Summary

There are three well-known facts at Shield High:

1. The history teacher Mr. Barnes is a stone-cold terror, and it’s not even because he only has one arm.
2. The other history teacher, Mr. Rogers, is a mysterious enigma, and it’s something to do with the body of a Greek God and contradicting stories of his past. (They’re all rumours, anyway.)
3. Mr Barnes and Mr Rogers hate each other.

Bucky wouldn’t have it any other way.

Notes

Okay so a few things:
1. I am not from the USA nor have I ever been so I don’t know how your schools work or anything at all tbh
2. This school is kind of based on my old school (just the times really) and starts at 8:45.
3. EOC stands for Education Outside of the Classroom

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2. The other history teacher, Mr. Rogers, is a mysterious enigma, and it’s something to do with the body of a Greek God and contradicting stories of his past. (They’re all rumours, anyway.)
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It all starts when Bucky is honorably discharged from his unit in the army after losing his arm. Or maybe it starts when Natasha gets him a teaching job at her school. Or maybe it even starts when Steve comes home from his third tour and starts teaching at the same school a year after Bucky. It doesn’t really matter how it starts, though. That’s not the fun bit.

The fun bit is how it plays out.

“This trip isn’t mandatory,” Bucky explains, waving the permission slips in the air at his class. “But it is recommended. Highly recommended. I expect most of you to come. Any questions?”

Half of his students are clearly not listening, eyes unfocused and fingers twitching. Bucky doesn’t really care, all the information they need is on the sheets. No one puts up their hands or calls out so Bucky decides to drop it. There’s still 15 minutes of class, but he hasn’t got anything left planned for the lesson so he decides he’ll let them go early.

“Okay, guys. Come grab a sheet off my desk, and you can go early. Provided you don’t disrupt other classes.” Bucky walks over to his desk, setting into his wheely chair and putting the permission slips down. There’s a chorus of cheers and the kids jump to their feet, eager to leave the class.

Of course, that’s when Steve pops his head in.

“Barnes, I need-” He begins, but stops to stare at the loud students milling around the room. There
are paper planes flying, and a couple of kids shouting over something, and it looks like chaos. Bucky stifles a grin.

The students all turn at Steve’s voice, dead silence washing over them as they cautiously look between Bucky and Steve.

“Rogers,” Bucky greets, voice stiff. There’s the same old tension in the air there always is when Bucky and Steve have to talk on school grounds. The kids love it but pretend not to.

“I need a new whiteboard marker.” Steve finally says, all eyes on him. He stands tall, back straight and jaw set, determined not to let the stares get to him.

Bucky doesn’t say anything, just meets his eyes and holds his ground. Usually people look away after only a couple of seconds, but not Steve. Nah, Steve’s even worse than Bucky when it comes to being stubborn, and the whole school knows it.

The problem is that Shield High isn’t a big school. And so they are only two senior history teachers. So Bucky and Steve actually have to interact.

Bucky still hasn’t said anything, determined to make Steve uncomfortable, or at least shuffle on the spot. (He knows it’s never gonna happen. The students, however, do not.)

Stone-cold Terror Barnes, right here.

“That’s not my problem,” Bucky eventually says. His voice is flat, an icy monotone. Steve doesn’t so much as flinch. Bucky loves him for it.

The whole class is still suspended in curiosity, waiting to see how this plays out. Bucky’s not gonna disappoint.

“Can I borrow one?” Steve asks, hand still on the doorknob, only half his body in the class.

Bucky’s still got his gaze fixed on Steve, not moving a fraction of an inch except to raise an eyebrow.
“Please.” Steve spits. “Please, Barnes, may I borrow one of your markers?” His tone changes to disgustingly sweet plea but there’s still traces of his sneer on his face. Bucky relents and lobs a marker across the room to him. Without another word, Steve catches it and leaves the classroom.

The door swings shut behind him and everyone looks at Bucky.

“Permission slips.” He says, and swivels in his chair to fiddle with the papers behind his desk. With his back to the classroom, no one tries to talk to him and he waits for everyone to leave.

“Mr Barnes?” A voice asks hesitantly. Bucky turns around to face her. It’s Jay, one of his favourite students- not that he’d let anyone know.

“Yes, Jay?” He prompts when she doesn’t continue.

“Are you coming on this trip?” She asks, fidgeting with her form. She’s nervous about something, but Bucky doesn’t know what.

“Yes. Are you?” It’s a fair question. She’s the kind of student he’d expect to come with no hesitation, but he also knows there’s something not-quite-right at home for her at the moment.

“Yeah, I- I think so,” she nods. “Will Mr Rogers?”

Ah. So that’s what this is about. Mr Barnes and Mr Rogers being forced into a three day school trip together. Some kids will love it, others will be indifferent. Bucky didn’t really think about the possibility of there being kids actually uncomfortable with it. (They don’t call him an asshole for nothing.)

“Yes. Mr Rogers is required to keep the student-teacher ratio balanced. Are you alright with that?” Bucky forces a smile, tries to come across as friendly. It probably looks more like a grimace, but at least he’s trying.

“Will you be shouting at each other?” Jay’s not just nervous now. She looks worried, and Bucky’s heart breaks a little for her. Bucky’s, like, 90% sure her parents are on the verge of splitting up. He imagines that includes a lot of shouting.
“Hey, no. We don’t shout. He’s an ass, but he’s manageable. And if we upset you, let us know, okay? That’s more important than him knowing he’s wrong.” Bucky wants to reach out, put a hand on her shoulder or something, but he still hasn’t gotten the hang of casual touch since coming home. Plus, he doesn’t want to make her more uncomfortable.

“Thanks, Mr B,” She says. Her eyes wander to something behind him, widening when they settle. Bucky turns around to see what she’s looking at, and lets out a little huff of amusement when he spots it.

It’s his travel mug, the one Natasha got for him when he came out. He loves it, even if it is the biggest lie he knows.

It’s bright and rainbow, with big white print saying “Nobody knows I’m gay”. Usually, he leaves it in the staffroom. Today he forgot.

“That alright with you?” He asks, turning back to look at his student. Jay nods quickly, stuffing her folded permission slip into her pocket.

“Yeah. Yeah, of course, Mr B,” she promises. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Bucky watches her leave with a straight face, but can’t help laughing when the door closes behind her.

There’s a small room between Bucky’s room and Steve’s, with a sink, microwave, and hotwater tap. It’s the kitchen for the level but no one really uses it because the microwave is shitty and the sink occasionally leaks.

Steve’s the only one in there at lunch.

“Thanks for the marker.” Steve says with a shit-eating grin when Bucky walks in. Bucky knows that grin. It’s not a good sign. He groans.
“You didn’t actually need it?” He guesses. Steve’s laughter is all Bucky needs for an answer. “You’re such an ass.”

“You love my ass,” Steve counters lamely. He hops up onto the counter and reaches out his left hand to Bucky.

“It’s literally the only reason I married you,” Bucky agrees. He takes Steve’s hand, fingers twisting the ring around his finger.

"Yeah, I love you too.” Steve laughs, dropping a kiss to Bucky’s neck. Bucky’s eyes drift closed and he laces his fingers with Steve’s.

“Oh, hey. One of my kids is a bit nervous about spending a couple of days with us together as the only adults,” Bucky says after a minute. He opens his eyes and looks at Steve. “So maybe we should tone it down a bit, just until we get back from the trip?”

“Two whole weeks of not barging into your class to shout at you?” Steve pouts, but Bucky knows this man, knows he’ll bring it down a notch if a kid doesn’t feel good about it. “The damage it would do to our reputations.”

“Hey!” Bucky protests. “I was a stone-cold terror before you started here.”

“Buddy, if I didn’t turn up when I did, you would’ve exposed yourself as a giant marshmallow in no time. I’m surprised you lasted as long as you did,” Steve snorts. It’s unattractive and gross and the best sound Bucky’s heard all day.

“Pick up Chinese on the way home,” Bucky tells him, heading for the door. “I’m not cooking, and I’d rather go without food than eat something you make.”

“Asshole,” Steve grumbles as Bucky leaves him to himself in the shitty kitchen. Bucky laughs and shuts the door behind him.
Everyone in Bucky’s class hands in their permission slips by the end of the week and he’s pleasantly surprised. He wasn’t expecting everyone to come, to be honest. They’re going down to DC to visit the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress, staying two nights in an EOC camp.

“How many in your class are coming?” Bucky asks Steve when it’s just the two of them in his class.

“Only three haven’t.” Steve says, doodling flowers on Bucky’s arm as he types up lesson plans. It’s a little bit distracting but he likes having Steve this close, drawing on him like he’s a piece of art.

“All of my class is coming. You realise what this means, right?” Bucky checks, glancing over at Steve from his laptop.

“Uuh,” Steve looks up from Bucky’s arm for a moment before going back to the vine weaving from his wrist to his elbow. “Lotsa kids?”

“We have 52 kids total if everyone comes. Even with three missing, there’d only be one room left. We’d have to share,” Bucky explains.

“We literally sleep in the same bed every night, Buck.” Steve teases, but Bucky knows Steve gets what he means.

“These kids will get the best show of their lives.” Bucky mutters under his breath, rotating his arm so his palm is facing up. Steve gets the hint and trails his hand down to rest in Bucky’s, squeezing lightly.

“This is gonna be wonderful,” he grins.

It’s after 5pm on a Friday night, so Bucky really isn’t expecting the knock on the door. Steve doesn’t have time to slip into the attached kitchen before the door is swinging open and Jay’s calling out.

“Hey, Mr Barnes? Can I talk to you?” She asks, poking her head through the door as Steve dives under Bucky’s desk.
“Yeah, of course,” Bucky says. “What’s up?”

“I,” she starts, but can’t continue because her lip’s wobbling and her hands are shaking. Bucky jumps to his feet and steers her to a chair. He pulls up a chair for himself and rubs her back, the same as he used to do for Steve when they were kids and he had trouble breathing.


It takes a minute, but eventually Jay’s breathing evens out and she wipes her tears on the hem of her sleeve.

“When did you realise you were gay?” She asks and Bucky clicks.

“I don’t know.” He tells her, because it’s the truth. It all started with Steve, but Bucky hardly has two memories without Steve anyway, so it’s too hard to pinpoint when or how he realised.

“I was about thirteen, I think,” Bucky says. He knows he doesn’t owe her any of this, but she’s so upset and if there’s a chance it might help her? He’s gonna tell her. “I’d known my best friend since we were six and I’d always known I loved him. Told everyone we were going to get married, be together forever, all that stuff. Adults told me I’d grow out of it but I guess I just never did. Then we were teenagers and he kissed me and realised I was in love with him. It wasn’t all easy, but it was okay because I had him”

“That is so cute,” Jay giggles, her laughter bubbling out. “How on earth did you get a reputation as an icy terror?”

“It’s the arm.” Bucky grins, relieved she’s no longer crying. Yeah, he’s good enough with kids to teach, but comforting a crying one? Way out of his depth.

“It’s the eyes. And the murder strut,” Jay corrects with a laugh.

“Murder strut? Honestly?” Bucky snorts, swinging on his chair. “That sounds like something Natasha would say.”
“Miss Romanov? Yeah, that’s what she calls it,” Jay grins. Her hair flops in her face and she pulls it back, tying it up in a ponytail. Her hair’s about the same length as his and Bucky makes a mental note to get Steve to tie it up, see if it makes much of a difference.

“She is so full of shit,” Bucky laughs.

“Did you know there was a rumour that you two were dating?” Jay says nonchalantly, and Bucky can’t tell if she’s joking or not.

“What,” he says, because there’s nothing else he can say.

“Yeah. When you started you were super close. And you’d speak in Russian to each other. Plus people would mention seeing you together outside of work and… wow. Okay, it sounds stalker-ish when I say it out loud.” Jay hums, pulling at the fray in the tear of her jeans.

“Natasha’s my sister. That is just so wrong,” Bucky groans. It’s kind of amusing too, though.

“Miss Romanov’s your sister? What, next you’ll be telling me you’re married to Mr Rogers,” Jay snorts. Bucky can’t help the choked laugh that comes out. He can hear Steve laugh, too. Steve, Mr Rogers, Bucky’s husband who is hiding under his desk while he chats to a kid about something they’ve come way off track about.

Jay doesn’t hear Steve.

“Okay, Natasha’s not my sister -sister. But she’s like family.” Bucky explains weakly, getting to his feet and heading back to his desk. He can see the blue of Steve’s shirt sticking out a bit- not enough for Jay to see, but enough for Bucky to swallow a smile.

“Mister B, are you happy?” Jay asks in a rush of exhaled air. Bucky’s in his chair now, feet tucked under his desk in Steve’s lap (just to annoy the bastard) and hand hovering over his laptop.

“Yeah,” he says. “I am.”
“Will I ever stop being scared of it?” She continues, voice quiet and eyes misty. She’s pulled her sleeves down to cover her hands again, and she looks so damn small it breaks Bucky’s heart.

“Yeah,” he says softly, “you will. You’ll find someone who loves you more than anything else, and you will love them with everything you are. And when you love someone that much, there’s no room left to be scared of something that feels so good.”

Steve squeezes his leg under the table and Jay wipes her eyes on her sleeve again.

“Thanks, Mr B. Have a good weekend, see you on Monday.” She says through a smile. It’s weak but not forced and Bucky returns it, hoping it’s comforting.

“Yeah, you too. And Jay- if you ever need someone, I’m here, alright?” He says, fixing her with a look. She nods a couple of times before answering.

“Yeah. Yeah, thank you.”

Steve’s up and wrapping himself around Bucky as soon as the door clicks shut and Bucky can’t do anything but tuck his smile into Steve’s neck.

“That was so sappy, Buck.” Steve laughs, but he clings just that much tighter to him.

“Shut your face or you’re walking home.” Bucky threatens. They both know it’s hollow.

Two of Steve’s three students hand in their forms, the third one away for a fortnight for their parents’ wedding. It’s Tuesday, six days from the trip, and Bucky’s actually getting quite excited. It’s his fourth year here but this will be his first overnight trip.

He’s got marking to do, though, and he plans to have it done before the trip so he can just enjoy it for what it is. Tuesdays (and Thursdays) are Steve and Sam’s gym nights, so Bucky makes use of his time alone to grade the essays from his sophomore class.
He doesn’t realise how late it is until it’s dark outside and Steve sends him a message saying he’s on his way home. It’s almost 7 and Bucky’s still at the damn school. Gross.

The school’s not far from home, though, so he’ll probably still beat Steve. With that thought in mind, Bucky packs up his work and races to his car. It’s starting to rain and Bucky takes a moment to be grateful Sam’s driving Steve home and the fool isn’t out catching his death on his bike.

Bucky’s sitting in his car, telling Steve he’s just on his own way home too when he sees her. He’s not certain, but he’s pretty sure that’s Jay across the road, waiting by herself in the rain. He sighs and pulls out of his carpark, driving over to where she is.

“Jay?” He says, winding down the window. Yep, that’s her.

“Oh. Hi, Mr B.” She says, forcing a smile. Bucky can see she’s shivering.

“Need a lift?” He offers. It’s cold and dark and she’s just a kid. He can’t leave her out here alone.

“Oh, I- no thanks. My bus is only fifteen minutes away.” She tells him, checking her phone for the time.

“That’s absurd. Come on, I’ll drop you home,” Bucky insists. Jay glances around the empty street and shakes her head.

“I think I’ll just wait, Mr B. Thanks for the offer though.” She looks nervous and when it clicks, Bucky’s so mad at himself for not even thinking about it.

“Shit. Sorry, Jay. I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable. But it’s so wet, please let me call Natasha. I know she’s still inside, she wouldn’t mind dropping you home. Or Maximoff. Or a taxi, I’ll pay it for you-”

“It’s not that, Mr B.” Jay cuts in, another shiver wracking through her body. Bucky’s reminded of Steve as a teen, waiting out in the cold for Bucky to finish sports practice.

“Please don’t wait out in the rain for quarter of an hour. You’ll get sick,” he says. Rain’s getting
inside his car but he can’t bring himself to care, not with this child shivering in the dark. “Please let me drop you home.”

There’s a gust of wind, carrying the rain and sleet straight into Jay’s face.

“Oh, okay.” She relents, opening the door and hopping in. “Thank you.”

The car ride’s a little bit awkward, but maybe that’s just Bucky. He turns on the radio, fingers drumming on the steering wheel to the beat of the music.

“Is it safe for you to drive with only one arm?” Jay asks suddenly, eyes widening with shock when she realises what she’s said. Bucky laughs at the bluntness of her question.

“Yeah. This car’s an automatic. We picked it out after I lost the arm,” he explains.

“Were you in the army?” Jay asks as she guides Bucky to her house. Bucky nods, not taking his eyes from the road.

“Yeah. Sergeant James Barnes,” he confirms.

“Thought so,” Jay says with a small nod. Bucky catches it from the corner of his eye. He raises and eyebrow and glances at her.

“Not the sergeant bit,” she clarifies. “But I’ve seen your dogtags.”

She clearly hasn’t seen Bucky’s dogtags or she’d realise he doesn’t hate Steve. Not when that’s the name he carries around his neck, resting over his heart. There’s the matter of his ring, too. He keeps it on the chain because it’s not like he has a left hand for it.

“The chain, anyway. Guessed they were dogtags.” Jay continues, mainly to herself.

They lapse back into silence again, save for the song on the radio. Bucky doesn’t recognise but he likes it all the same.
“That’s my street,” He tells her as they pass his road. He can see his house with its lights off. He’s still got a shot at beating Steve home. Jay looks down the road.

“Cool,” she says. “Random question, but do you hate Mr Wilson too?”

Bucky wasn’t expecting that at all. “Not really. Why?”

“Because everyone knows he and Mr Rogers are good friends, and since you hate Mr Rogers so much you might hate him too by default. I’ve never seen you interact.”

“I don’t hate Sam Wilson,” Bucky says. It’s the truth, really. He loves annoying the shit out of the guy, because it’s just so easy. But he loves him, too. He’s a good guy.

“That’s good. He’s funny. Seems to think he could kick your ass,” Jay grins. Bucky snorts.

“I may have one arm, but I’d still take him any day. I’d like to see his punk ass try.”

Jay lets out a sound of amusement, but then sits up straight, tension seeping back into her posture.

“I’m coming up, but you can just drop me here,” she tells him in a flat voice.

“What’s the point of that? I can take you right up to the door, I don’t mind.” Bucky offers.

“I know.” Jay says, voice quiet again. “But if my parents see me being dropped home they will think I was out with people older than me.”

“What if they saw it was just me?” Bucky suggests. Jay shakes her head.

“That would probably be worse. They’d think we’re screwing for my grades.”
Bucky winces, because that’s fucking harsh.

“Sorry-” Jay begins, but Bucky cuts her off.

“It’s not your fault. You do what you gotta do, okay? I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Jay gives him one last fleeting smile before disappearing into the cold. Bucky watches her until she turns the corner, edging his car closer so he can still see her. It isn’t until she enters a house down the next street that he drives away.

He tells Steve. Of course he does, Steve’s his husband, his best friend, he’d be able to tell Bucky’s worried without even looking at him.

“I’m worried about Jay Boskur.” Bucky says over dinner. Steve looks up at him but doesn’t say anything. “I dropped her home tonight, she was outside in the rain and I couldn’t just leave her. But then she wouldn’t let me turn onto her street in case her parents saw. She said they’d think we were screwing.”

“Jesus,” Steve mutters on an exhale. “And after that conversation in your class the other day…”

“Exactly. And she seemed so nervous to go home. From what I can tell, her parents aren't the best people to be around right now.”

“Jesus.” Steve repeats, dropping his head to his hands so he can run his fingers through his hair.

“It’s her birthday in three weeks. She’ll legally be an adult then. I hope it’s not bad enough for her to have to move out, but if it is, at least that option isn’t too far away. She won’t have to go through CPS and foster homes or any of that shit.”

“But she won’t have financial support or a roof over her head,” Steve points out. “That’s dangerous
enough for a kid without throwing in her sexual identity.”

Bucky falls quiet. Steve’s right, of course he’s right. Bucky hadn’t thought too much about that, he always had enough money growing up. Steve, on the other hand, didn’t. He spent so many dinners with the Barnes family so Sarah wouldn’t have to cook, stayed over so she could work the night shifts. Bucky’s always been aware of it, but it hasn’t stuck with him the way it’s stuck with Steve.

“Could she stay here?” Steve suggests cautiously. “Only if she was comfortable, of course. But just a roof over her head, at least while she finishes school.”

“Of course we’d offer, right?” Bucky asks. “Oh, God, the poor kid.” He doesn’t realise until Steve’s up and wrapping his arms around him, cradling Bucky’s head with his oversized hands.

“Hey, it’s okay, Buck. I got you,” he soothes. “I’m sure she’ll be okay, I doubt it will even come to that.”

Bucky nods, pulling Steve down to sit in his lap. “I know,” he sighs.

“But you still feel like shit about it?” Steve guesses, hooking his chin over Bucky’s shoulder.

“Yes. You know what would make me feel a bit better, though?” Bucky murmurs, tightening his grip on Steve.

“Mm, what’s that?” Steve hums.

“If you do the dishes.”

Bucky’s heading for the lifts, aiming to make it to class before all his students. He’s got a pile of textbooks awkwardly balanced on his arm and his hair’s blowing in his face when the bell rings.

“Hold the lift!” He calls, trying to hurry but not wanting to drop the books.
“Hold the lift,” Steve parrots back. Bucky looks up in horror to see his husband frantically push a button, resulting in the lift doors shutting in slow motion.

“Don’t you dare, you ableist piece of sh-” Bucky shouts, starting to jog only for his books to clatter to the ground.

“Wow, that was petty. You alright, Mr Barnes?” Someone to his left asks. Bucky fixes them with his Death Glare™ and refuses to feel guilty about it when he realises it’s just Sonya, one of his juniors.

“M’fine.” Bucky says, picking up his books. “Anyone ever tell you Rogers is an ass?”

“Sir, this is my second year in one of your classes. Of course I’ve heard he’s an ass.” Sonya snorts, handing Bucky one of his books.

“You’re a bright kid. Get to class.” He says, leaving her to call a lift back down.

“See you this afternoon.” She calls, disappearing down the hallway.

Bucky needs to get back at Steve for the elevator incident. If he were serious about it, he’d just make him sleep on the couch. But Bucky doesn’t really care, and none of the student body would find out if that’s all he did to retaliate. So it has to be something at school.

He spends the rest of the morning trying to think of something but nothing comes to mind. He’s tempted to set the fire alarm off in Steve’s room to get the sprinklers going, but that would disrupt the kids’ learning, and Bucky’s only an asshole to Steve.

The moment presents itself at interval when he passes Steve in the corridor. Steve doesn’t notice him at first, engrossed in tying his shoelace. He’s got a coffee resting on the windowsill next to him, branded with the logo from the cafe down the road. Without even hesitating, Bucky swipes
the coffee and takes a big sip, staring straight at Steve as he does so.

“What the hell?” Steve growls, standing back up when he realises what Bucky’s doing.

“It’s good, but not enough sugar,” Bucky shrugs. They both know Bucky doesn’t even like sugar in coffee, but the kids don’t, and that’s what counts. Without another word Bucky turns away from Steve and continues down the hallway.

“Savage,” someone whispers. (Bucky counts it as a win.)

Their alarm goes off at 6am on Monday and Bucky really doesn’t want to get up. He’s warm and soft and it’s one of those rare mornings where he wakes up in the same position he fell asleep in: the back of his head tucked under Steve’s chin, his husband’s arms holding him close. (More often than not he’s half off the bed, or the dog’s in his face, or Steve’s inadvertently got his foot shoved into Bucky’s stomach.)

Unfortunately, Steve has no problem getting up.

“Morning, Buck,” he yawns. Bucky can feel him sitting up behind him for a moment, and the bounce in the mattress as he gets out of bed.

“I don’t wanna geddup,” Bucky groans into his pillow. He can hear Steve laughing and the heavy sound of his footsteps before a hand drops to his hair, gently moving his face out of the pillow. Bucky blinks his eyes open to see Steve, right there. He smiles at Bucky softly before giving him a kiss and pulling away.

“Too bad. Have a shower, you stink.”

“Your face stinks,” Bucky mutters as he sits up. Steve raises an eyebrow at him, because unlike Bucky he actually looks and smells good when he wakes up. And he damn well knows it.

“If you don’t get up now,” Steve says as he opens up their bedroom door to let Spud in, “you’ll be late. And you can’t actually be late today, because we’ve got the trip. You washing your hair?”
“I’m up, I’m up.” Bucky insists, dropping a kiss to Spud’s fur as she clambers onto their bed. “Yes, I’m washing my hair. It’s so gross you could probably make a Big Mac out of it.”

“Remind me to never touch you again. Or at least until you’ve washed it.” Steve laughs. He’s already dressed in his running gear and Bucky sort of hates him for being a morning person.

“You running in today?”

“Yep. You take ages when you wash your hair, so I doubt I’ll see you before I leave. I’ll put my bag in the car and feed Spud. Get in the damn shower.” Steve says, kissing Bucky once more before leaving him alone in their room.

“You just touched me!” Bucky calls after him.

Bucky arrives at the school just before 7am and manages to make it to the staff showers without being seen. It wouldn’t really matter, except he’s got Steve’s bag and that might raise a few eyebrows because Mr Barnes hates Mr Rogers.

The bathroom (is it a bathroom when there’s no bath?) is filled with steam when Bucky pushes the door open and he can hear a shower running. Steve’s clothes are scrunched in a messy pile on a bench and he’s humming off-key, loud enough for the sound to carry over the spray of the water.

“Got your stuff, Stevie.” Bucky calls, folding Steve’s clothes in a neat pile and putting them in a bag.

“Come join me,” Steve offers, his head poking out of the stall he’s in.

“Ew, no. We are not having shower sex at school, Steve!” Bucky exclaims, head snapping up from the clothes he was focussed on.

“We can shower together without sex, Buck,” Steve scoffs. “You’re an animal.”
“Oh, don’t even pretend that’s what you meant. I’m going now, see you on the bus.” Bucky laughs, turning to head out the door.

“Buck! Wait,” Steve calls. Bucky turns around to see him leaning out of the stall again. “We’re going to be surrounded by our students for the next three days. One last kiss?”

“Talk about high maintenance.” Bucky sighs, but he crosses the room to kiss Steve.

“Three days of arguments and pranks,” he whispers against Steve’s lips. “You ready?”

“Bring it on.”

They manage to get the bus loaded and on the road by 9am, with Bucky at the back and Steve at the front (he’ll get motion sickness in the back, always has since he was a kid).

It’s pretty quiet on the bus, kids just chatting amongst themselves, so Bucky decides to put in his headphones. Unfortunately for him, his iPod’s drained of battery so he just sits there with silent buds in his ears. He’s about to take them out again, or maybe connect them to his phone when he hears the kids behind him.

“Hey, Mr Barnes,” a kid- Jake- giggles from behind Bucky. This is Bucky’s first year with him but he’s heard from Steve the guy can be a little shit. So, since he’s giggling, Bucky decides to give it a minute.

“Dude, he can’t hear you. He’s got his headphones in,” one of Steve’s kids says. Bucky thinks it might be Nathan but he doesn’t look to see. “What are you asking him?”

“I just wanted to see if he could hear us,” Jake says, voice dropping to a whisper. “As cool as he is, I don’t want him hearing everything we say.”

“Cool?” Nathan hisses. “He’s not cool, he’s terrifying. When he looks at me I just want to apologise and run away. Mr Rogers is the cool one.”
“You’ve never had Mr Barnes. He’s a good teacher, even if he is terrifying.” Jake insists. Bucky’s a bit blown by his loyalty, they’ve never talked about anything other than schoolwork.

“You had Mr Rogers for two years but after a couple of months with Mr Barnes you’ve switched sides?” Nathan asks incredulously. “Traitor.”

“It’s not about sides, dumbass. They’re both idiots when it comes to their ongoing fights. I’m just saying that when you get past the Stone-Cold Terror thing Mr Barnes has going on he’s not too bad.”

“Holy shit. You have a crush on him.” Nathan laughs.

“No! What the hell, man. He’s like, a hundred! And scary!” Jake splutters. Bucky has to bite the inside of his cheek to stop himself from laughing.

“First of all, he’s probably, like, thirty-something. Second of all, you like scary guys. Guess that’s why you like him more than Rogers, huh? Is Mr Rogers too pure for you, all that blond-hair-blue-eyes thing he’s got going on?” Nathan teases, and Bucky’s starting to love this kid.

“Mr Rogers is cool too, he can be scary. You should’ve seen him go off at Mr Rumlow for dress-coding Pip. That was brutal, I thought he was gonna explode.”

“Ooh, I heard about that.”

“Yeah, and did you know he’s been arrested? I don’t know what for but I’m willing to bet he killed a serial killer or something.” Jake continues. It’s true that Steve’s been arrested- they both have, back in the nineties at protests. But they weren’t serious enough to stop them enlisting, and Bucky’s almost forgotten it had even happened.

“You’d think someone so righteous wouldn’t pick on an amputee. What’s up with that?” Nathan asks.

“Mr Barnes probably started it. I bet it was over some stupid misunderstanding and they’re both assholes and won’t back down,” Jakes says with a theatrical sigh. Nathan laughs.
“Do you think he comes home to his wife and complains about *That Idiot Barnes*?”

“I don’t think he’s actually married.” Jake confesses. “He never mentions his wife, no one’s ever heard of her and he doesn’t have any pictures. And whenever someone asks him about her he blushes and changes the subject. There’s something fishy going on there.”

“My God, you actually have conspiracy theories on Mr Rogers. This is ridiculous, Jake.” Nathan groans.

“They’re not conspiracy theories! They’re just normal theories. Thoughts. Ideas. You know…” Jake mumbles. They fall silent for a minute and Bucky loses himself in watching the scenery change as they drive.

“What do you think his rank was in the army?” Jake asks after a minute.

“No idea. Bet you got a million theories, right?” Nathan sighs. Bucky’s not sure, because he doesn’t really know the kid and he can’t even see him, but he thinks Nathan sounds amused.

“I literally have no idea. Do you think he outranked Mr Barnes?”

“How do you even know they both served? Mr Barnes could totally have lost his arm in a car crash or something.”

“Come on, man. Just because you’re ace doesn’t mean you haven’t noticed their tight shirts. You can see the tags through them easily. Mr Rogers’ ones are more easy to see, but Mr Barnes definitely has something,” Jake says with a smile in his voice.

“Trust you to notice every detail of their chests. What happened to Mr Barnes being an old man, huh?” Nathan goads.

“I’m pretty sure he’s gay, too.” Jake continues, ignoring Nathan’s latest comment. “He had this coffee mug the other day, that rainbow one that says *Nobody Knows I’m Gay*. Best day of my life.”
“Dude! Just because he’s gay doesn’t mean you’ve got a shot! He’s your teacher!” Nathan hisses, voice dropping right down. There’s enough chatter in the bus for Bucky to have to strain to hear, but he still catches it.

“Nate! Not like that! I just mean, you know. It’s nice to know other people are gay. There’s something comforting about it. Oh my God, I can crush on him without wanting to have a chance. He’s an adult, I don’t want him to be interested in me. That is so wrong. Ugh.”

“So you do have a crush on him!” Nathan exclaims. It’s still quiet, though. Bucky’s pretty sure he’s the only one outside of the conversation who heard.

“It’s not a crush. I just- he’s really hot,” Jake replies in a small voice.

“You are such a mess,” Nathan laughs fondly. Bucky goes back to staring out the window, letting them chat away in private.

The bus pulls up outside the Liberty Bell just after 11am and Nathan and Jake shoot out of their seats to get off the bus.

“Boys! Slow down,” Steve says, standing at the door of the bus.

“We’re on a trip, Rogers. Let them have some fun.” Bucky groans, grabbing his coat from the vacant seat next to him and standing up. “Not everything has to be about rules and responsibility.”

“Don’t worry,” Steve sneers. “I wouldn’t expect you to know anything about responsibility.”

“Wow, who shoved that stick up your ass?” Bucky laughs. Dennis- the bus driver- watches on with a panicked expression. Bucky doesn’t dare move, knowing he’s a second away from melting into laughter, especially with Steve’s face like that.

“Don’t worry,” Jay assures Dennis. “They’re always like this. It’s fine.”
Dennis nods mutely and opens the bus door.

“The bus is leaving in fifteen minutes,” Steve shouts after the students. “Look at the bell then get back in. We’re having lunch in less than an hour.”

Dennis leaves the bus too, heading for the toilets, and suddenly Steve and Bucky are alone again.

“Having fun?” Steve asks, glancing out the window to make sure no one’s watching them.

“So much,” Bucky laughs. “Jake and Nathan spent the first hour talking about us and how hot we are.”

“Trust Jake to start that conversation,” Steve snorts.

“I want to kiss you,” Bucky blurts. It just slipped out and he finds himself blushing like a thirteen year old with a crush on his best friend again, instead of a grown man with his damn husband.

“I know,” Steve says softly. “Me too. But it’s not worth the risk.”

“Yeah. Yeah, I know,” Bucky nods. He’d rather keep this up than kiss Steve right now. They’re sharing a room tonight, they can make up for it then.


And then he’s off the bus before Bucky can reply.

“You’re all big kids,” Bucky says when they’re all gathered around the visitor centre of Valley Forge National Park. “Mr Rogers and I think you can manage yourselves. Go in groups of twos or threes, complete the quiz, take some photos, be back here by 2:30. Stick to the main paths, do not go far, and stay with your group. Any questions?”
“When’s lunch?” A kid calls out from the crowd. Bucky laughs.

“Lunch is whenever you like. Take your backpacks, find somewhere to eat, and tidy up after yourselves. Does everyone have either my number or Mr Rogers’ number?” Bucky asks.

“Yes,” they chorus in bored tones.

“See you at 2:30!” Bucky dismisses, watching the students mill out the door to explore the park. They all collect their sheets from Steve and disappear. Bucky’s willing to bet at least half have gone to have their lunch straight away. Usually he’d want to keep a closer eye on them all but part of this trip is about self-management, and so he leaves them to it.

Bucky’s at the National Memorial Arch with about a third of the kids at 1:30 just chatting away. There’s a group of girls scribbling down their answers in rapid-fire over by the sign post and Bucky wanders over to see what they’re up to.

“You girls have any questions?” He asks.

“No thanks,” one of them says. “We’ve got this.”

“Okay,” Bucky smiles. “But if I read that and it’s all Hamilton quotes, you won’t pass. Plagiarism is a thing, you know.”

“Sir,” she gasps dramatically, “I would never!”

“Instead of Hamilton, he promotes Charles Lee, makes him second in command-” one of her friend reads out with a satisfied smirk.

“I’m a general, wee.” Bucky says in absolute deadpan before walking away and leaving them to their quiz.

“Goddamn.” The first girl mutters, just loud enough for Bucky to hear.
Steve does one last round at 2pm to make sure everyone’s making their way back to the bus.

“If you two hate each other so much why are you on the trip together?” Dennis asks when it’s just the two of them. There are a couple of kids around, but they’re mainly talking amongst themselves or already in the bus.

“We’re the only two history teachers with senior classes,” Bucky explains with a shrug. “Plus, it’s not that serious. It doesn’t affect our teaching.”

“Whatever you say, Boss,” Dennis sighs with a pat to Bucky’s right shoulder.

“I’m right. Fight me on it.” Bucky mutters after him, too quiet to be overheard.

“Wow, someone’s argumental.” Jay laughs, and okay, maybe he was only quiet enough for Dennis not to overhear.

“It's argumentative,” Bucky corrects absently. “And that can be blamed on my-” He hesitates, not wanting to tell her he has a husband, but not wanting to undermine his relationship with Steve—“Partner.”

“Don’t worry, Mr B,” Jay grins with a wink. “It’s just me, you can say boyfriend.”

“I regret telling you anything,” Bucky groans as he heads onto the bus. Jay laughs as she follows him.

“Don't worry, Mr B. Your secret is safe with me,” she says from somewhere behind him. Bucky scoffs.

“It’s hardly a secret, buddy. Even Rogers knows.”
“Is that- that's not why he hates you, right?” Jay asks, going from joking to serious in two seconds flat. Bucky turns around and puts his hand on her shoulder.

“Rogers doesn't hate my sexuality. As much as it pains me to say, he's not that bad a person. But don't tell anyone I said that, okay?” Bucky says, meeting her eyes.

“Too late! You're on a crowded bus!” Someone calls out and Bucky's head snaps round. He can't tell who said it but everyone's grinning.

“Motherfucking piece of goddamn shit.” Bucky snarls. The kids just laugh harder.

Everyone's accounted for by 2:40 and the bus is back on the road. It's disconcertingly quiet for a bus of 50 kids so Bucky doesn't put his headphones in and opts to stay alert. They've been driving for barely five minutes when Jake speaks up.

(Of course it's Jake.)

“Hey, Mr Rogers!” He calls down the bus. He has to speak up because he's right at the back behind Bucky and Steve's right up the front, but Steve hears him.

“You alright, Jake?” Steve calls back, getting out of his seat to look down the aisle.

“Mr Barnes said something nice about you when you were outside.”

Steve's attention immediately snaps to Bucky, eyes wide and face clearly reading ‘Betrayal’.

“What?” Steve asks in a tone most people would use when they found out someone was talking shit behind their back, not defending them.

“He was being really nice-”
“Can it, Jake.” Bucky snaps. “I only said you don't hate me for being gay.”

“Of course I don't.” Steve says, standing up straight and addressing the whole bus. “It's Barnes I have an issue with, not his sexuality. Any questions?”

A dozen hands shoot up but both Steve and Bucky ignore them.

“Good talk,” Steve concludes before sitting back down.

“Told you he's gay,” Jake whispers from behind Bucky.

They arrive at the EOC Camp just after 5pm and unload the bus straight away so Dennis can shack up wherever he's staying.

“You can choose your cabins, four to a room, one group of three. No sex or you will be sent home, don't test us. We're having pizza for dinner, any allergies and dietary requirements have been taken into consideration. Mr Barnes and I are at the end of the hallway so as long as you don't choose that room you're good.” Steve says, sounding like a news reporter.

“Why are you and Mr Barnes sharing a room?” Someone calls out.

“There aren't enough rooms for us to have one each. Any relevant questions?”

Everyone's quiet, sitting on their packs and just wanting to go inside.

“One more thing,” Bucky adds. “Stay on the property. If you wander and get lost it's your own damn fault.”

“Language,” Steve scowls, as if he doesn't have the mouth of a sailor himself. Bucky rolls his eyes.
It happens when Steve’s out with a couple of the kids getting the pizzas. Almost everyone else is in the hall- the odd exception of tired kids just hanging out in their rooms.

So yeah, there’s Bucky with just over 40 kids and their music.

He ignores it for the most part, opting to sit in the corner and read his book. He’s keeping a vague eye on them but they’re all 17 and 18, they don’t need him babying them.

Then someone puts on that stupid Lady Gaga song- Bad Romance-, and honestly, how can he not?

Some of his students are up there already, doing that creepy dance the white things do. Joining in is obviously the only logical thing to do.

They slow down when he makes his way across the room, as if they think he’s going to turn the music off. Fair enough, he guesses. Natasha’s murder strut, and all that.

Instead, Bucky makes his way to the front centre and joins in. There’s a hesitation within the crowd, Lady Gaga keeping the room from falling into a silence. It doesn’t last long, though. Someone starts clapping, and before he knows it everyone’s watching him and cheering him along.

It’s a lot harder to do with one hand, doesn’t quite have the same effect, but no one seems to care. He carries out the dance, laughing with his students and he gets on the floor and moves his legs around. If he put more thought into it he might realise it isn’t really the sort of dance a grown man should be doing in front of minors, but he hasn’t put any thought into it and he’s having fun. He’s happy.

Bucky finds himself wanting more when the song fades off into another one- one he doesn’t have a dance for. The kid with the iPod- Nathan, Bucky realises- scrambles to his feet and grabs the device from where it’s plugged into the speakers.

“I’ve got another one for you, Mr Barnes!” He calls, clicking something.

“Will I know it?” Bucky asks, stretching his legs out to either side.
“You’d better.” Nathan laughs, finally clicking play and coming to Bucky’s left.

Of course it is.

Bucky laughs.

“All the single ladies!” Beyonce calls out, the room erupting into cheers and claps. Jay jumps up to flank Bucky on the right.

They make it through the song flawlessly, despite Bucky having to point at the empty space where his left hand should be throughout the song. He doesn’t let it bring him down.

“That was fantastic,” Jay gasps. She grins at Bucky, running a hand through her thick black hair. “What next?”

Her question is met with two things: The main door opening, Steve and his crew arriving with pizza, and the opening bars to Candy Man.

Bucky ignores Steve and starts clicking his fingers and and swaying his hips to the music. Steve knows this one, knows how to do it with Bucky and his missing arm.

None of the kids know that, not yet.

Steve barely has to think before his pizzas are left on a table to the side and he shimmies up to Bucky, dropping to one knee and holding his hand out.

They used to do this together in the army. Back at the bases with nothing to do between missions, dancing was Bucky’s favourite pastime. And with Steve being absolutely useless, it was Bucky’s job to make sure his guy could do something right.

The Lindy Hop was not an easy one for Steve, but it’s the one he enjoyed the most so they stuck with it. Any song they could fit it to, they would. It started out slow and frustratingly repetitive as Steve stepped on Bucky’s toes and mistimed his pacing, but eventually he got the hang of it. Now he even leads, swinging Bucky over his back and dipping him.
Bucky accepts Steve’s hand, letting his husband swing him back and forth, their legs kicking out in time to the music. It’s glorious, Steve whipping Bucky back and forth and flipping him over his back. Bucky’s footwork is miles better than Steve’s, but Steve still ain’t half bad. He manages the song without tripping over, a massive improvement from their teenage years, and even their army years.

The kids are clapping and cheering and laughing but Bucky tunes them out, focusing on the way his body moves seamlessly with Steve’s, the grip of his fingers holding onto Steve’s as he’s twirled around, the warmth of Steve’s breath on his face in brief passing. It’s magic and Bucky can’t get enough.

Unfortunately, the song ends and something Bucky doesn’t recognise replaces it. He pulls away from Steve, rapidly gaining awareness of their audience.

“This doesn’t change anything,” Bucky pants. He avoids Steve’s eyes and pretends that was only for him to hear, not the entire student body. He knows they heard. Or at least some did, and one thing Bucky knows about teenagers is that they’re fantastic at spreading gossip.

“Oh, course not,” Steve snaps. He reels away from Bucky to share out the pizzas.

“I’ll get the kids from their rooms,” Bucky says to nobody in particular. He needn’t have bothered though. The rooms are all empty, they must have all heard the laughing and joined to watch the dancing. Bucky takes the time to grab a sweater from his bag. It’s big and blue and baggy, and originally Steve’s, which is probably why he loves it so much. He effortlessly ties the left sleeve in knot and leaves their room to head back to the hall.

“Mr Barnes?”

Bucky’s head snaps up and he finds himself looking at Jay.

“Hey, you good?” He asks. She nods and walks with him.

“Yeah. Do you mind if I ask you something?”
“I might not answer, but you can ask away,” Bucky shrugs. Jay nods again.

“Why do you hate Mr Rogers so much?” Bucky doesn’t look at her, just keeps walking at her side. He shrugs again.

“I don’t know. We started out fine, just mocking each other, but it sort of escalated. And now we’re both too stubborn to back down, I guess,” Bucky tells her. It’s not really a lie, that is kinda how they got to where they are. But it’s obviously not the full truth either. None of this is about hate, not in the slightest.

“Do you regret that it got this far?” Jay asks, her voice lowering as they get closer to the hall. Bucky looks her in the eye and smiles.

“Nah. I can’t imagine it being any different, and I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

Lights Out is at 10pm because they have a lot planned for the next day. Bucky's counting down the seconds, desperately wanting to go to bed to Steve but knowing he doesn't have an excuse until bed time is mandatory and all the kids are gone.

Most of them are in their rooms anyway, just a handful choosing to stay out in the hall chatting away and playing games. Steve's gone to bed in a “rage”, claiming to need some space from Bucky. It's funny, and Bucky really does like it, but it's just the first day of this trip and he's ready to go back to bed where he knows Steve's waiting for him.

It's good, it's easy, they've always been the type of couple to bicker relentlessly in company. But they don't often spend so many consecutive hours with company and Bucky is more than ready for some alone time with his husband.

As if reading his mind, the clock strikes ten.

“Alright, guys. Bed time,” Bucky says. A couple kids groan but they all head off without an issue. He follows them down the hall, popping his head into each room to make sure everyone's in bed until he reaches his and Steve's room.
“Took you long enough,” Steve mumbles sleepily. He's in his sleeping bag, pushed right up against the wall.

“I was being an adult,” Bucky yawns. “One of us had to.”

There isn’t much room on the mattress but Bucky’ll be damned if he’s spending the night on the other side of the room after a long day of arguing with Steve.

“Have you set an alarm?” Bucky asks as he climbs into his sleeping bag. It’s super warm and he pulls it up over his shoulders.

“Yep,” Steve says as he wraps his arms around Bucky and pulls him closer. There isn’t enough room on the mattress to sleep without touching, but that’s really not something Bucky’s complaining about.

“Cool, thanks,” Bucky hums. His eyes are closed and he can already feel himself drift off, despite the early hour. “G’night, Stevie.”


Bucky wakes up to the offensively loud blare of Steve’s alarm.

“Turn it off,” he grumbles. He’s squished up against Steve, tucked into his sleeping bag. Steve’s arms are around him and Bucky never wants to move again. Maybe they should sleep in sleeping bags every night, he’s so comfortable and warm.

“You’re closer to it,” Steve groans, pulling Bucky impossibly tighter in his arms.

“And my only arm is under me. You turn it off,” Bucky retorts. It’s getting annoying and he really
doesn’t want to open his eyes.

“I hate you,” Steve mutters, but he leans over and shuts it off anyway.

“What time is it?” Bucky asks, still not opening his eyes.

“6,” Steve says into Bucky’s hair.

“What the fuck, Stevie. We don’t have to wake the kids up til after 7,” Bucky whines. He could be asleep.

“I was planing on going for a run,” Steve tells him without making a single effort to go for a run.

“But,” Bucky prompts when it’s clear Steve’s not getting up.

“But I’d rather just lie here with you.”

“You’re such a sap,” Bucky says fondly, turning to face Steve.

“Joke’s on you, you’re stuck with me for life,” Steve grins, kissing Bucky gently. “Ugh, how do I always forget you have the worst morning breath?”

“Because you’re such a sap,” Bucky repeats as he pulls Steve in for another kiss.

Steve heads for the showers at quarter-to-seven but Bucky stays in bed, soaking up the warmth Steve left behind. He must fall back to sleep because before he knows it, Steve’s back in the room getting dressed with dripping hair.

“You should get up soon, Buck. The bus arrives in just over an hour. I’m going to set up the breakfast.” Steve says, pulling a jersey over his head. Bucky watches him through sleepy eyes.

“How about you do anyway?” Steve laughs softly, crossing the small room to kiss Bucky on the forehead. “C’mon. If you get up now I’ll plait your hair.”

Ever since Bucky saw Jay tie up her hair the other week Steve’s been trying out different hairstyles on him. He’s kinda rubbish at it but Bucky loves it all the same.

“You can’t do that. I only have one hand so they’d know it wasn’t me who did it. Gotta be subtle, baby.” Bucky mumbles, face still half smooshed in the pillow.

“Good point. But you still gotta get up.” Steve says, running his hand through Bucky’s hair to get rid of the knots and tangles. As if that has ever helped Bucky wake up.

Steve seems to remember this after a minute and pulls his hand from Bucky’s hair. Bucky lets out a small whine but Steve just laughs softly and leaves him alone in the room.

“Asshole.” Bucky grumbles, even though there’s no one to hear him.

Bucky actually can get up on time. He’s not completely useless. He just prefers staying in bed.

But he’s got to sort out 50 teenagers, so he decides not to lay around for too much longer after Steve leaves, and heads to the showers before all the kids get up to use them. He’s just drying off when he hears Steve knock on the doors down the hallway, rousing everyone from their sleep. Bucky’s not jealous of that job in the slightest.

By the time Bucky joins Steve in the kitchen, about half the kids are up and eating toast or cereal, inhaling enough coffee to put Bucky to shame.

“Did’ya sleep well?” Bucky asks the students as he passes them on his way to the coffee pots down the end.
“Like a baby,” one of them replies.

“You ever had a baby? They do not sleep well, let me tell you.” Bucky mutters, pouring milk into his mug before downing the thing in one go.

“Do you have a baby?” The kid asks, voice full of surprise.

“Nope. And don’t plan on it either.” Bucky tells them, pouring himself another cup of coffee. Steve frowns at him, fitting him with his *I’m Disappointed* look.

“What about you, Mr Rogers?”

“No. And I’m perfectly happy without being a dad.” Steve says, snatching the coffee pots off Bucky. Bucky growls, but makes no move to stop him.

“I bet you’d be such a great dad,” someone else sighs. “What does your wife think?”

“We’ve talked about this topic enough to both be sure we’re happy without kids.” Steve says reluctantly. “And it’s none of your business, really.”

“Aw, come on, Rogers,” Bucky teases. “We all want to hear about you and your beautiful Mrs Rogers.”

“Mrs Rogers?” Steve repeats with a wicked grin and a gleam in his eye. Bucky’s face drops when he realises what he’s said. “My *Mrs Rogers* is such a sweetheart, Barnes. She’s the prettiest dame in all the world and I love my dearest *Mrs Rogers* so goshdarn much.”

“What the fuck is going on?” Jake asks in a way too loud voice and messy bed hair. Nathan trails after him with a matching expression of confusion.

“Language,” Steve says, moving away from Bucky again. As soon as his back’s turned, Bucky breaks into a grin.
“Your boy Rogers over here,” he says, jerking his chin in Steve’s direction, “was just telling us about the love of his life.”

“Your boy Rogers,” Jake whispers to Nathan.

“You and your love, you have it good?” Bucky asks Steve with a leer. Steve spins around and grins at Bucky.

“We have the life I knew we would. My word is good,” he sings, a tad off-key but beautiful all the same. “Hey there Delilah, I’ve got so much left to say—”

“Oh! It’s what you do to me! Oh, it’s what you do to me,” Bucky cuts in with his decent singing voice. The kids start tapping on the tables and singing along.

“Oh, it’s what you do to me, oh, it’s what you do to me.”

“A thousand miles seems pretty far, but they’ve got plane and trains and and cars. I’d walk to you if I had no other way. Our friends would all make fun of us and we’ll just laugh along because we know that none of them have felt this way. Delilah, I can promise you that I can’t remember the rest of the words,” Steve trails off, just him left singing. Everyone’s laughing and cheering and Bucky looks around their little audience.

“I can’t believe you know that much of that song,” Nathan laughs. “It’s such a bad song.”

“Who would’ve guessed, huh?” Jay adds. “Mr Barnes and Mr Rogers bonding over music.”

“We’re not bonding,” Bucky and Steve snap at the same time. Jay just raises an eyebrow at them, looking too much like Natasha for Bucky’s liking.

“The bus is leaving here in forty-five minutes. If you’re not on it you’re left behind and in a lot of trouble. Use the buddy-system if you have to, I don’t care, just be on that bus.” Bucky snaps, snatching Steve’s honey toast off his plate as he passes him, stalking off to their room.
If Steve put honey on it chances are he meant for Bucky to take it, anyway. Steve hates honey.

Everyone makes it onto the bus on time and Bucky resumes his previous seat at the back of the bus. He doesn’t bother with his headphones, not today. They’re not driving for long enough, and even though he borrowed Steve’s charger last night he can’t be bothered with music at the moment anyway.

“Hey, Mr Barnes?” Jake asks, leaning over the back of the seat next to Bucky. Bucky looks at him but doesn’t say anything.

“Have you met Mr Rogers’s… wife?” The way he says “wife” is suspicious, except Bucky remembers his theory that Steve isn’t married and he decides to play along.

“No. Why would I?” He says, tilting his head slightly.

“True, true. Has he met your partner?” Jake tries, clearly getting at something here.

“Yes. They’re acquainted. Where’s this going?” Bucky asks, narrowing his eyes.

“Don’t you think-”

“Jake, stop it. No one cares about your weird-ass theories.” Nathan groans from his seat, throwing his arm across his face.

“Shut up, Nate.” Jake hisses, grinning as he nudges his friend. “Mr Barnes, is Mr Rogers really married? Or is it a hoax?”

Despite telling himself he wouldn’t laugh, Bucky can’t help the sound that escapes him. “This is the best thing I have ever heard,” he says as he pretends to wipe a tear from his eye. “Stay golden.”

Bucky turns back to the window, ignoring Jake as he slumps back in his seat.
“Stay golden?” He mutters to Nathan. “What on earth is _that_ supposed to mean?”

“It means I was right.” Nathan sighs.

The best part about this trip, Bucky decides, is the tour guides. They’re met with a librarian when they step off the bus outside the Library of Congress just before 9.

“Good morning!” She greets, unnecessarily enthusiastic for such an early hour. Bucky squints through the sunlight, only pretending to listen. He’s been here a few times before, he’s not too fussed about the tour.

Instead Bucky lets his mind wander, thinking about sorting the dinner out for the kids. They get to wander around tonight, so long as they’re back before it gets dark. They get ten dollars each for dinner and have to manage themselves. Bucky’s pretty sure Steve got the cash out already but he’ll have to check in with that later.

He thinks of Spud and Nat, missing his dog even though he knows she’s in good hands. She loves Lucky, too. She’s probably having the time of her life with Nat and Clint. Bucky smiles to himself, thinking of the two dogs curled up in Lucky’s bed.

“Mr B.” Jay whispers, nudging Bucky’s side and pulling him out of his drifting thoughts.

“Shh, listen,” Bucky hushes. Jay rolls her eyes at him.

“You can’t expect me to listen to her if you can’t pay attention either,” Jay laughs under her breath.

“We’re on the Jefferson Guided Tour and I can’t get these stupid Hamilton songs out of my head,” Bucky whispers in her ear. Jay snorts a laugh and covers it with a cough. Steve shoots them a _look_.

“We have to behave ourselves here. Technically school groups have to have one adult to eight
students, but Principle Fury pulled some strings and managed to convince the staff to give us a tour with one adult to 25 kids. Mainly because half of you are 18, but still. At least pretend to focus.” Bucky tells her, nudging her to face the front again.

Once he’s satisfied Jay’s paying enough attention, Bucky goes back to thinking about his dog.

“I can’t believe you!” Steve growls as soon as they’re outside. “You acted like a child in there, constantly zoning out and fidgeting!”

“It’s not my fault the tour was so boring!” Bucky protests, shouldering past Steve and jogging down the steps.

“Nick Fury worked hard to make sure we could get that tour, and you completely embarrassed the whole school in there. I hope you’re ashamed of yourself.”

“Nick Fury can kiss my ass,” Bucky scoffs. Steve’s just going overboard now, and while it’s hilarious, the kids might pick up on it if he doesn’t tone it down.

“James!” Steve gasps, grabbing Bucky’s arm to stop him from running away.

“Steven!” Bucky hisses, twisting his arm out of Steve’s grip. “Let go of me!”

Steve immediately drops Bucky’s arm, but still follows him.

“We are not finished here, Barnes.” He warns, jabbing a finger in Bucky’s direction.

“I wouldn’t dream of it,” Bucky spits back.

“We’re having a snack over on the grass. Follow Mr Barnes. At 11:30 we will walk over to the Smithsonian for the next part of our day.” Steve calls out to the students. No one says anything and Bucky leads them over to the grass.
“You enjoying this trip, Mr B?” Jay asks, sitting next to Bucky in the shade and pulling out an apple from her bag.

“Despite some people,” Bucky glares at Steve, “I am. But I am looking forward to going home tomorrow. How about you?”

“Yeah, it’s fun. I always like trips. Do you miss your boyfriend?”

Bucky’s eyes are still fixed on Steve, across the lawn laughing with Jake and Nathan and a bunch of other kids.

“Yeah,” he sighs. “And our dog.”

Jay’s face lights up at that. “What kind of dog do you have?” She asks around a mouthful of apple.

“She’s a Staffy Cross, total sweetheart,” Bucky tells her with a small smile. Jay looks like she’s about to say something but a girl Bucky’s ashamed to admit he’s never met flops down in her lap dramatically.

“Hey, Mr Barnes,” the girl asks. “Do you have a favourite student?”

“Of course not.” Bucky says with a frown. It’s a total lie, but she doesn’t need to know. “That’d be like you having a favourite teacher.”

“We all have favourite teachers,” Jay laughs.

“Hell yeah. Mr Wilson all the way.” Jay’s friend grins, holding her hand up for Jay to high-five. Jay ignores it, opting to plait braids into her hair instead.

“Sam’s a chump,” Bucky laughs, picking a handful of daisies for Jay to feed through the plaits. “He thinks he’s so clever.”
“He’s funny!” The girl protests, grabbing Jay’s abandoned apple and taking a bite.

“At least it’s not Rumlow,” Bucky says. “That guy’s a jackass.”

“And a damn racist. He told me I’d have to go home if I didn’t sort out my hair. Said it’s distracting to the class. He wanted me to cut it off.”

“You’re Pip?” Bucky asks, and now that he’s got a name to go with her face he thinks he does know who she is. Pip nods, jostling her hair from Jay’s hands.

“Fuck, I’m sick of him. I’m going to file a complaint when we get back.” Bucky mutters under his breath. He’s always been a dick to Bucky for being gay, and Bucky knows he’d spout shit at Steve if he knew he was bi, too. Plus he sends girls out to “cover up” almost daily. Hearing about this, though? That’s the last straw. This asshole shouldn’t be allowed to work with kids if he’s this intent on damaging their learning.

“Mr Rogers hates him too,” Jay offers, twisting a flower through Pip’s curls.

“Y’know? I agree with Rogers on this one.”

“Oh shit.” Jay and Pip say in unison.

“He’s not gonna get away with this.” Bucky promises. “He should’ve been fired long ago.”

“I see how he’s your favourite, Jayjay.” Pip grins, reaching up to cup Jay’s face. Jay blushes and Bucky looks away with a smile. Kids.

It’s a half-hour walk from the Library of Congress to the National Museum of American History but fortunately it’s a nice enough day and the kids all behave. Bucky’s distinctly aware of Jay and Pip holding hands behind him as he leads the way and he doesn’t even bother trying to hide his smile. He’s happy for her, for them both.
“Independence Avenue. What a righteous name,” Jay laughs as they make their way down the boulevard.

“It was originally called South B Street,” Bucky tells them, looking over his shoulder as he walks. “It was renamed Constitution Avenue in 1931 when it was widened, and then again in 1934 to Independence Avenue.”

“Why Independence?” Pip asks with a slight frown.

“Why not?” Bucky counters. “There was talk of naming it Washington Avenue, but that was shut down. Probably a good thing, too. Everything here is named after him.”

“Well, yeah, he was the first president.” Jay points out.

“Yeah yeah, whatever.”

The girls laugh.

“Mr Rogers is handing out a list of questions for you to find answers for. Like before, complete them in groups or pairs, stick together, and try not to get lost. Mr Rogers and I will be floating from group to group. You can call us or text us if you need to, or report to the front desk and call us out on the speakers. If you do that as a joke, though, you will be in deep sh-”

“Trouble.” Steve butts in, flitting between the students with his questionnaires.

“Have fun,” Bucky continues, ignoring Steve’s interruption. “And be back here by 4. That’s four hours at this museum. There’s a lot to do here, don’t complain about being bored. There are cafes if you get hungry, plus you all have lunches. Don’t eat them inside, it’s a nice day and you can take breaks to have lunch out here. The staff know we’re visiting so don’t be afraid to ask for help. And yes, there’s free wifi.”
There’s a cheer from the students and Bucky waits for them to quieten down before dismissing them.

“We should take a week off work, come stay down here and visit all the museums and monuments.” Steve says once all the kids have disappeared inside.

“That is such a nerdy idea.” Bucky laughs, leaning into Steve slightly.

“Admit it, you’d love to.” Steve grins, lacing their fingers and bring Bucky’s hand to his lips to press a kiss to the back of it.

“I can’t think of anything better,” Bucky says. He can’t even make it sound sarcastic, he really would love to do that with Steve.

“Let’s do it, next holidays.” Steve beams, dropping Bucky’s hand and climbing the steps.

“You’re such a dork,” Bucky groans, but he’s grinning. “I love you so much, Stevie.”

“Shit, Buck, that’s so gay!”

“You can’t call me gay! You’re the one who kissed me first!” Bucky protests, following Steve up the steps.

“Yes I can. You proposed, that’s gayer.” Steve argues.

“Yeah, and I regret it more and more with each passing day,” Bucky mutters.

“Anyway,” Steve insists. “You are gay, I’m only bi.”

“Only bi? What the hell does that mean?”
Steve just shrugs.

The Smithsonian is so much fun. Way better than the damn Library, that’s for sure.

“One day I’m going to live in a museum.” Bucky tells the kids in his group. It’s Jay, Pip, Nathan, and Jake, and Bucky’s having the time of his life. (Not that he’s letting them know.) (They totally know.)

“But if you’re in the museum every day, won’t that take away the magic?” Jay points out.

“There’s no way to crush the magic of a museum!” Bucky dismisses.

“How did it take us this long to realise you’re not straight?” Nathan laughs under his breath.

“Beats me, pal.” Bucky grins, clapping him on the shoulder. Fuck his reputation, he’s having a damn good time.

The bus arrives at 4:15 but they’re not scheduled to leave until 4:30. Bucky’s out the front, waiting for the last few kids to arrives, going over answers with some of the kids. They all seem to be having fun and there’s a good mood in the air.

“Barnes,” Steve calls. “Dennis is here. Who are we missing?”

Bucky looks down at the roll in his hand, simultaneously pleased they’re only missing five kids and disappointed five kids still haven’t returned 15 minutes after the deadline.

“Group C. You go put it on the speakers, I’ll get everyone else sorted.”
For the first time in front of students Steve does what Bucky tells him to do without arguing, and Bucky manages to get everyone on the bus with everything they brought with them in the morning.

“How was the museum?” Dennis asks. Bucky stops at the driver seat to talk to him, not wanting to come off as rude.

“It was fantastic,” he grins. “Way better than the library, that’s for sure. How was your day?”

Dennis shrugs, as if that answers the question. Bucky just goes with it.

“We’re still waiting on Rogers and five students, sorry.” He says before heading to his seat at the back of the bus.

It doesn’t take long for Steve to come running down the steps with the kids trailing behind him like a duck with her ducklings.

“Sorry about that,” Steve huffs as he hops on the bus. Bucky checks his watch. 4:26. They’re not late so Bucky doesn’t comment on it.

There’s nothing really to do, the kids are either in their rooms or out getting dinner, only a few sitting around in the hall. Bucky’s in a chair but it’s hard and plastic and he’s not that comfortable. He really ought to get something decent on his phone but there’s no internet here so it’s not like he could do it now anyway. Instead, he sticks to Candy Crush.

“Barnes, can you come here for a sec?” Steve calls from the hallway. Bucky glances up at him then back down at his phone.

“Busy,” he lies. He’s so bored.

“It won’t take long,” Steve promises. “Please.”
“This is really important.” Bucky snaps, keeping his eyes glued to his phone.

“You’re playing Candy Crush,” Steve points out as he comes to stand over Bucky’s shoulder. “This is more important than your little game.”

“Full offense, pal, but I don’t exactly trust your judgement,” Bucky snorts.

“Just give me a hand then get back to it!” Steve groans. There’s only a handful of kids around but they’re all pretending not to watch Steve and Bucky argue. It’s wonderful.

“In case you hadn’t noticed, I don’t exactly have an extra hand to spare. So do it yourself,” Bucky mutters, swiping five candies to make a colour bomb. It gives him a high enough score to complete the level, though, so he gets up and follows Steve.

“This better be worth it,” he growls as Steve leads him down the corridor to their room.

“You complain so much,” Steve groans, opening the door to their room and letting Bucky go in first.

“Pshh,” Bucky scoffs. “My guy, my buddy, my pal-”

“My Bucky,” Steve interrupts, cutting Bucky off with a kiss.

“Stevie,” Bucky laughs, pulling away slightly. They’re close enough for their noses to bump together and he’s got his hand on the back of Steve’s neck. “Can’t you wait, like, four hours?”

“No,” Steve breaths, eyes flicking back to Bucky’s lips.

“If we come out looking like we’ve been making out… They’re teenagers, Steve. They’re gonna notice.” Bucky points out, his hand running up through Steve’s hair. It’s soft and falls through his fingers, longer than it’s been in a while.

“Noo,” Steve whines, dropping his head to Bucky’s shoulder.
“You know I’m right.” Bucky says, cradling the back of Steve’s head.

“That’s the worst part,” Steve grumbles. He presses a kiss to Bucky’s collarbone before pulling away with an exaggerated pout.

“Four hours,” Bucky promises.

“I’m so glad we’re the only teachers on this trip,” Steve admits when he comes to bed. “Imagine if we didn’t even get the nights alone.”

“I’m pretty sure we could last three days without making out,” Bucky laughs as Steve climbs on top of him. “It’d suck, but it wouldn’t actually kill us.”

“Speak for yourself,” Steve snorts, planting his lips on Bucky’s neck.

“No hickeys where I can’t cover up,” Bucky instructs. “Also, no sex on a school history trip.”

“No fun,” Steve complains, but he moves down Bucky’s body, mouth brushing over his ribs. Bucky jolts, fisting his hand in Steve’s hair and pulling him up so their faces are together.

“Fuck you, Rogers. You know I’m ticklish there!” He gasps. Steve grins, looking so damn proud of himself.

“I’m just good like that,” Steve grins. His eyes are bright and his hair’s flopping over his forehead, and he’s so damn beautiful Bucky’s heart melts a tiny bit.

“You’ve known me for thirty years and we’ve been together for over twenty. I think you kinda have to know where my ticklish spots are by now.” Bucky brings his hand up to Steve’s face, softly tracing over his cheekbone and down his jaw.
“I love you,” Steve whispers, pressing a kiss to Bucky’s palm. “So, so much.”

“You stole my line,” Bucky says weakly.

“And you stole my heart,” Steve replies. Bucky groans and rolls over.

“That’s disgusting. Go sleep on the other bed.”

“Aw, Buck. Don’t be like that.” Steve laughs, getting up.

“I was joking! Where are you going?” Bucky asks, sitting up.

“I know,” Steve says with an amused smile. “I’m just getting the lights.”

“Oh,” Bucky says. The room drops into darkness and he can just make out the vague shape of Steve hobbling back to their bed.

“This mattress is tiny and shit, I slept awfully last night.” He grumbles, climbing over Bucky to get in his sleeping bag.

“Sucks to be you. I slept so well,” Bucky says as he shuffles closer to Steve.

“Figures. You had me pressed against the wall.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard you complaining about me pressing you against a wall before,” Bucky laughs.

“Ha ha. Your jokes are so funny.” Steve deadpans. It’s kind of lost in the way he pulls Bucky closer, though, and kisses his forehead.
Steve’s alarm wakes them up again, but at 6:50 this time.

“I’m going to go shower,” Steve says, getting straight out of bed.

“Nooo,” Bucky whines, but Steve’s already gone. They’re heading back today, and while Bucky’s had a great time, he misses Spud. And privacy. (But mainly Spud.)

Bucky must’ve dozed off again because suddenly Steve’s back, dripping wet and laughing at Bucky.

“Get up, loser,” he laughs, chucking his towel at Bucky. Bucky scrunches his face as the wet fabric hits him.

“Why does getting up suck so much?” Bucky groans, flinging the towel to the floor.

“Because you’re weak. Come on, or you’ll miss out on a shower.”

Bucky manages to fit in a quick shower before it’s time for Steve to get everyone up. They have to clean the place today, but all Bucky has to worry about is his and Steve’s room, and he’s fairly confident he can persuade Steve to do most of it. (It really only needs to be swept, anyway.)

He decides to pack his bag now so he can spend longer zoning out over coffee without having to worry about Steve shouting at him.

“Hey, B, what time are we getting on the bus?” Jay asks when Bucky finally makes it out into the hall for breakfast.

“Bus leaves at nine,” he grunts. “But this place needs to be spotless for the next school to visit.”
“Aye aye, Captain,” Jay says, and Bucky can’t help it. It’s more of a reflex than a voluntary motion, but his eyes flick to Steve.

Jay notices. Of course she notices, these kids notice every damn interaction between Steve and Bucky.

“Barnes is not a captain,” Steve laughs. Bucky doesn’t say anything, just glares at Steve.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Jay asks with a raised eyebrow.

“Nothing,” Buck says at the same time as Steve says, “Sergeant Barnes vs Captain Rogers.”

“I outrank him,” Steve adds, as if he needs to clarify.

“Fuck you. I lost my fucking arm, leave me alone.” Bucky groans, standing up and moving his dishes to the sink.

“Look,” Steve says, and oh God this is going to be good, “I’m not saying it was your fault-”

“Jesus Christ-”

“-But maybe if you were good enough to make Captain you wouldn’t have lost your arm.”

“How has no one killed you yet?” Bucky laughs. He’s got to laugh, can’t pretend it gets to him because it doesn’t, and if he does that Steve will look irredeemable to the students. Steve’s not that mean, and neither is Bucky.

“Because I can actually defend myself,” Steve snarks. “Unlike some people here.”

“Watch your damn back, Rogers.” Bucky growls, stalking past him to make sure everyone’s at least started packing up.
“Is that a threat?” Steve calls after him.

“Oh, you wish it was!” Bucky calls back, disappearing around the corner and breaking into a grin.

“Mr B, are you alright?” Jay asks, jogging after him. Bucky spins on his heel to face her.

“Don’t worry, Jay. The arm’s not a sensitive topic.” (Anymore.)

“Okay, good. But does he know that?”

“Yeah,” Bucky says softly. “I know Steven G Rogers belongs in the pits of Hell, but that doesn’t mean he’s the devil himself.”

Jay blinks at him, unsure what to say. Bucky pats her on the shoulder before turning back around and heading down the hallway.

Everything’s all tidied and clean and ready to go by 9, except Dennis doesn’t arrive until quarter-past and Bucky can’t help but be a bit annoyed with him. Their first tour doesn’t start until ten so they won’t be late or anything, but it’s just rude, especially when Dennis doesn’t mention it. Steve’s frowning so hard it looks like his face is going to fall off and that in itself unsettles something within Bucky.

He knows he’s glaring, but fixes it on Steve because that way he can pass it off as leftover bitterness from their spat this morning. Steve looks up at him, catching his eye. Bucky tilts his head slightly towards Dennis and frowns harder. To anyone it will just look like he’s scowling at Steve, but Bucky knows Steve gets him.

“Let’s just get going,” Steve calls out, and everyone piles their bags into the compartments under the bus.

“What are you even on about?” He asks, not bothering to look at the kid.

“You called Mr Rogers Steven G Rogers to Jay before, back at the camp.” Jake explains, leaning over the back of the seat next to Bucky. Nathan’s probably rolling his eyes out of their sockets beside him.

“It stands for Gay because he’s a fuckin’ loser,” Bucky mutters.

“Aw, c’mon Barnes! You’re gay, I’m gay, even Nathan’s-”

“I’m not gay.”

“Well you’re not straight, buddy. Don’t even.” Jake laughs, losing focus for a minute. “Us gays, we’re the best,” he continues, turning back to Bucky.

“Damn right. Steven Goon Rogers. Steven Geezer Rogers.” Bucky offers. “Steven Goddamn Rogers.”

“I can hear you!” Steve shouts from the front of the bus.

“I don’t care!” Bucky yells back. Jake laughs like nothing could possibly be better.

They have a tour of the Washington Monument, which includes going in a crowded elevator (unfavourable) and visiting the two-part exhibition of Washington DC’s history (extremely favourable).
Bucky can do it, though. He’s been doing it for years and it doesn’t bother him too much anymore. He’d just rather not.

It’s worth it, though, when he’s 500 feet up looking out over the city. Washing DC fans out below him and Bucky wishes they didn’t have to go up in two groups, wishes he could look over at Steve right now. Next time, he tells himself. When you go on your holiday.

“Hey, Mr Barnes, this is what you were telling us about yesterday!” Pip calls from across the room. “You were right.”

“You think I was l making it up?” Bucky laughs, looking over her shoulder at the display on Independence Avenue.


“Thanks,” Bucky replies drily. “Appreciated.”

“You are welcome, Ca- Sir. You’re welcome, Sir.” Pip stumbles. Jay laughs at her.

“Nice save, moron.”

“Sergeants are better than Captains, anyway,” Bucky mutters, wandering off.

Dennis isn’t late this time, and Bucky’s so relieved he could cry. He’s Ready to go Home, with capital letters and all. Steve must be able to tell (who is Bucky kidding, of course Steve can tell) because he doesn’t try pick a fight with Bucky, even when he trips over the steps to the bus and lets out a colourful string of swear words.

“Her, Mr Barnes, we should play I-Spy,” Jake grins, way too energetic for Bucky’s old-man mind.

“You go ahead, pal,” he sighs, resting his head against the window. “I’m taking a nap.”
He manages to sleep the rest of the way home.

Everyone’s picked up by 5pm, leaving Steve and Bucky alone outside the entrance to the school.

“We fucking made it,” Steve sighs, leaning heavily into Bucky’s side. “I’m so glad we’re not parents.”

“You and me both, buddy,” Bucky laughs, wrapping his arm around Steve’s back. “You carry the bags, I don’t wanna let go of you.”

Steve snorts ungracefully but does as he’s told, leading Bucky back to their car.

“There’s one thing we have to do tomorrow, though,” Bucky says as Steve loads the car.

“Yeah?” Steve asks.

“Talk to Fury about Rumlow. It’s been going on for too long, and if we team up together, we can’t go unnoticed.”

“I like the way you think,” Steve grins, leaning in to kiss Bucky.

There’s something about the Principal’s office that has always been daunting to Bucky. It originated when he was a kid but he still can’t seem to shake it. He spent a lot of time in the principal’s office as a kid, being told off for starting fights or finishing them.

Just like all those times all those years ago, Steve’s sitting by his side as they face the principal together.
“It’s about Brock Rumlow in regards to his bias with the children.” Steve says, not at all as uncomfortable as Bucky. Then again, he’s never been one to shy away from trouble.

Fury raises his eyebrow, a silent cue for them to continue.

“Both Barnes and I have had multiple complaints throughout our time here about him, especially from our girls and people of colour. I don’t know if you’re aware of this, but we both feel it necessary to bring it to your attention.”

Fury’s frown deepens as Steve speaks, and by the time Steve’s done Bucky’s very glad Steve did the talking, and that Bucky’s not on the receiving end of that face.

“I’m going to call him down right now.” Fury say, reaching for the phone on his desk.

The three of them wait in awkward silence (although Bucky’s probably the only one who feel awkward) for Rumlow to come down. Bucky sits in his seat, fiddling with the zip from his hoodie just for something to do.

Rumlow’s knock is loud and obtrusive, just like the man himself, and he doesn’t wait for a response before barging in.

“Nick.” He greets, surprisingly friendly. He’s smiling, too, which Bucky’s never seen before.

“Mr Rumlow, please take a seat.” Fury gestures to the spare seat on Steve’s left, and Bucky internally sighs with relief that he’s got Steve as a barrier. He can’t stand Brock Rumlow.

“What’s all this about?” Rumlow asks, eyeing Steve and Bucky as he settles into the chair.

“Steve and James thought it was time to voice some concerns they’ve felt for your students.” Fury says, hands folded neatly on top of his desk.

“My students? What about their students?” Rumlow laughs, sharp and cruel. “These two can’t
even pretend to have it together for a single day, yet I’m the one in trouble?”

“The relationship between Barnes and Rogers has nothing to do with this. It doesn’t affect their teaching and I haven’t had a single complaint about it from anyone. I have, however, received multiple complaints from your classes. You’re a good teacher, but it would be irresponsible of me to ignore your behaviour for any longer.”

“What behaviour?” Rumlow scoffs. “You trust these two? Everyone at this school knows Rogers and Barnes can’t agree on a damn thing~”

“Which is exactly why I realise I’ve let this go on for too long. If both Rogers and Barnes agree on something enough to stand up for each other then I’ll be damned if I don’t look into it.” Fury cuts in, a fire in his eye to match his name. Rumlow seems to realise he’s not getting out of this and sets his jaw, eyes flitting to the ground.

“Rogers, Barnes. Thank you for your time. You may go.” Fury dismisses, nodding to Steve and Bucky.

“Thank you, sir.” Bucky says, getting to his feet and stumbling out of the office. Steve doesn’t say anything, just follows Bucky out.

“Why do I work at a school?” Bucky mutters. “I hate principals.”

“I know. But it was the right thing to do,” Steve sighs. Bucky wants to stay with him, calm down a bit with the comfort of his husband. Unfortunately, they’re at school. Bucky nods to Steve before heading down the hallway and leaving him by Fury’s door.

An email’s sent out the next day saying Brock Rumlow’s resigned and Luke Cage will be taking over his classes. Bucky breathes a sigh of relief.
Steve's taken Spud out for a walk because despite the morning run the three of them went on, the dog had become restless again. Bucky would've gone with them but it had started to cloud over and his arm tingles when it rains, especially if he's exercising.

So Bucky's alone in the house, just pottering about and enjoying the sound of the rain on the roof when the doorbell rings. He's not expecting anyone and the couple from next door only ever knock so he's a bit confused as he makes his way to the door.

He can't say he's not surprised when he opens the door to find Jay soaking wet and crying on his doorstep.

“T-i-m s-s-o-r-y,” she stammers. “I had nowhere else to go.”

“C-o-m-e i-n, g-e-t o-u-t o-f t-h-e r-a-i-n.” Bucky says, waving her in and closing the door behind her.

“You pointed out your street and I recognised the car.” Jay explains as Bucky leads her to the living room. There's drops running down her face but Bucky can't tell if they're tears or just from the rain.

“W-o-u-d l-i-k-e t-e-a o-r c-o-f-f-e-e?” He offers, heading to the kitchen. It has an open plan layout so Bucky can still see her as he puts on the jug.

“T-e-a, p-l-e-a-s-e,” she says quietly. She's stopped shivering and just sits there on his couch, curled in on herself.

Bucky doesn't say anything as the jugs boils, just waits for the ping and pours two mugs of tea.

“M-i-l-k a-n-d s-u-g-a-r?” He asks, heading for the fridge.

“B-o-t-h. T-h-a-n-k y-o-u.”

Bucky manages to bring both mugs to the couch without spilling anything and settles down next to
“What happened?” He asks gently. He doesn't want to pry, but she turned up on his doorstep crying in the rain so Bucky thinks he deserves at least some sort of explanation.

“I came out to my parents. It didn't go so well,” Jay shrugs. She's still not looking at Bucky, hunched in on herself and cradling her tea in her hands.

“Shit,” Bucky mutters. “Well, you can stay with us for as long as you need to.”

“Thank you, Mr B.” Jay says, rubbing her face with her sleeve and finally looking him in the eye. “Wait- who's us ?”

“Me and my husband.” Bucky says, the realisation that Jay doesn't know he's married to Steve suddenly dawning on him. This'll be fun.

“You're married ?” Jay exclaims, actually smiling a bit. “How did I not know you're married?”

“No left hand for a ring?” Bucky shrugs.

“That's hilarious,” Jay deadpans. “What's his name? Is he hot? How did you two meet? Wait, will he be okay with me here?”

“He'll be fine, we've talked this over,” Bucky assures her.

“How could you possibly have talked this over?” Jay frowns, shifting uncomfortably. Shit.

“He's my husband, Jay. He notices when something's on my mind. I was just worried about you when you came out to me and talked to him about it. He said if you ever needed anywhere to stay I should offer you our spare room. Just if you needed it.” Bucky's not sure what to say, because hearing it from Jay's mouth makes it feel a lot more creepy than intended. Luckily, Jay doesn't take it the wrong way.
“That’s really sweet.” She says, her eyes softening. She takes a sip from her tea, hiding a yawn behind the mug. “So. How did you meet?”

“Someone was kicking a dog, he saw red, shouted at them ’til he was blue, got punched until he was purple. I found him and patched him up. Rest is history, blah blah blah.” Bucky says, waving his hand dismissively.

“Your first date was a back alley scrap?” Jay laughs around another yawn.

“No. Our first date was seven years after that. Who the hell dates when they’re six?”

“Holy shit,” Jay gasps. “You’re married to your childhood best friend. That is ridiculously cute. Mr B, how can someone so soft look so scary and mean?”

“Ha ha, you’re hilarious. Follow me, I’ll show you the spare room.” Bucky stands up, bringing his mug of tea with him. The rain is still pounding on the windows and Bucky smiles to himself, glad he’s not caught out in that. Poor Steve. At least Spud will like it.

“So where’s your husband now?” Jay asks him.

“Out with our dog. He’ll probably be home soon. Why, you desperate to meet him?” Bucky snorts, pushing the door to the spare room open. It’s simple, a double bed in the corner, cream chest of drawers and a plain nightstand next to the bed.

“You go all mushy when you talk about him,” Jay shrugs. She toes her shoes off but doesn't move further into the room. “He offered me a place in his home without meeting me. He got beaten up for defending a stray. He sounds like a good guy.”

“The best,” Bucky confirms. He can feel his cheeks heating up but he doesn't give a damn. “Get some rest, have a nap. I’ll be in the other room if you need me.”

“Thank you,” Jay says, finally hopping onto the bed. “This means a lot.”

Bucky just smiles at her.
“Honey, I'm ho-ome!” Steve calls out in a shrill voice half an hour later.

“God, you're drenched. Decide to go for a swim?” Bucky teases, kissing Steve hello. Spud pushes past them, her tail wagging happily.

“Dry that dog before she gets the house all stinky.” Steve says, running his hand through Bucky's hair.

“So damn bossy.” Bucky grins, leaning into the touch. “You got her wet, you dry her.”

“But I wanna dry me.” Steve whines, finally releasing Bucky and trailing after Spud.

“My God, you're a baby.” Bucky laughs, following Steve to the laundry. Spud’s there waiting, her tongue hanging out of her mouth. She looks so happy it's impossible not to grin at the sight of her.

“Who's a good girl?” Steve coos, sitting on the ground with her and scratching behind her ears. Bucky watches them fondly from the doorway. “You are! Yes you are! You're so good and so smart, Spud. Nothing like Papa Bucky.”

“Suck a dick, Rogers.” Bucky laughs from the doorway.

“That's more your area of expertise,” Steve shoots back. It's a total lie.

“You say that like you didn't wake me up this morning with your mouth on my dick.” Bucky points out because, really, Steve?

“Oh my God.” A third voice gasps and both Bucky and Steve spin around to see Jay standing there with her eyes wide and a hand over her mouth.
“That couldn't possibly have been a worse time.” Bucky says, glancing between his shocked husband and horrified student. He was planning on telling Steve. In, like, one minute. He thought Jay would sleep for longer. Or be louder walking through the house.

“This is my husband, Steve.” Bucky continues lamely, gesturing from Steve to Jay. “Steve, Jay is staying with us for an undefined length of time because her parents don't like that she's gay.”

“Mr Rogers? You’re married to Mr Rogers? This is some elaborate joke.” Jay says, stumbling back with wide eyes. She hits the wall and stops moving, just standing there staring at them.

“Oh, April Fools?” Bucky tries. “I’m actually married to this asshole, surprise.”

“I’ll go make some coffee.” Steve says, slipping past Bucky with a comforting squeeze to his shoulder. Spud goes to follow but gets distracted by the new person in her house and sits at Jay’s feet, ears perked but patiently waiting.

“Go ahead, pat her.” Bucky says when Jay’s eyes flit to the dog at her feet. Slowly, carefully, Jay slides down the wall and runs her hands across the short fur on Spud’s back.

“What’s going on?” Jay whispers, clinging tightly to Spud.

“Steve and I have been best friends our whole lives and in love for most of it. People thought we meant it when we bickered at school, we didn’t correct them. Things escalated and here we are.”

“You told Mr Rogers about me,” Jay sobs. She’s not crying, not tears, but it breaks Bucky’s heart all the same.

“No. I told my husband about a student I care about. There’s a big difference.” Bucky says, no room in his voice for argument.

“Okay.” Jay says, not looking at Bucky. Spud lays down and rolls over, showing Jay her tummy for scratches. Jay smiles at her and rubs her tummy.

“You know, some things are starting to make so much more sense now.” Jay admits. “The
dancing? That was suspicious.”

“Yeah,” Bucky snorts. “That was a bit of a giveaway. But we couldn’t just not. Teaching Steve the Lindy Hop is the best thing I’ve ever done.”

“Who else knows?” Jay asks, still down on the floor with Spud.

“Natasha. Sam Wilson. Fury, probably, but that’s all. From the school, anyway.”

“Okay. Okay,” Jay says, letting out a deep breath.

“Come on,” Bucky says softly. “Let’s go into the other room.”

“Are you going to stay with us?” Steve asks when they’re all settled in the lounge. They’re sharing a couch with Spud while Jay curls up in an armchair opposite them. Steve made her a cup of tea but Bucky’s gone back to his coffee. “You can, you know that, right? Just because Buck and I don’t hate each other doesn’t mean you have to leave.”

“That makes, like, no sense.” Bucky mutters into his mug. Steve very pointedly ignores him.

“I think I’m going to call Pip,” Jay says, jumping on Steve’s bandwagon and ignoring Bucky. “I would’ve gone to her first but she lives across town, and I don’t have any money and you’re closer and I didn’t really think about it-”

“Hey,” Bucky cuts in gently. “Jay, it’s okay. We’re glad you’re here, it’s much better than you being out in the rain alone, okay? Call Pip, use the spare room if you want.”

Jay nods, smiling weakly through fresh tears.

“Thanks,” she whispers as she slips out of the room.
“She’s been through a storm today,” Bucky sighs once the door shuts behind her.

“Literally,” Steve adds.

“Ha, ha, Mr Funny-Man.” Bucky teases, pulling Spud onto his lap so he can lay in her spot, head on Steve’s thigh.

“So. We’re no longer secretly married.” Steve says after a moment of silence. Spud stretches out, laying her head on Bucky’s chest.

“Yes we are. Only Jay knows. And Pip, I guess. But that’s two people, not the entire student body.” Bucky protests, bringing his hand to rest on Spud’s back.

“Bucky, we’ve been at this school for years. I know you know what the rumours are like.”

“Yeah, but it’s Jay and Pip. They’re not bad,” Bucky protests. Steve shakes his head.

“It’s been a good run. But maybe it wouldn’t be too bad if the word got out…”

“Steven Grant Rogers, are you backing down?” Bucky mock-gasps.

“No.” Steve says instantly. “No, it’s not that. I’m just tired of not being able to talk to you throughout the day, I’m sick of people complaining about you to me because they think I want to hear it—”

“Wait, you’re clearly lying. No one ever complains about me.” Bucky interrupts with a cocky grin. Steve flicks his ear.

“We wouldn’t have to come out. And we are not going to stop the bickering because that was never exactly started in the first place. I’m just saying we could stop acting so much and just be us.”
“That does sound nice,” Bucky agrees. Driving with Steve to work, grabbing lunch together. Closing the lift doors on each other and sneaking extra papers to mark into each other’s piles. Nothing has to change, they just get to relax a bit more. “We could give it a try.”

“And if worst comes to worst, we could pack up and move to DC. Or live in the mountains.” Steve suggests, smiling wider. “I vote DC, though.”

“God, you are such a nerd. You’re a dork, an egg. Steven, you are-”

Steve cuts him off with a kiss. Bucky doesn’t mind in the slightest.

“I am coming back, loudly this time,” Jay calls from behind the door. Steve sits back up with a soft chuckle.

“Please don’t be talking about morning sex. That is not something I want to think about ever again.”

“We’re talking about DC, don’t worry.” Bucky assures her, sitting up slightly.

“God, this is so weird.” Jay says, scrunching up her face. “Seeing you two together and not ripping each other to pieces. Am I honestly meant to believe you’ve always been like this?”

“I guess so? But you don’t have to believe it. It won’t change anything.” Bucky shrugs, sitting up properly this time.

“Pip will be here in about ten minutes,” Jay says, changing the subject. “Thank you guys. It really means a lot.”

“I’m glad you thought to come here. And could recognise the car.”

Steve gets the door when the doorbell rings because he’s Pip’s teacher, he’s met Pip’s mum for
parent-teacher interviews.

“You got everything?” Bucky asks, standing with Jay.

“Yeah, didn’t exactly have much.” Jay points out with a sad smile.

“Oh, honey!” Pip’s mother coos, sweeping around the corner and gathering Jay in a hug. Jay hugs her back tight, clutching her like she’s going to disappear any moment. Pip stands there awkwardly, a hand gently resting on Jay’s back.

“I’m glad she’s got someone,” Steve murmurs in Bucky’s ear. Bucky nods, leaning into Steve’s side.

“Me too,” Bucky agrees, blinking back tears. He’s not going to cry, damn it.

Except then Jay flings herself at Bucky, pulling him into a tight hug. She’s fairly tall, head coming up to Bucky’s nose, and he’s thrown a bit off balance.

“Thank you, B. I’ll see you on Monday, I guess?” She asks, pulling away from Bucky to look him in the eyes.

“As long as you don’t go blind or I go invisible,” Bucky promises. He can feel tears prickling the back of his eyes but chooses to ignore them.

“Thanks, Mr Rogers,” Jay adds, giving him a small wave before taking Pip’s hand in her own and heading out the door.

“What the hell are they doing living together?” Pip hisses under her breath. Jay glances back at Bucky, looking for permission. He smiles at her and nods.

“Well, let me tell you!” She laughs, and the door shuts behind her.

“What a day,” Steve sighs.
They arrive around 8am on Monday morning together in Bucky’s car. Bucky can’t see anyone, but he doesn’t doubt people are watching from the windows overlooking the carpark.

“Are we really doing this?” He asks, glancing over at Steve in the passenger seat.

“We already let Jay tell Pip. It’s only a matter of time before the whole school starts talking. Don’t you wanna beat them to it?” Steve’s right, and the more Bucky thinks about it the more he wants to give it up. But now that’s it’s actually happening he can’t help but feel a bit nervous.

“Hey, there’s nothing to worry about. If you need me at any time I’ll be just down the hall. Only, this time, you can actually come to me, okay?” Steve soothes, resting his hand on Bucky’s thigh. Bucky covers Steve’s hand with his own and smiles at his husband.

“Yeah. Let’s get ‘em.”

In true high-school fashion, Bucky’s classroom fills with hushed whispers as the students come in for first period. No one dares to say anything- not when Bucky refuses to crack a smile at any of them- but it’s clear where their heads are all at.

Bucky ignores them and teaches his lesson as usual. Really, nothing’s changed.

Steve’s in his room going over lesson plans at break time so Bucky brings him a coffee to keep him going.

“How’s your morning going?” He asks, perching himself on the edge of Steve’s desk.

“So many questions,” Steve groans as he takes the coffee. “Why do they care so much?”

“Buddy, don’t you start that now. We both know how much you loved them caring when they
thought we hated each other.” Bucky laughs, stealing the coffee back for a sip. He only bought the one, and while he could’ve carried two, it’s easier to just carry one.

“I do hate you.” Steve grumbles, but his words are lost in the way he looks at Bucky.

“Yeah,” Bucky smiles. “I know.”

They’re interrupted by a knock on Steve’s door.

“It’s open,” Steve calls. Bucky flinches out of habit, ready to vault over Steve’s desk, before he remember he doesn’t have to. It’s okay now.

The door pushes open and Jake pokes his head through.

“I have a really important- holy shit!”

Bucky glances at Steve with a raised eyebrow but doesn’t say anything.

“Nate! I told you, I told you there was something going on with Mr Rogers’ marriage!” Jake calls over his shoulder.

“We’re right here.” Steve says calmly. Jake’s head snaps back around to him and he comes into the classroom, followed by Nathan.

“Yeah, but you never guessed it was this.” Nathan mutters, but he looks extremely amused.

“Jake. You said you had a really important…” Steve prompts, leaning back in his swivelly chair. He takes a sip from his coffee and his wedding ring catches in the light.

“Really important history-related question. That was a lie. I just heard rumours that you arrived together today, and honestly, I died a little inside.”
“You got your answer. Let’s go.” Nathan sighs, grabbing Jake’s hand and tugging him back towards the door.

“No! I need more information!” Jake protests.

“Leave them alone! You don’t want them knowing every aspect of your romantic life, so let them keep theirs private too.” Nathan hisses.

“Our romantic life is beautiful and the whole world should be obsessed with it.” Jake scoffs, momentarily distracted enough for Nathan to push him out the door.

“Ask Jay Bokur any questions you have!” Bucky calls after them. Steve laughs into his coffee.

“That’s the first mention of it I’ve heard all day,” Bucky admits when the door clicks shut again.

“Really?” Steve asks. “God, my kids will hardly shut up, and all they know is I got a ride with you this morning.”

“Mm, benefits of being a stone-cold terror.” Bucky hums, getting to his feet. The bell’s going to go soon, he has another class to teach. It’s his senior class and he’s actually kind of looking forward to it. These are the kids who’ve seen him and Steve dance and sing together on the trip. They’ve been here the longest, since Steve and Bucky even started.

“See you in a couple of hours.” Bucky says, heading to the door that leads to his classroom.

“Good fucking luck.” Steve sighs, downing the last of his coffee.

“Before we get started,” Bucky says to his class once they’re all settled in. “I will clarify something: today we are focusing on writing our essays. That means you don’t need to talk to your peers, and it especially means you don’t need to talk to your peers about my relationships with other teachers. Any questions?”
Jake’s hand shoots up. Of course it does.

“Good. If you need help, I will help you. You may listen to music, spread out, do whatever it is you need to do to concentrate. Come write your name on the board if you’re going to the library.” Bucky instructs, ignoring Jake completely and opening up his laptop. A lot of students come up to write their name on the board and Bucky knows less than half will actually go to the library, but if they chose to slack and their grade suffers because of it, it’s their own damn fault.

“Mr B?” Jay says quietly, coming up to Bucky’s desk. She doesn’t have her work with her so he guesses she’s not going to be asking for help on her essay.

“Jay,” he says.

“Why does Jake keep asking me about you and Mr Rogers? Like, does he know about you? Does he know about me?”

“All Jake knows is that me and Steve are married, and that you know more than anyone else. What you tell him is up to you.” Bucky tells her quietly, glancing to where Jake’s watching them from across the room.

Jake catches his eye, bringing two fingers to his eyes then pointing them at Bucky, the universal sign for ‘I’m watching you’. Bucky flips him off.

“So that’s it?” Jay asks with a frown. “One person finds out and three years of work is undone?”

“No. I think it’s something we’ve both wanted for a while. You just gave us an opening.” Bucky admits. He enjoyed it, and he knows Steve did, too. But it was a little bit extreme and he’s ready to live his life without wondering who’s watching.

“How are you?” He asks softly. Jay nods, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.

“I’m good. I’ve talked to my mum and she wants me to come home, but I don’t think I want to. Pip’s parents are letting me stay with them, and I’ll be off to college soon. I guess it’s a time for us both to step out and stop hiding, huh, B?” Jay says with a smile. It’s a tired smile, and she has bags
under her eyes, but she looks happy.

“Yeah, Jay.” Bucky says. “You know I’m proud of you, right? What you’ve just done- that isn’t easy.”

“It would've been a lot harder without you and Pip,” Jay admits, eyes softening when she mentions her girlfriend.

“I'm glad you've got her. You keep her, yeah?” Bucky grins, feeling the conversation coming to an end.

“I plan on it,” Jay promises.

“How was that?” Bucky asks Steve at the end of the day. He's propped back against the car, soaking in the sunshine while he waits.

“ Weird.” Steve says, his shadow falling over Bucky as he gets closer.

“Good weird or bad weird?”

“Both,” Steve shrugs. “Too many stares for my liking, but those will fade.”

“What's the good weird?” Bucky asks, knowing exactly where this is going. There are people buzzing around, students and teachers alike, and Steve's pushing him up against their car.

“I can kiss you in front of the whole school.”

And he does, and it's wonderful, and Bucky doesn't give a shit.
End Notes

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