Smashing is More Fun with Friends

by TunaFishChris

Summary

Or, 5 Times the Hulk helped/saved/hung out with an Avenger, and one time they saved him.

Can be read as a stand-alone, but is also takes place after "The Wisdom of Children."

Notes

So I really enjoyed writing Hulk's POV in "The Wisdom of Children," and I love me some hurt Bruce (preferably emotional hurt/comfort), so this happened.

For those who haven't read "WOC," all you need to know is that Bruce rejoined the Avengers a few months after Wakanda, Peter and Wanda are BFFs, and the team used to act like dicks to Peter and Wanda but now don't (or at least try not to).
Hulk-to-English Translation:
Jewel: Vision
Red: Wanda
Spidey: Peter (duh)
Tin Man: Tony
Lullaby: Natasha
Shield: Steve
Hammer: Thor
Birdie: Clint
Jewel

Hulk does not like "camping."

That's what Jewel calls it. Jewel doesn't seem to like it, either. It's cold, and wet, and they're far from the shiny buildings and Hulk's other friends. It's just Jewel and Hulk sitting next to a small fire, in the middle of a bunch of wet trees.

"The team will be here shortly," Jewel says, and that's the only reason Hulk's sitting still. Because if the Hulk jumps and Jewel flies away, then their friends won't be able to find them. Most of the Bad Things have been smashed (in that grey house, which is far away because Hulk grabbed Jewel and jumped), but Hulk's still angry, and scared, and doesn't want to go away and be puny Banner again because puny Banner is TERRIBLE at smashing Bad Things and they're still out there.

Also, Jewel's hurt. It's hard to tell, because he's always red (and that's kind of confusing, maybe Hulk should call him Red instead of Jewel...but then what would he call girl-Red?), but the liquid red that's supposed to be inside is trickling outside, from a cut on his side. It makes Hulk nervous. Jewel can't smash very well if he's hurt like that, so Hulk has to stay out and protect him.

(Hulk also wants to fix Jewel's hurt, but he can't. He's only good for smashing things, not fixing them. That's what puny Banner does. A not-so-small part of Hulk hates puny Banner for being able to do that, and hates himself for not being able to make his friend better. But a bigger part is grateful to puny Banner. If Jewel gets bad, Hulk will bring puny Banner out. He'll fix it.)

"Want Lullaby," Hulk grumbles. He wants Lullaby, and Red and Spidey and Shield and Hammer and Birdie and Tin Man and Metal Arm. But mostly Lullaby.

Jewel looks up from the fire, startled. Then he gives a soft smile. "I know. I want Wan...er, Red."

Hulk doesn't know why they always use his names for them. He knows their real names, of course. They're always shouting it at each other when they're smashing Bad Things. It's just that Hulk's names for them are easier to say.

It makes Hulk feel...special, when they use his names for them rather than their own when talking to him. It's a weird feeling. He's not sure he likes it. He's too used to anger and fear and hurt.

"Red is angry," Hulk says.

"What makes you say that?" Jewel asks.

"Jewel hurt. Makes Red angry."

"...ah." Jewel looks down at his hurt and nods. "Yes, she'll be rather annoyed. But at least Lullaby won't be mad at you."

"Good," Hulk grumbles. "Lullaby scary."

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"You got lucky," Bruce said, wrapping up Vision's wound with fresh bandages. "That almost got your liver."

Vision said nothing as Bruce finished his ministrations. They were on the helicarrier, and because
Bruce had a deep-seated mistrust for anyone in a white lab coat familiar with medical supplies (re: scientists, doctors, people who wanted to dissect the Hulk, etc.) and because Vision's wound was something manageable, Bruce was the one tending to him.

"Done," Bruce announced, stepping back. "Do I even have to tell you to be a good patient?"

"Since I was the one reminding Mr. Stark to behave--not that he ever listened--when I was JARVIS, I think not," Vision said.

"Good. Take your pain meds, drink fluids, take it easy, et cetera," Bruce said. "And I called Wanda. She'll be waiting for you at the tower."

Vision visibly bit back a groan. "On second thought, I may have to take a page from Mr. Stark's book and escape the hospital early. For I am a dead man walking."

"You'll be fine," Bruce encouraged. "Just make it through the lecture and the cold shoulder, and then you'll be fattening up on Wanda's home-cooking."

Vision paused, giving that thought. "That...is a very good point."

Bruce gave a tight smile. Now that his job was done, there was nothing to take his mind off of the fact that he was in a medical wing, surrounded by unfamiliar lab equipment, thousands of feet in the air. Oh, he knew that SHIELD wouldn't try anything on him (at least, not while he had the support of the Avengers and a favorable public opinion). And he had Vision, and Natasha was on the carrier...somewhere. He wasn't sure. He thought he heard something about her in the gym.

He would give his left limb to be with her right now, rather than here. But he couldn't leave Vision alone. Not here.

"Bruce," Vision said gently, as if reading his mind (maybe he could?). "I have no fear of hospitals, and the doctors will be letting me go soon. Go to Natasha."

Bruce squirmed slightly, hope warring with guilt. "I could stay."

"I'm more than fine. I'm sure she's as worried about you as Wanda is about me."

*Since I don't have a hole in my chest, I highly doubt that,* Bruce thought, but didn't say. He gave Vision a grateful smile and left.
Lullaby

Lullaby is angry at Hulk.

Hulk doesn't know what he did, or what puny Banner did, but he's sorry. (It was probably Hulk that did it. Hulk always makes everyone mad and scared, and that's why they shoot him, which is why he smashes them, which only makes them MORE mad and scared...)

But Hulk really doesn't know what made her mad. He's smashed before, things he wasn't supposed to: the shiny building they all lived in, cars they use to move in, even the flying ship in the sky. He's tried to smash HER before (once, long ago, and he will never ever ever ever ever ever EVER do that again EVER), and she wasn't mad.

So why is she mad now?

Hulk wishes Red was here. She whispers in his head when things get confusing, whether it's finding some little squishy Bad Things or figuring out what Shield wants him to do (smash the building, smash the car, not smash?...sometimes he just doesn't make sense). Hulk even has a vague memory of her helping puny Banner when Lullaby was being as confusing as Shield, so he knows she'd help him. But she's not here. Puny Banner probably knows where she is, but Hulk doesn't.

Hulk puts his fist through the wall to make an opening. The door's too small for him. Lullaby darts ahead of him and attacks the Bad Things with nothing but her small fists and feet. She doesn't have her bang-sticks. All the Bad Things have them, though, and that makes Hulk roar when they try to shoot her. Metal balls bounce off of his green skin and he smashes the Bad People into the walls, creating more openings.

Lullaby looks at him, even angrier. "I had that," she growls.

Hulk fumes, and on the inside is a hurt. He's only protecting her! She was taken by the Bad People and Hulk found her before the others and now he's getting her out. She doesn't have her bang-sticks, her eye is black and all puffy, there's cuts on her pretty skin and she's walking funny, so her leg is hurt. (And yes, Hulk knows she can smash a whole bunch of Bad People like this. He's seen her do it when one of her arms was twisted up and useless, a very bad hurt. He's not stupid. But still, she's hurt, he's Hulk, and there's Bad Things to smash.)

They're almost outside. Hulk wants outside SO BAD. The inside of this dark, blocky building is a lot like the ones the Bad Man tried to take him to, the one everyone calls "General" and puny Banner calls "Ross." It's small and cramped and filled with too many Bad Things. Outside, Hulk can pick Lullaby up and jump, take them far, far away and puny Banner can fix her hurts and Spidey and Tin Man and Shield can make her laugh (or she'll say something smart that makes them red and THAT will make her laugh). Hulk just wants Lullaby to laugh.

Hulk puts his fist through another wall, and this time they go outside. There's a ton of Bad People out here with bang-sticks. Hulk grabs Lullaby and twists, the metal balls punching his back. It hurts, but doesn't hurt him.

Then they hear the familiar roar of Tin Man's plane. Hulk looks up just as Hammer jumps out. Hulk holds Lullaby tighter. He knows what's going to happen. This might actually hurt him.

Hammer hits the ground. The ground goes BOOM. Bad People and Bad Things are thrown in the air all around and are smashed onto the ground. The boom almost pushes Hulk over, but he stays up
and Lullaby stays protected.

Hulk grins. He likes Hammer.

"My friend!" Hammer cheers. "Have you found Lady Natasha?"

Hulk lets Lullaby go. She wobbles, but doesn't fall and is even MORE mad now. Hulk wonders if she's going to turn green and big.

"Let's get out of here," Lullaby orders, walking up to Hammer. Hammer blinks, looking between her and Hulk.

And Hulk is suddenly very, very sad. Because this has happened before. The other lady, the one Hulk calls Raven (her hair is the same color as the birds) and puny Banner calls Betty, she did this, too. She liked Banner but not Hulk. She got hurt because she liked Banner, because of Hulk. She left.

Now, Lullaby is hurt.

Hulk shifts his feet. "Hulk sorry."

Lullaby stops. "What?"

"Lullaby mad. Hulk sorry." And because she's mad at Hulk and Hulk doesn't want her mad, wants her happy and smiling and laughing, he jumps, and runs away.

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Bruce woke up in the middle of a farm. It was too early in the year for anything to be growing, so it was just dirt around him. His pants were shredded but still there. Small miracles, then.

He sat up, hissing at his sore muscles. He tried to remember...

He shot to his feet, looking around. "Natasha?" he called. "Tasha!"

There was no one there.

She'd been taken, and the Avengers had immediately started looking, and Bruce was the first to find her and couldn't hold Hulk back (not that he'd particularly wanted to at the moment)...and that was it. That was all Bruce remembered.

But he had a sickening feeling of grief and guilt, deep in his gut. Bruce swallowed, tasting salt. Had Hulk failed to protect her? Had he been too late?

(Had she finally realized that he was a monster and decided to leave?)

The sound of thrusters jolted Bruce out of his stupor and almost cheered him. He ran to Tony as soon as Iron Man was on the ground, grabbing him by the shoulders. "Where's Tasha?"

"Whoa, personal bubble there, Big Green." Tony nudged him back and pulled up the faceplate. "Nat's fine. Still terrifying. Well, more so now that you're AWOL, but now that you're found maybe she'll stop terrorizing the nurses."

"Nurses?!" Bruce echoed.

"Routine medical check. You know, the kind everyone hates? Gotta give the doctor props, though:
the woman has balls keeping her under observation." Tony pressed a button and handles appeared on the armor. "Want a lift?"

The ride back to the tower took too long, even though it was only a few minutes. It was also very cold; Bruce was wearing only pants, after all.

When they finally got there, Clint was the first they saw. He chucked a fresh pair of clothes at Bruce and jabbed his thumb over his shoulder. "Medical wing, room six."

Bruce changed in under a minute and ran the rest of the way.

Seeing Natasha alive, standing, and pacing the small confines of the patient's room made Bruce's body do a full slump. He leaned against the wall. "You're okay."

"Bruce!" Natasha lunged at him, yanking him into the room. She kissed him as soon as the door was closed and had him in an almost death-like grip. Bruce did not mind one bit.

"Do that again and I'll skin you," she threatened as soon as they broke apart.

"Do what?" Bruce asked. *What did you do?* he demanded Hulk. Hulk only gave a defiant rumble. Natasha hesitated, then slumped into him. "Sorry. That was my fault."

Bruce blinked. The world must've stopped revolving on its axis sometime in the last few hours. "What?"

"I was angry at myself for getting kidnapped in the first place--really, it was such a rookie mistake. I should know better--and I took it out on Hulk. He thought I was mad at him and ran away."

"Hulk...ran away," Bruce said slowly, testing the words on his mouth. "He didn't try to...hurt you?"

Natasha shook her head. "He protected me, which only pissed me off more."

"...yeah, I would run away, too."

When Natasha looked up, Bruce was smiling. "I don't like you when you're angry."

Natasha punched him in the shoulder. She laughed.
Chapter Notes

This is where it would be useful to have read "Wisdom of Children," but again, not mandatory. (The damn thing is twenty chapters, after all.)

Longer chapter than usual. Just more of me to love. :)

Red = Wanda
Spidey = Peter

*Spidey's on his way to you,* Red says in Hulk's head. Hulk grunts (even though Red is very far away, she can still hear him because she can hear his head). He smashes more Shiny Bad Things. Shield is a little ways away. He's closer than normal, but still far. He likes to stay far away from Hulk. Everyone stays far away from Hulk. Except...

"Hey, buddy!" Spidey cheers. He swings over on his sticky string, uses another to grab a Shiny Bad Thing, and swings it to Hulk. Hulk punches it. It falls to the ground in pieces.

"Baseball?" Hulk asks, hopeful.

"Baseball," Spidey says. Even though there's cloth on his face, Hulk knows he's smiling.

Hulk takes one of the big light sticks on the street and yanks it from the ground. Spidey shoots another sticky string and sticks to the side of the glass building. (Hulk doesn't really like that. Glass is very, very easy to smash and if it smashes then Spidey will fall...but Hulk will catch him. Or Spidey will catch himself, he does that.)

Spidey grabs the Shiny Bad Things with his sticky string and swings them over to Hulk, who whacks them with his big stick. Metal bits fall on the ground. Spidey cheers. Hulk grins. He likes baseball.

When all the Shiny Bad Things are smashed, Red says in their heads, *Tony needs help with Doom. Fives miles north from you guys.*

*On our way!* Spidey says, also in their heads. Hulk doesn't know how that works, because Red is the only one who can speak in people's heads, but when she does it then others can do it, but Hulk's never tried it (he doesn't want to smash their heads, heads are squishy and so easy to smash even when Hulk doesn't want to)...it doesn't matter. What matters is smashing!

"Want piggy-ride?" Hulk asks.

"Yes!" Spidey jumps from the glass wall and onto Hulk's shoulders. He's so puny and light.

"Spider-Man!" Shield shouts, and he sounds mad.

"Tony's asking for help," Spidey says.

"What did I say about getting too close to Hulk?"
Hulk stops. He gets an inside hurt (he gets a lot of those, even though he never gets outside hurts). Hulk likes Shield, but Shield doesn't like Hulk. He likes Hulk's smashing (unless he smashes the wrong things, then he gets mad), but doesn't like Hulk. He yells at everyone who gets close to Hulk. Sometimes Hulk doesn't care (like when people point bang-sticks at Lullaby, or when Tin Man falls, and he doesn't think Shield cares then, either). But sometimes Hulk does care.

"Shield says no," Hulk says, sad.

Spidey tightens his hands on Hulk's shoulders. "Shield's a jerk," he says, and he sounds even madder than Shield.


"We're not gonna hurt anyone, except the DoomBots."

"You endanger everyone around you. You're going to get Tony and Wanda killed!"

Spidey hisses, like he does when he's hurt. But he's not hurt...

Oh. Shield gave Spidey an inside hurt.

Hulk doesn't know what to do. He smashes Bad Things that hurt his friends. But Shield gave the hurt, and Hulk likes Shield. Shield's not a Bad Thing.

"Let's go, Hulk," Spidey says. "Red and Tin Man need us."

Hulk jumps away from Steve faster than he ever jumped away from the Bad Man.

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The Shiny Bad Things are all smashed up. Hulk should go back to puny Banner now, but he doesn't. Spidey still has his inside hurt. He doesn't say anything, cheering and saying funny things. But his voice is all wrong. Red hears it, too. She doesn't laugh at his words.

So Hulk stays, because Spidey is hurt and Hulk will protect Spidey, even from Shield. (He won't ever smash Shield, but he'll pick him up and carry him away from Spidey if he has to, or carry Spidey away.)

Red tugs Spidey away from the others. Hulk has seen this before. He didn't think it was wrong, before. But then Bad People took Spidey and Red away, and puny Banner found out that they were lonely. That everyone had been giving Red and Spidey inside hurts, even puny Banner. Hulk is happy they stay together, at least. He and puny Banner were lonely, but when one shows up the other goes away.

Hulk wonders if he should bring out puny Banner. Banner can fix hurts. Hulk just smashes.

He growls. Puny Banner SHOULD have fixed their hurts, but he didn't. He made them. Hulk didn't give Spidey and Red hurts (at least, he doesn't think he did). So puny Banner can stay gone.

Hulk goes to Spidey and Red, ignoring the weird faces the others give him.

"...just being a jerk. It's fine, Wanda. Really," Spidey says.

They both look up at Hulk. Hulk looks at Red. "Shield give Spidey inside hurt."

Red stares at Hulk. She pokes the back of his head with an invisible hand and Hulk knows that she's
happy he told her this. But she's also a little sad. "Did he give you an inside hurt, too?"

"Spidey hurt worse," Hulk says, pointing.

"I told you, it's FINE," Spidey says. "It's not as bad as...wait, what?" He looks between Hulk and Red. "You're saying Steve hurt Hulk's feelings?"

"Mm-hm," Red says.

"And Steve's still ALIVE?"

"Hulk like Shield," Hulk grumbles. "No smashing."


Hulk laughs. "Spidey too puny!"

"I am not!"

"Shield smash Spidey."

"He would not!"

"Nobody's smashing anybody," Red says. "But you know the best way to fix inside hurts?"

"Smashing?" Spidey asks. (And this is why Hulk likes Spidey.)

"Good food," Red says, flicking Spidey's ear. "We haven't eaten in hours, and I know a place."

"Are they gonna be jerks, too?" Spidey asks, pointing at Hulk.

"Nope."

"Piggy-ride?" Hulk asks.

Red stops. Spidey is smiling under the cloth. "It'll be fu-un," he sings.

Red looks at Hulk, and she looks not good. "I like you, Hulk," she says (and that's good, because Hulk almost got an inside hurt from HER). "I just don't like...jumping."

"You haven't even tried it yet!" Spidey says. "It can't be any worse than flying with Vision."

"Puny jump?" Hulk asks.

Red thinks, then nods. "Puny jump," she says. "It's not that far, anyway. Do you like pizza, Hulk?"

"What pizza?" he asks.

Red and Spidey pause. They look at each other.

"Oh, this is gonna be fun," Spidey says.

Red gets on Hulk's back and wraps her tiny arms around his neck. Spidey gets on top of her, using his sticky fingers to keep her on Hulk's back when he jumps. "Ready!" he cheers.

"I might vomit," Red mutters, but she pokes Hulk's head so he knows where to go.
Red was right. It's only a puny jump to pizza. She screams so loud Hulk doesn't hear anything for a little bit after.

"You're such a baby," Spidey says, helping Red off of Hulk's back.

"Shut up," Red grumbles. She walks funny for a little bit, then goes back to normal. A man comes out of a building that smells very good. He and Red hug and say funny words to each other. The man shakes Spidey's hand, then looks Hulk up and down. He does not look scared.

"Let's fill those empty bellies then, huh?" the man says. "Have a seat, have a seat, and we'll get you two your regulars. What does Mr. Hulk want?"

"The guy's never tried pizza before," Spidey says, sitting on a chair. Red sits with him. Hulk will squish the chair if he sits on it, so he moves it and sits on the ground.

The man tsks. "We can't have that, can we?" He looks at Hulk. "You look like a meat-lover. Probably like chicken."

"Squawky white birds?" Hulk asks. He doesn't eat, most of the time (he turns back into puny Banner and then puny Banner eats for them), but one time he found squawky white birds that puny Banner called "chicken" and ate them.

"Exactly!"

"Yummy," Hulk says.

"Chicken pizza it is. Ah...whole thing?"

"Whole thing," Red agrees.

"Coming right up!" The man goes into the building.

A lady comes out and gives Red and Spidey glass cups of water, and a bucket of it for Hulk. "This is the best we could do," she says, and she smiles at Hulk.

People don't smile at Hulk. Most people are like the other people here, staying away from Hulk and looking scared. This lady is not scared. She is happy.

"Water good," he says. He takes the bucket and drinks. He decides to call the lady Smile.

"You probably don't remember," Smile says, "but you saved my brother's life a little while ago. From Magneto."

Hulk stops. "Bad Metal Man."

"That's him. He threw a car at you guys while my brother was still inside, but you caught it. So, thank you."

Hulk stares at Smile. He doesn't know the words "thank you."

Red pokes his head. *You say 'You're welcome.'*

"Wel-come," Hulk says, testing the new word.

Smile smiles. She goes to give water to the other people, who will never say "thank you" to Hulk.
Red and Spidey are quiet. Spidey's moved the cloth up to his nose so he can drink. "I remember the first time someone actually thanked me for saving their ass," Spidey says. "I almost fell off the building."

"People like Spidey," Hulk argues.

"Yeah, these days," Spidey says. "Didn't start out that way."

Hulk growls.

"Don't worry," Spidey says. "Now they don't hurt me."

The man (Hulk will call him Pizza) comes back with food. He has a bowl of wet rope in white sauce for Red and two circles of food.

"Chicken alfredo for Miss Maximoff, meat lover's deluxe pizza for Mr. Spider-Man, and a chicken pizza for Mr. Hulk," the man says, giving them their food. "Need anything else?"

"Hulk looks like he's out of water," Spidey says, pointing to the empty bucket.

Pizza takes the bucket into the building. Hulk watches Red twirl the rope around a fork and Spidey take a puny bit of his pizza.

"Normally we slice it up, so it's easier to eat," Spidey says. "But since your hands are so big, they didn't do that. You could just take the whole thing and take a bite."

So Hulk takes the whole thing and takes a bite.

"Good!" Hulk says, swallowing the squawky white bird pizza. He is very hungry. He finishes his pizza in four bites.

"Here, try a slice of this," Spidey says, giving him a piece of his pizza. "It's got chicken, steak, pepperoni, sausage and bacon."

Hulk eats the slice. He growls. "Hot."

"Not a fan of spicy food, huh?" Spidey asks. " Weird. Bruce loves that kind of thing."

"Puny Banner stupid," Hulk grumbles. "More pizza?"

"Want more chicken or a different flavor?"

They get a lot of different pizzas. When Spidey finishes his (bad) spicy pizza and Red has finished her wet rope, Hulk's eaten five pizzas and knows he doesn't like four others. Smile also brings him bubble-water, and there's a bunch of different kinds of that, too. Hulk likes Sprite and Grape, but not Coke or Orange. Red agrees. Spidey says he's crazy and drinks orange bubble-water.

Hulk looks between Spidey, Red and their empty plates. He pushes the four not-good pizzas at them. "Red and Spidey puny. Eat more."

"Sweet!" Spidey cheers as Red groans, "Too full." (That's why Red is so puny.)

"There you are!"

Spidey and Red both stiffen. Hulk gives a low growl as Shield runs over to them.
Shield pauses, giving Hulk a wary look, before turning to Red and Spidey. "We were wondering where you disappeared to."

"Just introducing Hulk to pizza," Spidey says, like he doesn't have an inside hurt. (Red and Hulk know better.)

Shield looks at all the empty boxes and bitten (bad) pizzas. "I see that." He rubs the back of his neck. "Spider-Man, can I have a word?"

Hulk is about to get up. He won't let Shield give any more hurts. He'll just jump and drop him at the shiny A-building where they live (then maybe turn into puny Banner; Hulk is tired).

Red pokes his head. *It's good. Shield's going to say sorry. It'll help fix the hurt.*

Hulk relaxes. Spidey and Shield go a little ways away so no one can hear them. Shield can give hurts, but he can also fix them, too.

Hulk can hear some of their words: "I'm sorry, that was way out of line. You never endanger those around you, I know that."

"Dude, I'm not that only one you need to be apologizing to..."

"I take it this is all on Mr. Stark's tab?" Pizza asks, looking at their mess.

"Twenty percent tip," Red says with a smile. "Thank you."

"Hey, having the Avengers for customers is the best form of free advertising." Pizza points a finger at Hulk. "Just don't go smashing my restaurant."

"No smash pizza-building," Hulk agrees. He doesn't like smashing buildings, anyway. People get very mad at him. But sometimes he has to, otherwise the Bad Things keep hurting his friends.

"Hulk?"

Shield and Spidey are back. Spidey's arms are crossed. Shield looks like he has an inside hurt.

Did Spidey give Shield an inside hurt now? Hulk should take one of them very VERY far away, maybe to Tin Man's other building (in Mal-ee-bu).

"I'm sorry," Shield says.

...Hulk is confused.

"I didn't realize..." Shield says. "Um...I get it now, that you won't ever hurt one of the other Avengers. I'm sorry I didn't realize it sooner."

Hulk snorts. "Stupid sorry. Hulk smash Lullaby on flying boat."

Shield blinks. Then he gives a sad smile. "But you won't do that again."

"No smash friends."

It's supposed to make Shield happy. But he looks sadder now.

Hulk turns to Spidey. "Why Spidey give Shield inside hurt?"
Spidey sputters. He holds up his hands. "I didn't do anything! I just told him you weren't as mean as everyone says you are!"

Hulk growls.

"He's going to take one of you to Malibu unless you get along," Red says.

"Do you even know where Malibu is?" Spidey asks.

"Hulk find it," Hulk says, reading for Spidey.

Spidey darts back. "Okay, okay! Steve, I'm sorry if I was a jerk while telling you that you were being a jerk."

"Forgiven," Shield says, and now he's smiling. (He's smiling! And Spidey's smiling! Hulk fixed it!) "We need to get back to the Tower, and then we're going to need Bruce back."

"Good. Hulk tired," he grumbles. "Piggy-ride?"

"I'm going with Vision this time," Red says, scrambling back.

"Suit yourself," Spidey says, jumping on Hulk's back.

Shield frowns at Red, who's giving him a big smile (because she knows Hulk's head). Shield looks at Hulk, who's grinning.

He thinks too slow. As Shield says, "Wait--" Hulk grabs Shield and jumps.

Shield screams louder than Red. But when they get to the shiny A-building, he's laughing with Spidey.

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Bruce finished making breakfast for the Avengers who hadn't left the Tower already, or weren't holed up in their lab. Natasha was gone for a morning SHIELD meeting (such a shame; Bruce loved snuggling with her on lazy mornings), but Wanda and Steve had nothing planned today, and Peter was dozing over his textbooks on the kitchen counter. Bruce winced. Sometimes he missed college. Not today.

"Breakfast!" he called, summoning Wanda and Steve.

Peter groaned, curling himself tighter. "Bruce, can you invent a time-turner like Hermione so I can go back in time and sleep?"

"You'd have better luck asking Tony. He's the mechanic."

"Time-travel is physics."

Bruce paused in filling the plates. "...very true. Until then, you get good old-fashioned coffee."

"Four sugars, please," Peter mumbled.

Bruce set all the plates on the counter. By the time Steve and Wanda came in, he had Peter's coffee ready, too, and even managed to get the boy sitting upright.

"Whoa, that's a lot of food," Peter said.
Bruce looked at the plates and blinked. Steve's was a mountain of eggs, hash browns and bacon, as was expected of a super-soldier. He'd given Wanda and Peter even more.

"That...I don't know what I was thinking. I'm sorry," Bruce said, blushing.

Steve, at least, looked as confused as Bruce. Both Wanda and Peter looked like they were trying not to laugh.

Bruce was almost afraid to ask. "What?"

"Nothing," Wanda said with a grin, taking her massive plate of food that weighed half as much as she did. "Thanks for looking out for us, Bruce."
Hulk comes out so fast, he's not sure why he's here, or why he's hugging Tin Man.

But then something goes BOOM behind him. Bits of glass and metal bounce off of Hulk's skin. Something's burning.

"Tin Man stupid," Hulk grumbles.

Tin Man sputters. "What makes you think it's MY fault?!"

"Tin Man always make big booms."

"That...okay, yes, that's a fair assessment. But Bruce and I could've handled it!"

"Tin Man not in metal. Tin Man squishy, so Hulk here." Hulk picks him up and carries him out of the room on fire. When he sees what else is in the room, he moves faster. He doesn't like the Living Metal Things or the screens or the com-pu-ters. The Bad Man had a lot of those.

Hulk sets Tin Man in the hall. Waters comes from the ceiling in the room to get rid of the fire while Lullaby and Hammer run in. They stop in front of Hulk and Tin Man.

"What happened?" Lullaby asked.

"Tin Man stupid," Hulk says.

"Ah."

"It was just a slight miscalculation. Nothing horrible," Tin Man says.

Something else in the room goes BOOM. Lullaby raises an eyebrow at Tin Man.

"Nothing that isn't covered by insurance," Tin Man says.

Hammer laughs and smacks Hulk's arm. "Thank you for taking care of our comrade, good friend. 'Tis no easy task!"

Hulk grins. Hammer called him "friend."

The fire is all gone, and the water stops. Hulk can see the room is a LOT like the Bad Man's.

"Hulk?" Lullaby asks. "Are you okay?"

"Look like Bad Man's room," Hulk says. He wants to smash it.

Tin Man goes very still and quiet. Lullaby looks like she wants to shoot something with her bang-stick.

Hammer tugs him away from the room. "Whenever evil memories plague me, I find that a playful spar clears me head."

"A spar?" Lullaby asks, sounding nervous. (Hulk hates it when she sounds nervous. She sounds like that when she thinks he's going to smash her and that will never ever happen.)

"Spar?" Hulk also asks, because he does not know this word.
Hammer thinks for a minute. "It's...practice smashing."

Hulk grins.

"You'll want the Hulk room," Tin Man says, also grinning. "Problem is, it's right beneath us, and there's no way Big Green here's gonna fit in the elevator, or the stairs. And no smashing a hole through my floor!"

Hulk groans. He wants to smash.

"Hey, FRIDAY," Tin Man calls, looking up. "Get Vision here, would you?"

"And tell Peter to get to the Hulk room," Lullaby says.

"Sure thing, boss."

Hulk growls, looking up. He does not know that voice, and he doesn't know where it is.

"It's okay," Lullaby says. "That's just FRIDAY. She's a friend of ours."

"Where FRIDAY?" Hulk growls.

"She...lives in the walls," Lullaby says.

"Good to meet you, Hulk," FRIDAY says. "Please don't smash my floors; I just had 'em cleaned."

Hulk does not smash the floors. But only because Jewel floats up from the floor. "Have we been attacked?" he asks.

"What the hell are you wearing?" Tin Man asks. "You look like a blueberry."

"These are my pajamas," Jewel says. "It IS past midnight, Tony."

"...oh. Really?"

"We'd like to go to the Hulk room," Lullaby says. "Me, Hulk and Thor."

"Get me there, too," Tin Man says. "I wanna see this."

"Certainly."

The floor eats Hulk, and spits him out in the Hulk room. He roars. He did NOT like that.

"Rough night?"

Hulk looks down. He's not wearing red and blue on his face, but Hulk knows Spidey's voice.

Jewel, Lullaby, Tin Man and Hammer come through the ceiling and land on the floor. Jewel leaves. Lullaby smiles at Hulk, so he knows it's all right, and goes to Spidey. "You're taking a break from homework to spar."

"Thank God," Spidey grumbles, and attacks Lullaby.

Hulk doesn't know what to do. Lullaby and Spidey are fighting! One of them is going to smash the other...

Hammer pats Hulk's arm. "It is merely practice," Hammer says. He's very calm. "You see, the Man
of Spiders is young and has much to learn. So he goes to the Lady Natasha, who is a great warrior and who can teach him. See?

Lullaby wins, pinning Spidey down.

"This wouldn't happen if you let me use my web-shooters," Spidey says.

"Yes, it would," Lullaby says.

"Yeah, it would..."

They both get up, and start again.

"This makes the Man of Spiders a better warrior," Hammer says. "So when the time comes when he faces an enemy, he stands a better chance of winning. Do you understand?"

Hulk thinks so. "Play-smash friends, better-smash Bad Things?"

"Ten points to Big Green," Tin Man cheers.

"Hulk not play-smash friends," Hulk says. "Will hurt friends."

Hammer smiles. "You won't hurt me. I wager that I am an even better smasher than you are."

Hulk rounds on Hammer, because NO ONE is better at smashing than Hulk.

"Before you prove Hammer here wrong," Tin Man says, and he's not smiling or being funny. "Just a quick thing: if he says 'yield' or 'stop,' you stop, all right? Same goes the other way: if you want him to stop, say so and he'll stop."

Hulk nods. It's not real smashing, it's just play-smashing.

Hammer is very good at play-smashing. Hulk is glad he's a friend and not a Bad Thing. Smashing him for real would be VERY hard.

"What the hell is going on here?"

Shield and Metal Arm come in just as Hammer smashes Hulk to the ground (ow). Hulk gets up and grins. "Play-smash."

"We are introducing our friend to sparring," Hammer says, patting Hulk's arm. "Would you like to join us?"

"Oh! Teams!" Spidey cheers. He uses a sticky string to swing through the room and land on Hulk's back. "I call Hulk's team!"

"Same," Lullaby says.

"Come on, Cap," Tin Man says. "Three on three? You, Robocop and Thor against Big Green, Mrs. Green and Bug-Brain?"

"Mrs. Green?" Lullaby asks, raising an eyebrow. (Hulk knows that eyebrow. It's her smash eyebrow.)

"Green for the eyes," Tin Man says quickly.
"Uh-huh."

Shield thinks for a minute. Metal Arm nudges him. "He can't really hurt the three of us."

"True." Shield rolls his shoulders and grins. "All right, let's do this."

Bruce woke up in the Hulk Room with a crick in his neck and an armful of beautiful assassin.

He immediately searched for damage. Natasha didn't have a scratch on her, but there were a few dents in the walls and floor.

Natasha groaned, curling into him. "'s too early."

"It's nine in the morning," someone yawned.

Bruce craned his neck. Steve was getting up and stretching. Bucky ran his fingers through his hair with a groan from the floor. Thor was curled up under his red cloak and Tony was passed out next to him.

"What happened?" Bruce asked.

"Tony was an idiot, Hulk saved him, we sparred," Natasha said.

Bruce said bolt upright, displacing a disgruntled Natasha. "You did WHAT?"

"What is going on?" someone else yawned.

Bruce looked up. In the corner of the ceiling, Peter had made a hammock-cocoon-bed out of webs. He was rubbing his eyes, blearily looking down at them.

"I'm getting coffee," Natasha muttered, standing. She winced as she did it. "Dammit, James."

"Don't give me that. With the shit you pulled on me, even my metal arm is throbbing," Bucky shot back.

"Oh, don't be such a baby," Steve said, helping Bucky to his feet.

Bruce, still horribly confused, slowly stood up. Nobody had any cuts or broken bones, though Steve and Bucky were sporting some impressive bruises. Besides the fact that Hulk had obviously been present, it seemed like the normal aftermath of a sparring session.

"Ah, shit!" Peter jumped down on the floor and sprinted out. "Late for class gotta go love ya!"

"...okay, one thing I really don't understand," Bruce said, while Natasha and Steve poked Tony and Thor awake. "Why did everyone fall asleep in here?"

"Oh, that just sort of...happened," Bucky said. "Hulk got tired around two in the morning. A few of us had already started to doze off--why do you think Peter set up a nest way up there?"

"Ah, my friend!" Thor cheered, swallowing Bruce in a hug. "You are indeed a worthy opponent! We should practice again sometime! But first, a morning feast to start a new day."

Bruce was still dazed, and confused, and convinced that everyone in this room was batshit insane. But he let Thor pull him out of the Hulk room while Hulk hummed happily in the back of his mind.
Birdie and Metal Arm

Chapter Notes

Some swearing here. No apologies.

Birdie is bleeding.

Birdie is bleeding, and Hulk CANNOT FIX IT.

(Because Hulk is only good at smashing Bad Things, sometimes he smashes Good Things, and he's no good at fixing things. Only puny Banner can do that.)

These new Bad Things are big, with lots and lots of legs and they came from a "por-tall" and started smashing the shiny buildings. They're hard to smash, too. Even with all the play-smashing Hulk and his friends have done, smashing these Bad Things is hard. Hammer and Tin Man and Red are the best at it, because they make things go BOOM. Some of Birdie's sticks do that, too. And he should have been safe, he was so far up that the Bad Thing couldn't reach him.

Except the Bad Things did reach him, because some of them have wings and they flew up and smashed Birdie and knocked him off. Spidey caught him before he hit the ground. But he's still bleeding, still hurt, and he won't wake up. There is red red red everywhere.

"I need medical, stat," Shield says. He and Spidey are trying to fix Birdie, but they're not very good at it. Spidey's sticky string only stops a little bleeding. It turns red right away. Lullaby might be able to fix it, but she's too far (Hulk knows because Red is in his head and tells him where everyone is, and she's mad because Birdie's hurt and she's making a lot more BOOMs, which Hulk likes even though he doesn't like why).

Hammer can't fix it. Tin Man can't fix it. Red can't fix it. They're smashing the Bad Things.

Metal Arm can't fix it. Jewel can't fix it. Hulk can't fix it.

Puny Banner can fix it.

Hulk can feel him in his head. He wants to come out. He knows something's wrong. All Hulk has to do is go to sleep.

But there are so many Bad Things. They need to be smashed, or else more of Hulk's friends will get hurt. They're smashing the buildings, and they might smash Pizza and Smile's building (and hurt them, too, which Hulk really doesn't want to happen because they like Hulk and it's so hard to find people who like Hulk).

Birdie needs to be fixed NOW.
The Bad Things need to be smashed NOW.

Hulk doesn't know what to do.

But Shield! Shield always knows what to do.
Hulk steps up to Shield. "Hulk or Banner?" he asks.

Shield frowns. "What?"

Hulk huffs. "Hulk or Banner?"

Shield stares at him. He looks at Spidey. "ETA on medical?"

"They're saying eight minutes," Spidey says. He sounds scared.

"Banner," Shield says.

Hulk closes his eyes.

--

Bruce woke up, and the fighting was still raging around him.

"What the hell...?" This had never happened before. Hulk never left until after the fighting was done. There was a sick churning in his gut, helplessness and fear and rage, everything the Other Guy fed off of. And yet there was the oddest sense of satisfaction...

"Bruce!" Peter called.

Bruce looked up. Steve and Peter both looked shell-shocked, staring at him with wide eyes (he could tell even through the mask). They were kneeling over Clint, who was covered in blood.

"Jesus," he breathed, and ran to help Clint.

--

Bruce managed to keep Clint together until medical was on the edge of the fight, as close as they could get. Tony then carried him over, moving faster than anyone else on the team.

The spider-like aliens from another realm were still in the streets, still terrorizing civilians and destroying buildings.

Steve looked at him. "Think you can call the Other Guy back?"

Bruce gave a vicious grin. Because right now? Covered in Clint's blood and surrounded by the things that had caused it? There was nothing he'd rather do than let the Other Guy out.

--

Hulk smashes the last ugly Bad Thing, tearing off its wings and throwing it in the slimy water (Hudsun, Tin Man calls it).

Red is still in his head, and tells him everyone is safe, even though they're far apart from each other (the Bad Things were everywhere so they had to go everywhere). He sees a picture of Lullaby asking, "Bruce?"

"He's okay," Red says in the picture.

"Good." Lullaby goes to find Birdie.

Hulk is with Metal Arm, which is funny. Metal Arm's usually with Shield. He always stays away
from Hulk. But now he looks at Hulk and could touch him, he's so close. "You okay?"

Hulk snorts. "No hurt." He shuffles his feet. "Want Birdie fixed."

"He'll be fine," Metal Arm says. "He's a tough one. And you did the right thing, switching to
Banner. He needed the help."

Hulk growls.

Metal Arm stiffens. He looks ready to run, or smash. He stays. "What?"

"Hulk smash," he says. "Not fix."

"I don't understand," Metal Arm says.

"Hulk want fix!" he roars, and smashes the ground. It shakes their feet. Metal Arm almost falls, but
doesn't.

Metal Arm goes to a pile of rocks and sits on it. He looks at Hulk, and shows him his shiny arm.
"See this? Do you remember when I had a different one?"

Hulk snorts. "First shiny arm bad. New shiny arm good."

"The first arm was made by...some very bad people. I didn't want it. But they forced me to use it to
kill people. Um...bad smashing."

Hulk growls.

Metal Arm chuckles, but it's a sad and angry sound. "Everyone says it's not my fault. Even Stark
says it now. I had no control over the situation, I was brainwashed, I was tortured, yadda yadda
yadda. Doesn't feel that way, though."

Hulk thinks. "Metal Arm...get inside hurt?"

"That...yeah, that's one way to put it," Metal Arm says. "Steve...er, Shield, he helped me get away
from them. Stark gave me a new arm. This one." He waves his new shiny arm. It's gold, like Tin
Man, while the other one was silver. "I still use it for the same basic thing: killing people. Smashing.
It's what I'm good for. The only thing I know how to do.

"What I'm trying to say is, I can't fix things, either."

Hulk doesn't say anything. Metal Arm's inside hurt is mostly fixed, but it's still bleeding a little.

"But," Metal Arm says, "some people just aren't meant for that. Some people are just meant to
destroy things. And that's okay, because some things need to be destroyed. Like the ugly sons of
bitches that hurt Cli--Birdie. Do you want to fix the Bad Things?"


"And who's better at protecting our friends: Hulk or Banner?"

"Hulk."

Metal Arm smiled. "Me, too."
It took Clint three days to wake up, three days that included extensive surgery and far too many cups of coffee consumed by Tony. Not that Bruce had a leg to stand on at that one; he did the same thing while sitting next to Clint's bedside.

He'd sent Natasha home to shower and sleep. She'd still had rubble in her hair. Bruce supposed he should've been jealous, or concerned at the behavior. He was the boyfriend, after all, not Clint.

Yeah, right. Like Clint and Natasha would ever be a thing. Not with Laura and the kids and over a decade of sibling-like love in there.

And besides, everyone else was showing the same level of worry and devotion. They'd just had the rotten luck of getting bullied into showering, eating and taking a nap first.

So as luck would have it, Bruce and Bucky were in the room when Clint woke up.

"Sonofabitch," Clint rasped.

Bruce got the water, sticking the straw in Clint's mouth. "Welcome back to the land of the living. Your wife's furious."

Clint groaned. "Dammit. Who caught me?"

"Peter."

Clint winced. "Fucking karma."

Bucky raised a questioning eyebrow.

Clint waved it away. "There was a...thing, before you showed up. 'Lot of us gave him crap and said he was shit at Avenging. Then he busted out of a Hydra base with you and Wanda like a boss."

"Funny how that works." Bucky tipped his head at Bruce. "You've got him to thank, too. He kept you stabilized until the docs showed up."

Bruce felt heat rush to his face. Being thanked for helping, something he did naturally even as he brought destruction, was still uncomfortable.

Clint frowned. "I thought we'd called a Code Green right out of the gates."

"He de-Hulked."

Clint jerked forward. "What--ow!"

"Stay down, you idiot," Bucky ordered, at the same time Bruce said, "I'm as surprised as you are! That's never happened before."

"Well, don't let it happen again!" Clint ordered. "That's fucking dangerous!"

"We had it handled," Bucky said. "Hulk and Steve made the call. As soon as you were squared away, Hulk came back. And since you're the only one lying in a hospital bed, you don't get to say jack shit."

Clint glared at him, then at Bruce. "Don't let the Other Guy do that again."

Bruce thought about it for a second. "Actually...I kinda trust his judgement on this one."
The next time Hulk comes out, he looks at his friends first, instead of the Bad Things. Shield's telling them all what to do, Red and Lullaby are smashing, Spidey's sticking to glass walls, and Tin Man and Hammer and Jewel have already flown off.

"Hawkeye," Shield says, "standard procedure."

"Shoot things and look pretty," Birdie says, grinning with shiny white teeth. "Got it. I'll be on the-- gah!"

Hulk picks Birdie up by the back of his shirt and glares at him. He pokes him in the chest. "Birdie keep red INSIDE."

Birdie stares at Hulk, then huffs. "Fine. God, you're worse than my wife."

"Birdie-wife smart." Hulk sets Birdie down and turns to Shield. "Smash?"

"Smash," Shield says. "Spidey wants to play baseball."

Hulk grins. He jumps to give Spidey a piggy-ride.
From WOC: May Parker knows about Peter being Spider-Man (there's one line near the end that doesn't make sense unless you know that).

It HURTS.

Hulk doesn't know how, or why. But he suddenly has a LOT of outside hurts.

The Bad Things this time are people who do funny things like Red. One of them make lots of Bad Things with stingers suddenly appear. Another flies around and shoot fire. And another has little dolls.

Hulk was about to smash her. Then she picked up a big green doll and broke the arm.

And then Hulk's arm went SNAP and he screamed.

And a lot of the smashing stopped. And Tin Man sad something bad and Shield didn't yell at him for it. Because Hulk doesn't get outside hurts, but his arm was all floppy and useless and it HURT.

"Lay down your arms," the Bad Woman said, "Or I snap his neck."

Shield threw his shield at her.

Hulk ran forward to smash with his good arm (he only needed one). But the Bad Woman ducked the shield and did something to the doll and now Hulk's leg is floppy and useless and hurt and he can't stand.

And he has to stand. He has to get up and smash because his friends are smashing and they might get hurt if Hulk's not there to protect them and--

"Stay down," Lullaby says. She's kneeling next to his head with her hands on his cheeks (they're so little on his face). He growls. She doesn't move, or look nervous. "Stay down. We've got it."

Red's in his head, too. She's trying to get him calm, too. But that's hard because she is so SO angry and scared because he's hurt and Hulk doesn't get hurt and--

"Ha! The summoner has fallen!" Hammer roars. Hulk has to turn his head to see that one of the Bad People--the one bringing in the Bad Things with stingers--is all smashed in the ground.

"You'll pay for that!" the Bad Woman yells. She takes the doll--

And it flies out of her hands, pulled by sticky string. Spidey grabs it and swings away. "I got it!"

The Bad Person with fire turns and shoots fire at Spidey. Spidey can't move out of the way. He turns, hugging the doll and putting the fire at his back. He's going to get hurt--

Jewel grabs him before he gets burned and they disappear into the ground. They pop out a little ways away. Spidey takes the doll and swings away. Jewel goes to help Red.
The Bad Woman reaches for another doll on the table. She screams when a pointy stick gets stuck in her arm, shot by Birdie. Metal Arm grabs her and pins her down.

The fiery Bad Person and Red and Jewel are still fighting. Tin Man flies up behind the Bad Person and shoots him with his glowing hands. The Bad Person crashes to the ground by Hulk's feet.

Shield hisses, coming up to Hulk. "Get medical and Banner. Those look bad."

"Hulk," Lullaby says, "all the Bad Things are gone. Go to sleep. It won't hurt anymore."

The Bad Things are gone. His friends are safe. Hulk closes his eyes.

--

Bruce woke up in medical two days later. His team was packed into the room with him, all of them asleep. (That was nothing short of the Eight Wonder of the World, considering the two super-soldiers, Norse god and android built like bodybuilders, plus five other teammates plus Bruce in the bed.) Natasha was holding his hand. Peter had set up his web-cocoon in the corner of the ceiling, curled around a big green voodoo doll wrapped in spiderwebs and washcloths for padding.

Later, he'd hear about how Vision made sure someone was with him at all times so he wouldn't wake up alone in a hospital that looked too much like a lab.

He'd hear about how Vision needn't have bothered. Natasha only left his side to change and shower once.

He'd hear about how Wanda kept everyone fed, and called an Italian pizza place for delivery once he woke up. (Even though they didn't deliver. They also refused payment.)

He'd hear about how it took Tony, Wanda, Steve, and May Parker DAYS to convince Peter to let go of the voodoo doll. He's hear about how Tony kept it in the most secure safe in Avenger's Tower, where he'd used to keep his spare arc reactor. And he'd hear about how Thor risked a century of imprisonment to go back to Asgard and find a sorcerer to break the spell on the voodoo doll, so it'd never hurt Hulk again.

He'd hear Bucky's lecture and Clint's ruthless teasing about how Hulk got hurt and hear the unspoken "You scared the shit out of us, don't do that again, we love you" underneath. And he'd hear how Steve reamed the doctors out to the point of tears when they suggested restraining Bruce, out of fear for the Hulk.

But he didn't need all of that to feel loved. And safe.

So Bruce smiled and went back to sleep.

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