that, have you?” Steve asked as he stepped over the bench, and Bucky pushed himself up to walk next to Steve. Bucky didn’t answer right away and Steve let out an involuntary snort of laughter. “You did, and you realize your mistake. He’s going to attempt to do copious amounts of Public displays of affection now in front of you. Thanks a lot, Buck. Now, it’s not only you who suffers.”

“Like you suffer!” Bucky pushed Steve’s back, making him almost stumble into the elevator and Steve grinned. “Punk.”

“Jerk,” Steve grinned at him.
The ride down was short, and they stopped at the main floor of the Penthouse, and Bucky stepped out first to lead the way. He stopped before they entered the large living room, and he made a sweeping motion with his arm. Steve stepped in, then stopped and tilted his head as a smile came over his features.

Tony was on the floor, at one point having propped himself up against the couch, but had since moved to his side. Peter was tucked under one Tony’s arms, and Jamie was laying on top of Peter and Tony’s arms, while Wade was on his back and draped over Tony’s hip. All four of them were fast asleep, a couple of pillows, and blankets, haphazardly around, and over and under them. Tony’s tablet was pushed away, and he was still wearing his black work pants, but he had discarded the tie and button down shirt and was just in a black undershirt. Jamie had pulled off his socks, and they were nowhere to be found.

“He came back up from the offices early,” Bucky whispered to Steve, who couldn’t look away from pile of humans on the floor. “Offered to take the kids from us, and you know I jumped at the chance. I came up a few hours later cause I found one of Jamie’s toys and found them like this. I don’t know how Wade can be comfortable like that.”

“He sleeps weirdly in a bed, too,” Steve said softly. “It’s Tony’s hip that I’m going to be concerned about later. Jarvis? Did you get a picture of this?” The lights dimmed softly in response and Steve nodded. “Thanks, Buck, I got this from here.” Bucky rolled his eyes a little and clapped a hand on Steve’s shoulder before heading back for the elevator.

Steve walked over quietly, and slid down on the floor, wedging himself between Tony and the couch. He reached down and lifted Wade’s legs so that he was now sleeping on both Steve and Tony, and shook his head at the weirdness of the sleeping position. His arm went out to wrap around Tony’s waist and he gently dropped a kiss on the back of Tony’s neck. The sleeping man hummed a little and turned his minutely.

“Shhh,” Steve whispered by his ear. “Just me, go back to sleep.”

“Can’t,” Tony murmured, leaning his head back against Steve. “Was waiting for you.”

“I’m here now, mission’s done so I’m staying put.” Steve kissed the shell of his ear, his other arm moving so his fingers could rest in Tony’s hair. “I didn’t know that kids were the new fashion accessory though.” Tony snorted softly and Steve smiled.
“They’re doing their best to make me feel old,” Tony whispered back, his voice clearing of the sleep it was laced with. “I’m already feeling the aches in my arm, and my hip thanks to Wade.”

“I’ll give you a rub down later,” Steve said with a smirk, letting out a small ‘woof’ of air when Tony managed to elbow his stomach.

“No dirty talk when I’ve got kidlets all over me.”

“I’m happy staying like this for a while,” Steve told him, glancing over Tony’s shoulder to see Peter and Jamie, faces relaxed in the sleep. “At least Peter’s mouth isn’t open yet.”

“Jamie started off asleep on the floor,” Tony told him, and Steve had to bite his lip when he saw her start to shuffle again. She was inching herself up closer to Tony’s face, moving like some kind of bug. “She crawled up Peter, then turned sideways, and she just keeps doing it. It’d be cute, if she wasn’t moving all across my body.”

“Nah, it’s still cute,” Steve said. “Look at this precious creature, she just wants to be closer to her family.”

“Then she can be closer all over your aging body. Seriously, I don’t think I can move now, my body has locked down. You’re going to have to get a stretcher and slide me on like a mummified corpse.” Steve rolled his eyes and Tony leaned his head back.

“Glad to see the office didn’t kill your sense of dramatics,” Steve said as he pressed another kiss to Tony’s neck. “How long have you guys been asleep?”

Tony hummed a little in thought. “Maybe a couple of hours. Suppose it’s time that Jamie woke up, if we want any chance of sleeping through the night at least.”

“I just got here, though,” Steve almost whined.

“Then roll on your back and pick up the baby,” Tony said with a soft chuckle. “We don’t have to physically get up, someone just needs to wake her, and preferably the boys, up from a nap. Go on, Papa, do your parental duty.” Steve grinned against Tony’s skin when he said Papa, something warming in his chest when Tony reminded him that he actually was a parent now, and a parent with Tony no less.
“Later, you’ll tell me why you came back up early?” Tony turned his head to look at Steve. “I know you had enough paperwork to keep you busy well up until dinner.”

“Yeah, later,” Tony said quietly, biting back a groan when Steve managed to slide Wade off of him. “Oh, oh that hurts now. I can’t move, Steve, I think my body has actually locked up.”

“You’ll need to move, to stretch out. And I wasn’t joking about giving you a massage later.” Tony turned his head, seeing Wade laying over Steve’s legs now, shooting a smile at him. Steve leaned over, pressing a kiss to Tony’s cheek, then wrapped his arms around Jamie. She made little whine, then settled in Steve’s arm, against his chest.

“You’re supposed to be waking her up, not giving her a new place to sleep.” Tony murmured, his arm wrapping a little tighter around Peter.

“But she’s so cute when she’s asleep,” Steve said, smiling.

“And quiet, you’re forgetting to say quiet.”

“You’re forgetting to say the boys are quiet,” Steve corrected. “For some reason, those two get her riled up.”

“She likes to have fun,” Wade mumbled suddenly, making Steve jump a little. “She’s not so bad, for a baby, and she likes it when we teach her stuff.”

“Forget about me corrupting her,” Tony said, glancing at Steve. “These two are going to do it all on their own.” Steve snorted and they both smiled. Steve started to move his legs, making Wade bounce. He yelped then laughed as he tried to wrap his arms around Steve’s legs to make him stop.

Peter whined a little, curling into Tony’s chest, and Jamie started to open her eyes, looking at Steve. “Oh, I know, waking up is the worst feeling in the world. I’m a horrible person, how could I do this to you.”

“Your sarcasm is showing,” Peter said muffled into his chest, and Tony snorted with a laugh.
“Wake up, mini-me, Pops is home.” He smiled when Peter popped up from his position. “Yeah, I thought that would get you.” Tony grunted when Peter crawled over him to get to Steve, groaning when he rolled over onto his stomach. “My aching body.”

“Papa!” Peter snuggled down into the space between Tony and Steve, hugging the blonde, careful of Jamie, even though she giggled. “Are you staying home?”

“I’m home for a while, yeah,” Steve said with a smile. “Got some art and self-defenses lessons to catch up, now don’t we?”

“Yeah we do,” Peter said with a big nod. “School’s gonna start soon, so we have do as much as possible!”

“See, now you can’t argue with logic like that,” Tony said, face smooshed into the floor. “School will be starting a couple of weeks, and they’ll be in fifth grade. Do you know how important that is? It’s the Senior class of elementary school.”

“You’re dramatic,” Wade mumbled.

“You’re not wrong,” Steve said, smirking.

“Betrayed!” Tony wailed, making the boys giggle a little, which made Jamie giggle. “I’ve been betrayed!” Steve leaned his head in to whisper in Peter’s ear. Tony yelped and started to wiggle away when Peter started to tickle the back of his neck. “Betrayal!” He laughed and Wade actually cackled before joining in to help Peter. Jamie was pushing herself up, and Steve wrapped an arm around her waist before tickling her secret spot, making her squeal with laughter.

Tony hummed as he wrapped himself around Steve in bed. “She’s asleep?”

“Out like a light,” Steve nodded, wrapped his arm around Tony’s back. “So, how was your day?”
“You’re not very subtle, Steve,” Tony said as he burrowed his face into Steve’s side.

“Neither are you when you wrap around me like an octopus before you’ve even fallen asleep.” Tony grumbled a little, and Steve moved his fingers to rub circles on the back of his neck.

“Well, Jarvis got a hit on Meg’s Aunt.” Steve tilted his head a little. “I had my suspicions that Hilda was back in the US, but still had Jarvis running a lot of checks over in Europe, too. Took a while, but back in April she came back to the States. Jarvis hasn’t been able to get a hit since then.”

Steve nodded a little as he listened. “So, now we start trying to track her through surveillance cameras?”

“Something like that,” Tony said quietly. “I, uh, found something today. I think she’s working with Colonel Wilson.” Steve sat up a little and stared at Tony. “Yeah, I know. I’m not exactly inspired with confidence.”

“Please tell me that you have locations on at least one of them,” Steve asked, keeping eyes on Tony.

“Last I could confirm, Wilson was still in DC,” Tony told him. “I still don’t have a present location on Hilda though.”

“How did you find out that they were working together?”

“Once I found out where she came in, I checked old videos, and saw that someone came to pick her up. A nice black car with plates that trace back to the Colonel.” Tony huffed out a breath. “I don’t wanna tell Bucky or Meg yet, because we might see our new seasonal friend, and he might take another trip down to DC.”

“That’s, something we don’t need,” Steve let out a sigh. “I’d want eyes on Hilda as quickly as possible, we don’t need another Hydra resurgence right after exposing them. And we don’t need her making contact with Hydra over in Europe, or even Strucker.”

“You think there’s a chance that hasn’t happened already?” Tony asked, pushed his face back against Steve. “Notice anything weird on your mission?”
Steve hummed and shook his head. “No, it was a smaller base, and they were already clearing out. We managed to retrieve a couple of things for SHIELD, but not the scepter. Coulson’s team is taking care of more searches.” He turned in the bed a little, holding Tony a bit tighter. “No sign of the Enhanced, either.”

“I’ve got Jarvis watching, and searching,” Tony said against his skin. “I think we can continue to work on standard operating procedure for the time being.” Steve made a noise and Tony kissed his neck. “I think you need another vacation.”

“We spent nearly a week in Cali a couple months ago,” Steve said, pressing his nose to Tony’s hair.

“A vacation without the kids. And not somewhere huge and public, private, just us.” Tony’s hand moved up and down Steve’s chest. “Just think about it. Maybe after the boys start school. I’m sure Granma and Granpa Fitzgerald will be more than happy share babysitting duties with the Buckster.”

“One day, he will take revenge for that nickname,” Steve murmured, closing his eyes.

“That should be a fun day.”

Chapter End Notes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFd0hmDYZuE
The song that Tony was singing. Just, uh, imagine it slower, and like it was done acoustically. Romantic like.... :D
September 2012

Chapter Summary

Steve destresses Tony, in the best way possible.

Chapter Notes

Fluuuuff all around! There baby fluff, and Uncle fluff, and boyfriend fluff, and implied sex fluff! Fluff fluff fluff. Even teddy bears can't handle this much fluff. Go forth, and be fluffed! For the fluff endeth next chapter. :'(  

September 2012

Steve watched Tony from just outside the living room, saw him reading through something on his tablet, but he knew that he was going through Howard’s journals again. Mary slid up behind him, and he turned his head back a little. “Told Tony yet?” She asked, leaning across from him.

Steve shook his head. “I want to keep most of it a surprise. This is about destressing him.”

“Hopefully it does the same for you,” Mary told him. “Yeah, he’s got a lot people after him because of what he knows, but you’re taking on the protection detail. For all of them. And I know a number of those people who wouldn’t complain if they were able to get their hands on you.”

He took a breath and looked back at Tony. “Doesn’t help that everyone knows we’re together now, almost like projecting our weaknesses.” Steve crossed his arms over his chest. “I’m sorry for putting Peter in possible danger,” he said quietly.

Mary raised an eyebrow at him, turning more to face him. “Really? Tony’s already tried to apologize for that, and tried to distance himself from us when Peter was younger. After Afghanistan he went back and forth on that decision. But now, he’s embraced it, as much as he can, and just makes sure to care for, and protect, Peter as much as he can. He’s a pretty smart guy when no one’s paying attention.” She smiled at him and rubbed his arm gently, before turning and walking away.

Steve watched Tony again, letting a soft smile show up. “Jarvis?”
“Everything is all set, Captain,” the AI responded in the hallway. “There is a car waiting to take you and Sir to the jet. The house has been prepared to your specifications.”

“No, just to pull Tony away from work,” Steve mumbled. He pushed himself up straight and walked into the living room. “Hey, babe.” He leaned over the couch and kissed Tony’s cheek, pulling his attention away from the tablet. “Can I interest you in a distraction?”

Tony hummed, leaning his head back. “You probably could, for a little bit. What are you thinking?”

His arm traveled up behind him to slide his fingers through Steve’s hair. “Mary’s got the kids tonight, so we could actually get some alone time in.”

“I was thinking some alone time for a few days,” Steve said, leaning down to and kissing along the shell of Tony’s ear. “Maybe head to Malibu.” Tony raised an eyebrow. “We didn’t to spend a lot of time there before, and it was nice.”

Steve wrapped an arm across Tony’s chest, pressing their cheeks together. “I’m thinking that maybe that vacation idea of yours isn’t too horrible. It’s good even.”

“Oh, is it?” Tony chuckled. “Are you sick of the public appearances already?”

“I can’t do another charity event,” Steve groaned. “Our PR team is good, there’s no doubt, but I can’t keep dressing up in the suits just to try and show the press, well, whatever it is they want to see about us.”

“I told you that this would be a whole new experience,” Tony said, turning a little so he could look at Steve. “The press was nothing like what you had to deal with back in the War. I’ll try to protect you.” Steve snorted softly and pressed a kiss to the side of his mouth. “You’re handling it with a lot of patience, that’s for sure. Super proud of you, Soldier.”

“Hmmmm,” Steve rumbled a little. “I need a break, and so do you. I’ve already cleared it with Mary and Phil, and even Bucky’s gonna pitch in. Of course Rachel and William will be more than happy to spoil the kids while we’re gone.”

“You have put a lot of work into this.” Tony smiled at him, pushing the tablet on the couch, and wrapped an arm around Steve’s neck. “I like when you’re prepared.”

“Good, because I already have a bag packed for you, and there’s a car waiting, and the jet is all ready to take off.” Steve grinned at Tony’s slightly impressed look. “I’m learning quickly how to
utilize what’s available. I happen to be dating this guy who has a private jet, and more than one house. Seems to me that there is no use in ignoring it, so I’ll use it.”

“Ooo, aren’t you a luck man,” Tony smirked a little at him. “You must be dating a very successful man. Loaded with lots of money.”

“Yeah, he has that, but so do I.” Steve pressed a soft kiss to Tony’s lips. “I’m not with him for his money, and I have no interest in taking over his business.” He kissed him again, lips lingering for a second longer. “He’s pretty good looking, too, but he’s got this personality that I’m drawn to too. Oh, and he’s got this kid, he’s pretty damn adorable.” Tony let out a huff of air through his nose. “You know, actually, now that I think about it, I think it’s the kid. Yeah,” Steve nodded, looking off into the distance. “Sorry, I’m only with you because I like Peter better.”

Tony let out an exaggerated sigh. “Yeah, I figured that was it. Peter is by far, more adorable than I am.” Amber eyes looked at Steve. “I have a confession. I had you move in so I could spend more time with Jamie. She’s far cuter than you are, Rogers. I need to raise a girl alongside my boy to make my life complete.” Steve snorted with laughter, and Tony couldn’t help but smile. “Stop being too good for me.”

“Stop working,” Steve replied, snaking his other arm around Tony. “Some on, we’re taking a few days off, while Peter and Wade are in school so they don’t actually notice that we’re missing.” Tony leaned up so Steve didn’t have to lean so far over the couch. He tilted his head to catch Steve’s lips. “Mmmm,” Steve smiled. “More of that, but in Malibu, when we’re alone.”

Tony hopped over the back of the couch. “I’m good, let’s go.” Steve laughed and wrapped an arm around his waist, trying to keep up with him. “You said even Barnes was gonna get in on the kidlet situation?”

“Meg’s working on commissions, and her, Mary, Julie, and Rachel kind of surrounded him.”

“The Sisterhood strikes again!” Tony cackled, pulling Steve along to the elevator. “Be careful Steve, they’re going to try and pull Jamie into their group before long.”

“Bite your tongue!” Steve exclaimed. “Not my precious angel!”

“Yes!” Tony turned to face him, putting his hands on Steve’s cheeks. “It’s like a cult, Steven, and there is no fighting it. You don’t want them to turn on you, trust me.”
Steve pursed his lips as he tried not to smile at the seriousness of Tony’s tone. “To turn on me? They’re not a coven.”

“Don’t joke about that.” Tony pointed a finger in Steve’s face, making his eyes go crossed a little. “I think they could be more dangerous than Dr Doom if they put their mind to it.” Steve creased his brows. “Okay, should have picked a better villain. But, my point is, when we come back, your bestie is going to be a babysitting pro, or a broken man.” Now Steve was raising his eyebrows. “These are our kids we’re talking about.”

Steve took a second to consider it, letting Tony pull him into the garage. “You may have a valid point.”

“I always have valid points.” Tony opened the door to the waiting car, and Steve barely resisted the urge to roll his eyes. “To the jet!”

Bucky stood in front of the couch, arms crossed over his chest. Peter and Wade were sitting by the coffee table, working on their homework, but they kept stealing glances at Bucky. Jamie was sitting on the floor, one of those learning toys that Steve wanted her to play with in front of her. Thankfully this one didn’t make noise.

“What are you doing?” Meg whispered behind him, not wanting to disrupt the boys.

“I’m suspicious of them.” Bucky said, still looking between the two boys, a glance down to Jamie to make sure that she was still behaving.

“They’re kids, James,” she said, raising an eyebrow at him. “You could always put Jamie with the twins when they wake up.”

“Nope,” he shook his head. “No more corruption. If they ever joined forces, we’d all be doomed.” Meg let out a huff of laughter.
“They’re breaking down your defenses, aren’t they?” Bucky narrowed his eyes a little, then felt Meg slip something into his pocket. “Those make for great bribes for the boys.”

Bucky reached into his pocket as Meg walked across the room to grab her tablet. He looked at the green wrapped chocolate mints. “What about the little one?” He turned his head over, taking note that Peter and Wade had noticed and were moving closer to him.

“She’s a sucker for being held,” Meg informed. “And socks. She likes socks, and feet.”

“That’s a little weird.” He put out one finger, pressing backwards on Wade’s head before he could grab the mint from Bucky’s hand.

“Conor to chew the foot of his stuffed animal, and Rowan likes to play with fingers. Babies have things they like to do,” she said, shrugging a little. Meg reached into the pocket of her sweater jacket, tossing two mints over to the coffee table, drawing the boys back towards their homework. “If they can focus on that for longer than a month, then I’m happy. Means they’re learning to focus, and they’ll retain learning better. I’m hoping for a fast potty-training session myself.”

“You’re optimistic.” Bucky grunted, unwrapping the mint to pop it in his mouth. His eyebrows went up at the taste, and Meg smirked.

“Bribes, James, bribes.” She motioned towards the boys that were back to work again. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I need to work how to dye glass, and entertain the other two babies in this apartment. Sticking you with five kids would probably overload your brain.”

“I take offense to that.” Meg looked at him in silence. “I didn’t disagree with you,” he grumbled. She walked away with a small smirk.

Bucky glanced back down at Jamie, and saw that she was looking up at him. He frowned a little. “She likes you Uncle Bucky,” Peter said, not looking away from his homework. “Papa said that she was named after you.”

“Obviously she’ll like you,” Wade pitched in. Bucky swore he saw a smirk. Suspicious.

He looked back down when he felt little hands tapping at his feet. His toes rolled on instinct and Jamie let out a little giggle. She pushed down on one of his feet again, trying to grip his sock. “Oh
no, no, not my socks.” He took a step back and Jamie let out a sound of surprise, then looked up with big blue eyes. Bucky’s eye almost twitched, seeing a younger Steve Rogers pull those same pitiful eyes. He sighed and sat down on the floor across from Jamie, legs crossed.

She clapped her hands and cooed, then crawled the foot between them, trying to crawl into his lap. His brows creased as he lifted her up a bit. She batted at his hands, then settled down in his lap. Bucky studied her as she pulled on his pants, trying to get to his socks. Jamie made a little whine then turned her head to look up at him, tugging on his pant leg again.

“What was that noise?” Bucky said as she whined again. “It’s so distressing.”

“She’s trying to work out why she can’t get to what she wants,” Peter said, looking over at them. “She’ll keep working at it until she figures out the problem.”

“Stubborn,” Bucky snorted softly.

“But, she will start crying soon,” Wade warned as Jamie let out a third, longer, whine when she couldn’t move Bucky’s leg. “I really don’t think you want that.”

Bucky shifted his leg, his foot sticking out now, and Jamie let out a delighted squeal, instantly leaning forward to grab at his sock. “This is really weird, kid,” he said when she managed to pull it off. Jamie put her foot next to his, then started pointing at the different toes, babbling, like she was teaching Bucky something. He tilted his head a little. “You don’t say? Yeah, okay, go ahead and tell me more.” If anything, she seemed to get louder, more excited.

“She likes it when people talk to her,” Peter said with a smile. Jamie looked at Peter with a smile, throwing a couple squeals his way, before looking back at Bucky, and touching his longer toes. Bucky quirked a little smile at the girl. She was Steve Rogers’ kid, Bucky had no doubt about that. He looked forward to Steve going through what he had, every time he had to drag the punk from an alley. He would absolutely deny that she had wormed her way into his heart already.

Steve looked around the mansion as he brought the bags in. It was different than the Tower, and he had briefly seen it earlier in the year, but now he’d have a little more time to enjoy it. Or maybe not, with his plans.
“I’m noticing that a lot of the food here is easy to make,” Tony called out from the kitchen. “Lots of snacks, too. Last time I saw stuff like this,” he paused a bit and Steve walked to the entrance of the kitchen. Tony looked at Steve with a knowing smirk. “Well, I think I have an idea of what you have planned.”

“Yeah?” Steve asked, letting out a little chuckle. “Guess we’ll see if you’re right, huh?” He lifted the bags a little, then turned to head for the stairs. “I’m putting these in the room, maybe you can make us something for lunch?”

“You’re trusting me in the kitchen?” Tony said, raising his voice so Steve could hear him. “I didn’t know you wanted to see if you were immune to food poisoning!” Steve snorted as he jogged up the stairs.

“Just make some sandwiches!” Steve dropped the bags on the bed before taking a minute to put the clothes in the dresser drawers. He didn’t have plans to use too many clothes, but it was always better to be prepared. On the bedside table he put Tony’s tablet, in case there actually was a little bit of downtime, and he put his sketch book and pack of pencils next to it. Next he moved to the bathroom and opened the linen closet and saw several sets of extra bedsheets and blankets.

“Jarvis? Can you help me make some customs settings for the bath?” Steve asked as he moved to take stock of the rest of the bathroom. There was plenty of body wash and shampoo, towels and washcloths, (Steve had no real intention of doing laundry until they were getting ready to go back to New York).

“Of course, Captain Rogers,” the AI replied helpfully. “Taking into account the plans you have discussed with me, I have made a couple templates that I think would suit your thoughts.” The display by the wall of the shower tub combo lit up and Steve moved towards it. He looked over the different settings that Jarvis was proposing and nodded.

“I’m thinking you’re starting to get to know me, Jarvis,” Steve responded. “Alright, so no contact unless it’s emergencies, or about the kids.” He went back to the bedroom, putting their bags under the bed, and heading back downstairs. He was a little relieved when he didn’t actually smell something trying to cook.

“I suppose I now know why there’s so much sliced meat,” Tony said, offering a plate to Steve when he walked in. “It’s kind of hard for me to mess this up.”
“Only if you add too much salt, to something that doesn’t need it.” He leaned to kiss Tony before they both sat down at the island bar.

“I thought seasoning was our friend?” Tony asked with a little smirk. “Isn’t that what they were saying on one of those cooking shows you watch?”

“You make it sound like that’s all I watch.” Steve moved his leg over to push at Tony’s. “I’m just trying to get a handle on all the stuff that’s made today.”

“You enjoy it!” Tony laughed and elbowed Steve’s arm. “You’ve been back for almost three years, you bum.”

“There’s never enough to learn in the kitchen, Tony,” Steve argued, taking a bite of his food. Tony rolled his eyes with a smile.

“Nothing wrong with liking those cooking competitions, just as long as you don’t try putting me on one.”

Steve hummed in thought. “I bet you could beat them all, though. And, you could make more than pasta.” Tony squawked and turned big eyes to Steve. “You can’t live on pasta and hot chocolate forever.”

“There are other people who make food, for pay,” Tony pointed out. “There are even people who get paid to bring the food to houses.” Steve snorted and laughed. “Come on, I’m serious.”

“Maybe I should put you up for one of those shows,” Steve said, and he almost smirked when Tony realized that he was kind of serious. “Getting taught by some amazing chefs, I bet you’d make it all the way to the end. You have the taste buds to recognize good food, you just need a little help on the how of preparing it.”

“This is bordering on blasphemy, babe,” Tony told him. “I’m gonna start to worry if you suddenly want me to cook something, and take me on a little road trip.”

“Well, it helps that we’ve already been outed, so we wouldn’t need to put on a disguise for the taping.” Tony let out a little moan and dropped his head back. “I haven’t put this much thought into this, in case you were wondering. We should try it some time.”
“I don’t have like eight weeks to spare,” Tony pointed out. “I bet you had to work with Pepper to clear out these few days to spend here.” Steve leaned over to kiss him. “Mmmm, that’s a sure fire way to stop my rambling.”

“Obviously not if you’re still talking,” Steve said with a devious smirk, then kissed him again before he could say anything else. Tony hummed against Steve’s lips, then mimed zipping his lips. “Jarvis, did you record that?” He laughed when Tony punched his shoulder. “I’ve put a bit of thought behind these next few days, and I’m confident that you’re going to enjoy it. And yes, lots of simple food to make, because I really don’t think we’re going to be up for making meals that take too long to prepare and cook.”

“Someone’s ambitious,” Tony said, leaned his shoulder against Steve now. He bit his lip a little and Steve shifted his eyes to look at him. Steve pressed a kiss to his cheek before leaning his head against Tony’s. “Feels a little weird, not having to get little Bit up from a nap, or get dinner ready for Peter. I was still adjusting to him being back in school.”

“Little Bit?” Steve asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Something I’ve heard from a British show, or something,” Tony said with a shrug. “How long do you think we’ll last before we’re calling for a video chat with the kids?”

“I’d like to hope that we can last until tomorrow,” Steve chuckled, wrapping an arm around Tony’s waist. “We can try to distract each other.”

“I like the way your mind is working right now.”

Bucky leaned against the door of the car at the school, watching as kids started to trickle out. Parents were closer to the doors, talking to each other, and talking to some of the teachers and staff that came out as well. For some reason though, his eyes were drawn to a woman with braided back blonde hair that was starting to grey. She walked with a slower pace, but with a purpose, waiting for someone. Like half the other adults that were there.

Wade came out first, and the woman raised a hand to him and walked over to the kid. Bucky’s eyes
narrowed a bit and he pushed himself away from the car. The woman and Wade were talking, and Wade pointed over towards Bucky. She put a hand on his shoulder, giving it a squeeze before she turned to head in Bucky’s direction. He saw the little frown on Wade’s face before he was heading back to the school doors, most likely to get Peter.

The woman kept her head down enough that Bucky couldn’t see her face clearly, until she was crossing the street, and was almost right in front of him. “Been a long time since I’ve seen you, Soldier.” He straightened his body and looked at her, and a name came forefront to his mind.

“Probably not the smartest idea to be around here, Hilda Mueller.” She smirked at him and nodded.

“True, but I was little Wade’s favorite babysitter when his parents were working.” She glanced back towards the school, then faced Bucky again. “Are you enjoying this little slice of freedom?” She lowered her voice and stepped closer to him. His finger twitched, the knife sliding down his arm. “I’m playing the long game, something that even you don’t know about. How long do you think you’ll be safe in that little Tower? Under protection of Tony Stark? Steven Rogers?” Hilda snorted softly. “We’ll get them both, preferably alive, but we’ll make do.” Her hand grabbed his wrist as the knife slipped into his palm, slamming it back against the car. “You won’t make a scene, not in front of the school. Lucky for you, neither will I.” She tapped his nose, then took a step back. “I’ll be seeing you soon, Soldier. Better get those two boys home, yeah?” She started to walk away from him. “Tell my niece hello, would you?”

Bucky growled and took a stepped after her, but stopped when he saw Peter and Wade walking over to him. She was right, he needed to get them back to the Tower. There was no telling how many eyes were watching them now, not if the woman that Tony had his systems searching for was able to waltz within ten feet of his son. Tony’s theory was confirmed about her knowing Wade’s father though, and that didn’t sit well with him.

“You know Miss Sarah, too?” Wade asked when they reached the car, Bucky opening the backdoor for them. He looked at the older boy, then nodded once. “Do you like her?”

Bucky shook his head no right away. “Only met her a couple of times.” The Winter Soldier remembered seeing her, but they didn’t interact, not really.

“Never really liked her,” Wade said to him as Peter climbed in the car. “Dad hired her, and Mom never met her. She was usually gone before Mom came home from work.”

Bucky dropped his hand on Wade’s head briefly. “She’s not coming back. Come on, let’s get back home. The Fitzgerald’s are making dinner tonight.” Wade nodded and hopped into the car. Bucky
did one last look around the area, and got in the driver’s seat. He’d tell Meg, and Jarvis when they
got back. Maybe the rest of the Avengers would take it seriously if it came from the AI. They could
come up with a plan before Tony and Steve got back, because those two did need the little break.

Steve looked at the sketchpad, his pencil dragging easy lines across the paper, then he smiled when he
looked back up. He was sitting at the end of the bed, Tony laying across the bed, face relaxed in
sleep, on his side with one arm under his head, the other splayed out on the bed. Steve’s eyes went
back down to the paper, sketching Tony, focusing on the peaceful look on his face.

Shortly after they ate, and caved in to make sure that Peter had done his homework, and that Jamie
was eating her food, Steve had implemented the no clothes rules. No clothes around the house,
unless they absolutely had to leave, or if they kids were on video chat. Day two, and Tony was
thoroughly enjoying the new rule. At the moment, part of the bed sheet was draped over Tony’s hip,
while Steve had pulled another part over his legs.

“I can feel your emotions,” Tony slurred out sleepily. Steve lifted his eyes to see Tony looking at him
with a lazy smile. “You’re ridiculously happy right now.”

“I’m not the only one,” Steve said with a little hum. He pushed the sketchbook to side, then stretched
over to kiss Tony. “I told you that this would be good for you.”

“Mmmm,” Tony wrapped his arm around Steve’s neck, pulling him closer. “For us. You’re a lot
more relaxed yourself.” He moved his fingers through the short hairs at the back of Steve’s neck.

“Ah-uh,” Steve hummed, smiling at him, moving Tony onto his back. “This is me treating you,
remember?” He leaned down, kissing the corner of Tony’s mouth, then moved down to his jaw,
trailing kisses across his skin. Steve moved, knees straddling Tony’s hips, and his hands pressed
against Tony’s chest. He felt the hitch of Tony’s breath when he nipped the skin of his neck.

“Shit, Steve,” Tony breathed out, his hands resting on Steve’s shoulders, digging his fingers into his
skin. He moved his head to the side, baring his neck a little more for Steve, moaning when Steve
moved his mouth, sucking harder. “I would love to take credit,” he sucked in a breath when Steve bit
down a little, “for the things your mouth can do, but fuck.” Steve chuckled a little against his neck.

“You said you felt the Universe move once,” Steve started to say, lips moving against his skin. Tony
hummed as he nodded. “Do you know-“

“You made it happen,” Tony breathed as he lifted his leg to hook around Steve’s knee. “Just that one time so far.” He swallowed and closed his eyes as his fingers moved against Steve’s skin. “But, I think we’re gearing up for a repeat.” Tony spread his hands out, feeling the warmth of his skin, feeling his skin start to bead with sweat.

“Tell me,” Steve said as he moved his head down, kissing across Tony’s collar bone. “Tell me everything you feel and see. Please?” One of his hands slid down Tony’s chest, down to his waist, tracing muscles, and bones down to his hip.

Tony let out a shuddered breath, back arching a little. “I can,” he took a breath, trying to put his thoughts together from the intense feelings rushing through his body. “I can feel your fingers against my skin. I can feel the ridges of your fingerprints.” He could feel Steve’s heartbeat through his fingers, and it was like it was vibrating through his body. He gasped when Steve’s hand trailed lower, brushing against his erection as he pushed the sheet off of his body. “I, uh,” Tony licked his lips as he tried to focus. “I felt, the fabric, every fiber.”

“What do you see?” Steve whispered against his skin, and Tony’s eyelids fluttered.

“Gotta stop,” Tony took a breath, “doing things like that, if you want me to talk. Fuck, that feels amazing. Steve, if you stop, I may strangle you.” Steve huffed out a laugh and it reverberated through Tony. “That, I uh, I could see it. I saw the vibrations of sound.” Tony opened his eyes and started to move his body, wanting more friction and heat, needing more of it.

“There’s, there’s sound, I mean, color, both?” Tony’s hand pulled Steve down, chest to chest, and he jerked his hips up into Steve’s hand. “When there’s sound, voices, moans, it’s color right now. Steve, I need you move more, please!” Steve’s chest moved as he chuckled, and Tony moaned, tipping his head back. “I am having a sensory overload, and I’m so damned touch sensitive right now that you’re driving me crazy!”

Steve leaned up so he could see Tony’s face, could see how expressive it was, eyes moving until they locked on Steve’s, breath coming out of his mouth in pants. “You’re stunning, but right now,” Steve trailed off, leaning back down to catch Tony’s lips, opening his mouth with his tongue, pulling more moans from Tony.

One of Tony’s legs was up and around Steve’s waist, and the blonde was smiling. “I’m serious, need more of you.”
“Want all of you,” Steve moaned against his lips, rolling his hips down against Tony.

“All yours,” Tony whispered. Tony’s brain was unable to process words past that, Steve finally moving the way he wanted, needed, their bodies pressed together, touching as much skin as they could. The only thing he need was Steve, the bedroom falling away from his sight. There it was again, everything, the Universe, around him and Steve.

Steve couldn’t help but look at Tony, seeing his brown eyes, warm, comfortable, feeling like home. Their breaths, quick and panting, matching up with each other, moving and feeling as one. Then he saw the sparks in Tony’s eyes, the color swirling and shining, and he couldn’t help but kiss him.

The lights burst behind their eyes, and Steve gasped. Tony’s back arched, hanging onto Steve.

Boneless bodies were laying against each other, Steve half on top of Tony, Tony’s arms wrapped around him as tight as he could. Both were still breathing in time with each other, even and steady. “That’s what you felt?” Steve asked later, pressing his lips to Tony’s shoulder. Tony hummed and nodded. “I think I felt it. I saw it in your eyes.” Tony’s eyes fluttered open to look at him, pressing his face into Steve’s hand that came up. “I love you, so much.”

“Love you, too,” Tony whispered through a smile. After a couple minutes, he let out a goofy little laugh and Steve raise his eyebrow a little. “Just, this is a little surreal to me. Me being in this bed, and happy, and with you, well, with anyone really.” There was almost a purr of happiness when Steve’s thumb started to rub gentle circles against his cheek. “The happiest I thought I could get was just being able to see my son a couple times a week. Thought we’d be doing the traveling from Manhattan to Queens for a while, and not just to drop them off at school. And you know, I was content with that.”

Steve watched him as he spoke, other arm wrapped around his side, fingers gently tracing against Tony’s skin. “When the arc reactor was killing me, I got all my affairs in order.” He let out a little groan, closing his eyes with an embarrassed smile. “I recorded a video for him, but, I thought I was the happiest I was going to get. I was ready to check out knowing that I tried to love my son the best I could. Then, I didn’t die, like, three times in one week, and I found out who you really were. Then you go and do this thing, making me fall for you, and then, holy crap, I found out I could actually be happier.” Tony looked at him and smiled, stretching his leg against Steve’s side. “Then you went and did something like this. Let me tell you Steve, I’ve had a lot of sex in my life, and I’ve never gotten close to how you make me feel. Even when you’re not making me see the meaning of life.”

Tony closed his eyes again, moving his head slightly when Steve’s soft lips were against his neck. “You already know what I thought my life was going to be like,” Steve told him. “And I got you
now, and I got Peter and Jamie, and hell, I even got Bucky back. I’m not letting you go, and I will do everything in my power to keep you. To keep this family.” Tony pushed his face into Steve’s neck. “I’m going to smother you with happiness.”

“If you can put up with my overworking, stubborn, and arrogant ass for this long, then who am I to stop you.” Steve smiled at Tony’s words, kissing his head.

A couple hours later, as he held onto Tony as he slept, he let the smile slowly slip away, mind slipping away into thoughts that he tried to keep buried in the back of his mind. If that’s what Tony really saw, and felt, what was happening? He and Tony were both technically human, no unnatural mutations, at least nothing that the Serum could have caused. So why was Tony literally seeing the universe? It didn’t sit right with Steve. He kissed Tony’s head again, closing his eyes.
This chapter is a little longer since I made you all wait for long. Life literally buried me, and I still can't see sunlight, but I have a chapter for you! Therrrrre's not a lot of fluff here..... Enjoy!

Bucky had his hands behind his head, legs stretched out on the bed, watching the stars light up on the ceiling. Jamie was on his chest, pointing every so often at one that blinked a little brighter than another. When Bucky didn’t say anything, she turned her head and patted his chest with her hand, pointing up again. “Yeah, I see it. I don’t know what it’s called though. Your Daddy would probably know though.” She seemed satisfied with his answer and turned her head back around.

“You know it’s way past your bedtime little squirt.” He told her, his fingers coming up to tap along her back. She made a little squeak, then whined and tried to push his hand away. “Oh no, Stevie trusted me with you, and you need to sleep.”

“No,” she batted at his hand, turning on his chest. Bucky raised an eyebrow at her. “Buh. No, Buh.”

“Shit, are you trying to say my name?” Jamie just smiled at him and put her hand on his nose. “Bucky, is that what you’re trying to say?”

“Buh-ee,” she said, giving a little giggle. “Buh-ee.”

“They are going to kill me.” Bucky smirked, despite his words. “Okay, so mission accomplished, you’ve endeared yourself to me. That doesn’t mean that I’m wrapped around your little finger.” He pointed at her with his metal arm, and she reached out to grab it. “Okay, figuratively, not literally.”

“She’s not even a year old, I don’t think she knows the different, yet.” Bucky turned his head and saw Steve in the doorway, smiling at them. Jamie turned her head and let out a squeal, throwing her arms up in the air for him. “Hey there, sugar! Why are you awake?” He walked in, picking her up. Bucky sat up and watched them. “Were you good for Uncle Bucky?”

“Buh-ee!” She proclaimed and Steve looked at Bucky.

“Oh yes,” Bucky said with a smug look.

“Tony’s going to call you every horrible nick-name every if she ever adds in the missing sounds,” Steve informed him, bouncing Jamie in his arms. “You thought Buckster was bad?”

“I’m not a fan of Buckaroo, or Bucky Bear, or Winter Buck, or Seasonal, or-“

“I get it,” Steve interrupted him. “You do know that Peter’s first word was Stark.”

“So your precious bosom buddy is going to want her first word to be something along the lines of Stark, Tony, Dad, or Daddy?” Bucky raised a brow. “You’re not hoping for her first words being something along the lines of Papa? Or Pops, even Steve?”

Steve groaned, dropping his head a little. “I’ll honestly be happy if her first words aren’t some kind
of swear word.”

“So, when did you two get back? And how much did you shower so that you didn’t smell like sex?”

Steve gave him an unimpressed frown, hand trying to cover Jamie’s ear. “We got back about fifteen minutes ago,” he told him, then paused a little. “And the clothes helped. We just pretty much didn’t wear any.” Bucky made a face, clearly screaming ‘TMI’, “then took a few long baths.”

“I appreciate it,” Bucky told him, standing up. “Well, your other kid is asleep, but that one is all you, Stevie. She’s stubborn, and even looking at the stars won’t make her fall asleep.”

“You’re the fun Uncle,” Steve said as he looked at Jamie, dropping a kiss on the top of her head. “Of course she’s not going to go to sleep when you want her too, if she’s not tired enough.” Her little face scrunched up adorably, and she let out a big yawn. Jamie looked betrayed at the yawn. “Oh baby girl, you are so tired. If you go to sleep, you get to eat with Daddy and me. Keep a close eye, Buck.” Steve turned on his foot, still bouncing her, but started to sway gently, slowly walking around the room. A hand was on her back, rubbing circles, cradling her against his shoulder. “There are certain steps, if you take them just right, she’ll slip right off into sleep. I’m taking advantage of it now, before the pattern changes.”

“She’s going to be a moody little thing when she grows up,” Bucky said with a nod.

“Why do you hate me?” Steve shot him a look.

“I believe that you said some of the same things to me,” Bucky reminded him. “When you was still a little guy, and I was dating…”

“Linda,” Steve supplied.

“Yeah, dating Linda.” Bucky shook his head a little. “Just cause I dated a girl for more than a week, didn’t mean I was gonna marry her. Not the point,” he said waving his arm, heading for the door. “Point is, you tried to curse me with moody children. I’m just returning the favor. And it’s going to work out because I’m the fun Uncle.” He cackled as he left, walking down the hall towards the elevator.

Steve blinked, expression fairly deadpan, and he looked down at the now sleeping Jamie. “Please, please don’t take after your Uncle Bucky.”

Tony sighed as he flopped on his back on the bed. “Yes, you have to get dressed,” Steve called out from the bathroom. “We’re back in New York, there are people, including our children, around.”

“Yeah, but I got used to not wearing anything,” He pushed himself up and grabbed the pair of pants that Steve threw at him from the doorway. Tony smiled at him, then pulled the pants on and stood up to grab a shirt. He snagged Steve’s arm and pulled him in for a quick kiss. “It’ll be nice to be by the kids again, though.”

“Yeah, specially since I’m sure that Bucky was about to start spoiling them,” Steve told him as he walked to the closet to find a shirt. “Specially Jamie. Apparently they’ve bonded. Continuing to bond as we speak.”

“We’re doomed.” Tony grabbed one of his t-shirts and slipped it on. “You could have told me that earlier, I wouldn’t have slept in so much.” Steve raised an eyebrow at him, slipping a button down
on over his white tee. “What? She’ll start to get used to him, and then she’ll think he’s the fun Uncle!”

Steve tried not to smirk, pulling on his jeans. “And what’s wrong with that? I’ve gotten glowing reports from everyone else about him with the kids.”

“If she thinks he’s the fun one, then she’ll want to go to him, instead of coming to me,” Tony said looking at him. He slid his hands up Steve’s chest, then gripped the collar of his shirt, pulling Steve in for a kiss. “I need to insert myself in her life as the one that she goes too when papa says No.”

Steve’s expression deadpanned. “What? I’m the one Peter goes to when Mama says No, and you’re the one he’ll go to when Daddy says No.”

“Are you getting jealous?” Steve asked, tone quirking up in amusement. Tony looked at him for a few seconds, then let go Steve’s shirt. “Come on,” Steve said, trying not to let out a laugh at Tony’s expression.

“Nope,” he pat Steve’s chest a couple of time, then turned to leave the room. Steve rolled his eyes fondly. “You get to unpack everything, and do laundry, now. I’m going to go get the little monster, sticking you with all the chores.”

“Don’t you have work to do before we pick up the boys from school?” Steve asked, quickly following him out the door.

“Nope!” Tony called out, attempting to keep a couple steps in front of Steve. “Taking the long week, straight into the weekend, which starts as soon as the kids get out of school.” Tony called the elevator, then turned to put a hand on Steve’s chest to keep him back. He could see the tiny lift of Tony’s lips, and knew that this was the start of a long game. “Hey J?” Tony started to back into the elevator, Steve following him. “Where’s my precious second child?”

“Young Lady Jamie is with Sergeant Barnes, Sir,” the AI replied dutifully. “Shall I take you to there?”

“That would be utterly fantastic.” Tony responded. Steve pressed against Tony’s hand, backing him up against the wall of the elevator. “Oh, I didn’t know that you had chores down that way, Captain Rogers.”

“Ouch,” Steve put on a little pout. “Not even the first name. I’m hurt, baby.”

“I seem to remember a time when I never used your first name.” Tony started to tap his fingers on Steve’s chest. “A time that ended nary a year ago.”


“Trying to seduce me, Captain?” The elevator doors opened and Tony quickly ducked down, sliding around Steve to jog out of the cart. “It won’t work!”

Steve turned to follow him, watching him slip into Bucky and Meg’s apartment. He smirked playfully and hurried over to follow him. He heard Jamie’s squeal as he walked in.

“My precious little gumdrop!” Tony cooed as he picked up the little girl from the floor. “Were you enjoying your time with Uncle Bucky Bear?” Bucky growled lowly as he pushed himself up from the floor, where he had been playing with Jamie. “Yes, Buckaroo is a funny man, isn’t he?” Steve pressed his lips together when Bucky shot him a glare. “But, it’s alright, because Daddy is back now!”
“Stark,” Bucky growled out.

“Yes, Buckster?” Tony grinned. He felt Steve coming up behind him, an arm almost snaking around his waist from behind, but Tony was pivoting and turning so Steve met only air. Now Bucky was raising his eyebrows at Steve. “Cap here is grounded until he gets all his chores done.”

“Uh oh,” Meg’s voice sounded as she walked into the living room, putting her own babies in Bucky’s lap. “Here, you can get your baby fix twice as fast now.” She glanced back at Steve. “What did you do?”

Steve pouted and Tony smirked, bouncing Jamie around. “Nothing too horrible, which is why he’ll get the chance to make it up to me.”

“You are a good man, Tony. Allowing him the chance to make it up to you.”

“I know!” Tony grinned at her. “I am very benevolent.”

“Not discounting the romantic getaway that he took you on,” Bucky mumbled loudly, setting up a puzzle table for the twins.

“Oh, Buck-lerone.” Meg snorted at Tony’s newest nickname. The name earned two confused looks.

“Toblerone is a candy bar,” Meg explained to the two Super Soldiers. “It’s a lot better than the mass produced ones you can find at any gas station.”

“I’m proud of my creativity,” Tony announced.

“Buh-ee,” Jamie said, turning to look at Bucky when he let out a huff through his nose. Tony’s eyes opened a bit more, then looked over at Bucky. “Buh-ee, bye?” Both Meg and Steve took a step away from Tony and Bucky.

Bucky was looking between Tony and Steve, silently asking Steve for some back up. “Is she trying to say your name?” Tony asked the dark hair man. “Were you teaching her to say your name while we were gone?”

“I didn’t teach her nothing,” Bucky defended. “I made sure that she didn’t spontaneously stop breathing, or combust.”

Tony hugged Jamie to his chest. “She wouldn’t combust, she’s too sweet.” Jamie giggled, putting her hands on Tony’s cheeks. “Yes you are, aren’t you tiny one?”

“Technically, she didn’t finish his name,” Steve threw in and Tony shot him a look. “I’m going with it doesn’t count.” Tony narrowed his eyes at him a little, nose scrunching a little.

“Fine!” Tony let out a breath. “It doesn’t count.” He pointed a finger at Bucky, that Jamie reached out to take in her hands. “But, she better not add in those last consonants until after she says my name.” Meg snorted as her phone started to ring. Tony turned his gaze to her and she just gave him an innocent smile in return as she picked up her cell.

“That’s it,” Bucky said, watching Rowan crawl to the other side of the little table, trying to help her brother push the blocks around. “I’m going to teach her to say Wade’s name first now,” Bucky said and Tony’s head whipped back around to look at him. “Oh no, you know what, I’ll get her to say Fury’s name first.”

“You bite your tongue, Barnes!” Tony said with an exaggerated gasp and Steve was choking on a
laugh. “Steve, I’m sorry, but you can’t be friends with him anymore.”

“I don’t think that’s how it works, Stark,” Bucky said with a raised eyebrow. “We’ve got years of friendship going for us. Unbreakable bonds of friendship!”

“Unbreakable bonds of sex!” Tony retaliated and Steve closed his eyes, letting out a sigh.

“Please don’t let her first word be sex,” Steve murmured, only loud enough for Tony and Bucky to hear.

“I have an idea,” Meg said as she came back over to the little group, done with her call. “Why doesn’t Bucky go with Steve to pick up the boys from school, and Tony you stay here? We’ll work on getting her to say something else than eighty percent of James’ name.”

“I like the way she thinks,” Tony said, looking over at Steve and Bucky, pointing towards Meg. “I knew there was a reason that I let you talk your way into my Tower.”

“You moved me here,” she told him, crossing her arms and cocking her hip.

“Don’t ruin it,” Tony said with a wave of his hand, looking back down at Jamie. “Yes, Aunt Meg has good ideas sometimes, but she just needs to let Daddy have the glory. Because Daddy is amazing. Daddy.”

“Don’t embarrass yourself, Tony,” Bucky said, little smirk on his lips. Tony shot a narrowed eye expression his way. “You sure you two can handle three babies?”

“I can handle Peter and Wade, together, at the same time, in Disneyland,” Tony said. “I think that handling three babies, that are so close to nap time, won’t be much of a problem.”

“He says with confidence,” Steve said with a smile. “It’ll be good to get out of here, Buck. In fact, let’s escape them now.”

“Don’t think this means you get to get out of laundry duty,” Tony warned Steve. The blonde winked at him as Bucky got up from the floor. “Ooo, you are playing this game, aren’t you?”

“Learning from the best, babe.”

“I’m going to be sick,” Bucky said, putting the back of his hand to his mouth. “Let’s get out of here before you two start, kissing, or something.”

“It’s called love!” Tony called out as Bucky started to push Steve out of the apartment. “You should try it! Start dating!” He could still hear Bucky’s snort from the doorway. “Date Meg!”

“I will kick you out of your own Tower,” Meg warned him.

“So it!” Bucky shouted before the door shut, and he and Steve were gone.

Tony rolled his eyes, then set Jamie back down on the floor by the twins. They all seemed to squeal at each other, in a hidden baby language, and started to play together. “Who was on the phone?”

Meg hummed a little in question. “Oh, just an update on a shipment.” She started to pick up the rest of the toys, and blankets, around the living room. “How long do you think they’ll actually be gone?”

Tony looked away from here, down at Jamie when she started to babble.

“Knowing them, they’ll probably be gone for a few hours,” Tony smiled softly. “School isn’t out for
nearly an hour, and they’ll probably end up taking them for ice cream, or some such nonsense.”

“Good.” Tony blinked, then glanced up. Meg was barely a foot away from her, eyes looking disturbingly blank, very much like the Winter Soldier. Tony was barely able to curse when the points of a tazer slammed into his stomach.

“So you would just lean against the car, watching school get out?” Steve asked as they got out of the car, walking towards the school. “Like a creeper, who was plotting which child they would take when no one was looking?”

“You make it sound so horrible,” Bucky almost whined.

“Well, it’s a little creepy, Buck!” Steve said with a laugh.

“I was making sure that no one else was watching,” he grumbled. “Plus, wasn’t sure how everyone else would take it to see me standing awkwardly on school property.”

“No one knows who you are,” Steve stage whispered to him, bumping his arm with his own. “It’s not like we’ve exactly advertised your identity, and you don’t fight with us, so you’re pretty much the best kept secret that we have going for us.” Steve reached up and sunk his fingers against Bucky’s scalp, ruffling his hair a little, before the man pushed the hand away. “Since you’ve started using, whatever Meg buys you for your hair, you look less hobo now.”

“I don’t wanna hear anything about beauty products from you,” Bucky grumbled to him. “She’s easier to ask about this stuff than Tony is, and I know that Tony buys all the stuff that you use in the shower, so I can’t ask you. And I’m certainly not about to ask the other Avengers who would rather stab me with the body wash than help me buy it.”

“Wasn’t going to say a thing,” Steve smiled. The blonde maneuvered his best friend over to a half concrete wall and leaned against it. Bucky noticed that some of the women smiled at Steve, waving, and Steve offered a hand in greeting back.

“Do they recognize you or,…”

“In the way that I’m a regular,” Steve told him. “Until very recently, I’ve been able to come pick up Peter, and now Wade, without being as recognized as Tony.” He motioned towards a group of three women talking across from them by a rose bush, and Bucky followed with his eyes. “Tori is taking care of her nephew while his parents are serving overseas. She seemed a little lost last year, so Genna and her fiancé Harriet managed to get her to come to a couple PTA meetings, and now the three of them are in charge of volunteers for school functions. Genna and Harriet have a set of twin girls that are in Peter and Wade’s class, and that’s how I met them.”

Bucky’s eyes slid over when Steve nodded towards another group of three, two men and a woman. “There’s Mr Jones, he’s one the office staff. He’s talking to Mr and Mrs Dornier, whose three kids all attend school here. Mr Dornier is looking for a new job, because he works a night shift, and his wife works school hours for a Doctor’s office. They want more time to spend with their kids, and with each other. Mr Jones might have a lead for them in the school system.”

“Holy shit, Stevie,” Bucky mumbled in his breath. “You’re like a gossipy old rag.” Steve coughed out a laugh and elbowed Bucky’s stomach. “Well you are! You could probably tell me everything about all the parents here.”
“Not all of them,” Steve pouted a little. “Mostly just the ones with older kids.”

“Steve!” The two men looked over as a red-headed woman walked over to him. “We missed you this week. There’s gonna be a bake-sale next week, and Brenda was hoping to get your name down on the list.” Her eyes slid over to Bucky and her smile perked up a bit more. “Who’s your handsome friend? I hope not your boyfriend?”

Steve slowly, smugly, turned his head to look at Bucky. “No, this isn’t my boyfriend, you know that, Izzie.” Bucky would have turned a murderous glare on him, if he weren’t being stared at so intensely. He wanted to be able to come back to get the boys without the police tailing him. “This is my best friend, B-“

“James,” Bucky quickly amended. Steve might have rolled his eyes.

“James, apparently, since he’s denouncing his nickname.” Steve’s foot kicked into Bucky’s. “He was here to get the boys while I took my fella on a surprise get-a-way.” Izzie hummed a little, smiling at Bucky, who just quirked his eyebrow a little.

“I’m surprised you still brought the SUV,” she continued, turning back to Steve. “Not if you didn’t come here with Jamie today.”

“Why’s that?” Steve asked, hearing the doors opening as kids started to run out of the building.

“Well, Wade already left for the day.” Both Bucky and Steve straightened a little. “I thought you would have known that.”

“What do you mean he left?” Steve asked with a frown. “Did Julie come to get him?” They were both positive that that wasn’t the case.

“No, his Aunt came. I was in the office, getting the fliers from the office when she signed him out.” Steve’s phone started to ring and he grabbed it, not looking away from Izzie.

“Capt-- stems seem to be-- come back to-- reboot needed. Sir--” Jarvis was stuttering on the other end, static creeping up. Izzie was saying something else and Bucky looked ready to run into the school.

“Papa! Uncle Bucky!” Peter ran over to them, barely holding onto his bag, eyes wide. Bucky knelt down to intercept the boy. “Uncle Bucky, that woman was back. Sarah? The one that Wade didn’t like.” Bucky’s head jerked up to Steve. “She took him out of class.”

“To the car,” Steve told them, stepping closer to Peter. “Thanks, Izzie, we gotta go.” Bucky was picking up Peter and they were running back to the car. Bucky was looking around, his eyes scanning every person he could see. “Jarvis? Jarvis can you hear me?” The line was all static now.

“Papa?” Peter asked, and Steve looked over to see his big eyes. “Something’s wrong.” Steve nodded a little, and he unlocked the doors, climbing in the driver’s.

“Steve, I need your phone.” His hand was reaching out as he helped Peter into the back, and was climbing in the front a second later. “I have a bad feeling about Meg.”

“I have a bad feeling overall,” Steve commented and tossed his phone to Bucky, starting the car.

Tony’s eyes fluttered, and he woke up to a flurried sound of movement, hard thumps, and smacking
sounds. He groaned, realizing he was on the ground, and pushed from his lying on his stomach to his side. He saw the kids toys, but didn’t see the babies, and his heart sped up.

“Don’t.” Tony heard Meg’s strained voice, then turned to the other side. He frowned when he saw Mary pushing her to the ground, a knee in the middle of her back, pulling both arms behind her. “Don’t let me go.”

“Wha?” Tony moaned out as he pushed himself up. Mary glanced over at him.

“Good to see you up. Do you think you could grab something to restrain her?” Mary asked, and Tony blinked. “Tony, afraid we don’t have time for your brain to catch up. Take my words for true, help me out, and I’ll explain later. Somebody’s trying to hack into Jarvis.”

Tony let the words roll around, getting his bearings back, then stumbled to his feet. “Did I get tazed?” He asked, moving down the hall. Meg’s office was full of all kinds of wire, so he grabbed a bundle of that and tossed it to Mary. Looking around, Tony spotted the three babies just inside the nursery and took a deep breath.

“Well, I assuming yes.” Mary caught the wire and quickly started to wrap Meg’s wrists behind her. “I saw a discharged stun gun on the couch, and you on the floor. Looked like it was fired at close range.”

Tony put a hand on his stomach, still feeling a few twinges in his muscles. “Yeah, point blank.” He frowned and looked down at the no longer struggling woman. “What the hell happened?”

“Something you’re not going to want to tell Barton and Romanoff about,” Mary told him with a quick glance. She grabbed Meg’s shoulders, pulling her up, and made her lean against the closest wall. She chuckled a phone at Tony, and he grabbed it on instinct and raised an eyebrow. “She got a phone call from an unknown number, and I called it back, and all I heard was a recording of five words, on repeat, in a woman’s voice.” Tony looked at Mary, and they both looked down to the still Meg, eyes blank and staring straight ahead. “Last time I saw this lovely expression,”

“Meg and Bucky were experimenting,” Tony finished with a sigh. “Great, trigger words. Wait, did you say someone was trying to hack into Jarvis?”

“Welcome back to real time.”

“Shit,” Tony raced for a tablet, finding one just by the couch, and started typing on the screen. “This was planned, and it was so underhanded that even I didn’t see it. I at least didn’t anticipate something for another day or two.”

“Well, whatever happened, it doesn’t stick for long,” Mary told him, leaning against the wall. “Jarvis got me a message before he was pretty much shut down, and I ran down here. You were on the floor, she was getting the kids dressed, like they were going out. She didn’t see me at first, but something seemed odd, and that’s when I grabbed her phone from table. She’s had good training, I’ll tell you.” Tony glanced over at her, then looked back down at the tablet, trying to reboot Jarvis. “As we were fighting though, she would pause, and blink, then say something.”

“Say something?” Tony questioned, setting through the last commands. In two minutes he would know if it worked, then he would be able to see if anyone was still in his tech.

“Yeah, like she asked me to stop her, and to make sure she didn’t leave the Tower.”

“She was aware of what was happening,” Tony said as he dropped down on the couch, putting a hand on his sore stomach. “Well, that’s good news at least. Steve’s with Bucky, so if he somehow
gets triggered, we know that he can stop that.”

“You think he will?” Mary asked him. “Get triggered, that is.”

“I hope not, but I’m not going to count out anything.” His eyes flickered over towards Meg, then back at the tablet. “I have no reason not to think that Hydra is behind this, and that maybe, Aunt Hilda is a little closer than we would like.”

“Tony!” The door slammed over and Steve was running in, Peter in his arms. “Tony, are you alright??” Peter jumped from Steve’s arms and wrapped his arms around Tony’s neck, hugging him tightly. Tony’s eyes widened marginally as he looked at Steve, looking frazzled, and then at Bucky as he ran in, then saw Meg.

“Get something over her mouth,” Bucky said before moving further into the room. “She’s still under, and-“

“One step ahead,” Mary moved quickly.

Tony was hugging Peter back tightly, rubbing his back, but hadn’t looked away from Steve. “What’s going on, Steve? I only just got Jarvis back-“

“Someone has Wade,” Steve interrupted him, hands moving to check him over. “Jarvis tried to get a call through to me.”

“It was Sarah,” Peter said to Tony. “Wade’s old babysitter, but he never liked her.” Tony looked at Steve, whose expression said that it was not good. “She came and signed him out after lunch, and he didn’t come back.”

“I’m giving phones to the boys now,” Tony said under his breath. Steve moved to get up and Tony watched him. “What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to get my shield, and I’m going to find Wade,” Steve said matter-of-factly. “I’d feel better if you and Bucky stayed with Julie, to keep her calm, and to keep an eye on her.”

“You think this has something to do with Wilson?” Steve nodded grimly at Tony’s question. “Be careful, take a comm unit.” Steve leaned down to kiss him quickly, then kissed the top of Peter’s head. “Pops is gonna find Wade.”

“I know,” Peter said softly with a nod.

Mary walked over to the couch, doing her best to not let Peter see Meg, and leaned over the back to give Peter a hug in Tony’s arms. “I’m gonna stay here to give Steve some tech help, but you’ll be good with Daddy and Aunt Julie, right?” Peter nodded, giving her a brave smile.

“We’ll keep her cheered up, until Papa comes back with Wade!” Mary smiled at Peter, kissing his forehead.

“Why don’t you take Uncle Bucky down the hall,” Tony said, setting Peter on his feet. “I have to finish getting Jarvis back up, and I’ll be over with Jamie and the twins, alright?” Peter nodded then hurried over to take Bucky’s hand, and they left the apartment. Tony looked over at Mary, tapping a few more things on the tablet. “You going to be okay here alone?”

“Probably just going to sit here until either she comes back to her sense, or you guys figure out how to snap her out of it,” Mary told him. “Just focus on getting Jarvis back up and helping out Steve. I don’t like the idea of Wade being close to anything Hydra related.”
“I don’t like the idea that this is all connected,” Tony added. “Alright, I’ll grab the babies. You know where we’ll be if you need anything. Jarvis should be fully functional in a few minutes or so.”

Steve sat at the security desk of the school, looking over the security footage from earlier in the day. He saw a blonde woman walk into the office, signing out Wade, and a few minutes later the boy walked in with his bag. Steve could make out the frowned on Wade’s face before the woman was moving to take his hand, nearly pulling him out. There was no denying that it was Hilda, but he didn’t think that she would show up so soon as revealing herself to Bucky.

“Do you have cameras that get any view of the street?” Steve asked the security guard. “The parking lot, or street parking? Anything that might get a view of cars driving by?” The guard nodded as he leaned over to bring up the footage. Steve was trying not to tap his foot too much, or break something with the mix of anger and anxiety he was feeling.

He was watching the footage, looking for any sign of what car Wade might be in when his phone rang. Steve nodded to the guard as he answered. “Tony?”

“No, afraid not.” Steve tensed at the unfamiliar female voice. “I understand that you’re part of the reason that I won’t be seeing him myself, Captain. Or at least those in that Tower.”

“I’d be interested to know how you managed to take down Jarvis,” Steve said as he put the phone on speaker after the security guard left the room. He attempted to pull up the tracking program that Tony had shown him. This would only work if Tony had managed to get Jarvis fully operational. “But, what I really want to know is where Wade is.”

She chuckled a little over the phone, and Steve felt his eye twitch a little. “Nowhere where I am,” Hilda told him. “Taking him was a repayment, after that I really couldn’t care less where he actually ended up.” Steve growled and the woman hummed. “There’s that fighting spirit. Listen, Captain, let’s not pretend that you don’t know who I am. I’d thank you for taking care of my niece for me, but you’ve been trying to undo all my hard work.”

“I don’t actually have time to give you a lecture that you’ll no doubt ignore,” Jarvis seemed to be operating enough to give Steve a location of the phone that Hilda was using. Then the signal jumped, showing a different location, then again.

“No, I imagine you don’t. I don’t think the Colonel was in a very good mood when I dropped off his son with him.” Steve was up, pushing the chair back with how fast he moved. “There was a chance that this plan wouldn’t actually work, I was prepared for that. Don’t worry, Captain, we’ll meet again.”

“You won’t like it when we do,” Steve promised her.

“Only time will tell. Do tell Margrit, and Sergeant Barnes that I said hello.” The call disconnected and Steve had to fight not to slam his fist down on the device. He looked back up at the screens and saw Hilda putting Wade in the backseat of a car, then actually making eye contact with the camera.

“Tony?” Steve pressed a finger to the comm in his ear, freezing the image to get a view of the license plate. “Please tell me you have Jarvis up and running? I need to track a license plate.”

“I am indeed operational, Captain,” Jarvis responded in his ear instead of Tony. “I’m afraid that Sir is still working on restoring the communications system inside of the Tower. If you could capture the image of the vehicle with your phone, I shall immediately start following the trail through all
available street surveillance.”

“Thanks, Jarvis.” Steve lifted the phone to get a picture of the plate, then was up and moving. He knew the car had started heading west, so he could at least start that way, and Jarvis would tell him where to go after that.

Steve was glad that he decided to not wear his uniform into the school, looking at the number of parents and staff still around, but he knew he was getting more than a few looks when he hopped on his motorcycle, the shield secured on the front. He didn’t have time to worry about it, not when he needed to find Wade, get him away from his father.

“Captain,” Jarvis spoke up in his ear. “I have a possible location for you.”

“Get me there as fast as possible.”

The directions took him out of the main city, and to a closed housed community. Parking his bike at the corner, Steve slid his shield on his back and eyed the gate. Wilson probably had the whole community wired with cameras, and they were probably all on the look out. The guard house at the gate had one person in it, but he looked like he had spent some time in the military.

“Steve?” Tony’s tinny voice sounded in his ear, and Steve raised an eyebrow. “Can you hear me?”

“Barely,” Steve told him quietly. He surveyed the perimeter of the community, and found that his best bet would be to jump the wall into the backyard of the furthest house from the guard house.

“Whoever got into my systems planted one nasty virus, tailored just for J, and about a dozen data mining bugs.” Steve frowned a little as he kept down and paced the wall, finding a spot, then easily vaulted over.

“What does that mean for us?” Steve whispered, keeping low to the grass and looking for any movement inside the house before darting for some bushes.

“Means, I have to change all security measures, at the very least.” Tony sounded more than annoyed. “I’m still digging into what kind of information they might have gotten, and who even did—“

“Hydra,” Steve informed him, moving around to the side. The neighborhood was unusually quiet, and that only fed into his theory that most here were probably working with Wilson. “Hilda called me.”

Tony groaned, and Steve winced a little when there was a burst of, short lived, feedback from the comm. “It looked like she was going to get Meg to get her hands on Jamie again. I should be surprised, but I’m more than annoyed. Were you able to at least figure out what her play was by taking Wade? Julie said she recognized Hilda as a sitter that her ex-husband had hired, but she barely ever talked to her.”

“Something about repayment,” Steve said as he darted to the back of another house, pressing himself close to a window to listen inside. “Wilson has Wade.” Tony cursed, and Steve cupped his hand around his ear as the signal started to crackle. “Tony, I’m losing you. Jarvis has my location. I’ll be back soon.”

Steve wasn’t sure if it was Tony’s repairs, or something else that was interfering, but his comm was currently useless. A crashing sound caught his attention and his eyes flickered over to the next house. There was a flurry of movement past a window, and Steve was off like a shot, pulling his shield from his back. He saw some light flickering in the small basement window, and Steve was holding up his shield and curling up to crash through the first floor window.
Second before he jumped to his feet, Steve was able to see three people still in the room, and he heard footsteps fading away down some steps. He was in the air, slamming his shield into the back of one of the men and used the momentum to plant both feet on the chest of another. A gun shot flew past him as he landed on his feet, and he threw his shield to make contact with the last man’s stomach and to ricochet back.

He grabbed his shield and was leaping down the stairs, barely touching down on them, and he heard a couple more gunshots. But they weren’t aimed at him. He jumped over the railing and kicking at the two closest men, before throwing a punch at another. He could see light coming out from underneath a door, and then a shout that sounded too much like Wade’s.

Steve grabbed the last guy and slammed him down onto the floor, then gave a punch to his jaw before he turned at another gun shot. The shield slammed into the closed door, cracking in the doorframe and swinging open. Steve blinked, his arm drooping with the shield when he looked inside the room.

He had never seen Colonel Wilson in person, only in pictures, but he knew that the body on the floor was no doubt the same man. It was the small pool of blood starting to form that made something clench in his gut, and his eyes drifted over to the side, then he was moving in the room. “Wade?” He called out softly.

The boy looked up with wide eyes, hands shaking that were gripping a gun. He was breathing pretty fast, and Steve could spot nearly half a dozen spots that were going to blossom into dark bruises later over the bare skin he could see. Trails of blood sliding down from a cut above his eye, and a split lip. Steve gently set the shield down and crouched down to his knees. “It’s alright, Wade, I’m here.” He put his hand out, gently taking the gun from smaller hands before setting it down, then Wade was throwing himself into Steve’s arms. Steve held onto him tightly when felt the first sob work its way through Wade.

“He-he said he was gon-gonna hurt Mom,” Wade sobbed out, hands clutching Steve’s shirt. “I wan-wanted to stop h-him.”

“I’ve got you now,” Steve whispered to him, rubbing his back. “I need you hang on to me, okay? I’m going to get you back home, back to your mom.” Wade nodded against his shoulder, wrapping his arms around Steve’s neck when he picked him up. Steve leaned down to one side to grab the shield before moving back up the stairs. He could feel Wade shaking against him, and Steve couldn’t get out of there fast enough.

Steve paused for a second on the first floor, ears picking up a sound, and he was moving for the back door of the house. Whatever had happened before Steve had gotten downstairs, reinforcements were now headed for them through the front door He kicked open the back door, and put his arm with the shield around Wade as well to keep him protected, just in case. He heard the front door slamming open just as he was darting across the grass, going for the same spot that he had jumped the wall previous.

“Remember, hang on tight, Wade,” Steve said quietly by his ear. “No matter what, don’t let go, I’m gonna get us out of here.” There was another nod, and Steve set his legs moving. The shouting behind him he had had expected, and he wasn’t surprised when the first of the bullets went whizzing past him. Steve jumped at the wall, arm going up and grabbing the edge and pulled himself up. He bit back a gasp when a bullet dug into calf as he was pulling them over, and was just able to switch the leg to land on and not stumble.

His bike was still in the same spot, thankfully untouched, and he ran over to it. He slid the shield on the front as he slid on the seat, pushing back a little so he could rearrange Wade to sit in front of him.
He wasn’t going to take the chance of Wade behind him, so much more so when a couple more bullets hit the street behind him. Steve started his bike, looking behind him, and saw the guard was running out with his own weapon.

Tires skid across the street as Steve pushed the bike to take off. He wobbled a little when he felt the bite of another bullet in the back of his shoulder, causing Wade’s hand to tighten in his shirt, but Steve quickly straightened up and was turning the corner, racing back from Manhattan.

Steve took a few extras turns, trying to lose any tails they might have gotten, before he hit the bridge to Manhattan and took a straight shot for the garage in the Tower. Jarvis had opened the garage doors just enough for Steve to slip in, before they were closing and locking again. He stopped the bike and was bringing Wade close to his chest again and slipping off, sliding to his knees to hold onto the boy.

He lifted his eyes when he heard the slide of the elevator doors opening, and Julie was out like a shot. “Wade!” The brunette’s head popped up and he extracted himself from Steve’s arms to run over to his mom.

“Mom!” He wrapped his arms around her waist, pressing his face to her stomach as he started to cry again. She held onto him tightly, her own red rimmed eyes dropping a few more tears down her cheeks. Steve pushed himself up, eye twitching a little as he felt the two bullets still in his leg and shoulder now that the adrenaline of a fight had worn off. He caught Julie’s eye when she looked over at him, and he just gave her a nod and motioned back towards the elevator. She didn’t need to worry about him, Wade was infinitely more important. He’d be up to tell her what happened soon.

The elevator doors opened, and Tony was stepping out, holding the doors to let mother and son in, before he hurried over to Steve. He pressed a hand to Steve’s cheek, eyes taking in the blood stains. “What happened?”

“I wish I knew for sure,” Steve mumbled. Tony ducked under his arm to take the weight off of his injured leg, and they slowly made their way to the elevator doors to wait for its return. “It was the Colonel that had Wade, but I’m a little shocked at how prepared he was.” Tony frowned, looking up at him. “He had at least a dozen armed men, that I could see, and they were very well covered. It was too much to just hold a child. Although, I suppose in a way it wasn’t enough.”

“I don’t like the sound of that, Steve,” Tony said quietly. The cart returned and the doors opened, the two men shuffling on board. “Those don’t look like thru and thru’s.”

“They’re not,” Steve confirmed, drawing a semi-annoyed hum from Tony. “Let’s get them out, and get back upstairs. I’ve gotta talk to Julie, and, unfortunately, we’ve got to talk to Wade about what happened before I got there.”

“Do you think he will?” Tony asked. “Talk, that is?”

“I’m not sure, but, Tony,” Steve let out a sigh. “I don’t know what happened, but, when I found him- Tony, I think he shot his Dad.” Tony’s eyes widened almost comically. “I heard the shots, and when I got into the room, the man was dead, and Wade was holding the gun. From what I saw it was self-defense, I’m not worried about that.”

“He’s ten years old,” Tony nearly whispered. “It’s bad enough that his dad had to be the face of abuse when he was a kid, but, to have to go through that.” He shook his head a little. “It’s going to stick with him, forever.”

“We’ll help him,” Steve said as they stepped out onto the MedBay floor. “Whatever he needs.” Tony
leaned his head in slightly to kiss his arm, nodding.

“These are going to be some awful conversations,” Tony muttered.

“Don’t I know it.”

Steve was resolved to get Tony a little more medical training after he was bandaged up. Perhaps Julie would be able to help the man, but maybe Steve would just avoid being in the path of bullets from now on. The skin around the shots was red and puckered from the digging that Tony had done to try and pull the bullets out. Steve hadn’t been impressed.

As they road up the elevator to the apartments, that was furthest from his mind. They could see that both doors to the occupied apartments were open. Bucky and Mary visible in one, with Peter seated on the floor, looking a little morose, but doing his homework. He probably didn’t understand why he couldn’t be with Wade at the moment. Steve assumed that they still had everything under control with Meg, and the babies. He’d be wanting a long cuddle session with both their kids when this was done.

Inside Julie’s apartment, the lights were dim, and the two men could make out the top of her head on the cough, wrapped around her son. Wade was no longer crying, but he didn’t look like he was going to be letting go of his mom anytime soon. Tony knocked just loud enough to be heard before they walked in. They walked around the couch to take a seat on the love seat, and Wade’s eyes sought out Steve’s.

“Hey, Wade,” Steve said softly, keeping the eye contact. The boy nodded once at him. “Do you think maybe, that it’ll be alright if we sit and talk for a little bit?” Wade didn’t say anything, and he could feel the slightest bit of apprehension coming from Julie. “Your mom was pretty worried, so I think we have to tell her what happened. I know it’s probably hard, but we can just get it over with now, then we’ll leave you two alone.”

“No,” Wade spoke up, shifting a little in Julie’s arms. “Not completely alone.”

“No, not completely alone,” Tony agreed with him. Steve glanced at him, and it seemed that the older man understood what Wade meant. “Jarvis is of course watching, and we’ve got the Tower on non-essential lock-down. Todd is stationed at the end of the hall, with an eye on all the cameras.” Wade nodded a little, snuggling back against his mom. Of course, he wanted to protect his mom.

“He’s not going to hurt us again,” Wade mumbled out. Julie frowned a little, looking down at her son, running her hand through his hair.

“Baby?” She asked softly, gently. “What happened?”

Wade burrowed his head down, looking at the ground, but didn’t leave her protective arms. “Miss Sarah came to the school, but I didn’t know it was her until I got to the office. She was already taking me out before I could say anything to anyone in the office, and she said that if I didn’t get in the car, then someone would be there to hurt Peter.” Steve saw Tony’s hand clench a little. “So I got in the car, cause I didn’t want anyone to get hurt. I thought, as soon as I got out though, I’d be able to kick her, in a way that Uncle Bucky showed us. Then I’d make a run for it, get to the nearest adult, the nearest house, and then call someone.”

“Those were good instincts, Wade,” Tony softly praised.

“Well, didn’t do any good,” the boy muttered. “She never got out of the car, but when it stopped, there were a bunch of men with guns, and Dad was with them.” Julie’s arms tightened ever so
slightly around him. “Told me that he had people watching you, and that he was going to take you next.” He sniffed a little, arm reaching up to wipe away the tears there. “They took me into a house, then down into a basement, and locked me in a room. I was alone for a while, but I could hear a lot of talking and moving upstairs. Couldn’t understand any of it though. Then he came back down,” Wade trailed off, hand probably subconsciously rubbing at the cut above his eyebrow. Julie’s head leaned in, kissing the top of his hand.

“Didn’t do anything new, not really.” He shrugged one shoulder once, and Steve was almost wishing that he had gotten there just a few minutes earlier, so he could have been the one to end Wilson. “Kept asking me questions, getting louder and louder. Wanted to know about why we moved, and what Mr Tony was doing.” Steve glanced at his boyfriend, but he kept staring at Wade, keeping his emotions behind a mask. “Wanted to know how to get into the Tower, and stuff like that. The way he was asking though, I think he was planning to hurt everyone.” He sniffled again. “Then, he was pulling out one of his guns. Said that if I didn’t tell what he wanted, he’d hurt you, Mom. He take you, and then he’d hurt you, and I wouldn’t be able to help!”

“Wade, baby,” she tried to soothe him, her hands cupping his cheeks. “I’m right here, I’m not hurt. He didn’t do anything to me.”

Wade shook his head. “No, and he won’t, not again. He got too close to me, didn’t even have me tied up.” He now looked up, looking at someone for the first time, expression surprisingly determined. “He hit me his gun, but he didn’t think that I would actually fight back, and I surprised him and he dropped the gun. I grabbed it to keep it away from him, then he was running at me, and I had to stop him.” He paused. “So I did.”

Steve saw Julie’s lips quiver a little with unshed tears, and her hands held on securely to her son. She brought him into her chest, hand on his back, other hand in his hair now. “I’m so sorry, baby,” she whispered, but, guiltily, his ears heard it. “I’m so sorry that I wasn’t able to stop him. I’m sorry that you had to do that. I love you so much.”

“We’re safe now, Mom,” he told her, voice muffled by her shirt, but he didn’t care.

Tony tapped Steve’s knee as he silently got up. “Todd will be nearby if you need anything,” he told the two of them. “And Jarvis of course. We’ll be just upstairs.” Julie nodded a little, he head resting on top of Wade’s head. He motioned to Steve with a gentl nod of his head, motioning that they leave the apartment.

Steve got up, watching Wade for a second, seeing his eyes peek out to look at Steve again, and then he was following Tony out into the hallway, quietly closing the door. Tony nodded to Todd at the end of the hall as he went for Meg and Bucky’s apartment. “It would just be crass to say anything else,” Tony said softly.

“We know what happened,” Steve said with a nod, agreeing with him. “There’s nothing else that Wade can tell us. I’ll check on them tomorrow.” Tony put a hand on Steve’s arm, giving him a small smile.

“Daddy?” Peter looked up when the two men walked in, getting up and scrambling over to them, wrapping his arms around Tony’s waist. “Is everything alright?”

Tony smiled a little sadly at Peter, running his hand through his hair. “Wade will be alright, but he’s going to be spending some time with his Mom for a few days, okay?” Peter almost pouted, but he looked more concerned for his friend. “He didn’t have an awesome Daddy like you do, and he did some pretty ugly things. But Wade’s safe now, and his mom is gonna help take care of him.”
“Helping in the way that only the best of moms can do?” Peter asked seriously, looking up at Tony.

He nodded. “That’s right. Just like your Mama is able to do.” He rubbed Peter’s back a little. “Why don’t you show me what you’re working on for homework?” Tony followed Peter back over to the table he was working on, and sat next to him. Bucky had gotten up, a little head nod motioning for Steve to follow him to the nursery.

Once inside Steve moved immediately to Jamie, unable to resist picking her up. She woke up gently, sleepy eyes looking up at him. She cooed softly, turning in his arms and closing her eyes again. Steve let out a breath, feeling his body relax with her now in his arms.

“I know that look,” Bucky said quietly behind him, leaning against the wall. “Nothing good happened, did it?”

“I’d say that it would be a miracle if we make it past Christmas without something happening,” Steve whispered so he didn’t wake up Jamie, or the twins. “But, I’ll be happy if we can make it past Peter’s birthday. Preferably past Jamie’s first birthday.” Steve turned his head a little to look at Bucky. “How’s Meg doing?”

“Sleeping now,” he said. “Wearing off like a bad perfume, and Jarvis has already changed her phone, and phone number, among other things. She should be fine by morning.”

“You gonna be okay with the twins by yourself?” Bucky scowled a little at Steve, and he smirked just a bit.

“Mary’s gonna take them,” he finally admitted. “Be easier to make sure we’re in the clear.” Steve hummed a little, nodding, and turning back to his daughter.

“You know where we’ll be,,” Steve offered, like it was automatic. He’d always be there for his friends and family, always offer the help.

“Yeah, but I’ll give you a break tonight,” Bucky told him, clapping a hand on his shoulder. “Get the kids to sleep tonight, get Tony to rest. I’ve got things handled here, and Jarvis has emergency shut-down if a worst-case scenario happens.”

Steve nodded gratefully to him, hands brushing over Jamie’s hair. “Thanks, Buck.”

“Till the end of the line, Steve.”
Chapter Notes

No amount of apologies can begin to express how sorry I am to have made all of you wait. I got a new job, and I was putting in 45+ hours a week. Apple Farms are Fun, but busy. Then I was house/pet sitting for some friends, and at that time my laptop decided that the internal keyboard, and usb keyboard don't want to work completely for me. I've still got some keys that don't work, so I have to use three keyboards to type. >.

Steve jolted a little in his sleep, a loud, high pitched gurgle reaching his ears and him back to consciousness. He was up, blankets tumbling to the ground as he jumped from the bed and ran across the floor the door, grabbing onto the frame when he stumbled a little. In less than two seconds he was at Jamie’s doorway, then stopped, and blinked as he stared inside the room. Peter was sitting in Tony’s lap, who was on the floor, and Peter was holding onto Jamie’s hands while she stood on her own two feet. She had shoes on, but didn’t look all too happy about it.

Peter pushed his arms forward and backward, Jamie’s arms moving with him, and she let out another high pitched sound, that was one of her giggles. Peter grinned at her and moved his arms a little faster, making Jamie lean into him. Tony was leaning back on one arm as he watched the kids, his other hand gently carding through Peter’s hair as he played with his sister. Warm, but tired, brown eyes glanced up to the door to look at Steve. He gave him a soft smile.

“Hey, sleepyhead.” Tony’s words caught Peter’s attention, who looked up towards the doorway then gave Steve a pure smile of happiness at seeing him. “We were just talking about you.”

“Look Jamie! It’s Papa!” Peter held onto Jamie’s hands as he pulled her into his lap, turning her around.

Jamie’s eyes followed where Peter’s hand was pointing once he had pulled her into his lap, and she let out a gasp as her face lit up. She reached out her arms, kicking her feet out. “Pa!” She exclaimed. “PaPa!” Steve’s eyes widened a little when she repeated herself, repeating his name, his brain finally catching up. He moved further into the room, sliding down to his knees in front of his piled up family, and obligingly reached out to pick up Jamie and cuddled her to his chest. “Papa,” she said contently, resting her head against his shoulder.

Steve knew he was tearing up as his vision blurred briefly, but he felt the stretch on his face from his smile. “Yeah, baby girl, that’s me. That’s my name.” He rocked back a little, sitting on his feet, feeling content and free, even if for just a minute. Movement in front of him pulled his attention back to Tony and Peter, the older man leaning in to whisper something in Peter’s ear, then patting his back as the boy jumped up. Peter pressed a kiss to Steve’s cheek before running from the room and down the hall.

Tony leaned up to his knees, pressing his lips to Steve’s before resting his forehead against Steve’s. “I needed to hear that,” Steve whispered to him.

“You slept through breakfast,” Tony told him, hand resting against Jamie’s back as he stayed close to Steve. “We didn’t have the heart to wake you, so Peter spent the whole morning teaching Jamie how
“Papa.” Jamie parroted dutifully.

“He even got Jarvis to help with visual cues, so she associates the word with you.” Steve sniffed softly and Tony’s thumb reached up to wipe at the stray tear. “You need the rest, babe.”

“You’re being rather affectionate today,” Steve said with a soft smile.

“And it’ll never leave this room,” Tony replied, smile going a little wider and Steve couldn’t help but give a little chuckle. “The kids are around, too.” Steve could read everything that Tony wanted to add after that. The kids were around, and he didn’t want them to ever think that he didn’t love them, didn’t want them to think that he wouldn’t do everything for them. He wanted to be the parent that he never had, to make sure that they felt comfortable, and never doubted if Tony was being sincere with them or not. Especially since Peter, and Wade, were becoming old enough now that they might see Tony doing interviews, or some of his older stuff, and they would be able to tell right away that Tony’s public persona was not how he acted at home.

Tony stole another kiss before leaning back a little, pushing himself up to his feet. “I love you, baby, but you’re going to have to get up now. I sent Peter off on a mission, and we shouldn’t keep him waiting.” He extended his arm to Steve to help him up. “You don’t have to let go of the little heartbreaker, but you do have to get up.”

“I should probably eat breakfast,” Steve admitted as he took Tony’s hands, levering himself up as well. Tony leaned up to run his hands through Steve’s hair, and he winced a little. “I didn’t even think about what that looked like. I heard Jamie through the baby monitor and I was rolling out of bed without thinking.”

“Yeah,” Tony said, almost looking a little guilty. “I forgot to turn that down, but you looked so peaceful, like you were actually getting some sleep.” His hand came down to cup his cheek a little after attempting to fix his hair. “You’re gonna be so glad you at least wore pants to sleep, though. Because, hun, it’s nearly lunch time, so we’re all going to be eating.”

Steve wrinkled his nose up a little at the prospect of having slept so late into the day.

“Are you boys coming to eat?” A voice called out down the hall, and Steve lifted his head. “I know I didn’t slave over a hot stove to be ignored!”

“I’m not wearing a shirt,” Steve hissed at Tony, who was now grinning. “I can Not go out there without a shirt. It’s not proper.”

“I’m sure Rachel won’t care. Everyone can admire that sculpted chest of yours,” Tony said as he started to pull Steve towards the door. “I know times that I may have properly worshipped it.” Tony couldn’t help but grin at the dusting of pink on Steve’s cheeks. “Probably shouldn’t say stuff like when we’re about to eat in front of the family.”

“You’re a horrible person,” Steve mumbled out, trying to get Tony to let him turn back towards the bedroom. “An absolute instigator, with no shame.”

“Very little shame,” Tony corrected. “I’m sure there’s some there, it’s just, I’m not sure where at the moment.” Tony grinned, leaning forward to press his lips to Steve’s again. “It certainly isn’t going to show up in front of Rachel and William.” Steve’s eyes widened a little.

“Nope, putting a shirt on.” He started to shake his head, but Jamie put a hand on his face, making him stop. She didn’t appreciate that her warm vehicle was moving and disrupting her comfort.
“Papa.” She said firmly and Steve looked down at her. “No.” Tony’s shoulders were bunching up as he looked like he was about to melt from the cuteness of it all, and shake apart from the laughter that he was trying to keep in. Jamie settled her head back on his shoulder, and wiggled to get comfortable again.

Steve let out a little sigh, knowing he had been defeated by a baby, not even a toddler yet. “Alright, let’s go.” He slipped his hand in with Tony’s, threading their fingers together. He needed this right now.

Bucky stepped out of the apartment, both Coulson and Mary inside with the twins and Meg. Looking towards the elevator he didn’t see the security guard Todd there, but when he looked down the other way he saw that the Wilson’s apartment door was partially open. He could hear Julie raising her voice to someone, most likely over the phone by the fact that there was no answering voice, and Wade was sitting on the floor against the wall. Bucky walked over quietly and sat down next to him.

“-has no blood related Aunts!” Julie was saying inside the apartment. Talking to the school then, Bucky surmised. “No one has been added to the approved list in over a year, and I did not get a call to authorize any additions anyway!”

“Todd’s in there with Mom,” Wade told him after a bit. “She’s real angry with the school office.” Bucky snorted softly and nodded. “Todd can at least get her to calm down when she’s done. They like each other.” Bucky raised an eyebrow as he glanced over at the boy. “He’s nice,” he said with a shrug. Bucky watched the boy staring at the wall in front of them, before turning his head to look at Bucky. “Thanks for teaching me self-defense.”

Bucky nodded, giving Wade’s shoulder a little squeeze. “The point of the lessons are in hopes that you never have to use it, but so that you’re always prepared.” That’s what Steve had told the kids, and Bucky liked that a hell of a lot better than what he had learned with Hydra. “I’m glad you had the training.”

“You think maybe later Mr Steve can come down?” Wade asked softly, looking back down towards the floor. “I gotta thank him about yesterday….”

“You know what,” Bucky said, shifting a little so he could reach into his pocket. “How about I just text him right now? I know for a fact that he planned on staying inside all day, so it’s just a matter of timing.” Wade nodded a little, and Bucky watched as he pulled his knees up a little. He quickly typed out a text to Steve. Bucky knew this was something that he and the kid had to work out; Steve had been the one to find Wade, to bring him home, and there had been some kind of imprinting, or something.

Steve texted back, saying he’d need about ten minutes, and something about finding a shirt. It wasn’t even half the time when the elevator doors opened and Steve was walking over to them. Bucky nudged Wade’s arm a little as he pushed himself up. The two shared a brief look, both nodding to each other, and Steve sat down next to Wade, arm going out to wrap around the boy’s shoulders. Bucky moved back towards the elevator, set on going to the gym now, giving them some privacy.

Wade leaned against Steve’s side, and Julie was back to talking at normal levels, but Steve could hear Todd inside trying to calm her down. Bucky had mentioned that she was upset with the school, and he would leave Tony to deal with that as well. Wade didn’t say anything for a while, just leaning again the Super Soldier. “What’s gonna happen?” Wade nearly whispered, Steve’s enhanced hearing
just picking it up.

“I’m not really sure,” Steve told him honestly. “You and Peter might change schools, but nothing’s certain.” He glanced down at Wade, hand coming up to gently rub the side of his head, pushing some hair back. “You and your mom should be safer now, but Todd will still be around.” Wade nodded a little.

“What about when Mom dies?” Steve’s brain stuttered to a halt for a second. “I’ve known she was sick a lot longer than anyone else, and I know that cancer is bad.” Despite his no-nonsense voice, Wade was tucking himself against Steve’s side, under his arm. “I know she’s really sick, and that she can’t work anymore because of it.” Wade pursed his a lips a little, taking a few breaths. “I know she doesn’t have a lot of time left.” He stumbled a little over his words and Steve turned to pull him into a hug. “What’s gonna happen to me?” Wade asked in a whisper.

“You’re gonna stay here,” Steve answered automatically, hugging Wade a little tighter. He knew that this was probably something that Wade should be talking to his mother about, but he didn’t have the heart to turn the boy away right now, not when he needed this comfort. And apparently wanted it from Steve. “Your mom and Tony talked about it. They made sure, that before, there was no way that you would have to go back to your dad. Tony would be your legal guardian, and you’ll stay here with us, with Peter.” He rubbed circles on Wade’s back, feeling a touch of wetness soaking through his shirt as Wade let out some tears. “That’s not going to happen for a long time, though, Wade. Not for a while.” Steve closed his eyes briefly, thinking how he shouldn’t be having a conversation like this with such a young kid; talking about the eventualities.

“Thank you, Mr Steve,” Wade said, voice muffled into his shirt. “Thank you for finding me.”

Steve pulled Wade back a little, a hand on his shoulder, his other hand lifting his head up gently by the chin. “We’ll always come after you, Wade. I promise.” He wiped some of the tears from his cheeks with his thumb. “And if you ever need to talk, or just want to sit with someone, just like this, you can always ask. You can ask your mom, or me, or Tony, or Peter, or I bet even Bucky.”

“I gotta be strong for mom,” Wade mumbled.

“You’re already strong,” Steve assured him. “But that doesn’t mean that you can’t ask for help, or even for a hug. I do, from Tony. I even cry in front of Tony, too.” Any other time, Steve might not have admitted that to Wade, but he knew that it was something that Wade needed to hear. Judging by the surprised expression he aimed at Steve, he was right. “Yeah, I do it. And he won’t say anything, just give me a hug, try and make me feel better. Sometimes we talk about stuff, cause even I get troubled by stuff. It’s a human thing, but it doesn’t mean we’re weak. Makes us better, because we can try and make things better, to change the bad into good.”

Wade nodded, and Steve brought him for another hug, and this time the little arms that wrapped around him were stronger. They stayed in the hall for a while, until Wade eventually yawned, and was more lounging against Steve as he tried to fight off sleep. The door to the apartment opened a bit wider and Todd stepped out before catching sight of them, Julie right behind him. He gave them a small smile, and shifted Wade into his arms to pick him up as he pushed himself from the floor.

“Tony’s thinking about pulling Peter from school until next week,” Steve whispered to Julie as they all walked back inside, Todd making sure the door was shut and secure. “Honestly, I think he’s ready to Home School them until Middle School.”

“I can’t say I wouldn’t agree with that,” Julie answered back, briefly running her fingers across Wade’s head. She was about to head for Wade’s bedroom when Steve shook his head a little. She frowned, then nodded as understanding dawned on her face. Julie instead moved towards the door to
her bedroom and Steve followed.

“Tony will get in touch with you, probably tomorrow or the next day, and you can discuss it from there.” Steve leaned on one side of the bed, putting Wade down towards the middle, Julie slipping onto the bed from the other side, bringing her son into her arms. He instantly turned, tucking himself neatly against her, eyes still closed. “I know you two will do what’s best for the boys.”

“I’d do anything for him,” she whispered as she watched him fall into a slumber. Steve nodded, then left the room, feeling like he was intruding. He shut the door a little, not fully closing it, then gave a nod to Todd who was making some coffee, taking up watching inside the apartment now. He could see a tablet on the kitchen counter that had up multiple camera views inside and around the Tower. The man took his job seriously, and Steve felt better about it.

Steve heard a movie running from the main living room when he got back up to the Penthouse, and he saw Rachel and William on the couch with Peter in between them. William had glanced over and Steve gave him a little wave as William motioned towards the stairs. Steve jogged up the stairs and Steve jogged up the stairs and took a detour down the hall to the bedrooms, peeking in to see that Jamie was down for her nap, but didn’t see Tony there. He walked down the hall, then paused when he thought he heard the soft sound of a piano. It wasn’t coming from the movie that they were watching downstairs, and it wasn’t coming from the speakers. Steve only knew of one spot that had a piano.

It was a smaller room, with a couple of loveseats, some lamps, and a baby grand piano in front of the expansive glass windows. It was a sparse room, but Tony seemed to like it that way. Steve had never seen Tony utilize the room, until now. Tony sat in front of the piano, one hand out, fingers dancing across the keys, and Steve leaned against the wall to watch him. He wasn’t playing a full song, just plucking at the keys, but there was some kind of intention behind the movements.

Steve walked over to Tony eventually, kissing the back of his neck. “I didn’t know you actually played.”

Tony paused a little in his playing, leaning back against Steve. “My mom used to play a lot, she wanted me to learn as a kid. I wanted to play the violin, but she said that a pianist’s fingers would be valued more.” He reached up one hand, rubbing Steve’s cheek to bring his head closer. “She would be appalled at all the calluses that I have now. My fingers didn’t turn out as longer and slender as she would have liked. I never did have the perfect poise to play like the masters.”

“I don’t need a master pianist,” Steve murmured as he rested his cheek against Tony’s. “I like the engineer hands that I’ve got just fine. They seem to be able to play the piano just fine.”

“Among other things,” Tony said with a slight smile. Steve dropped a kiss along his jaw. “Is everything okay downstairs?”

“As well as it’s going to be for now,” Steve told him. He moved to sit next to Tony on the piano bench, watching as the brunette put both hands on the piano now, playing something softly. It wasn’t anything that Steve recognized, but the way that Tony played it, it seemed to soothe him a bit more. “Wade’s starting to work through what actually happened yesterday, and he’s been thinking.”

“Overthinking,” Tony corrected and Steve nodded.

“Thinking about things that we probably wouldn’t like,” Steve continued, watching Tony’s fingers. “He asked about what’s going to happen after Julie dies.” Tony almost faltered in his playing, the song losing the tempo for a second.

“Did you tell him?” Tony asked as he picked the song back up, and Steve nodded. “I wish he wasn’t
so perceptive sometimes. At least he knows, and maybe he won’t worry so much about it.” Steve glanced over at him. “I don’t need to look up to know what kind of look that you’re giving me.”

Neither of them talked for a bit, letting Tony play a little louder, his shoulders, then his body starting to move with the song. Steve could see years of lessons, probably decades of playing, deeply ingrained his technique. “What are you playing?”

“Something from a game that Peter and Wade were playing last year,” Tony told him. Steve was a little envious, but impressed, with the way that Tony was able to play and talk to him at the same time, to follow the entire conversation. And on a song that he had only learned not too long ago, with no sheet music. Sometimes Steve thought about learning how to play some kind of instrument. Before the war of course. “They weren’t too incredibly thrilled with it, apparently calling it one of the weaker of the series. But, the music was catchy, and I tend to dabble at the keys when I can’t sleep, but don’t want to be in the workshop.”

“You taught this to yourself?” Steve asked, a bit of surprised leaking into his tone. Tony just smirked a little, and nodded.

“Years of training,” Tony explained. “I’m pretty good at picking out melodies, then working from there. I know a lot of the classics, the real classics, but I can also play a lot of modern songs.” Tony lifted his eyes up to look at Steve as he transitioned into another song. Steve raised an eyebrow at him, then smirked a little. “I had a little bit of incentive to learn this song.”

Steve hummed along with the piano, inwardly pleased at how well Tony was playing. “We have a song now, you know,” he commented, and Tony snorted out a chuckle.

“Yes, and so far, only Sam Wilson knows,” Tony said as he continued to play through I Won’t Give Up. “If we aren’t careful, he’ll tell the others, and then at an anniversary party, we’ll see Jason Mraz show up to sing to us. I don’t want to publicly hurt your friend, Steve.” Steve laughed and his smile widened.

“Speaking of anniversaries,” Steve mumbled happily.

“If I let you plan the date for our anniversary, I’m sure that we’ll end up back on the couch, watching Supernatural,” Tony commented. “Unless you’re hoping to create a successful first date?”

“You’re cruel to me, you know that?” Steve pushed their shoulders together as Tony finished at the piano.

“But I’m not wrong.” Tony smiled, turning on the bench to face Steve. “If you want to take over the festivities for our one year, I have no issue letting you do that. If you have no plans, then I’m sure I can come up with something.” He leaned in to kiss Steve softly. “We still have a few weeks yet, and I’ve got to search for a new school for the boys.”

“I told Julie to expect you to talk to her later about changing schools,” Steve threw in as he kissed the end of Tony’s nose. “She was on the phone earlier with the school. Bucky told me there was a lot of angry talking.”

“As far as I could tell, someone hacked into the school’s system, and names were added to Wade’s file.” Tony turned so he could lean back against Steve’s chest now, relaxing and dropping his head back against Steve’s shoulder. “They had looked into Peter’s file, but hadn’t altered it. There’s no way the school would have known, but I’m also not trusting their safety to such a weak security system. I won’t take a chance on this happening again.” Steve nodded and kissed him again. “It’s almost time to start making dinner, so we should go wake up Jamie so she’ll sleep through the night.”
Steve got up first, then pulled Tony up by one hand and walked with him. “We should spend more time in here.”

“Did you like my playing that much?” Tony asked as they left the room and headed down the hall.

“Well, yes, but I wasn’t able to hear a lot of live music in my day. It’s certainly something special.” Tony hummed happily and nodded as they walked into Jamie’s room. They could see her already awake, standing in the crib, holding onto the rail. “Look who’s awake and waiting.” Jamie cooed at the attention, reaching her arms up, and Steve obediently reached down to pull her into his arms.

“She’s surely does love the attention from her Papa,” Tony said with a small smile.

Jamie’s face lit up, and she looked up at Steve. “Papa!” Steve leaned down, rubbing his nose against hers, making her giggle and push at his face. “Papa.” Tony snorted, rolling his eyes a little as he watched them.

“She’s takes after you so much.”

“You love it,” Steve said with a smirk, turning back to face his boyfriend.

“More than is probably healthy,” Tony said with a smile. “Now come on, Granma and Granpa have already said that they’re making dinner, and I want to go and claim cuddle rights with Peter.”

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Tony walked into the dining room, smiling a little when he saw Peter and Wade huddled next to each other, books and notebooks open with their class work. Between Jarvis and Julie, the boys seemed to be very happy in their home schooling lessons. Perhaps it was that they kind of felt that they were skipping school that the rest of their friends had to go too, and that they got to go on ‘educational’ field trips with Mary, and Steve, and the Fitzpatrick’s. He and Julie had decided that they would try again with school for the high School years, letting the boys graduate together, and be able to walk with the rest of their class, getting their diplomas.

He moved past the boys, not wanting to disturb them, and saw Jamie asleep in her bassinet just inside the living room, where Steve currently was, a sketchbook open on the coffee table. Tony walked over, leaning over the back of the couch to kiss the back of Steve’s neck, but frowned a little when his lips met cold skin. That’s when he noticed that Steve’s body was shaking ever so slightly.

“Steve?” He moved to the front of the couch.

Steve lifted his head slowly, and Tony swallowed a little. His movements were sluggish, his eyes seemed glazed and unable to focus, and his lips looked to be turning blue. He had wrapped his arms around himself as he tried to curl up, a violent shiver running through his body. “C-cold,” Steve forced out before his body slumped forward, knees hitting the ground. Tony dropped down next to him to catch him, hands wrapping around his upper arms. Even his shirt felt cold. “Too cold.”

“Shit,” Tony whispered. “Okay, Steve, it’s okay. Jarvis, get the bath going, give us some hot water.” His eyes widened when he saw frost start to appear in his hair. “Steve?” Steve’s head drooped down, his body slumping even further towards the floor, dragging Tony with him. “Steve! Come on baby, say something.” He watched as Steve’s eyelids closed, his breathing getting slower as his body started to freeze. “No, no, no, Steve.” Tony moved his hands up to cup Steve’s cheeks.

An intense chill swept through his body and Tony’s eyes widened, pulling a sharp breath. Dark
colors burst in his vision and he felt himself falling backwards. Deep, dark blues, and violets swam in front of him, and the living room disappeared. Soft red and yellows circled together before leaving his sight, and he saw spots of white, and realized they were stars. He was back in space. Tony sucked in a breath, then felt his arms being pulled down, and his back was pushed down against something hard. Hands pressed down on his shoulders, and there was chittering sounds around him.

“You were given an option.” Tony tried to squirm, needing to pull away, to get away from the familiar voice. He could feel The Other behind him, then felt the grip of its hand closing around the side of his neck. “Now, we will take what we want.” His arms were pushed down on whatever he was lying on, palms facing up. He frowned when he felt something sharp just pressing against his skin, at the base of his palms. “You should be so lucky,” the voice hissed down by his ear. “He’s going to enhance you, again.”

Tony gasped when those same sharp things were pushing into his skin, then started to drag down, like scalpels cutting down towards his fingers. His mouth opened in a silent scream when he felt the cuts sliding down his middle fingers. They lifted, but then were poised at the base of his index fingers, the process repeating. Each finger was sliced, and tears had started to collect at the corners of his eyes.

His screams were no longer silent though when he felt fingers start to peel back the skin around his fingers. “Stop!!” His voice cracked with pain, his body unable to move and thrash. “No! Stop!” Fingers stopped, and he struggled to take even breaths. Tony’s eyes stared up, into space, watching stars and nebulas, sharp and burning pain streaking through his hands. A strangled scream forced itself up his throat when white hot pain suddenly blossomed at the tips of each finger, pins being jabbed in. Brown eyes widened, pupils blowing wide as the view above him started to twist and move, and then he was suddenly moving past stars, other galaxies moving past him, and his own Milky Way Galaxy came closer, before stopping.

Tony flinched when fingers gently dragged across his cheeks. “Get us closer,” the voice whispered, hot and uncomfortable on the skin of his ear. “Lead us.”

Steve’s eyes shot open as his hands gripped the sheets beneath him. He tried to drag in a deep breath, the nightmare still lingering around his mind. His body jerked when fingers dug into his chest. Tony was laying on top of him, his hands on Steve’s chest. “Tony.” He tried to clear his throat when his voice came out weak and raspy, as if he had been screaming. “Tony,” he tried again. When he reached up, his hands touching Tony’s, Tony’s body spasmed then curled up, screaming in pain and he pulled his hands into his own chest.

Tony curled his body up and twisted, trying to roll away. His body thumped when he fell off of something and he whimpered as he jostled his hands. He forced his eyes open and saw the inside of his bedroom, the couch in the open space beyond the bed, the soft glow of a small fire from the fireplace, and then blue of their current sheets. Feet were slowly slipping down onto the floor of the bed, and he curled his body up a little before knees were sliding to the ground and Steve’s face came into view. This time, his eyes looked as troubled, and wild, as Tony felt. Steve’s hand hovered out towards Tony, but didn’t touch, and there was a fine tremor running through them.

“Tony?” Steve said softly, shuffling on his knees a little closer. Tony surged forward, wrapping his arms around Steve’s neck, not letting his hands touch. His face pushed into Steve’s neck and he bit his lip as Steve wrapped his own arms around him. “I think I saw your dream.” Tony squeezed his eyes shut at Steve’s words. “Was that-“

“That’s the voice,” Tony whispered to him. “It’s what I heard....” He sighed as he tried to relax against Steve, but the pain was still feeling too real. “I actually kind of wish that Loki was still
around, or alive, so I could try and grill him about this.”

“Is there anyone else that might know? Maybe something about magic?” Steve asked, shifting his legs so he could pull Tony into his lap. “Maybe the Fantastic Four might know something about the portions of space that you saw?”

“I’ll seek someone out about magic before I find myself willingly making a visit to Reed Richards,” Tony grumbled against Steve’s skin. “I hear Doctor Strange has recently made his way into the strange world of not normal, or some such nonsense that I didn’t want to pay attention too until just now.” Steve placed a soft kiss on the top of Tony’s head. “Maybe I’ll make a visit, at a semi-decent hour for humans.”

“Not that we’re getting back to sleep anytime soon,” Steve murmured, and Tony just hummed in agreement. Steve carefully threaded his fingers through Tony’s hair as he held onto his, careful of his fingers as a faint ache pulsed through them from the dream. If those were the dreams that Tony was constantly experiencing, it was a wonder that Tony hadn’t avoided sleeping more often.

“Why don’t you tell me about what you have planned for next week?” Tony asked, drawing Steve’s attention back to the present. They both shifted until Steve was leaning back against the bed, Tony leaning against him.

“And ruin the surprise?” Steve teased lightly.

“You don’t have anything planned yet, do you?”

“I have too many ideas,” Steve corrected. “All those visits to museums and libraries with the boys gives me time to see all the opportunities for date ideas.” Tony’s hands were rubbing gently against his arms, as if trying to warm him up. Steve didn’t stop him, afraid that it might make him think about how cold he had been in the nightmare. “I have to make it special though, so I have to parse the ideas down.”

“Babe,” Tony murmured, a small smile on his face. “I know that this feels wrong coming from my mouth, and that really, you should be saying this too me-”

“-but, we seriously don’t have to go all out,” Tony continued, ignoring Steve’s words. “I would be fine with staying home with you. Specially after we just had that long weekend in Malibu. You’re going to spoil me, even though I will never stop you from doing that.”

“That sounds more like the Tony Stark I know,” Steve quipped.

“-but, we didn’t have to go all out,” Tony continued, ignoring Steve’s words. “I would be fine with staying home with you. Specially after we just had that long weekend in Malibu. You’re going to spoil me, even though I will never stop you from doing that.”

“The end of the world must be coming if you’re acting like me,” Steve quipped.

He was exhausted, had been for several days. He never usually complained about it, being used to it for most of his life. At first it had been constant exhaustion from being sick all the time, from taking all the meds that his Ma had been able to get for him from the hospital, then from his time in the war and hunting down Hydra. Now, it seemed that it still didn’t stop. Tony was there to help, and he would never be able to thank the man enough for that. He had allowed Steve to be a part of his son’s life, and then there was Jamie. Steve loved the kids, and would do anything for them, of that he was certain, but he was tired. Jamie was nearly a year old, but still needed constant attention, and then there were the art lessons and Peter, and the self defense classes with both Peter and Wade. He wasn’t complaining, really he wasn’t, but sometimes he just needed a little break.
It didn’t seem that long, but Steve must have drifted off a little because next thing he knew there was a pressure on his chest, and he was waking up. Tony must have been moving, and he wondered if he was going to wake him up so that they could move back up to the bed. Then the pressure turned sharp, then painful, then cold.

Steve gasped and his eyes shot open. “Steve,” Tony’s broken voice called out, brown eyes locking with blue. He was being pulled away, body lax and sliding across the floor. An arm was wrapped around Tony’s front, and soon lifted him up. Hilda smirked at Steve as she held onto Tony, his head flopped back in a boneless motion.

“You should have stayed in the ice, Captain,” she whispered to him, German accent thick, like so many other Hydra agents he had fought against. Steve couldn’t move his limbs, could barely think, as she hefted Tony’s body over her shoulder. His body felt heavy, and cold. Another sharp tug in his chest had him looking down and he saw that a small dagger had been pushed in to the hilt. The weapon seemed to be radiating a cold aura, frost building in layers around it, and onto, into, his body. “Allow me to help.” Steve sluggishly lifted his head back up to look at the woman. “Hail Hydra.”

“Steve!” Steve sucked in a breath at the shout by his ear. He started sucking in breaths until he started coughing, lungs unable to hold a proper breath. A hand was rubbing against his chest, which he could feel again, and he felt something breathing just against the shell of his ear. Someone was trying to help him regulate his own breathing, that’s what it was. “Can you hear me now?” Steve nodded once, jerky, but he nodded. “You’re in New York, and it’s Twenty-Twelve, October. You’re up in the Penthouse, and Peter and Jamie are still asleep. You’re safe, babe, you’re safe. I’m safe, everything is alright.”

Tony. It was Tony that was with him, talking to him, helping him. It felt like a chore to open his eye lids, but when he did he was greeted to the bright eyes of Tony, worried. He wasn’t being dragged off back to Hydra, wasn’t drugged or hurting, he was there in front of him. “Come on now, it’s not cool to have a nightmare right after I do,” Tony said tightly, trying to make a joke. “You know I don’t like it when people try to steal my thunder. Only one mental episode at a time, you know this.” He let out a huff a breath when Steve suddenly wrapped his arms around him, squeezing a little. “Yeah, it’s okay, babe,” Tony whispered to him in his ear, arms wrapping around his neck. “I’m right here, and so are you.” He kissed Steve lightly. “Everything is gonna be okay.”

Steve’s hand reached up, fingers gently ruffling through the short hairs on Tony’s neck. Tony hummed a little, resting more against Steve, taking in his warmth. “I think that there are two pints of ice cream in the kitchen that are calling our names.”

“I think I’ll take some butter pecan today,” Steve said, his lips turning up a little at Tony’s outraged look.

“You’ll not touch my sacred stash.”

“I thought we had moved you on to something better?” Steve’s fingers started to gently rub Tony’s neck. “What about the mint chocolate chip?” Tony scrunched up his face a little. “Peter loves it!”

“That’s because Peter follows what Wade does, and Wade is on a mint chocolate chip kick right now,” Tony grumped a little. “All I have to do is get Wade to start eating the superior Butter Pecan, and all of my troubles will be solved.”

Steve snorted softly. “I think I’m going to go with Moose Tracks, tonight.” He could feel Tony raise an eyebrow. “I like the mini peanut butter cups.”
“When Captain America craves his chocolate-“

“Nothing in the Tower is safe,” Steve finished with a nod.

Tony eased the knot of his tie up, paused to take a look in the mirror before pulling it off. “Are you going to go out shopping for me?” The engineer turned his head slightly to see Peter kicking his legs, sitting on the edge of the bed.

“Why would I be going out shopping for you tonight?” Tony asked, turning back to the mirror, unbuttoning the top button of his shirt.

“Because my birthday is coming up,” Peter told him. “I’m gonna be Eight this year.” Tony couldn’t help but smirk a little at the very matter-of-fact tone coming from his young son.

“Thanks for the reminder, kiddo,” Tony told him, reaching over to grab the dinner jacket by the mirror. He slipped it on and took a second to evaluate it. “Should I go with the tie or the jacket?”

“You should go with the tie,” Peter told him. “If you look important, then the people will give you more stuff for me.” Tony couldn’t help but snort.

“We’re not going shopping for you birthday presents.” He glanced in the mirror to see the slight pout that was starting to develop on his young features. “We’ve already got your presents.” Peter’s face lit up with a smile so fast that Tony had a hard time not smiling himself. “Papa and I are going out because one year ago, he asked me out, and I said yes. He was really very silly, but he’s stuck around for this long, so we’re going to celebrate.”

“And that’s why Jamie and I are spending the night down on Mama and Phil’s home?” Peter asked, watching Tony put the tie back on.

Tony hummed a little as he nodded. “That’s right. We don’t know when we’re going to get back, it might be really late. They’ll make sure that you get fed and watered-“

“And taken for a walk?” Peter finished and Tony narrowed his eyes at him a little. Peter just sent him a grin, teeth and everything.

“Watch out, or I’ll take your presents back and get you a harness and a leash,” Tony threatened before turning around to face his son. He walked over and pulled Peter up into his arms. “I’ll make sure that it’s bright neon green.” Peter’s face twisted in disgust. “Yeah, that’s right. I’m your Dad, and I have all the power. Don’t you forget that.” He turned and left the bedroom, with Peter in his arms, and they headed for the living room.

Tony couldn’t help but smirk a little when he heard the familiar whimpering pouts of young Jamie. As they entered the room, the little girl was hanging onto Steve, not wanting to let go and be separated. He set Peter down on his feet again, and the boy ran over to stand next to Mary. Phil had Jamie’s diaper bag, and Peter’s backpack over his shoulder.

He had to admire Steve’s figure though, and the dashing look he cut with his khaki’s, blue button up, and black sport jacket. “Come on, baby girl,” Steve cooed. “It’s just for a night, and you’ll be asleep for most of the night anyway.” Jamie pressed her face to Steve’s neck, and blue eyes caught Tony’s, asking for help. Tony chuckled silently and walked over to them. He kissed Steve lightly then rubbed Jamie’s back.
She turned her head to look back at Tony. “Hey there gorgeous, why the long face?” She wiggled her nose a little. “Yeah, I know. Papa’s being mean, isn’t he? He wants to send you off for the night.” Steve’s expression deadpanned in Tony’s direction. “I know you’re a good girl, though, and you can do this.”

“I doubt that she can understand you,” Mary whispered in Tony’s ear. He waved one hand, shooing her away.

“Our little girl is smart, she knows what I mean.” Tony smiled at Jamie. “Listen, Papa wants to take me out, and it’s kind of a special night. So, I think that our big girl can be courageous, for just one night.” Steve moved her around until he was able to lift her from his arms and move her over to Mary’s arms.

Jamie made a little whine, not content in Mary’s arms, looking back at Steve and Tony. “It’s okay Jamie.” Peter spoke up and Tony moved closer to Steve to grab the sleeve of his jacket, discreetly. Peter had really turned around on Jamie in the past few months, and it still shocked Tony a little bit every time. “I’ll be there too!” Jamie had turned her head to look down at Peter.

“Now would be the time to sneak away,” Phil told them, Jamie’s attention still on her brother. “We’ll see you in the morning.” Steve grabbed Tony’s hand, smiling, and dragged him to the elevator, waving to the kids, Mary, and Phil.

“So far,” Tony started after the elevator door closed. “This date is better than our first. We’ve actually made it to the elevator, and it isn’t an Avengers call out.”

“Don’t jinx us, baby,” Steve told him, giving him a kiss. “We’re going to go out, we’re going to get some food, we’re going to have a special night to make up for the one that we didn’t get one year ago.”

Tony smirked at him a little, nodding. “It’s amusing to me to see that you’ve so thoroughly set this up. You really the ‘man with the plan’, aren’t you?”

“You’re never going to let that go, are you?” Steve asked dryly, but Tony could see the hints of a smile in his expression. “Here I thought that I was living in a new century, not back on stage.”

“Have you ever thought about going on stage?” Tony asked, turning a little to look at the elevator door so he could avoid Steve’s glare. “I could see you on Broadway, maybe. Do you think that you could sing for a musical? Maybe we should start off with just acting, a drama, before we jump into a musical. Let you build up-“ Tony yelped when Steve wrapped an arm around his waist and pulled him back quickly into his chest. “Is that a no?”

“One day, you’re going to be in trouble with me,” Steve muttered into his ear.

“But it is not this day.” Steve snorted and Tony smiled. “Alright, dazzle me with an amazing date.”

Chapter End Notes

Songs played by Tony on the piano -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyuqlOefPLA - (video Game music= Legend of Zelda)
https://youtu.be/ZJr_FfdKug4
Update

Hello all you lovely people!!! So, here's an update on what's happening and why there is no new chapter yet.

I was still working a lot, my job actually ends on X-Mas eve, but just as everything started to slow down we had a pretty major thing happen. I got my keyboard to work so that wasn't stopping me anymore. I had to take my mom into the Emergency Room a few weeks ago and she ended up having a really bad infection that started in her foot. We didn't know about it, or how long it had been there, and it became life threatening.

My mom is a single mother, and I'm her only child, so I was suddenly put in the position of making the decisions that would save her life. The doctors were telling me that there was still a good chance that she wouldn't make it, she was a surgical emergency and a medical emergency. She made it through the night, and made it through the surgery, and she had to have a leg amputated above the knee. So in between making sure she's doing well in rehab, I have to clean the house out, get a storage unit, sell the house, and find a place for me to live. (Mom luckily has case workers that will help her get that ball rolling for when she gets out.)

I do have part of a new chapter written, but I've just had a lot of big, and emotional, decisions. There are plans, but it's trying to get the plans rolling that's really weighing heavy on my shoulders. It's hard to do all the big things that need to be done, in less than a month, when all the money is being funneled into my mom's recovery.

Basically! **TLDR:** Almost lost my mom to an infection and surgery, need to sell the house, and find new living arrangements for myself, and my job is ending very soon. This story is not abandoned, there should be a new chapter before the new year, but that's just my hope. There will be a new one soon.

You're all beautiful people, amazing, and I adore you all. Seriously your comments and reviews are amazing, and I have every intention of still responding to everyone. Your support keeps me going.
October 2012

Chapter Summary

There's a date, and there's magic, and then it's all downhill.

Chapter Notes

Hi!! Okay, first, a very huge, very warm, Thank You to everyone! It's been rough, but things are starting to look up. Adulting sucks sometimes, but you all have been so very patient, and your kind words have meant so much! Small update: My mom is kicking butt in Physical Therapy. Her surgeon had said that she'd never walk again, but she's proving him wrong by getting a recommendation for a prosthetic. She's beating the odds and getting better step by step. Now we're just addressing issues that have to do with her finances, and finding places to live, for her, and myself. (Down below I've posted a picture I sneaked while she was working in therapy.)

Now, as for the story! This is the second to last chapter, and I know I'm going over 200k words with this chapter. Next update, which won't be nearly as long as this one took to come, will be the last chapter, but then I'll also post a preview for what's going to happen in the story after that. It's been requested in the comments, and I can confirm that we will be seeing a teenaged Peter! We will be seeing Spiderman! With the way the story will progress, we'll probably get more Spiderman as more info about Spiderman Homecoming, comes. I'm always adamant about not putting any spoilers for recent movies in the stories, so what I'll be pulling is how they portray Spiderman, and what kind of powers/gadgets that he has. Because I really like Tom Holland as Peter. :)

I hope you all enjoy! I've made this chapter a little longer to make up for being gone for so long.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony tried not to roll his eyes, with a smile, when the tall malt glass was placed on the counter, two long straws in it. He locked eyes with amused blue ones across from him, letting Steve reach for the glass first, going for the cherry on top. “If you take that cherry, I will use my Italian leather shoes to ensure that the night ends with dinner.” Steve tried to give him a pout, but Tony just hardened his gaze and stole the cherry by the stem from between Steve’s fingers. The blonde shot him a smile then used his finger to steal a large dollop of whip cream from the top. “You didn’t!”

“I did!” Steve exclaimed with mischievous grin. “You get the cherry, I get the first taste of cream.” Steve stuck his finger in his mouth, keeping eye contact with Tony, slowly sucking the whip cream from his finger. Tony let out a little growl, leaning forward on the table as he slipped the cherry in his mouth, stem included. He then pulled the stem out, knotted.

“I think that you should have gotten this thing to go,” Tony murmured, twirling the knotted stem between his fingers.
“I like the cream they use here,” Steve said, grabbing his spoon to start siphoning more whip cream off the stop. He raised an amused eyebrow when Tony placed the stem on top of the spoon. “They make it themselves, old fashioned like.”

“Just the way you like it, huh?” Tony asked, taking his own spoon to get his own share from the top of the malt. He bit his lip when he felt Steve’s ankle start to wrap around his own. “Never said that old fashioned was a bad thing.”

“I’d hope not, because I just gave you an old fashioned date.” Steve smiled at him, letting his tongue peek out around the spoon.

“These are not old fashioned flirting techniques,” Tony argued. “You’re playing dirty.”

“Is it working?”

“There’s a reason we’ve hit a one year anniversary.” Tony snorted softly when he felt Steve’s foot tapping against his own. “If the people knew just how big of a sap Captain America is, I don’t think the villains would fear you anymore. Playing footsie under the table, what are we teenagers?”

“Well, considering I didn’t get to do this when I was teenager,” Steve said with a little smile. He reached his spoon over again, but Tony had grabbed his own and they clanked against each other.

“I was in college when I was a teen,” Tony threw in, locking eyes with Steve.

“So, we’re just making up for lost time.” Steve pushed against Tony’s spoon, and Tony pushed back, smirking a bit.

They did battle a little longer as they ate the malt, and Steve practically fought him to pay the bill. It wasn’t until Steve reminded him that he had his own bank account, and that he was pretty sure that Peter and Jamie weren’t going to use all that money for college.

“Just because you said that, you get to use your money for allowance with them,” Tony told him as they left the restaurant. He pulled his jacket back on as Steve walked next to him. “I’m going to make sure that they deplete your account first.” Steve rolled his eyes fondly, slipping his arm around Tony’s. Tony side-glanced at Steve, a little smirk lifting at the corner of his lips.

“I understand, if you’re hard up for cash,” Steve teased. Tony elbowed his side and he couldn’t help but laugh a little. He pulled Tony closer to his side, arm wrapped around his waist, as they walked down the sidewalk. With their jackets on, the sky darkening as the sun set, they both had the pleasure of going mostly unnoticed, and unrecognized, in the crowds on the sidewalk.

They walked in silence, a comfortable one, for a while before Tony hummed a little. “I blame you.”

Steve raised an eyebrow and shifted his eyes to look at Tony. “Blame me for what exactly?”

“For turning me into a sap,” Tony continued. “I was never like this before. Paying attention to anniversaries, looking forward to dates, actually going on dates. Thank science that your birthday is so memorable.”

“You remember Peter’s birthday,” Steve countered.

“That’s different,” Tony said with a wave of his hand. “Peter would never let me forget it anyway. Neither would Mary. Do you know what I was doing a year ago?” He poked Steve’s chest a little.

“Yes, actually,” Steve responded. “You were cuddling with me on the couch after a too-near death
experience. Then we watched Supernatural.”

“Okay, not the point I was going for,” Tony grumbled a little. “Alright, so two years ago, smartass.” Steve opened his mouth to answer and Tony lightly thwapped his chest. “Completely not the point. You get what I’m trying to say.”

“Do you feel like you’re missing out on your old life?” Steve asked him.

Tony quickly shook his head. “No, not at all. Old Tony never would have thought that he’d be happy, especially doing cliché everyday, normal people things.” Steve mouthed the last few words, trying not to laugh. “I think we all can admit that my life is anything but normal.”

“You’re not the only one,” Steve said, then dropped a kiss on the side of Tony’s head. “Happy to be in the thick of it with you, though.” Tony hummed happily.

“See, there you go again!” Tony pushed against Steve’s side, but the man didn’t deviate from as he walked. “Such a sap! Maybe I was wrong, maybe you’re gonna be the woman in the relationship.” Steve wrinkled his nose up and looked at Tony as they crossed a crosswalk with a small crowd. “I know, technically no one needs to, but you’re just so undeniably sappy, and romantic-“

“My Ma taught me to treat everyone with respect!” Steve exclaimed.

“Except for bullies,” Tony teased.

“I respectfully put them in their place,” Steve muttered a little.

“With your fists.”

“I’m certainly going to treat the person I love the way they deserve.” Tony smiled up at Steve when he heard a tiny lilt of Irish in his voice. “I’ll spoil you the way I see fit. And I don’t see you complaining about it.”

“I am far from complaining,” Tony confirmed with a nod of his head. He pushed closer to Steve, pulling the blonde’s hand closer to his side and threading his fingers with Steve’s. “Never knew someone could feel this way…,” he admitted. “I mean, yeah, there’s a certain kind of happiness and joy with your children, I’m sure you know that by now.” Steve hummed and nodded. Yeah he knew that feeling. “But, I’ve got that, and I’ve got a really good relationship going with my son right now, the best it’s ever been. And I’ve got our new baby girl, and that’s, that’s something else. That alone is more than I could have ever for with my life. Then you come along, with all your, Steve-ness, and you just, you spoil me. That’s what it feels like. I’m not entirely convinced that I’ve earned it, or deserve it, but I’ll be damned if I let go of it now that I have it.”

Steve tightened his grip on Tony a little, dropping a kiss on his head. “I’m kind of a paragon of goodness, so I don’t think that I would be with someone that wasn’t deserving of everything that I wanted to give them. I’m just a little bit in love with you, Tony Stark.”

Tony snorted a little, but smiled, burying his face against Steve’s side.

The ‘ding’ of a new message brought Tony’s eyes from his computer monitor, from his new coding project, to his phone. He grunted a little at the sender’s name then pushed himself up from his chair. Really, he had put this off for too long.
“J, save and store files, I’ve got to go out, apparently.” Tony listened to his AI affirm his command as he headed for the exit.

“Captain Rogers is upstairs in his office,” Jarvis informed him. “Shall I inform that you plan to leave?”

“No,” Tony told him, stepping into the elevator. “I’ll go tell him myself. He knows that I need to go, but I might as well get anything else we need for Peter’s birthday as well.”

“And you’re volunteering, Sir?”

Tony narrowed his eyes up at the speaker a little. “Watch out, I’m already coding something. It wouldn’t take me more than a minute to go into your coding.”

“Of course, Sir. I never forget the sheer power that you wield.” The engineer rolled his eyes.

When the doors opened he headed down the hallway of the Avengers offices, stopping just in the doorway of Steve’s office. He wasn’t dressed in his mission uniform, and his hair wasn’t wet from a recent shower, so it was strictly a paperwork day. Tony gave a catcall whistle, causing Steve to look over.

“Look at that good looking man hunched over his desk.”

“I’m not hunched,” Steve retaliated, leaning back in his chair now. Tony tried not to chuckle. “What brings you up here? I thought you’d be downstairs for at least a few hours more.”

“Just got word that Strange is back at his place,” Tony told him. Steve stood up walking over towards him. “Thought I’d check and see if there’s anything else we need for Peter’s birthday while I was out.”

“You’re going to run errands?” Steve questioned. Tony’s nose twitched a little in annoyance. “Just checking,” Steve said with a chuckle, giving him a little kiss. “I’m sure there might be, but I’m also sure that it’s not something we absolutely need. I assume that the floor where his party will be is ready?” Tony hummed and nodded. “I don’t think we need much more. Mary and Coulson said they would help out to get the rooms decorated and set up. If you want you can always pick up some more ice cream.”

“Oh, I’m sure.” Tony pushed Steve’s shoulder. “And what kind of ice cream should I be getting? Perhaps Moose Tracks? Or Butter Pecan?” Steve just smiled and kissed Tony again before turning back towards his desk. “Ah ha, I see how it is. This ice cream probably won’t even make it to the party. That’s fine, you’ve been breaking into my stash, and I need to refill it anyway. Hey, where is the ice cream in a grocery store anyway?”

Steve snorted a little as he took a seat in front of the computer keyboard, and the paperwork he was filling out by hand. “It would probably be better if you just went to one of those little corner markets, instead of a large grocery store.”

“Why’s that, Mister Nineteen-Forties?”

“Because I don’t want to have to write up a report saying that we lost Iron Man inside of a grocery store.”

“Oh, you are so not getting any ice cream tonight,” Tony said as he turned from the hallway. “And you’ll be lucky if I let you cuddle tonight!” He heard Steve’s, obviously faked, gasp of shock, and kept walking. Apparently he needed to pick up ice cream as well. Perhaps Strange would know
where he could do that. If he still even did his own grocery shopping as well.

He didn’t very often drive south enough to go through Greenwich Village, preferring to take one of the earlier bridges when he drove to Queens to visit Mary and Peter when they lived over there. When he knew what he was looking for, finding the townhouse that Doctor Stephen Strange lived in wasn’t all that hard. Tony was aware, had been told, that Strange made sure that no one really looked at it unless he wanted them too, said it was some kind of glamour, or something, that he cast about the building. Tony didn’t know what he did, but he would find a scientific explanation one day.

Of course, Tony couldn’t have counted on parking being quite horrendous on the street, forcing him to park three blocks away. His sunglasses were already on, and he buttoned up his jacket as he locked his car and started the hike up. It wasn’t that he minded walking, he did a lot of walking when he worked directly with the missiles that he helped with when SI was still working with the military on weapons. He just didn’t like doing it alone, where he might be recognized, or any one of his apparently endless enemies could be watching him.

As he crossed the street to the block where Dr Strange was, Tony felt a soft tingle travel down his back. He glanced over his shoulder but didn’t see anything. When he turned back, the townhouse stuck out like a sore thumb, and yet no one paid a second, or even first, glance to it. There had to be a scientific explanation for it. Magic be damned.

Tony walked up the steps, hand barely raised to knock and the door slowly opened to allow him inside. “Anthony Stark, you are one of my more surprising visitors.” Tony stepped inside, the door closing behind him, and saw Strange walked down the stairs from the second floor.

“Neat door trick,” Tony said, jerking his thumb back a little as he watched the man. Of course he knew about Dr Strange when he had been one of the best neurosurgeons in the country, possibly the world, before his accident and then disappearance. It wasn’t until after he had become Iron Man that he really heard about what Strange had done while he was gone. “I remember your previous residence being a lot higher up, and with a lot more glass. More modern, too.”

Strange lifted an eyebrow at him, stopping just at the bottom of the steps, a gap still between the two men. Tony had pushed his hands into his jacket pockets. “And last I remembered, you were well on your way to drinking yourself into an early grave. I’m sure there were some drugs involved, as well. I thought for sure that I would see you end up on a table in front of me.” Tony nose twitched a little. “Yes, well, it seems a lot of things have changed for both of us.”

“Indeed. And it seems that you have ended up in front of me, needing my help.”

“Let’s not sound to boastful about it,” Tony murmured a little. “Listen, I don’t come here with a lot of humility—”

“That’s something that hasn’t changed.”

“But it would appear that things are happening that I have been unable to explain.” Tony continued, trying to ignore Strange’s comment. His hands came back out of his pockets, and he rubbed them together, a bit nervously. Strange took a couple steps closer, head tilted as he observed Tony.

“This seems to have had a serious effect on you.” Tony looked at him with a deadpanned expression. “But, for you to come to me—”

“Well, my next choice would have been Reed Richards.”

“Your personal disdain for him is well known,” Strange said with a nod.
Tony pulled off his sunglasses and met the man’s eyes in front of him. The bags under his eyes were starting to become noticeable from the lack of sleep that Tony was getting thanks to the nightmares. “Something happened last year, during the battle. I really don’t know how to explain it, but something happened when I was alone with Loki. He claims that he was under the control of some other being, out there, in space.”

“You don’t believe him?” Strange asked, turning and motioning for Tony to follow him back up the stairs. Tony didn’t see that he had a choice as the self-proclaimed Sorcerer Supreme started walking away from him.

“Unfortunately, I do. I went through the portal that was created, I saw the army that was there.” Tony took a breath as he tried to push away the thoughts and images that might creep in. “Okay, this sounds crazy to me, but this is the reason that I came here. Also, Steve said that I needed to seek out help…..” They both still remember the night that they shared Tony’s nightmare. “I’ve been having nightmares that feel too real. I’m not entirely convinced that they are nightmares, and not visions…..”

“Now, that, I know you don’t believe in.” Strange led him through a room that held dozens of artifacts on stands and inside glass cases.

“Normally no, but I don’t know how else to explain this.” He took a seat in the smaller room they entered. Tony started to rub the bridge of his nose. “It’s starting to scare me.” He looked up when he saw Strange pulling a chair up across from him.

“I’m not positive that I can help you,” the former surgeon told him, pushing the sleeves of his shirt up. “But I would not turn away someone in need. There is a way that I could try, but I would need your permission to slip into your dreams and memories of what has happened.” Tony whined a little.

“I’m not a huge fan of people in my head, considering that the last few times someone has been in there, it hasn’t exactly been pleasant.”

Strange hummed and nodded. “Understandable, but it is the quickest way for me to determine exactly what is happening. Let me remind you, that you came to me.”

“No need to be a dick about it,” Tony mumbled under his breath before pulling one in. he straightened a little in his chair and nodded. “Yeah, alright, let’s do this.”

“I hope you don’t mind if I take a peek as well.” There was a very familiar voice behind Tony. He hopped up in shock at the fact of someone else being in the room that he didn’t see, and the disbelief at the owner of the voice. A very dressed down Loki strolled towards the two men, looking not the least bit dead. “I’d like to see how this has progressed, if you are still plagued with dreams and visions.”

Tony narrowed his eyes at the taller man, then wound back and threw a punch straight at his face. Loki hadn’t seen it coming and jerked back from the hit, eyes widening a little bit. “This is your fault, you asshole! You undo what you’ve done right now!”

Loki ran a hand over his face, face wrinkling a little in displeasure. “I’m afraid it’s not that simple. It’s not something I could do if I wanted too.”

“A little context would be helpful,” Strange piped up. Tony turned his glare towards the doctor now. He had been harboring the Asgardian, and hadn’t said a word. “This is taking a physical toll on him.”

“This situation right now is taking a physical toll on me,” Tony growled out. “Give me one good
reason not to call back to Steve and have him mobilize the rest of the Avengers.”

“It would not be in your best interests,” Loki simply said. “I have been here for a while, peaceful existing, breaking my own mental chains.”

“Is this a connection with the same entity that you had dealt with?” Strange asked Loki, receiving a nod in answer. “Then perhaps we may have more of a situation on hand than I thought.” He looked back at Tony now. “I would ask for you to take a seat so that we can continue. You may be having more than just nightmares, and it would be within everyone’s best interest to deal with this quickly.”

Tony reluctantly sat back down. “I told Steve where I was going before I left, so if something happens to me, he knows where to start kicking in doors at.” Tony heard Loki’s soft snort, but he obviously wasn’t blowing off the threat. Strange waved his hand over Tony’s eyes, and Tony closed them. He felt fingers tap at the insides of his wrists, then move up to tap at his shoulders, then finally settle on his temples. He took a deep breath, trying to relax into the chair.

Maybe he was relaxing a bit too much when he had the sensation of floating, leaving the chair. His head lolled back and he took a deep breath through his nose. Then lights flashed through his eyelids and he opened them then. He bit back a gasp when he saw the darkness of space, specks of lights of the stars, staring back at him. He had literally started floating, out in space.

Tony jerked, turning his body in spot, but didn’t see anything, or anyone, around him. A wave of blues and purples rippled on his side and he turned his head to try and follow it. It seemed like more stars seemed to appear, twinkling at him, but it didn’t seem as sinister as he had once felt. He bit back a gasp when he felt a burning in his fingers and palms. The heat tried to race up his arms, but was rerouted just past his wrists. It was like a bug caught under a jar, running about to try and find an exit, causing more pain in his hands.

“Shhh,” a gentle voice brushed past his ears. “Try to hide.” Tony bit back a whimper of pain. This voice was not one he had heard before, and there seemed to be nothing sinister behind it. It vaguely sounded like a woman’s voice to him. “Too much pain. I help.” He briefly wondered about the way that it spoke in broken sentences, but that quickly became less of a factor when the burning sensation started again. “He tries to find you. But cannot. You stay until he stops.”

Steve never liked messages that requested his presence ‘most urgently.’ Especially not from the person that Tony had gone to visit. The text that came from Dr Strange had him moving immediately, with Jarvis contacting Mary’s parents to ask if they could watch the kids while he bee-lined it down to the garage to grab his bike. He passed by Tony’s car on the road before squeezing his bike into a parking spot closer to Strange’s residence.

Unlike Tony, Steve wasn’t concerned with the way that the door opened on its own as he practically ran up the steps. He was concerned when it wasn’t Strange that was waiting for him, but Loki. The same one that they all believed to be dead. He was reaching for his shield on his back even as Loki raised his hands.

“I’m not your enemy in this one, Captain,” he said simply. He looked a little ruffled, but he also didn’t look like he was the guilty party. Which was impressive for the dark haired man. He then turned and headed up the rest of the stairs, Steve following a quick pace.

Steve didn’t drop his shield until he entered the sitting room where Tony and Strange were. Strange was on his feet, hands out on either side of Tony’s head. Tony, who was unconscious, and floating
in the air above the floor. Steve moved towards him, but was stopped by Loki’s hand on his arm. “I wouldn’t disturb the Doctor.”


“It would seem that my actions over a year ago still resonate,” Loki murmured, stepping away from Steve now. “I was unaware that the connection I inadvertently created at our meeting would continue this long.” Steve thought that he actually sounded a little regretful at his words. “Strange went to help him, and now he works to keep his mind on this plane.” Steve’s eyes widened.

“To keep his mind- What?!” Steve looked back at Tony, then turned the full force of a Captain America glare at Loki. “If you don’t start explaining what all of this means in the next two seconds, I will use my shield on your head.”

“I do not know specifics,” Loki said, suddenly walking on the other side of Tony and Strange. “The being that has kept Stark’s mind hostage works to secure that hold. I believe that a third entity has intervened, and now it is difficult to bring Stark back to us.”

“It feels like every time you talk I still have the urge to hurt you, and I’m left with still more questions.”

Loki rolled his eyes, letting out a huff. “Your lover’s mind is being pulled in a different direction than his body is, and it could be catastrophic if this is not handled delicately. You could be left with a breathing husk of a body.” Steve’s body jerked and Loki lifted his hands again. “I said could. Honestly, Captain, wording is everything. As is the application of magic. It’s a very sensitive thing, and I do believe that the Doctor will be able to handle it.”

“If you’re the one who did this to him, why aren’t you the one to reverse it?” Steve moved a little closer to Tony, without touching him.

“I do not fancy being under this being’s control again. I did it once and you were the one to deal with the aftermath of that.” Loki lazily circled the two men between them. “And if I were to risk that again, I would not be able too, for your organization has lost the scepter that was originally handed to me. The power that it held was beyond what most humans can comprehend.”

Steve let out a frustrated huff, hiding his worry for seeing Tony like this. This was the last thing that either of them had expected. But being fair, neither of them had probably expected anything. Steve almost startled when Strange pulled his hands back from Tony.

“He’s being sheltered by another, nothing that my powers will aid at the moment. It’s not working against us, that’s for certain.” He then took notice of Steve and bowed his head a little. “I wish I had more news for you, Captain.”

“Do you have any kind of news?” Steve asked. He wanted to reach out to hold onto Tony, but wasn’t sure if it was safe. He was still suspended in the air.

“I attempted to disrupt a connection, really a hostile takeover of his mind, and they attempted to pull him back to them,” Strange started to explain. Steve attempted to follow. Having Tony around made it easier for him to start to understand how the updated tech worked, but magic was something, almost, entirely new. Something that his scientific boyfriend refused to put any credence too. “His nightmares are not that at all, but actually his visions are him being used.”

Steve’s breath stuttered a little. “I saw one of his nightmares,” Steve said slowly. “They did something to his hands, and it looked like they were traveling, or-“
“They using him as a map,” Loki cut him off. “They used his physical body as a mooring point, and they were creating a travel route to get back to your tiny little realm.” He looked back to Strange. “They probably felt your meddling and attempted to use him to finish their route.” He now looked between Strange and Steve. “They would have used him until he had no more to give, then left him to rot. Had this secondary entity not intervened to hide him, this would have been disastrous. As it is now, we now have to figure out how to get him back to his body, without Him finding Stark again.”

“We have to try and break the connection while we have him in this state,” Strange said, looking at the other sorcerer.

“If the scepter were not lost, I might be able to create a loop to protect myself and free Stark,” Loki told him. “As it is now, I am unable to recreate the power needed.” Steve could tell that Loki was keeping something from them, something about the scepter. Fortunately, he was not the only one to have this thought.

“I must question what powered this scepter,” Strange said as he took a step closer to Loki. “The only thing that I could that would be strong enough—”

“Is the same power source to your amulet,” Loki said with a wave of his hand to the artifact around his neck. Strange’s eyes widened slightly, then he turned to look at Steve.

“Shield has lost an Infinity stone??” Steve took a step back from the magician. “How was it lost, and who has it?!”

“Shield had been infiltrated by Hydra,” Steve told them, giving a very small summary of what had actually happened. Dr Strange actually looked to have sputtered at the implication. “We’re close to finding it though. We have lists of their bases, and we are going through them systematically.”

“And yet, here you stand,” Loki mocked. “And not out breaking down these bases.”

“Luckily for me, I don’t have to explain my actions to you,” Steve practically spat out. “he then turned his gaze back to Strange. “What exactly is an infinity stone??”

“Something of immense power. Stark is under the power of the Mind stone, as Loki was at one point as well.” Strange looked back towards Tony, then gently waved a hand over his face before waving Steve over. The blonde moved right away, and then Tony was being gently lowered down into his arms. “There’s nothing that I can do today, and it would be better to take him back where he’ll be comfortable.”

Steve frowned a little. “And what do we do then?”

“I’ll work on a spell that might be able to shield him. At least until you can find the scepter.” Strange turned to leave the room, and Steve turned to follow him right away, vaguely aware of Loki following him as well.

“And he’s going to be like this until the scepter is found?” Steve was sure he managed to keep the note of hysteria from his voice. “He can’t stay like this! What am I supposed to tell our kids??”

Loki leaned in a little, interested at the tidbit. “There are more little Starks??” Steve turned his head, snarling quietly. Loki raised an eyebrow, almost elegantly, with amusement. “You certainly have attached yourself quite nicely. Perhaps one of them is yours? Tell me, how many more are there??” Steve ground his jaw together a little, then turned his attention back to Dr Strange.

“I can do what I can,” the sorcerer answered. He watched Steve take a step closer to him, cradling Tony carefully to his chest.
“His sons’ birthday is in a couple of days,” Steve was almost pleading.

Strange almost looked apologetic. “I’ll do what I can.” Steve’s shoulders deflated a little. “Head down the hall, I’ll lead you back to your Tower at least. I’ll take you vehicles in as well.” Steve nodded a little and turned. He briefly leaned down, using one hand to grab his shield, and let it slide onto his back before gripping onto Tony again.

He didn’t pay much attention to what Strange did that got him back to the Tower, but he was thankful as it was just down the hall from their bedroom. Steve didn’t much remember getting him and Tony back into the bedroom either, just that he found himself sitting up in the bed, and unresponsive Tony in his lap. His chest moved smoothly with his breaths. Steve ran his hand through Tony’s hair and took a deep breath.

“Jarvis?” Steve asked after a while. “When Mary gets a chance, I need to talk to her.” Jarvis didn’t respond, sensing Steve’s mood it seemed, but he knew that the message would get to Mary. They needed to start to plan around this, concerning Peter, and Jamie. After the year they’d had, this would be devastating to the boy on his birthday. Steve leaned down, gently kissing Tony’s head as he ran his hand through Tony’s hair.

After a minute Steve gently moved Tony to rest on the bed, moving to go meet Mary outside of the room. As he closed the door to the bedroom, he saw Mary making her way down the hallway. She gave him a smile until she actually saw his face, and her lips tipped back down.

“Steve? What’s wrong?” She put a hand on his arm as she approached. “Where’s Tony?”

Steve tried not to shake his head a little. “He went to go see Dr Strange today.” Mary raised an eyebrow, and that’s when Steve knew that Mary didn’t know about the recent troubles with Tony. It seemed that Steve had been the only one he talked about what he was experiencing after the Battle. Steve obviously hadn’t said anything to her, because it was up to Tony on if he wanted anyone else to know or not. “Loki did something to him, and I don’t really know how to explain it. There was, someone? Something? Out there controlling Loki, and it had gotten into Tony’s mind.” Mary raised a hand to her face, but didn’t look away from Steve.

“What we thought were just nightmares, or night terrors, started getting worse. He said that he still heard things, and felt things.” Steve took a little breath. “This thing is still inside of his head, and it’s been using him for some reason. I felt it,” Steve said a little more quietly. “I don’t know what happened, but we had a shared dream. Not the point, but it is what sent him to Strange. I’m not exactly sure what happened there, but……” Steve sighed and opened the door to the bedroom, Mary following behind him.

Tony was on his back on the bed, pillow under his head. His chest still moved at an even pace, almost looking as if he were merely just asleep. Dark circles under his eyes stood out even more, and his expressions reeked of restlessness. “Whoever has his mind is currently trying to get to him, again. At least that’s how it was explained to me. A third party has intervened, and we think that it’s trying to help him, but it’s like he’s been pulled from his body.”

“What is Strange doing to help him?” Mary said immediately, moving over to the bed. She slipped on the bed next to him, brushing the hair from Tony’s head. “When is he going to wake up?”

“He said he’s trying to work on a spell, to bring him back…. Until then, he said that he’s going to stay like this.” Mary’s head shot up to look at him. “That’s not even the best part.” As if there was a good part. Steve knew that Mary was going to lose it soon. “Loki is with him.”

Mary shot up from the bed, rage radiating from her body, and Steve even took a step back. “What is
he even doing alive?? I was pretty damn okay with it when Thor told us he died.” Steve put a hand on her arm to keep her in one place. No doubt that she would be on her way down to Greenwich in no time if Steve didn’t stop her. “Why isn’t he here right now stopping this! Why isn’t he doing something!” Mary looked at Steve, starting to frown deeply. “What are we going to tell Peter?”

“That’s kind of what I was hoping you would tell me,” Steve admitted quietly. “I’m already pretty lost with all this magic stuff, and with the fact that I know Loki is back, but can’t do anything about it right now. He’s the only one who has the most knowledge about what’s happening to Loki, and I’m not above trying to exploit that.” Steve ran a hand through his hair, glancing over at Tony. “I don’t know how long this is going to last. I don’t know what he’s going through right now, and there’s nothing I can do to help it. I’m feeling pretty helpless.”

Mary reached her arms up, putting her hands on his cheeks. “What we’re going to do is wait for Strange to get his shit together.” This was the SHIELD Agent coming out, Steve could handle this. “We’re going to tell Peter and Jamie that Tony is sick right now and that he needs rest. We’re not going to let them see him, not right now. Jarvis is going to keep an eye on Tony, because we still have to plan Peter’s birthday party. We’re not going to let this stop that.” Steve let out a slow sigh and Mary lifted his head back up. “Don’t you start dropping on me, Captain. You’ve dealt with bigger things than this and come out on the other side.”

“I’m getting tired, Mary,” Steve confessed. “I sure would like a break for us.”

“Sadly, we don’t get what we want,” she said softly. “But we roll with the curves, and we make life our bitch afterwards.” She tapped his cheek gently on one side. “Make a phone call if you have, too. You know what to do if it gets too bad.” Steve knew that she was referring to the therapist that he still on call.

“You have your mission. We’ll help Tony, and keep things quiet around Peter, and afterwards we’re gonna kick some Asgardian ass.” Steve smirked a little and nodded. “I’ll go tell Phil, and tell the kids they get to spend the night with us. Keep an eye on Tony.”

“You know I will,” he promised as she kissed his cheek and left. “I always will.”

In the morning, Steve tore himself away from Tony’s side, Jarvis promising to send updates to his phone while he was away. He went down to Mary’s floor to greet the kids for breakfast, attempting to keep up appearances. He hadn’t heard anything from Strange, or heavens above, Loki, and he wasn’t sure if no news was good news, or if they were too busy with something happening to inform him of it.

Steve saw Phil already in the kitchen, serving out food, while Peter and Wade were sitting at the table. “Papa!” Peter called out happily when he saw him, turning and raising his arms for a hug as Steve walked over. “Is Daddy feeling better?”

Steve dropped a kiss on the top of his head. “No, not yet. He’s gonna get lots of rest so he can feel better real soon.” Peter nodded seriously, and Steve moved to rub Wade’s shoulders a little. “Eat your breakfast before you have to start classes. I’ll even take you and Wade out if you get down early.” They both grinned and turned back to their plates.

The blonde walked down the hall towards the room that had been set up for Jamie, and saw Mary inside trying to get the girl dressed. He could hear her whining, and then saw her squirming on the changing table. “Now, Jamie,” Mary said to her. “You can’t see your Papa with no clothes on.”
“No,” she whined out. Steve bit his lips, trying to keep back a smile, and to not interrupt them. “Papa.” Steve knew he was out of sight from the little girl, and he almost stepped inside fully. He hated hearing her sound upset, but also knew that Tony would be there telling him to be strong, to not give in every time that she whined, or wanted something.

“If you put some clothes on,” Mary paused a little, and Steve could see her trying to get some pants on her little legs, “we can go see Papa.” There was a little gasp, and the soft sound of clothes hitting the ground. “Really? I knew you didn’t like socks, but now pants, too?” Mary snorted softly, almost fondly, and moved to the dresser to grab something else. She spied Steve standing there and raised an eyebrow. He put a finger to his lips and she rolled her eyes with a smile. “Alright, Mini Rogers,” she said back to Jamie. “How about we try a skirt? I know I’ve seen your Papa put you in one before.”

Jamie made a little whine, but she let Mary put the skirt on her this time. Steve could tell she was pouting from the little huff she made, but didn’t resist anymore. “There we go. Yes, you have the Rogers stubborn streak a mile long, but you also know when it’s time to be reasonable.” Steve pursed his lips a little. “There, all done up and dressed. Come here.” Mary picked her up and the little girl leaned against Mary’s shoulder. “Yeah, you’re just a grumpy gus, not getting enough sleep, huh? I’ve seen it before, first in your brother, and then in your cousins. I am well versed in the ways of you younglings.”

Steve backed up a bit in the hallway as he heard Mary walking closer to the door. When she walked out, Jamie’s eyes were already at half-mast, but she saw him instantly and sat up in Mary’s arms. “Papa!” She squealed happily, and Mary chuckled a little.

“See, if you get dressed, then you could see Papa.” She held the little girl out to Steve and he stepped forward to take her in his arms.

“There’s my baby girl,” Steve cooed at her, letting her settle herself in his arms, putting her head on his shoulder. “And so good looking in your clothes. Aunt Mary always knows what she’s talking about, doesn’t she?” Mary had a little self-satisfied smirk on her face, but Steve pretended to ignore it. “Looks like somebody didn’t sleep very well last night, did they?” He could share the feeling. She babbled a little against his shoulder and Steve smiled softly, gently running his fingers over her hair. Mary smiled at him, patting his arm as she walked by, heading for the dining room and the boys. Steve kissed the top of her head. “Your hair is almost long enough to start doing something with. You’re growing fast, baby girl. Mary was right, I’m buying you clothes left and right.” He didn’t know what exactly was happening, why he kept talking, but it seemed to help calm him, and Jamie liked to hear the sound of his voice, especially when she was tired. “Well, probably more of them online, with Jarvis’ help. Hard to go outside and not be recognized lately. And with all the trouble we’ve had lately…. Well, it’s going to get better, you’ll see.” He took a breath, nodding a little to himself, and turned around himself. “We can go out, see Peter and Wade now.” She cooed a little and Steve smiled. “Yeah, it’s going to be real interesting the older you get, with them teaching you. Real interesting.” He kissed the top of her head again.

Steve didn’t sleep again, sitting next to Tony, keeping watch over him, but he didn’t let Jamie sleep in her room again, along with Peter and Wade. They’d go back down to Mary’s floor after they woke up, keep up on their school lessons that Jarvis, and Tony, had put together for them. The boys were starting to get anxious, knowing that a birthday party was coming soon.

He had seen the boys off with their books, Jamie against his hip, before heading back to the
bedroom. Steve held onto her with one arm, his other hand holding onto a little container of crackers that she was still snacking on. She made a little noise when she saw Tony, looking over towards him. “‘addy,” she mumbled, looking up at Steve. The blonde smiled at her and nodded.

“Yeah, that’s Daddy. Don’t tell Peter you saw him, though,” he said, walking over to the bed. As he sat down on the edge, Jamie abandoned the crackers and wiggled from Steve’s grip. He set her down on the bed, watching her crawl over to Tony, carefully sitting down by his head. She started to tap Tony’s cheek with her hand before Steve leaned over to stop her. “No, no, Daddy is sleeping.” He kissed her hand a little, pulling her back a couple inches. She blew a bubble with her lips, but didn’t look away from Tony. “I know, I want Daddy to wake up, too.”

The bedroom door almost creaked, which should have been impossible, and Steve was moving from the side of the bed, hand reaching for a shield that wasn’t there. He stood in front of the bed, trying to block Tony and Jamie, and frowned. A young man and woman were standing in the room, but Steve recognized them. From the pictures that Tony had pulled up after they had rescued him from Baron Strucker.

The Maximoff twins.

Wanda tilted her head, looking past Steve, making him move just a little. Her brother, Pietro, stepped closer, but Wanda put a hand out. “The girl still lives,” she said, and Steve’s eyes narrowed a little. “He kept his word.” Her eyes shifted from Jamie to Tony.

“Relax,” her brother said, a little roll of his eyes. “We’re not here to make trouble.”

“You’d better start explaining right now,” Steve said, not moving from his position.

“They were invited,” another voice spoke up as the bedroom door opened again. Stephen Strange walked in, unfortunately with Loki still trailing behind him. “I have need Ms Maximoff’s skills. I have found out that she’s been inside of his head before.” Steve took a step back closer to the bed when Loki also looked over to the bed, looking past Tony. Jamie’s hand was grasping at Steve’s pant leg, and he moved an arm back to rest on top of her head.

“You can’t just walk in here with three people that the Avengers are looking for,” Steve said to Strange, but didn’t take his eyes off of the twins, or Loki. “I can’t be certain if Jarvis has alerted the others yet, or if he will soon, but I’m not going to call him off.”

“I’ve come to an agreement with them,” Dr Strange said as he stepped up to the bed. Steve quickly picked up Jamie in his arms, holding her close, trying to keep her from looking at all the new strangers in the room. Sadly, her curiosity was as strong as Steve’s had been as a child. She kept twisting her head, trying to twist her body to look at them all.

Pietro leaned in a little and Steve tried to pull back. “She looks just like you, unsurprisingly.” Steve almost growled at him, and Pietro nearly smirked.

“Yes, she does, doesn’t she?” Loki did smirk, and Steve didn’t like it. “I was correct in my assumptions, one of them is yours. Quite the family that you’ve built for yourself.”

“If you’re here to help,” Steve hissed out at the man, “then I suggest you help.”

Strange and Wanda had moved to settle on either side of Tony, red light starting to dance around her fingers. “Loki, I could use you over here,” Strange spoke up, attempting to ignore what was happened between the men. “Ms Maximoff is going to go back into his mind, find what we now know to be the weak link between Stark and the being. I will need you, Loki, to confirm that is what
we’re dealing with, and I shall isolate it.” Loki stepped closer, nodding.

“And that will keep him safe?” Steve asked, stepping to the opposite side of the bed form Loki. “We won’t have to worry about this happening anymore?”

“Unfortunately, no,” Strange told him. “I will only be able to throw a shield of sorts over his mind, to hide him, but not to sever the connection.”

“No, that, as I said previously, can only be done with the lost scepter,” Loki reminded him. “The one with the same power that lies within these two, curiously enough.” Loki looked at the Maximoff twins, before looking back down at Tony’s prone form. “This shall be a temporary fix. But should give you enough time to find your missing artifacts.”

Steve held onto Jamie, bringing her as close to his chest as he could. He didn’t like all these people in the Tower, in their bedroom, so close to Tony, and their daughter. Technically enemies. He wasn’t lying before; he wasn’t sure if Jarvis had alerted the other in house Avengers yet, or not. Her certainly would have put Mary and Coulson’s floor on lockdown at the very least. He watched as Wanda’s fingers almost danced near Tony’s temples, the red reaching out. Watched Strange’s hands hover over hers. Saw green wisps dance between the two pairs of hands, connecting their fingers with sparks. Then Tony’s body gave a jerk.

Tony’s eyes fluttered a little. He was exhausted, but most of the pain had stopped, just pulses of leftover pain lingered. Whoever, or whatever, had him had worked to try and block the pain that he was becoming familiar with. He was sure that it was trying to block The Other from finding him.

Tony wasn’t sure how long he had been there, but it had felt like it had been too long. He knew that time was always different when he was sleeping, when he was pulled into what he thought were just nightmares. Now, he had to think differently about it. At the moment, his brain was just a little too muddled to process it.

He gasped when his body suddenly jerked, a bright blue light flashing in front of his eyes. Then red. Then green. Something was in his head. “No,” he whispered, starting to shake his head. “No, no, no.” It was this long, this long being hidden away, he couldn’t go back, not when he was this vulnerable. “Help, please.”

The space around him rippled, almost violently. “Intruders. Too many.” Tony’s breathing picked up and his body jerked again, a wave of pain washing through him. His mind felt like it was being pulled in two different directions, and apart felt like it was anchored and wasn’t going to move. His hands started to burn again and he could practically feel the rage of his subconscious captors. They wanted him, they wanted him badly, and there would be promised pain. On the other side was a calmer sense, frantic, but no anger.

Golden orange light reached out for him, seeming to sneak in past the bubble of space that he was sure he was wrapped in. Sparks of red and green burst on the sides, and Tony wanted to reach out to it. “Not safe. Can’t keep you safe,” the voice called out.

“But this won’t hurt me,” Tony rasped out. That’s all he wanted, wanted to not hurt anymore.

“Sorry. Can’t protect you anymore.” Tony frowned a little at the words, how they sounded softer, and maybe a little further away. The space around him rippled, then cracked. He frowned, watching the golden light waver slightly, not knowing what was happening. With an unnatural tearing sound,
the purples and blues, the stars, all disappeared. The pitch black of space momentarily shocked Tony, not expecting it that quickly, then his entire body tensed up. Pain like he had never felt before streaked through all of his nerves, paralyzing his body. He wanted to scream out but couldn’t, wanted to pass out, but something was keeping him awake.

“Stop!” A voice wavered through the pain, as gold and blue lights, energy, clashed around him. Someone else was crying. He knew the voices, the sounds. Tony wanted to reach out, to tell that it would be alright, even though he knew that it wouldn’t. He was being ripped in half, and those that wanted to use him didn’t care what happened to him, not really. “You’re hurting him!”

“Tony!” Tony frowned. That voice was familiar, but different from the one he had heard. “Tony, I need you to focus!” They were calling out to him, that much he knew. What was he supposed to focus on? All he knew was pain, what else could he possibly focus on?

Something green slipped past his eye on the side, catching his attention briefly. “Are you that weak of a mortal?” Tony would never forget that voice. “To survive our first encounter, only to let this take you? Perhaps I shall take up the raising of your offspring, then.” Tony wanted to growl. “That shall be the only way to ensure that he will be raised to fulfill the potential that he holds. I supposed I could be burdened to take the girl as well, to make her as powerful as she could be. They could be of legends. Thanks to me.”

The golden energy as able to surge, pushing back the blue light. Red streaked forward, as if to attack, and the pain started to lessen. “Tony,” the first voice was back, calling out to him. “Tony, we need you to relax.” Easier said than done. “Yes, I am aware, but you need to do it anyway. I can’t bring you back home if your mind keeps rejecting it.”

“He has natural mental defense because of me,” a very familiar female voice spoke now. Someone who had been in his mind before. Tony mentally shuddered when he thought about the fact that all three of these people had been inside of his head at one point.

“If you cannot move quickly enough, then I shall have to break the wall.” Loki sounded very put-upon, burdened.

“If you do that, then they may be able to see you,” Strange warned. “It will spread quickly that you are in fact alive.”

“If we do not save this mortal, then it will not matter,” Loki hissed. “If you are as good as you say you are, then you will move quickly.”

Tony yelped in pain as the blue energy tried to make another surge, but was held back. He was quickly praying that someone would do something, to put an end to something, when his body started to tingle. Tony let out a puff of breath as it felt like a warm blanket was gently being lowered on his body, then it grew cold. He felt lethargic, and detached, like he didn’t want to, and wouldn’t be able, to do anything. His head felt fuzzy and light, and golden light covered his eyes, driving back the blue and some of the pain. It felt like he was being lifted up, then pulled back down, like being underwater, and Tony deducted that Strange must be bringing him back.

Dual gasped sounded in his mind when something suddenly struck at his arc reactor, a sharp pain radiating throughout his nerve endings, making his heart rate skyrocket and his chest seize. This time he could scream with the pain, and then the pulling continued, but only on one side this time. His body suddenly hit something solid, and his ears were assaulted with too many voices. There was talking that was more like shouting and yelling, some screaming, and crying.

Steve had been watching the magic users all tense along with Tony’s body. Pietro looked troubled as
he watched his sister, then Tony let out a strangled cry of pain, his back arching from the bed. His face wreaked of pain, of being in agony, and even Loki was jerking slightly. The dark haired man had closed his eyes, leaning in, the green glow around his hands brightening slightly. That’s when Tony let out a scream, making Jamie whimper and press her face into Steve’s chest.

“Stop!” Steve tried to command, hand cover up to Jamie’s head, turning her head slightly so she was looking away from Tony, one ear pressed against his chest, and his hand covering the other ear. He needed to keep an eye on them, to keep an eye on Tony, but he couldn’t keep Jamie in the room while this was happening. Jamie started to cry when Tony let out another scream. “You’re hurting him!”

Pietro was pacing slightly, looking as if he were fighting with himself on if he should interfere or not. Wanda must have warned him off if he wasn’t moving just yet. The rest of Tony’s body started to thrash on the bed, and Tony wanted nothing more than to grab him away.

The door was suddenly swinging open, Bucky standing there, looking around with big eyes. They settled on the three people around a distressed Tony, and then on a crying Jamie, and his eyes narrowed, icing over a little. He growled and started to stalk over, and Pietro was moving faster than Steve’s eye could track. Bruce hurried in after Bucky, a little out of breath from trying to hurry, then ran over to take Jamie from Steve, getting her away from anything that might happen between the occupants in the room. Jamie let out a long whine in her cries, reaching back for Steve.

“Get out of my way!” Bucky barked, trying to swat the Enhanced away to get to the bed. Steve looked at the bed to see both Loki and Tony arch their backs, gasping, and then shouting in pain.

“Tony!” Steve shouted, trying to get to them. Loki pulled back, panting, eyes wide.

“Sorry, but you won’t be getting near my sister,” Pietro was talking to Bucky, who was still growling, and yelling at him to get out of his way. Bruce was trying to calm down Jamie, who was crying more with all the commotion. Steve crawled up the end of the bed to Tony, vaguely noticing that Wanda almost fell away from the genus, the red disappearing form her hands. Pietro took notice and he was by her side, arms around her to make sure she didn’t fall. Bucky started to move closer, and Stephen Strange was standing up, a hand to his temple.

Tony’s eyes were fluttering and Steve reached out to pull him closer, freezing when Tony gasped, almost keening in pain. “Tony?” He turned his head when the room became a little quieter, Bruce leaving the room with Jamie. He could still hear her soft cries in the hallway and he teared up a little as he looked back at Tony.

“He needs to rest,” Strange spoke up, and Steve looked at him, briefly forgetting that he was there.

“What happened?” Steve asked, trying to make sure that Tony was as comfortable as possible. Wanda was gone from the side of the bed.

“I’m not exactly sure yet,” Strange murmured, taking a couple steps back. “When we’ve all gotten more rest, I can relay what happened, but know that things have been handled at this point.” Steve watched the older man move, and then Loki was there. When he looked at the sorcerer he could see that even he looked winded, and spent.

Tony tapped at Steve’s hand with his fingers, and his head whipped over to look at him. His other hand was resting on his chest, over his arc reactor, his eyes were nearly closed, but he was looking at Steve, he was back. The blonde leaned down, dropping a kiss on his forehead, brushing back some sweat soaked hair. When had that happened, Steve wondered.
“J’mé,” Tony mumbled. Steve blinked, then realized that they could still hear her crying. “J’mé.”

Steve nodded and kissed down his nose. “Yeah, I’ll go get her, but I need you to rest. I’ll be right back, I promise.” He turned to get up and noticed that the room was empty now. Strange and Loki were gone, no doubt back to his Sanctuary, and Pietro had more than likely taken Wanda, away from the threat that was an agitated Winter Soldier. Even Bucky was gone from the room. As he headed for the hallway though, he knew where his friend had gone.

“Hey, everything’s alright.” Steve peeked out and he saw that Bucky was trying to soothe Jamie. She was wriggling in Bruce’s arms, but didn’t want Bucky to take her. She moved away from his hands, her cheeks red and scrunched. “Yeah, I know, but everything’s okay now.”

“Papa!” She whined out. “’addy!” Steve couldn’t take it and he took big steps into the hallway, moving with a purpose to his daughter. “Papa!” Her arms went out when she saw him, and he obediently scooped her up, bringing her up to his chest.

“I’m sorry, baby,” Steve murmured against the side of her head, peppering her with soft kisses. “I’m sorry, I’ve got you now.” He started to rub her back when she started to hiccup. “Yeah, you’re okay now. Let’s go see Daddy.” She nodded a little, hands gripping his shirt tightly. Steve caught Bruce and Bucky’s eyes, nodding to them before moving back to the bedroom. He knew that Bruce would want to come and check on Tony, but it looked like the scientist was willing to wait.

Tony was rubbing his chest a little when they walked back in, and Jamie started to turn slightly in Steve’s arms. She whined a little and Tony turned a hand to her. Steve sat down on the edge of the bed and Tony motioned for him to bring her closer. Setting Jamie down on the bed, she scooted over to tuck herself into Tony’s side. His arm came up, slowly, to wrap around her, and he turned his head to look at her.

“‘m here,” Tony said quietly to her. He then wiggled his fingers a little and looked up at Steve. Steve bit his lip a little, and laid down next to him, taking his hand and wrapping an arm around Tony and Jamie. “‘m here,” he repeated.

“I should be reassuring you,” Steve whispered to him. Tony’s lips twitched slightly in a smile. He squeezed Tony’s hand a little, then just held onto him. Jamie was sniffling, her hiccups going away, and she fell asleep against Tony’s side. Steve hoped that a lot of Tony’s worries could stop now, that he’d actually be able to sleep, to return to some semblance of normal.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter will have more happiness, i promise!
It may take me a while, but i do fully intend to go and respond to each and every one of you that left a comment. because i appreciate it, and I’ve so thankful. I still go with my mom almost everyday to her therapy sessions, so that I know how to help her when she is eventually discharged.

And speaking of, here's my hard-working Mama! https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8yvi7NRT4LvM3VfN1k5SGJhdzMyQk1EeUo3aWd6e0tuZFhn
Oct 2012 - Nov 2012

Chapter Summary

Tony makes an important decision, and lots of fluff!

Chapter Notes

It's here! The end! What a ride, for them and for all of us! I'm ready to get out of the year 2012 though, that's for sure!
I want to thank everyone, so so much! Without all the support and kind words, and just seeing how much you guys really like this, it helped, and it kept this story full of life. I loves you all!!! Even all you lurkers! I see numbers, and I know you're there, and you're amazing as well!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony hummed a little, waking up to a soft sensation against his cheek. It felt nice, and the repetition of the motion almost put him back to sleep. He opened one eye just a crack and saw the shadow of the thing that was causing the feeling on his face. Opening his other eye, just a little more, he saw that the object was Jamie’s hand petting his cheek. Her face lit up when she saw that he was awake and she made a soft cooing sound.

“'addy,” she called out to him, and he smiled at her. Steve was still asleep, creating a warm cocoon around Jamie and Tony, arm still across Tony’s waist. “Otay?”

Tony licked his lips, realizing that his lips were dry, and he needed a little effort to make his mouth not so dry, before he could answer her. “Yeah.” Although his voice was still just a little raspy. “Yeah, I’m okay, baby.” He lifted his arm, with a little more effort than he thought he’d need, and messed with her hair a little. “I’d say that you probably needed a haircut, if I didn’t think that your Papa would break every pair of scissors in the state at the suggestion.” He tugged very gently on some hair and she giggled. “Joke’s on him though; he’s going to have to learn how to do your hair.”

“Mean,” Steve mumbled huskily, eyes still closed. Jamie turned excitedly when she heard his voice and started to pat his face with both of her hands. His face scrunched up, but Tony could tell that he was trying not to laugh as well. “Tony, there’s something on my face. Do you mind getting that?”

“I’m healing,” Tony replied, making a show to snuggle into his pillow a little more. “Sorry, babe.” He made a noise of protest when Steve’s arm left it’s spot over his waist, but he was then grabbing Jamie with them, and Tony smiled at her laugh.

“I found it,” Steve announced, blowing a raspberry on her cheek. She let out a squeal of laughter, wiggling around. “It’s loud, too.”

“It’s all yours,” Tony said with a little smirk. “Literally, she is all you. I didn’t realize just what I was getting myself into, but—” He squawked and wiggled, almost painfully, when Steve poked his side. “You still have to learn how to do her hair if you’re not going to cut it.”
“I’m sure that Jarvis will pull up some videos,” Steve said, cuddling Jamie to his chest.

“Oh no no,” Tony shook his head, pulling his head up a little. “No cheating, mister. You need someone to show you, first-hand experience.” Steve raised an eyebrow at him. “And you can’t ask Mary, because we had a boy, and she never had to do his hair, not really. She used scissors.” Steve made a face, as if he were hissing at the prospect, and Tony rolled his eyes. “And a video can’t show you the little nuances. I bet that if Natasha weren’t still upset with you because of our own personal Hydra agents, she still wouldn’t be able to show you anything about doing baby hair.”

“Are you trying to set me up for failure?” Steve tried to pout at him, but then Jamie’s little hands were pulling on his bottom lip. Tony had to cover his mouth before laughing loudly.

“I’ll help you out, just this once.” He was sure that Steve was attempting to give him a deadpan expression, but Jamie was too busy playing with his face. “Rachel raised a little girl, and Meg is raising a little girl almost the same age as Jamie. I’m confident in your abilities.” Steve gave him an annoyed hum, then moved his head to push his lips against Jamie’s hands.

Tony let his head rest against the pillow, closing his eyes again, just for a second. When he opened them again, Jamie was gone, and Steve was sitting on the bed next to him, legs crossed, looking at a tablet. He took in a deep breath and caught Steve’s attention. “Hey, sleepy head. How are you feeling?” Steve reached out to run his hand through Tony’s hair, and the brunette pushed his head against the warm hand.

“Guess, I’m a little more tired than I thought,” he mumbled out. “Where did Jamie go?”

“Bucky came up to watch her, actually.” Steve admitted. “He needed to make sure that she was alright after all the excitement.” Steve kept an eye on him for a few second longer than usual. “Do you remember what happened?”

“You’ll have to be a little more specific I think.” Tony let out a little sigh, then attempted to push himself up. That was when he became acutely aware of just how much his body hurt. He pulled in a breath, then felt Steve’s hands there to help him up. “I remember going to Strange’s place, shit, and Loki was there.” Steve dropped a kiss on Tony’s forehead as they got him in a more comfortable position.

“I’m already aware of that, it’s okay,” Steve assured him.

Tony hummed and nodded. “He was gonna try and help, and I think he went into my head. Then, like it was all set up, and I was headed back, but something stopped me.” Steve tilted his head a little, looking at Tony curiously. “I don’t know who, or what, but it stopped, him, from finding me again. I, I really can’t explain it too much, Steve, because I’m not sure what I remember or not.” His head was brought to rest against Steve’s chest, fingers carding through his hair and rubbing at his scalp. “There was too much magic around, and then Strange, and Loki, and,” Tony paused, frowning. “There was someone else there. The Maximoff girl?” Tony tried not to tense up when Steve didn’t deny it. “Then there was just, pain. It was all too much noise, too much happening.” Steve kissed his head again.

“We’ll figure this out when Dr Strange comes back over sometime.” Steve leaned his head on top of Tony’s, hand rubbing his arm up and down. “He said that he put up a shield, something that’s clocking you from being found, so we should have a little time.”

“Where’s Peter? I didn’t miss his birthday, did I?” Big brown eyes looked up at Steve, begging to let him know that he didn’t let down his son.
“He’s down with Mary, with Wade. They’re doing their schoolwork.” Tony relaxed a little bit. “His birthday isn’t until tomorrow, you didn’t miss it.”

Tony nodded a little. “I’m tired, Steve.” He closed his eyes again as Steve wrapped strong arms around him, sharing the sentiment.

“I think that might be able to change, maybe just for a little bit.”

The next day Tony had been unable to help with decorating for Peter’s birthday. As soon as the little boy had seen that Tony was awake, he had plastered himself to his Daddy’s side. He and Wade made sure that Tony felt better, and that he wouldn’t get sick again. It took Tony having to trap them on the couch in the morning with a blanket and a movie, while Steve cooked them birthday pancakes. Mary, Coulson, Bruce, and Bucky were on decorating duty, and Steve would join them. Rachel and William were making the cake and the rest of the food, along with the kitchen staff downstairs.

Tony really didn’t mind. He had the two boys practically buried into his side and stomach on the couch, and he smiled when he smelled the pancakes before he saw them. Steve walked out to them with a tray in his hands. There were empty plates stacked up, with another plate loaded with blueberry pancakes, syrup, butter, and silverware. Steve was walking a little slower than usual, and Tony could see why when he looked down. Jamie was walking behind him, handing onto his pant legs as they walked so she could keep her balance.

“I just this one time, we can break the rules,” Steve said as he set the tray down on the coffee table in front of them. Jarvis had automatically paused the movie they had been watching. “We can eat out here, because it looks like everyone is comfortable out here. Next time though, we eat at the table.” The boys grinned, scooting up a little. Tony leaned in to grab Jamie as Steve sat down on the ground, splitting up the pancakes onto plates for everyone.

Wade and Peter both scooted down to the floor as well, knowing they would be able to eat better if they didn’t have to hold onto their plates. Steve had set aside one plate with one smaller pancake on it, and set it off to the side. He put the pancakes on a plate, and Tony knew it was his as he watched him putting syrup on it. The exact amount that Tony liked. Steve leaned in to give him a quick kiss, then took Jamie from his arms. She wiggled happily when she saw the pancake that was just for her, and grabbed for it.

Tony couldn’t resist running his hand through Peter’s hair as he started to eat, before turning to his own plate. “Is everyone gonna be at my party, like last year?” Peter asked in between bites of his breakfast. Tony glanced at Steve. The last he had known there was a standoff between Clint and Natasha, and Bucky, (and by extension Meg.) The two Avengers weren’t going to show up if Bucky and Meg were going to be there. Steve had growled a little, thinking that it was unfair to make them not show up. If Captain America trusted them, then that should have been enough, but Barton and Romanoff didn’t agree. Peter spent more time with Uncle Bucky and Miss Meg more than he did the other two, but they also weren’t to make the boy choose.

When Bucky and Meg had volunteered to stay back, for the sake of Peter’s party, Tony could see the disappointment roll off of Steve. Disappointment in his team members.

“They’re gonna try,” Steve said. “We told everyone so they could try and get the day off of work.” Tony took that as a sign that Steve had no idea on if the spy twins were gonna show up or not. A part of Tony thought that it was unfair to keep them in limbo like that, but he also wasn’t entirely in a
stable state of mind at the moment. “But all of your friends from school are going to be there. It’ll be fun seeing them again, I bet. Uncle Rhodey said he was going to try and make it, too.”

Peter just nodded and continued eating happily. Steve met Tony’s eyes for a second, before they went back to their own food.

Tony and Mary walked off the elevator, Peter’s presents in hand, and headed for his bedroom. Mary and Coulson had blessedly decided to chaperone the slumber party that was happening, but they had decided it would be a good idea to move most of the presents up to Peter’s bedroom upstairs. Tony slowed a little as they approached the living room, then took a step in front of Mary.

“Tony-” He shushed her and took a step closer to the living room. There were two heads sitting on the couch. He recognized them both.

“I assure you we do not mean to interrupt,” Stephen Strange’s voice called out. “That’s why we waited up here.” Tony rolled his eyes, then lightly bumped Mary’s shoulder to keep her moving.

“You’re going to be waiting a much longer time!” Tony called out as they disappeared down the hall. Mary turned her head to look at him as they walked into Peter’s bedroom. “I’m really not in the mood to deal with Strange right now. I’m not thrilled that he showed up unannounced, and on Peter’s birthday.”

“Seems like you’ve been generally annoyed the whole day,” she commented to him, setting the toys in the corner with Peter’s toy chest. Peter liked to organize his toys a special way that neither parent was able to figure out yet. “You were able to hide it from Peter though, so I didn’t say anything.”

“People have generally been annoying me,” Tony said with a shrug. “Specifically, your husband’s charges.” Mary let out a little sigh. “I don’t really wanna talk, or argue about it.”

“You stay up here, I’m going to go and get Steve and Bruce.” Tony let out a sigh as Mary left the bedroom. His head dropped back and he fought back giving out an audible groan.

He made his way back out to the living room, this time Dr Strange was standing up, his red cloak always in place. The second person was still sitting on the couch, but his head was slightly cocked, making it clear that it was Loki still around. Tony wiggled his nose a little and walked past the man who more than likely saved him, but he could find himself to care at the moment.

The elevator let off a soft ping and Steve and Bruce walked into the living room, Bucky behind them already looking a little broody. Tony sat on the couch opposite of Loki, not looking at anyone, but aware of where everyone was. He became intensely aware when there were a few more sets of feet stepping in as well. Barton, and Romanoff, (who hadn’t showed up until nearly the end of the scheduled party time, thus ensuring that Bucky and Meg stayed away,) and the surprising sounds of Rhodey’s boots. Any other time Tony would have jumped up at the prospect of his best showing up, but something had been grating on his senses, and by extensions, his nerves, all day long.

Also, he hadn’t exactly filled Rhodey in on everything that had happened.

“Doctor,” Steve greeted, crossing his arms in front of his chest a little. “We weren’t exactly expecting you to show up this soon, not today at least.” He heard Tony trying to hold back a snort, then the sound of Tony’s glasses hitting a side table as he pulled them off.

“Yes, well, I guess I had thought that we had rested for longer than we actually did,” Strange replied,
turning to face the blonde now.

Tony lifted his head a little and saw that Loki was looking at him, the back of his head still facing the others. Hazel eyes ticked over to see where Barton and Romanoff were standing, keeping their distance from Bucky, and then something clicked in his mind. Loki smirked a little, as if reading his mind.

“What exactly brings you to the Tower, Strange?” Natasha asked. She may have been dressed in her civvies, but she still exuded assassin.

“We’ve obviously come to speak about everything that has transgressed, and what shall still continue to happen,” Loki spook up this time, knowing the chaos that would erupt in the room. Clint and Natasha were instantly reaching for their own hidden weapons, pointing them at the seated man, Rhodey was in a fighting stance, Bruce taking a step back as Bucky stepped forward to stand next to Steve. Steve, Tony, and Strange were the only one to not react in any way.

Loki started to turn his body on the couch, and almost surprisingly Natasha was the first to fire off a shot from her gun. Loki’s image wavered and disappeared as the bullet passed through him. Tony jumped up from his spot, shooting a glare her way. He felt the air displaced behind him as Loki appeared again. “Dammit Romanoff!” Tony shouted. “There are children in this Tower, only a few floors away.”

“Loki is behind you,” she growled in retaliation, her and Barton repositioning their weapons, pointed towards his face too close for comfort.

“Put your damned weapons down, he’s not going to do anything.”

The two agents looked at him like he had lost his mind. “I can vouch for the truth of this statement,” Strange spoke up. Natasha rounded one gun to point in his direction now, and he just let out a sigh. “I’ve had him under my most watchful eye for a little time now. I think that if he were going to attempt another interplanetary coup, he would have done it by now.”

“You’ve been housing a universal criminal?” Rhodey asked, a little bewildered. He was still taking his cues from Steve and Tony though.

“This is moving very far from the point of this visit,” Strange interrupted, now looking a little bored. Tony let out grunt and dropped down to the couch again, moving a hand to his head as if he had a headache.

“I really don’t think that right now is the best time,” Steve told him.

“What the hell is he talking about?” Barton demanded. Tony closed his eyes tightly. “Why the hell is that monster here? Why is he with someone who’s supposed to be one of the good guys, at least in our files? And what does it sound like you’ve known where he was all this time?!”

“Barton, I’m going to need you calm down,” Steve said turning towards the two. He was pulling out the Captain America voice, spreading his feet a little to take on the stance.

“Things don’t exactly seem to going too well, do they?” Loki’s voice sounded softly by Tony’s ear. He was taking the bet that the other two wouldn’t shoot through Tony to get to Loki. Tony let out a low growl, but Loki just let out a slight chuckle, moving away from his ear. “Tempers seem to be flaring.”

“I think we’re owed some explanations, Captain,” Natasha demanded, pulling a glare from Steve.
“I think you don’t get anything unless you’ve earned it,” Bucky barked back, standing behind Steve’s shoulder.

“I’m not surprised that a traitor like you would be standing up for that scum.” Clint spit in front of him, keeping eyesight with Bucky. That had both Super Soldiers tensing in anger.

“Really, I don’t think that right now is the time-“

“You came here uninvited,” Rhodey looked over at Dr Strange as he tried to cut in again. “I think that it’s plenty obvious that this is not a good time.”

“It’s never going to be a good time to talk about what we need, too,” Strange countered.

“I really doubt that it’s more important than knowing that Loki is actually, in fact, alive,” Clint said tightly.

“Actually, I’m going to have to argue that, and say that you’re wrong. You really don’t know the gravity of what’s happening.” Strange looked over at Steve. “We do need to discuss everything that we saw, what we felt. I have a theory about what had stopped me from completing my spell the first time.”

“What spell?” Rhodey asked, and Tony wanted to groan. This was going on far longer than he actually had the patience for.

Someone moved in front of Tony, and he tried hard not to open his eyes, but he almost felt compelled to do it. Loki was crouched in front of him, with a slight frown on his face. “Are you alright, Stark?” Tony grit his jaw, a fire lighting behind his eyes. Loki actually shifted back away from him. “Captain.”

“I attempted to help Anthony with a problem, and I ran into a few complications,” Strange kept talking, not noticing what was happening just behind him. “On a promise to Rogers, I gathered my resources to bring him back, and I needed the help of others, including Loki.”

“You knew about this?” Barton growled out, looking at Steve.

“When I feel that it is time for you to know about what happens, then I will let you know,” Steve fire back, voice thread and low, thrumming with a barely concealed threat to back down. “When I get all the information is when I will release what we know. You’ve already proved that when you don’t get all of the information, you go running half-cocked, and endangering others.”

Tony took several deep, and vaguely controlled breaths in, and out, through his nose. It was too much. There was shouting, then more calm voices, then gruff tones. People were moving around him, and the air seemed to pulse with too much energy, too many emotions around him. He couldn’t focus on the thoughts in his head, couldn’t hear himself. There was a twinge his arm and his hand slapped down to cover it suddenly.

The sound of smacking skin had caught Steve’s attention, and that’s when he saw Tony. Almost vibrating on the couch, Loki looked over at him, slowly standing up to move away from Tony. He wasn’t spooked, but the look in his eyes said that he didn’t want to take the risk of a bomb going off in his face. And that’s what Tony looked like. Steve started to step closer, as did Rhodey, but Bruce had put a hand on Rhodey’s arm to stop him, shaking his head a little.

Barton was too riled up to see what was happening though. Natasha was keeping Bucky’s attention, eyes flickering over to see what had suddenly caught Steve. The archer moved with Steve, both getting closer to Tony. Loki moved to stand by Dr Strange, now watching with curiosity. “You can’t
just ignore us, it doesn’t work like this.”

“Shut up, Barton,” Steve hissed, frowning as he watched Tony. Hazel eyes moved, too quickly to be normal, looking at Clint as he got closer to Tony.

“Dammit, Rogers-“ As he had kept moving, Clint had reached Tony first, accidentally bumping Tony’s knee. That seemed to be all that was needed.

Tony reacted in a flash, hand flying out to grab one Clint’s wrist, his leg sweeping out to bring the man to the ground, his other hand pressing down at his throat without cutting off any air. Tony was breathing heavily through his nose at a wide eyed Clint, weapons sliding out of his hands. It only took a second for Clint to react though, only being caught off guard once before his training kicked in.

Bucky moved to help Tony and Natasha was there to stop him from getting closer, guns holstered as she used her own martial training.

“Tony!” Steve had moved when he saw Tony bring Clint to the ground, but a cold hand on his arm stopped him. Steve ducked down and turned, grabbing the wrist of the person who grabbed him, pausing for a second when he saw the blank face of the Iron Man armor behind him.

Clint flipped, forcing Tony down to the ground. As he got to his feet, the armor had abandoned Steve and was there, pinning Clint to the couch with an outstretched hand. The repulsor in the palm started to glow, not firing, but enough to make Clint freeze. Steve moved, not thinking before reaching for Tony’s arm. He was about to pull away, but Tony was already turning, his arms moving. Palms slapped at Steve’s wrist and hand, forcing them down. He knew that Tony’s motive was to keep his attacker’s hands and arms close together, keep them from being able to move them, that way they couldn’t grab him to incapacitate him. It was one of his fears, after the AIM attack in the summer, being unable to get to the kids.

Steve moved back and stopped moving his arms. Tony had grabbed his wrist, moving to break it before his eyes locked in with Steve’s. They widened and he suddenly stepped away from Steve. Steve held his hands up, showing him that he wasn’t hurt.

“Stark!!” Tony whipped around at Natasha’s shout, and saw the Iron Man armor still pointed at Clint, the other hand now pointing over at Natasha and Bucky. Tony took a hurried breath, sounding more like a gasp, then moved his arms in a specific motion. The armor powered down, and Tony moved one arm and it fell the pieces on the ground. His hands and arms were shaking as he stared at the pile on the ground. Clint moved towards him and Tony jumped back and away from him, hands flying up to protect his head.

“Don’t,” Tony breathed out. “Don’t touch me.”

“What the fuck was that, Stark?”

“Don’t!” Tony shouted as he moved backwards away from everyone. “Fuck!” He turned and practically ran from the room and down the hall. Steve looked over at the others, and it was Rhodey’s eyes that he caught. There was a slight nod, and Steve was turning to follow the genius. Rhod ey would take care of the now unwelcome guests in the Penthouse.

“Jarvis?”

“Sir has already retreated to the workshop,” the AI informed him as Steve made a beeline for the private elevator. The elevator was just hitting the floor where Tony kept his larger workshop, on that
nearly twenty floors below the Penthouse. “My sensors pick up that he is experiencing an extreme Sensory Overload episode.” Steve bit his bottom lip as he waited for the cart to return up to him, foot tapping on the ground. “He has always suffered from the effects of sensory overload, but it has not become more prominent until after his return from Afghanistan, and more recently after the Battle of New York.”

Tony took the most direct route to what he knew would be a safe space. He didn’t need to put in the code, Jarvis was already opening the hidden door in the back of the workshop. Any other day, Tony would say that he had built a nest, but on days like this, it was the only thing that he could trust. The room was dark and cool, lots of pillows and blankets around, the floor padded with lots of cushioning, and custom made bean bag chairs. He went for the furthest corner of the room, dropping into the oversized cushion that would practically swallow him. The fabric had been painstakingly fabricated so that it wouldn’t irritate his already overstimulated sense of touch. The room was quiet, with insulation and extra noise canceling foam on the walls, and the temperature was constantly regulated.

He took a deep breath, throwing his arms over his head, and closed his eyes tightly. Tony was appalled with himself, ashamed. He was physically fighting with Clint, then he had tried to attack Steve. And when had he called the suit to himself? Why would he do that? Had he felt threatened? Yes. If Tony really thought about it, and that was the only thing that he could do at the moment, the whole day had been building up to something like this. After breakfast, everything just seemed to annoy or irritate him if it didn’t go to plan, or make Peter happy. He let out a strangled cry. What if Peter had been there? Or Jamie? Or Wade? What if something had happened to any of the other kids that were staying there?

Any other time, Steve was one of the quietest people that Tony knew. But his ears picked up everything right now. He felt Steve kneel down on the ground next to him, but Steve hadn’t touched him. Tony pulled himself into as small a ball as he could, trying to hide inside of the beanbag.

Steve held onto his hands, wanting to reach out to pull Tony to him, wanting to run his hands through his hair to try and comfort him. Sure, he noticed there were times that Tony would shrug off the touches when he was working in the workshop, but he figured it was just something to do with the way that Tony worked. Afterwards, Tony would always make up for it, wrapping arms around him as they cooked in the kitchen, little kisses dropped on the couch with the kids. He never really thought about it. But now, it all added up, staring him in the face. Tony had just been able to hide the little attacks whenever they happened, he obviously had a system if this room was anything to go by.

Tony lifted his head a little, eyes craving the darkness, adjusting quickly, even if it was blurry without his glasses. “Steve,” Tony whispered a little. “I think I need help.” A sad frown crinkled Steve’s forehead, and he could see how the blonde wanted to reach out. It was just how they comforted each other. Tony pushed one arm out towards Steve, and the man almost surged forward at the offering. Both hands wrapped around Tony’s hand, feeling the slight twitches in his fingers. “What if Peter had been around? I wasn’t seeing anyone, I didn’t know what was happening. I didn’t know that I had called the suit. What if I had hurt our kids?”

Steve kissed Tony’s knuckles. “We’ll find someone, babe,” Steve said quietly. “It’ll be alright.” Tony nodded a little, hand tightening around Steve’s.

Tony took a breath, flexing his hands on the steering wheel of the car. “I don’t know if I can do this.”
Steve leaned in to kiss his cheek. “I do know that you can do this.” He put his hand on Tony’s leg, giving it a quick squeeze. “I’ll be right there in the lobby, waiting for you. Come on.” Steve slipped his hand into Tony’s, tangling their fingers.

Tony finally nodded and they both slipped out of the car. He pushed his glasses further up his nose, tapping the button on the side to turn them into sunglasses, and let out a little calming breath when he felt Steve take his hand again. He shifted his hand a little, locking their fingers together, and took the first step towards the office building. Tony liked that it was a bigger building, where he could hop in the elevator, and no one would know right away that he was headed to a psychologist’s office. He looked at all of the names on the plaque just inside the main lobby, and noted that most of the name had PhD’s attached at the end. Maybe he should have taken a better look at the building itself.

They found the office to Dr. D. Cavanaugh and walked in, Steve pulling out the initial paperwork that Tony had pre-filled out, handing it to the receptionist. They were told that it would be a few minutes, so Steve led Tony towards a loveseat. “You should give me your phone.” Tony raised an eyebrow at Steve at the suggestion. “You won’t be able to use it as a distraction, and you know that I will come in if there’s an emergency.”

“But, what if-“

“Peter and Wade are studying with Jarvis and Bruce today, and Rachel and William are watching Jamie,” Steve shot down all of Tony’s excuses. “I’ve told them that if anything were to happen to call me first. Jarvis will get a hold of me, and you know he can, since you made my phone.” Steve kissed Tony’s knuckles. “The first few meetings are the most nerve wrecking ones, I know this.”

“That’s how you know exactly how I was going to try and get out of it?” Tony asked, watching Steve nod. He let out a little sigh, slumping a little in his seat.

“Like you wouldn’t be able to rig your phone to ring, or heaven forbid even give off the Avengers alarm.”

Tony let Steve slip his hand into his pocket to pull out the phone. “I don’t know if that last one would work.” Tony muttered a little. “I’d rush out here and you’d be sitting here, not on alert.” Steve hummed, a little smirk on his face. His squeezed Steve’s hand one more time before the door opened. “Thanks for coming with me.”

Steve kissed his cheek. “Anything for you.” He watched Tony stand up, walk over to the classy wood door and follow the woman who had opened the door and walked inside.

Once inside, Tony looked around the room, not turning his sunglasses off. He thought that maybe this woman was another secretary, or PA to this Cavanaugh. It wasn’t until the brunette sat down in the chair in front of the official looking desk. There were a couple of chairs and a couch in the room, and Tony took the single seat that was nearly the furthest away from the desk. The woman pulled out some papers and Tony nodded to himself a little.

“You’re here to do the little paperwork stuff until Dr Cavanaugh comes?” The woman looked up at him, putting on a pleasant smile. She folded her hands over her knee. “Is he not coming? Because a friendly call from the office would have been nice.”

“I am Dr Cavanaugh.”

Tony blinked a little. “You look all of Fifteen,” he blurted out, pulling his glasses off.

“I’m sorry that I don’t look as grey as some of my other colleagues.” She never lost her pleasant
smile, or looked away from Tony. “Would you feel more comfortable with an older gentleman?”

“What?”

“If that’s something that would make you feel more comfortable, then I can help you pick someone.” She leaned forward a little, and Tony felt himself relaxing just a tiny bit. She was the least intimidating woman he had ever met, and it was throwing him off. “The most important part of coming to the sessions if that you feel comfortable. This will be a safe space for you, Mr Stark, and I won’t be in the least bit offended if you prefer a male professional to a female one.”

“Uh, no, that’s- No, I mean- I’m not sexist,” Tony rushed out, tripping over his words. She merely chuckled softly. “No, it definitely doesn’t have to do with your gender, or even your age. Really it has nothing to with you, at all.”

“You’re not entirely sold on the whole idea of talking to someone else, a stranger really, about your problems.” Tony nodded to her, folding his glasses in his hands. “You wouldn’t be the first the think that, and you won’t be the last. Even with a celebrity status such as yours, that feeling can be amplified, along with other negative thoughts about it.” Tony slipped his glasses back on, not looking at the Doctor. “I actually wish that I saw more that are constantly in a spotlight sought out our services. It could really help coping mechanisms, a way to deal with the immense amounts of stress that come with life.”

Tony’s nose twitched a little, and he crossed his leg over one knee. One hand slipped into his pocket, fingers wrapping around a paperclip that hadn’t been there before. Tony tried not to smile, knowing that Steve had put it there after taking his phone, knowing that Tony needed something to keep his hands busy with. “Alright, so if I go ahead and say yes to this, where are the papers we both have to sign? Like, I gotta keep myself, and all interested parties, protected. Doctor-Client privileges don’t cut it in my world. And I’m sure there’s more I have to sign? And then what do I call you?” The young woman opened the notepad in her lap, pulling out some papers. As she held them out for him to take, Tony stared at her hand for a second. “Uh, I don’t like to be handed things.”

“Ah, of course,” she nodded and put them down on the arm of the chair, along with a pen, and went to her notepad, unfazed. “You can call me Danielle if you’d like. What would you like me to call you?”

“Um,” he ran his eyes through the papers before answering. “Tony, call me Tony. Mr Stark was my Dad, Anthony was what my mom called me.” He signed the papers he needed too before slipping the papers back over to her. “You’re willing to take me on as a client?” Danielle looked up, and interested look on her face. “I’m Tony Stark. I have a whole slew of problems, and those are the ones that don’t touch the reasons on why I’m Iron Man. And I am Iron Man, I’m an Avenger, and I get call outs often.”

“Probably doesn’t hurt that you’re dating Captain America.” Tony raised an eyebrow at her. “He’s very clearly sitting out in my waiting room right now.” Tony huffed a little from his nose. “I won’t lie,” she said, as she leaned back in her chair a little, still the picture of professionalism. “When I saw the name in the books, and I got the advanced papers from your legal team, I did a little digging. I’m surprised you didn’t bring up your children first.” Tony tilted his head a little. “I’m a parent myself, so I know how important a child can be to, basically anything else in our lives.” Tony’s face softened a little at the thought of Peter and Jamie.

Then he was reminded why he thought it was time to come. “You’re right, they are the reason that I’m here.”

Steve had picked up in one of the many ebooks loaded on his phone, (and tablet), still on his mission
to catch up with pop culture. By his count, Tony would be almost done with his first sessions, and since Tony hadn’t stormed out, he figured that it was going pretty well so far. Until Tony’s phone started to ring. Steve lifted it up, seeing Pepper’s picture on the phone, and frowned a little.

“Pepper?” He answered, letting her know that it was not going to be Tony on the other end.

“Steve, where’s Tony?” Steve frowned when he recognized her business tone.

“He’s currently in a meeting,” he told her. He wasn’t sure if Tony had told Pepper exactly where he was going yet. “He should be almost done. What’s wrong?”

Pepper sighed a little, and he could picture her rubbing the spot on her nose, eyes closed. “Is he at a therapist’s office?” Steve raised his eyebrows. “How prepared are you for a media storm?”

“What happened Pepper?”

“Take a look at any of the social media apps that Tony put on your phone. I’ll wait.”

Steve frowned but held up his phone again, pressing Tony’s phone between his ear and his shoulder. He opened up the first app in the social media folder that Tony showed him. It was also set up to show any alerts regarding the Avengers, Tony, and himself.

Who’s the crazy one? Tony Stark, or Captain America driven crazy by Tony Stark?

There was a picture in multiple posts, of Steve and Tony walking into the office building, holding hands as Steve reached for the door handle. There were a few different shots, but they were all caught after they had gotten out of the car, and with the names of those who worked in the building in most shots.

Clearly Tony Stark has been a bad influence on Captain America. They should have thought about that before putting Stark on the Avengers.

Someone clearly didn’t warn Cap enough from Stark; Probably couples therapy

Raise your hand if you knew the relationship wouldn’t last

Then Steve saw what Tony and he had been afraid of since announcing they were together. Pictures of them out together, mostly of dates, where they thought they had been hiding enough, spliced next to pictures of them walking into the building, claiming that things were rocky. Then pictures of either him or Tony, out with the kids, alone. Everyone wanted to make a story where there wasn’t one.

“How bad is this going to be?” Steve asked quietly, still going through some of the responses.

“I don’t know. Don’t let Tony see until you get back to the Tower,” Pepper suggested. “I’m on my way there now, I’ve got the PR team coming to the offices to prepare for this.”

“Some of these pictures have Jamie in them.”

“I’ll be waiting for you back at the Tower.”

Steve sighed as Pepper hung up. He wasn’t worried about the inevitable backlash their dating had caused, he didn’t care what anyone thought about him. He wasn’t ashamed of who he was, of who he loved. He was worried about the exposure on the kids, especially for Jamie, much like Tony was worried about the exposure on Peter. While it was true that they hadn’t seen, or heard, from AIM or even Hydra, it didn’t mean that they would have given up looking and plotting. He also knew that
Tony was going to blow a gasket.

The wooden door opened all too quickly for Steve’s taste, and Tony was walking out, the doctor behind him. “I’ll see you next week,” she told him with a smile, then tapped a card that was in his hand. “And use that if you have, too.”

“Thanks,” he gave her a nod, before turning back towards Steve. The blonde got up from his seat, giving a polite nod to Dr Cavanaugh, and slipping his arm around Tony’s waist. He pressed a little closer to Steve, and there was a sense of calmness around him. Steve really hated that they’d have to break that when they got back home.

Except they didn’t make it home before the chaos started. In the time that they had been inside and the pictures had been posted, more cameras and people had gathered. Tony blinked, caught off guard for a second. Steve went to pull away, but Tony just followed him, and gave him a look. That’s when Tony took over, pushing them through the group of cameras and shouted questions.

“That was fast,” Tony muttered as they approached the car. He unlocked it, watching Steve move past the paps to his own door, and they got inside.

“Just remember to not run them over,” Steve told him, thankful for the tinted windows of Tony’s car. He watched his boyfriend closely, saw him white knuckle the steering wheel a couple of times, before they pulled out until they were free of being surrounded. “Pepper called not too long ago.” He saw Tony glance over at him before looking back out at the road. “The picture broke online not too long ago, she’ll be waiting for us back at the Tower.”

“The kids?” Tony asked. Steve tried to remember that being photographed was nothing new to Tony, it had been happening to him practically since birth. He had told Steve that he didn’t care what they said about him, or what pictures they took of him, as long they didn’t drag Steve, or the kids, through the mud as well.

“Still inside the Tower. Jarvis is combing the internet for pictures of the kids where they clearly got too close,” Steve informed him, looking down at his phone. While Tony had finished his appointment, Steve and Jarvis had teamed up to assess the damage, and then try to control it as much as they could. “He’s trying to suppress as many pictures of them as possible. All the things they’re jumping to is ridiculous.” He shook his head a little. “I don’t think this would such a big deal if they hadn’t of seen the name on the building right away.”

Tony reached over to take Steve’s hand with one of his. “I’m sorry, Steve. If you want, we’ll get the lawyers—”

“I told you before, I don’t care. I’m not ashamed of being Bi, and I’m not ashamed to be seen dating you.” Steve turned his attention to Tony, holding onto his hand. “They can say whatever they want about me, because I know how I feel, and as long I know that you’re happy, then I’m happy. Whatever they print about us, we know the truth of how we feel, of our family, and we’ll work with the kids on the press as they grow older.” Tony let out a little sigh, nodding his head, and Steve brought his hand up to kiss his knuckles. “I love you.”

“I love you, too,” Tony murmured back, squeezing his hand. There was a moment of silence and then Tony let out a little groan. Steve turned his head slightly to look over at him. “That was such a domestic moment. I have to get you that house now, don’t I? And a ring. We’re all but married at this point.” Steve couldn’t help but smirk a little at his rambling, looking back down at his phone, still holding Tony’s hand. “We dated, then we had second kid, then we moved in with each other. I don’t even know what kind of order that is. And how you put up with me and my crazy rambling, I’ll never understand.”
“You are the one for me, that’s all I’ll say,” Steve said with a smile.

Tony watched Steve in the art room with all three kids that day, watched as he tried to keep Jamie trapped between his feet while he worked with Peter and Wade on color theory, and colored pencils. Jamie had pieces of paper in front of her and crayons in her hands, mostly content to work on the floor, sometimes growing curious enough to want to see what the boys were working on.

Turning back, he headed for the kitchen to get started on some sandwiches for lunch. He groaned a little when he saw a familiar red cloak flapping at him. Dr Strange and Loki were seated on the stools to the kitchen island. “I should be thanking you for waiting a week since our last meeting.” Tony was a lot more cordial this time around, even if he still wasn’t happy to see them. “You’re gaining another shadow there, Doctor, I’d keep an eye on that.”

“The cloaking spells around him are stronger when he’s around me,” Strange said, turning in his seat as Tony walked by and over to the fridge. “Also, he kind of knows more about what we encountered than anyone else.”

“Which thing in particular?” Tony asked, sparing a glance over at them. “They thing that wanted to use me, or the thing that tried to trap me?”

“That’s what we’re here to talk about.” He watched Tony pulled out some food, then reached to turn on the coffee maker. “Any chance of that coffee finding its way over here?” Tony just looked at him, blank faced. “Or not, it was just a question.” Loki snorted softly, crossing his knee over the other.

“So, I’m judging by the lack of nightmares that you’ve done whatever you set out to do?” The engineer asked as he continued to move around the kitchen. He might as well get this over with, and do it while he was marginally more relaxed than last time.

“I’ve been able to shield your mind, yes,” Dr Strange nodded, setting his hands on the counter, folding them together. “I can’t remove whatever influence was left there, but that would be more of Loki’s expertise. I can’t erase the progress that the Titan has made, or what he will make towards Earth, but we know that we’ve at least slowed him down.” Tony grunted a little with a nod.

“I can’t remove the influence on you, not while he still lives,” Loki spoke up, and Tony shot him a small glare. “As I’ve said before, and I shall say again, I can’t do much that includes the brute without the staff, and gem, back. Should I try anything, he would be able to find me, and I would be used, again, as helplessly as you have been.”

“You concern is touching.” Tony rolled his eyes. He grabbed a knife, pointing it in Loki’s direction. “There really isn’t much that’s stopping me from calling up the suit and blasting your face in.”

“I nearly revealed myself to save your worthless hide,” Loki responded with a sneer.

“But,” Strange interrupted them, “he wasn’t seen. The Titan only knows of my presence and power, and possibly that of Wanda Maximoff—“

“Yeah, that’s something I’m incredibly pissed off about,” Tony threw out there.

“But since he doesn’t know our magical signatures, he won’t be able to follow that.” Stephen shot Tony a look, but had continued like he hadn’t been interrupted. His cloak flapped a little in annoyance. “I had no other choice but to bring her to help, after I was able to figure out just what we were up against. She had been inside of your mind, so she would know any shortcuts we could use.”
“I’m putting an embargo on entering my head,” Tony decided. “You people are already driving me crazy.”

“Yes, we saw with your foray to what Midgardians call a ‘shrink’,” Loki said with a smirk in his voice.

“I will not hesitate to stab you.”

Strange cleared his throat a little, a small disapproving frown on his features. “As for the interfering force that both helped and hindered, that is still a complete mystery to me. It’s not like something I’ve ever encountered before, and I can’t seem to find it again. I can tell for a fact that it’s not malevolent, though.”

“I could have told you that,” Tony said with a snort. He had started to assemble the sandwiches, cutting crusts off for Peter and Wade. “It told me as much, that it was trying to help.” Loki and Strange watched him intently, waiting for all the information that he had. “It was trying to hide me from the Big Bad. And then when you showed up, it tried to stop you, but that’s because it didn’t know that you were trying to help. I think it was because He was there at the same time.”

“You were able to glean all of this, but were too weak to fight your way back?” Loki almost scoffed.

“You’re welcome for information that you didn’t even have,” Tony shot back. “You’re also welcome for not putting out the word that your back, and calling for your brother.” Loki nearly hissed, and Tony didn’t try to stop the smile from crossing his lips. “Tensions are a little high in the building, if you hadn’t noticed, so I’m sure it will be no problem to get that word spread.”

Dr Strange sighed a little, letting his head fall onto his hand. “Perhaps it’s time we left.”

“Yeah, that wouldn’t be a bad idea.” Tony had turned to pull out some oranges. “Good ole’ Captain America will be done with his lesson anytime, and I really don’t want my kid seeing Loki’s face again. He’s gotten past his nightmares, and I’d rather they not start up again.”

“I’m so happy to see that I’m so often on the minds of your family, Stark,” Loki nearly purred, before standing up. “I shall take my leave. I anticipate when our paths will cross again, Anthony Stark.” He gave a mocking bow before turning, disappearing with his second step.

Tony looked over at Dr Strange. “There must be a fan-freaking-tastic reason that you’re keeping him hidden, and around.”

“There usually is a good reason for what I do,” Strange replied with a little smirk. “Till we meet again.” Tony raised an eyebrow but nodded to the man and went back to peeling the orange he was working on.

“This is my life.”

November 2012

“This is going to end so badly.” Tony had one arm wrapped around his stomach, his other hand pressed up to his hand. Steve was standing next to him. “Just, so awful.”

“You can’t look at it like that,” Steve said, but he didn’t have his usual optimism in his voice. “You need to have a little bit of faith.” Tony shot him a look, and Steve almost winced. “I know.”
“It’s your fault.”

“I know.”

“You should know better.”

“One would think.”

Tony sighed and ran his hand through his hair. Letting out a longer sigh, he turned to face Steve.

“Alright. We have to face the music. There’s no changing this, no getting around it. We made our
bed, now we have to sleep in it, and hope that no one throws the dirt on us just yet.”

“So morbid,” Steve muttered before reaching in to pick up the finely designed ice cream cake on the
counter. Tony picked up the several ice cream containers, and they looked at each other. “None of
the kids are going to sleep tonight.”

“Not with all the sugar that you’re about to be responsible for pumping into their bodies,” Tony
replied with a smile. “The candles are lit, let’s go give our daughter her first birthday cake.” Steve bit
his bottom lip, looking down at the Sleeping Beauty themed cake, and walking out to the living
room. Bucky was holding onto Jamie, sitting on the floor with Meg’s twins in front of him. Peter and
Wade were perched on the couch, each practically hanging over Bucky’s shoulders. Steve smiled at
seeing Bucky there this time, and to see the kids so happy.

Everyone had been invited to Jamie’s first birthday party, just like Peter’s. There had been no answer
from Barton and Romanoff, but Bucky wasn’t going to miss another party because they wanted to
play games, specially not for his goddaughter. They had made it up to Peter by making a special
breakfast for him the morning after his birthday, and giving him his gifts. This time Meg had been
across the country, unable to get back in time thanks to one of the sculptures she was working on and
a shipping mistake that couldn’t wait if they wanted to salvage the project. She made sure Bucky had
brought her present for the little girl, and her apologies to Tony and Steve, again.

Jarvis lowered the lights a little, and everyone looked over to the lights of the cake now. Jamie
gasped softly when she saw her Daddy and Papa, then the candles. Mary got the singing started, and
Jamie was clapping when she realized that everyone was singing to her. Bucky held onto her with a
smile, lifting her up a little when Steve reached them. He got down to one knee and smiled at her.

“You gotta blow out the candles, baby girl.” Steve mimicked blowing, pursing his lips, waiting for
the one year old to follow suit. She had seen Peter, and Tony, blow out some candles, and she
squealed now that she knew it was her turn. She started to blow as well as she could, Steve secretly
helping her out. She clapped, eyes big, and looked at Steve. “You did it!”

‘I di’ it! I di’ it!’ She exclaimed, (not quite sounding out the ‘T’), and bounced on her feet, excited.
Steve couldn’t help it as his grin got wider and bigger.

“Rogers must have been the cutest baby ever,” he heard Sam murmur to someone from behind him.
“If he was anything like her.”

“She is his clone,” Coulson answered, a little amusement in his voice. “There’s a good bet that he
was a little like this.”

“Let’s cut some cake,” Rachel said as she swooped in to take the cake from Steve’s hands. Jamie
reached out for her Papa and Steve happily bundled her up in his arms, blowing a raspberry on her
cheek. She squealed and pushed at Steve’s face a little, wiggling her body. Steve laughed, holding
her close.
“Don’t torture the little one,” Tony said, his head swooping in over Steve’s shoulder, pressing a kiss to Jamie’s cheek. She giggled some more. “We need to get her into a sugar coma first.”

“Sugar!” Wade proclaimed, jumping to his feet. Peter followed him, both look expectantly at Tony.

“Alright,” Tony chuckled a little. “You can both have a corner piece of cake, and an extra scoop of ice cream, if you help your moms pass out the cake and ice cream to everyone else, okay?” The boys started to whisper to each other, in their made up language that Tony was still trying to decipher, before looking back at him.

“Deal!” Wade said with a decisive nod.

“Alright. You’d better get over to and tell Mary that I said you could both have a corner piece, before she gives them awa-wah!” Tony wrapped his arms around Steve as the boys rushed past him, nearly knocking him over. “Okay, we know that bribery works especially well on the boys.” Steve chuckled a little. He lifted Jamie up so she could give a sloppy kiss to Tony. “Mmmmm, yes, now I feel much better!”

“Can you stop acting like a domestic family?” Bucky spoke up, leaning back against the couch, still sitting on the ground. Conor and Rowan were using his legs to push themselves up, wanting to climb their Uncle Bucky. “My stomach can’t handle it.” They could see that he was trying not to smirk at them.

“I’m sorry that you have such delicate sensibilities,” Tony retorted. “I would have thought after the Army, and babysitting all these kids, that you’d have an iron stomach.”

“As per usual, you beat all odds, Stark,” Bucky fired back playfully. Tony grinned, almost preening, and Bucky rolled his eyes. “This one, it had to be this one, Stevie?”

“Yeah,” Steve said with a little laugh. “It had to be this one.” He kept one around Jamie, his other snaking out to wrap around Tony’s waist. He saw Peter carefully hurry by, carrying a plate over to Bruce, and then run back to get more. Wade was right behind him, handing a plate to Sam, and doing the same. Steve leaned his head back a little, pressing a kiss to Tony’s neck. “I like this one, I’m going to keep him.” Tony wrinkled his nose, like he did every time he tried not to smile too widely. “Hopefully for a good long time.”

“Careful, thems’ strong commitment type words,” Bucky said, looking at him pointedly, one arm going out to catch Conor before he fell over Bucky’s leg. Rowan was trying to climb up his shoulder. “One might think you’re sweet on him, sweet enough to make a statement.”

Steve watched a blush work up Tony’s neck, coloring his cheeks a little. He pulled Tony down closer to him, planting a soft kiss to his lips. “I’m as sweet on him as the cake we got.” Tony shoved Steve’s shoulder a little, hiding his face in Steve’s neck now. Jamie giggled, patting Tony’s head with her hands, and Steve nuzzled her cheek with his nose.

That night, they’d stay up with Peter and Jamie, helping them burn off the last of the sugar rush. They’d all be wrapped in a blanket, in the big bed, a movie marathon playing. And when the kids had fallen asleep, Steve would lean over, kiss Tony slowly, tangle their fingers together until they were resting over the sleeping kids. Tony would fall asleep first, and Steve would soon follow, a small smile on his face. There’d be no nightmares that night, and they’d all get the much needed rest owed to them.

Chapter End Notes
Woooooo! Thank you all again!
So, if it feels like there are things that were left untouched; there are. And (most of) it's done on purpose! It purposely leaves it open, and it leads into the over-arcing plot in my head. I'll say it again, we are going to see the kids grow-up, and we're going to see Spiderman! And some Deadpool!
Let me here your thoughts! Leave it here in the comments, or if you want to write more, or start a conversation, I have an email for that! Just for all of you!
MegaraNoelleWrites@gmail.com
<3<3<3<3<3
Hullo!! Yes it's been a while hasn't it my lovelies?? SO yes, there is going to be another part to this series, and coming soon. I promise! I have indeed seen both Civil War and Infinity War, and all the movies in between, and will be working those in in their own way. As usual, there are no worries about spoilers with the more recent movies. I like to give about between 6-10 months after a movie comes out before I started using spoiler-y items in my stories, giving everyone a chance to either see it or learn about it.

Updates to me? Well, I am no longer homeless, Yaaaaay! I’ve moved to an apartment, and I live with my mom as her caretaker, and working part-time. I work at a pizza place and I love it, and I even got part-time Manager in less than a year. So it makes me a bit busy, but I also didn't want to start the next chapter of this series until I knew what I was doing, and could make it just as good as the rest that everyone loves. I’m still super grateful to everyone who's read this series, and left a review/comment! Seriously, you all still blew me away with all the stats that I see, with all your kind words! I do this all for you guys!! Thank you!!

Expect something soon! Keep an Eye on the Proof Positive series tag!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!