This fanfic takes place shortly after the end of the Civil War of the MCU. Natasha realizes that she has more feelings for Steve than just friendship, but she realizes it a little too late, Steve and Sharon have already started a relationship. One night, Natasha ends up not resisting and invests in Steve, the two kiss and have a torrid love night, but the next day Natasha realizes that it was a mistake and decides to disappear to not to interrupt Steve's happiness.
Chapter 1

S: Maria, I need to talk to you alone.

Steve and Maria remained in the meeting room after all the other Avengers and SHIELD Agents left. Maria Hill folded her arms and stood up, staring Steve.

Steve approached her.

S: Maria, where's Natasha?

H: Oh my God, how many times do I have to say? I don’t know!

S: Well, I don’t believe you. You're her closest person, she wasn’t going to disappear without telling you where she was heading.

H: Yes, she would, she's done this before. She must have gotten herself into some trouble and needed to change her identity.

S: So you think she's in trouble?

H: Probably, but she knows how to deal with her own stuff, she's an adult, Captain.

S: We are friends of her, she should have come to us.

H: She's a spy, she prefers acting alone.

S: I know, but…

H: Forget it, Steve, just go take care of your engagement.

S: I'm just worried.

H: Well, don’t be.

S: How not? It's been two years since I last saw her.

H: Me too, but it's not the first time she's gone. Trust me, she's fine.

S: Even with all the imminent risk of this War, she doesn’t come to help us? Doesn’t she care to know if we are fine or not?

H: If the war happens, you can be sure that she will come.

The two heard knocks on the door, and Fury opened the door and looked at Maria.

Fury: You know I hate waiting.

H: Sorry, boss, Rogers wanted to talk with me.

Hill looked at Steve.
H: Are we done here?

S: Yes.

Hill left the room with Nick Fury, and before the door closed, an agent grabbed the door and entered the meeting room, she walked over to Steve Rogers and gave him a long kiss. Steve looked her and smiled.


S: Nothing, it's just this war.

Sharon: Well, speaking of that, it's good that our marriage happens before this war.

S: It will happen.

Sharon: Really? You haven’t set a date yet, and you always have a reason to delay.

S: It's the missions, Sharon.

Sharon: I know.

S: There’s a lot going on but I promise you as soon as possible.

Steve smiled and Sharon smiled back, Steve bent down and kissed Sharon's belly.

S: How is he?

Sharon: She... is fine.

Steve looked up to meet Sharon's eyes.

S: She? It’s a girl? Really?

Sharon: Yes. I couldn’t hold my curiosity and I looked at the test result.

Steve smiled again and kissed Sharon's belly again.

S: That's wonderful.

Sharon: I thought of a name.

S: Which one?

Sharon: Margaret Carter Rogers. Maggie Rogers.

Steve undid his smile a little and nodded.

Sharon: You didn’t like it.

S: No, it's just that I remembered your aunt...

Sharon: Damn, I'm sorry.

S: All right. I need to see Tony, I'll see you later.
Steve gave Sharon one more kiss and left the meeting room.

Steve and Sharon didn’t have time to marry before the war imploded. No one understands how a single being, managed to exterminate half of the population of Earth in just two months. The whole planet was living under threat and ruins. Heroes from all corners of the planet and off the planet were communicating, to get together somewhere and discuss the best possible solution to end this Thanos War.

The place chosen for the meeting was planet Earth, which had been less impacted by the Thanos attack, and one of the most distant from where Thanos was at the moment.

Thor, Loki, Sif and 3-year-old Torunn were the first extraterrestrial heroes to arrive at the base of the Avengers.

New base because the old one was destroyed in the attack, and Tony had already planned the construction of three huge bunkers scattered around the planet and he spread the heroes and their families through these three bunkers. Each bunker has a capacity for 900 people, they housed the heroes, their family and civilians. And yes, the new base was just a bunker under the ground.

There was a bunker in Africa, one in the U.S. and another bunker at the South Pole. SHIELD and the Avengers with their families stayed in the U.S. bunker, but today they were getting more guests.

Steve Rogers, Sharon Carter and Sam Wilson were at the reception.

A little plane landed near the bunker and a bald man was the first to land in a wheelchair. Sharon looked at him, then looked at Steve.

Sharon: That's Professor Xavier.

S: I figured that.

Sam: We'll have mutants here, you know? That’s so dope! He ... Who's that goddess in leather?

Sharon: That's Ororo, better known as Storm.

Sam: Wow and what about that guy who looks so angry?

Sharon: That's Logan, we call him Wolverine.

Sam: JESUS CHRIST, WHAT'S THAT?

Sharon: It's Hank, or Beast.

Sam: How bizarre, man.

Professor Xavier approached the entrance, Steve shake his hand.

S: Professor.

Charles Xavier: Captain.

S: It’s a pleasure.
Sharon: Me and Sam will help you all settle in, follow me.

Steve greeted Hank and Ororo. He smiled at Logan, who grunted some strange sound.

O: Don’t care about him, he's in a bad mood.

Ororo looked back.

O: Girls, come on.

Steve looked at the two young women, laughing and whispering to each other as they looked at him.

S: Hello.

They both laughed and passed by Steve with heads down.

O: Kitty and Jubilee are the youngest and... silly.

S: I noticed.

Steve said with good humor.

O: This is Rogue.

S: Hello.

Steve reached out to greet Rogue, but she remained with her arms folded.

Sam: Uh, does she suck blood? Should I wear a scarf?

O: She no longer uses her baptismal name, she prefers to be called Rogue, because she can absorb the powers of whom she touches.

Sam: And if the person has no powers?

O: So, she absorbs the person's life. So don’t touch her. And those are Scott Summer, Jean Gray, Nightcrawler and Bobby.

After everybody entered the bunker, Steve was still talking to Ororo on the hall.

S: I heard you have many students.

O: Yes, but we also had some bunkers and we prefer to spread out there and I don’t intend to stay long here, I intend to go to Africa’s Bunker to stay with my husband.

S: Oh yes, I heard about you and T'Chala. Congratulations on your wedding.

O: Thanks, Captain. I wish our honeymoon happened in a different situation, but...

S: I understand.

O: Excuse me.

Ororo walked away and Sam approached Steve.
Sam: Damn it! They’re never single.

... 

After everyone settled in, and had a meeting to establish rules of coexistence in the bunker, everyone went to sleep.

When the day dawned, Steve woke up next to Sharon in bed and noticed an early movement in the hall outside their room.

Steve got dressed and left the room.

Clint was in the hallway with his wife Laura and their three children, Lila, Cooper and Francis.

Lila: Uncle Steve!

S: Hi. Good morning.

Lila: Auntie Nat's back!!!

Steve frowned and looked at Clint, who nodded.

S: I wasn’t informed that someone has arrived.

C: It's Natasha, Captain, everyone only knew when she was already here.

S: Where is she?

C: In the meeting room, with Hill, Tony, Bruce and Thor. I'm going there, are you coming?

S: Yes.

Steve looked at Sharon asleep and closed the bedroom door, Clint and Steve made their way to the meeting room.

As the door of the meeting room opened, Natasha glanced at it and smiled when she saw Clint Barton coming in and broke her smile at the sight of Steve entering just after.

Steve and Natasha looked at each other for a long time, not smiling, not saying anything.

Despite his missing her and all the concern he had for Natasha, Steve was upset that she had vanished from nowhere, and just after they had had a love night, only one, which neither of them expected to happen, since they were friends and Steve was already dating Sharon, at that time.

Natasha was the first to look away and looked ahead.

T: How did you survive alone out there?

N: I had to survive and I wasn’t alone.

S: Bucky was with you, did he come back with you?

Natasha looked at Steve and made negative with her head. Steve soon got worried, wondering if Bucky had been killed in any of the attacks.
N: But he's fine, he’s ok. He just decided to stay in the South Pole bunker, I couldn’t stay there anymore, it was too cold.

C: What are you talking about, Russian? You were born to be cold.

N: I know, but I had other reasons to not be able to stay in the cold anymore.

S: I'm glad you're safe.

Natasha and Steve looked at each other again.

Someone knocked on the door and Hill recognized the face.

H: Yes, Agent Simmons?

Jemma: I'm sorry, director Hill. It's just that… He's crying too much.

Tony: Who?

Jemma walked into the meeting room, holding a baby in her lap. The baby seemed to have one year and a half.

Everyone frowned, confused, no one recognizes this child. Jemma placed the baby on Natasha’s lap, who held him and kissed his forehead.

N: It's okay, honey. Mommy's here.

Tony spat the coffee he was drinking on Thor's shoulder.

T: Excuse me?

C: Mommy???
Natasha looked at Clint and sighed, then she looked at her son and tucked him in her lap, wrapping him more protectively. Natasha stroked the baby's head and kissed the side of his forehead.

N: It's okay, I'm here. Don’t cry anymore.

Clint: Mommy?

Tony: Ehhh...

Tony just made that sound, looking startled at Natasha.

Natasha looked briefly at Steve and he was completely surprised, she didn’t know if it was a positive reaction or not.

T: Ehhh... She's with a baby... Okay, Nat is with a baby but... Isn’t that dangerous for the baby? Is the baby alive? Is the baby real?

N: He's fine, he's my son.

C: Son?

Natasha looked at Clint again and he was getting more and more surprised and angry at the same time. Natasha took a deep breath and clearly thought about explaining this to Clint, but she didn’t want to do it in front of everyone.

C: Am I the last to know about you having a baby?

N: Clint, I... I could not tell you, I didn’t know...

C: You’d certainly would manage to tell me, Natasha. How did you survived out there with him? You two walking outside alone? I would have helped.

N: I know that.

Clint shook his head negatively.

T: Are you sure it's yours? I'm not very sure...

Thor: He has fire hair like hers.

T: Is he mine?

Natasha frowned and looked Tony.

N: How could he be yours, Tony?

T: I don’t know, we never...?

N: Not even in your dreams.

T: I wouldn’t say that, I dream a lot with you.
Natasha sighed and rolled her eyes.

H: Tony, Natasha needs a room for her and her son.

T: Of course. Hey Dorito, do we still have any room available?

S: No, but we'll find a way.

T: She should have warned that she would arrive and even more bringing one more with her, things doesn’t work that way.

C: Stop being insensitive, Tony.

T: I’m not being insensitive, but many people want to get in here too and she just appears here out of nowhere... People will complain and they will be right about it.

H: Do you want her to stay outside with a baby?

T: Of course not.

S: What Tony is saying is that we have a protocol to follow.

Wanda: And don’t forget that when we were arrested during Civil War, she left.

N: Well, I'm here now. I had my reasons to leave, but if you want to arrest me now. You can arrest me. Go ahead.

S: No one will arrest you, Natasha. And no one will put you or your son out. But I just wish you had stayed.

Bruce: I'm surprised.

N: I'm surprised to see you too, Doctor Banner.

Bruce: I'm sorry, Natasha.

N: There's nothing to apologize now. I followed with my life as you can see.

S: I'm going to relocate some members to be together, and you'll have a room just for you and your... son.

Steve stammered to say “son”, it was very surreal Natasha reappear so long after and with a son. He could never imagine her as a mother.
Two hours later, Steve got a room for Natasha, he himself led her into her room. On the way, Natasha and Steve remained in silence, a very awkward silence.

When they reached the bedroom door, Steve opened the door for her to get in with her baby.

Natasha came in and put her son on the carpet, Steve looked at him and then at Natasha.

S: *It's a small room, I know.*

N: *That's enough for us. Thank you.*

Steve nodded and he didn’t notice Sharon Carter approaching, he just felt her hugging his waist for behind. Steve turned to see her and then stood beside her.

S: *Sharon... Natasha is back.*

Sharon looked at Natasha, who looked back at her and then at Sharon's belly.

Sharon: *I heard about it. What a surprise, Romanoff. And you had a child, that's... amazing, I mean it’s wonderful. He can play with our Maggie, or even date her.*

Sharon laughed with a good humor.

Sharon: *How old is he?*

N: *One and a half.*

Sharon: *Awwwn and he's so gorgeous and redheaded just like you. Is his father here?*

N: *No.*

Steve looked at Natasha, he has no idea who is the father of her baby.

Sharon hold Steve’s hand.

Sharon: *Come on, Hon. I'm hungry.*

S: *Right.*

Steve looked to Natasha.

S: *Meals are at 8 am, noon and 7 pm. I'll include your name there. Babies have food priority, any time it’s needed, feel free go to the kitchen.*

Steve and Sharon left.

Natasha closed the door and looked at her son, she sat on the carpet next to him and stroked his curls.

N: *Do you want your toy?*

Natasha reached for the small luggage and picked up James's bite, she handed it to him and heard knocks on the door.

N: *It’s open.*
Clint Barton came in and closed the door.

Natasha’s son looked to Clint and immediately ran into Natasha's lap. He was afraid of Clint, because everyone for him is new and he gets scared easily.

C: A son?

Natasha sighed and she was too lazy to explain herself, it was easier to get everyone that matters together and explain it at once, and she decided that only three people deserved to hear her explanations: Hill, Clint and Steve.

N: I couldn’t warn anybody.

C: Not even me?

Natasha made negative with her head.

C: I would have helped.

N: I know. I needed to stay away, when I left I didn’t even know I was pregnant.

C: Where have you been?

N: I went back to Russia. He was born there and soon I had to move. Bucky helped me.

C: Is he the father?

N: He doesn’t have a father.

C: Tasha...

N: All you need to know is that he's my son.

C: Hey there, baby. My son must be the same age as you.

N: Francis?

C: How do you know his name?

N: Hill.

C: That fucking cow! Did she have contact with you? She didn’t say anything.

Clint looked at James.

C: Why is he so scared?

N: When we were in Russia, KGB found me, and they took him away from me. Bucky helped to get him back and we fled together.

C: I thought he was hibernating.

N: Me too.

C: I hope you can count on us to help you raise this kid.
Clint stayed all morning with Natasha talking about what happened outside the bunker, and at lunchtime he took Natasha and her son into the dining hall.

L: Natasha.

N: Laura. How are you doing?

L: I'm fine. I don't believe until now that you have a child.

N: Nobody seems to believe it.

C: I'll get you a tray to eat.

N: No, I'm not hungry, I'm just going to feed him.

C: Okay.

After picking up their trays, Clint and Laura went to sit at the table of the main Avengers. Natasha had to go along, despite wanting to avoid Steve's scolding stares.

As they sat down at the table, Steve wasn't in a bad mood, he looked at James who looked back at him and laid his head on Natasha's shoulder.

N: Sit down...

Natasha was trying to get her son to sit on the bench next to her, but he refused to let go of her blouse, wanting to stay on her lap.

C: Hey kid, you're among friends, don't be so shy.

S: It's a new place for him, there are a lot of people that he doesn't know. It's normal. He will get used to it.

N: James, please, sit down.

Steve looked at Natasha when he heard the name of her son.

S: James?

Natasha didn't look at Steve, she straightened James to sit on her lap, and ignored Steve's question, because she knows that he will interpret that James is Bucky's son for having his name.

Sharon: That's a pretty name. I loved that.

Natasha put some food on the spoon and tried to give it to James, but he shook his head.

N: James, please.

James looked away, every time Natasha tried to feed him.

N: You need to eat, c'mon.

S: James?

Natasha and James looked at Steve.
S: Listen to your mother, Okay? Do you want this?

Steve took the brooch from his uniform and handed it to James. He held it and finally settled down on and started to eat.

Sharon smiled.

Sharon: Steve will be an incredible father, Maggie is so lucky!

T: So... The question that everybody is wondering: Who is the father?

Pepper: TONY!

T: Is it doctor Banner?

Bruce adjusted his glasses and shook his hand, getting nervous.

N: He doesn’t have a father, okay? Just me.

T: Er... Oh so are you Mary? Did you have this baby alone?

N: Yes.

Pepper: She doesn’t want to talk about it, respect her, Tony.

After finishing the meal, most Avengers got up, each had tasks to perform inside the Bunker. The civilians worked too.

N: What can I do to help?

S: Nothing. Whoever has babies, can take care of them.

N: I want to work like everybody else.

S: Well, then we will find something for you, but you must be tired, rest and tomorrow we will reassess the activities and fit you in.

Natasha nodded, she got up with James and went to her bedroom. Laura accompanied Natasha and on the way, showed the nursery they set up so the children could interact and the parents could work.

L: That's what we have closer to a normal life for them.

N: Better than the outside world, believe me.

L: Is things really bad out there?

N: Many sick people, some seem primitive, aggressive, I had to fight and hide with James, I barely slept at night, fearing that someone would take us by surprise. I saw people feeding of each other bodies, it was horrible.

L: I'm so sorry that it happened.

N: I'm sorry for all the people who are still out there and still healthy... Hope be able to help them.
L: Do you think still have healthy people out there?

N: Yes. If I was there, there are others too.

L: I work here at the daycare, you can leave James here with us.

N: Thank you, but maybe tomorrow, it's still too early for him.

L: I understand.

Natasha finally walked in her bedroom with James, there was only one bed, but Clint said he was going to build one for James. Natasha put James on the floor and he started crying, wanting to stay on her lap.

N: Just a minute, James.

Natasha was setting the bed, James crawled over to Natasha and tried to climb her, still crying. Natasha heard a knock on the door.

S: Do you need help?

Natasha was startled to hear Steve's voice, she looked back and saw him standing in the doorway, she had forgotten to close.

N: We're fine.

Steve looked at James, still incredibly. He didn’t say anything else, it was as if he was waiting for Natasha’s to apology.

N: Steve...

S: Why is he crying?

N: He wants to stay on my lap. He always wants to.

Steve stepped into the bedroom and approached James.

Natasha frowned, as if it was forbidden for anyone to get close to her son, even being a friend and that’s just because she protected him from a lot of things outside.

Steve ducked and looked at James, but Steve was just looking at him, Natasha's heart pounded so hard and fast, afraid that Steve would find out he was actually James's father.

S: James?

James looked at Steve and frowned, he hugged Natasha's leg even stronger.

S: Your mother is a bit busy. Do you want a lap? Do you want to come to mine?

Steve held out his arms to James. Natasha shook her head.

N: He's not going with anyone, he is...

Natasha went silent because Steve got James on his lap. James didn’t have the initiative to go on Steve’s lap, but he didn’t complain about Steve catching him.
Steve stood with James on his lap and James ran his hand over Steve's beard, that was all news to baby James.

Natasha was shocked, because James never goes on anyone's lap, except Bucky, because they were always together.

In a way, Natasha felt jealous of her son because he just met his father, he can't just accept his lap that easy, it's not fair.

Steve kept looking and talking to James, he couldn’t help but smile, he loves children and the anger that he was feeling of Natasha for having disappeared, disappeared too. James is very lovely to Steve not to be delighted with him.

**S:** He's a handsome child.

**N:** I know.

Natasha took James from Steve's lap, as if she had to protect James from him.

**N:** You need to go, now. We need to sleep.

**S:** Of course... I'll see you later.

**N:** Tomorrow.

Steve nodded and, before leaving the room, he waved to James. Steve closed the door and Natasha lay down with James to sleep.
Chapter 3

In Steve's room, Sharon was showing to Steve, the baby clothes that Laura had sewn to her.

Sharon: That was very kind of her.

S: She's a really nice person.

Steve replied, but his mind was elsewhere. Sharon watched him and before going up to him, she folded the clothes and placed them on the table.

Sharon: What?

S: Natasha and her son.

Sharon: I could never imagine her having a child.

S: Why not?

Sharon: Steve, because it's Natasha. She has no tact with children, she is not the type of kind and caring person.

S: I'm just thinking about what she went through with this baby in this chaotic world outside. That time, when we had a mission to get food outside, you know the risks and dangers. Thanos spread an army that looks as human as we do, it's difficult to know who is the enemy and who is not.

Sharon: Yes, but Natasha is very experienced, it does not surprise me at all that she has arrived here. As Fury says, she's the best agent he's ever had after Maria Hill. That must be why she received an invitation to be an Avenger and some of us never got invited till this day...

S: Not only for that reason, Sharon. She has proved to be loyal to the purposes of defending the world, she works very well in a team. She deserved her place on the team.

Sharon: Wasn't it you who complained about her having her own missions while on a mission with you?

S: Yes, but she never harmed us for that, in fact she only helped. After the incident with Bucky as the Winter Soldier, she proved to be loyal to me.

Sharon: And when she joined Team Iron Man during the Civil War?

Steve scratched his forehead.

S: Sharon, I told you, I only escaped, because she helped me and Bucky.

Sharon: Yeah, because she could defeat you and Bucky at the same time. Right?

S: Perhaps she could, but there was T’Challa there too. Anyway why are you questioning my friendship with her, right now?
Sharon: I’m not. It's late, let's go to bed.

Sharon said holding Steve's face and placing her lips over his. They lay down and did what they did almost every night. Sharon fell asleep soon after and Steve stayed awake, still thinking about Natasha, her son and Bucky.

Steve could see through the crack of the door that someone was passing in front of his room now. No one should be walking around at that time. Is any of Professor Xavier's students coming up to something? Steve thought.

Steve decided to find out, he got up, carefully to not wake Sharon. He put on a suit and opened the bedroom door, he looked down the hall and there was no one, but he could see a shadow passing in the distance toward the kitchen of the bunker.

Steve left the room, he went to the kitchen and was surprised to see Natasha with James.

Natasha was putting James's bottle on the microwave to warm while James grunted softly.

When she had finished warming up, she felt the temperature of the milk dripping a little over the back of her hand.

N: It's still a bit hot, James.

James grunted louder and he wasn’t much of a scandal, so only a few tears rolled silently down his face that always make Natasha's heart clench.

S: I can help.

Natasha turned and saw Steve. How did she not notice him approaching?

S: Sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you.

Steve approached them and held out his hand to Natasha. Natasha froze for a few seconds, but handed the bottle to Steve.

Steve opened the sink tap and put the bottle down the water.

N: I didn’t get the milk from the refrigerator. I brought it with me from outside.

S: I didn’t say anything. I warned babies have a free pass in the kitchen. The time you feel you should feed him, do not hesitate.

N: The food protocol...

S: Oh yeah, if you brought food, you have to list and deliver so we can equally share for all the children we have.

N: Steve, I can’t do that.

S: Why not?

Steve handed the bottle to Natasha. She put the bottle into James's mouth and laid him on her lap, he closed his eyes and began to suckle the milk.

N: James has lactose intolerance.
S: I didn’t know. We have a low stock of free lactose products, unfortunately.

N: Don’t think I’m selfish, but I can’t share what I brought to James. The babies that are here and have the same as James can still breastfeed with their mothers, but James...

Natasha made negative with her head.

N: I've never had milk, I've never nursed him, I don’t know what happened, but my body... he doesn’t have that second option, you know.

Steve sighed and ran his hand over James's head. Steve didn’t notice a smile forming on his face as he looked at James.

S: I understand. Just don’t let anyone notice that you have a stock in your room, that’s cause for expulsion.

Natasha nodded. Steve looked at Natasha.

N: I need to go. Thanks.

S: It’s okay.

Steve looked at James again.

S: Night, night, James.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Good night.

Natasha just nodded and went into the bedroom with James.

The next morning, Natasha got up and changed James's diaper, he was still quite sleepy.

The siren announcing breakfast began to ring, and Natasha picked James up and left the room with him. As she left, Hill was standing in the doorway waiting for her.

H: Look at you. You look like a real mother.

N: I am a mother, Hill.

H: Yes, but I didn’t think you would have children someday.

N: Neither did I.

H: And I thought that if you had, you would never look like the child's mother, but you look like the mothers I see around here.

N: Is that a compliment or?

H: Oh Natasha, I know you won’t be offended by that at all.

N: What is this in your hands?

H: A schedule of bunker activities. We have to communicate with the government.
N: Government? How can you...

H: The president is alive, as is the First Lady and some rulers.

N: Which bunker are they in?

Natasha and Hill walked down the hall toward the dining hall.

H: On their own. They have some bunker scattered around, but they’re not that big and they have the excuse of not accepting civilians in there, so they can protect the rulers of the world. Their bunker has nothing to do with what the Avengers have built.

N: You mean Stark built.

H: May be, he had help. SHIELD, including.

N: What do you want?

H: You.

N: Does SHIELD have parallel activities even in this situation?

H: Yes, but the Avengers are fully aware. We'll meet soon after breakfast.

N: I can’t.

H: What do you mean you can’t?

N: Hill, I have James.

H: We have a nursery, just put him there.

N: It's not that simple, he's not used to it, I have to help him adapt to this new reality.

H: Damn, you really are a mother.

N: Of course I am.

H: How long does it take for him to adapt?

N: He's not a machine, Hill. I don’t know. By the way, I haven’t seen Fury, where is he?

Hill looked at Natasha. Hill went serious. Natasha frowned and her heart speed up.

N: He's dead?

H: He's alive, but... He's paraplegic.

N: God... He would never accept to live after that.

H: He didn’t accept it, he tried to shoot me for saving his life. He said he would rather die, now he refuses to leave his room, he has acted like a child.

N: So you're the one who's been taking care of SHIELD for him?
H: Yes.

Upon arriving in the dining hall, they saw the size of the queue to eat.

H: Yeah... We're getting full.

Natasha and Hill were shocked to see a girl with brown hair and brown eyes just walk out of the wall.

She smiled at both of them and went to the end of the line.

H: A lot of news for us, imagine for the children. You have an advantage. There is a preferred queue for those with babies. You should go there.

N: I hate to do that, but James has to eat. See you later.

After breakfast, Natasha was still sitting at the table with James and the other Avengers.

Clint: Hey, kid.

Clint threw a crumb of bread into James, who looked up at him and stuffed his face into Natasha's arm and scaled her up until Natasha caught him in her lap.

C: It's your Uncle Clint, boy. Why are you scared of me? I will not hurt you, look...

Clint reached into his pocket and pulled out a cookie from inside his pocket, he reached out toward James.

C: I got that for you, but don’t tell anyone.

James looked at the cookie and then looked at Natasha who looked at him and nodded, indicating that it was okay to accept. James reached out to take it, but Clint hid the cookie.

C: But you'll have to come on my lap first.

Clint reached out and James grabbed Natasha's clothes and buried his face in her chest.

C: Damn it! This always works!

Tony: Don’t get me wrong, but I'd rather stay on those boobs than with a cookie. You're very clever, James.

Pepper: God, Tony! You're so disgusting.

Clint put the cookie on the table next to James, looking at him.

C: Here. It's yours.

Laura: You should not steal food, Clint.

S: Who stole food?

Steve was coming to the table now with Sharon. Sharon sat down at the end of the table. Steve stood holding the tray behind Natasha, waiting for someone to respond.
C: Cap, technically it was me.

S: Clint, we talked about this.

C: I know, I know. I just wanted to please James, he got here yesterday and I wanted to make him feel good.

S: I know your intention is noble, but imagine if we waste a little food each time someone new arrives.

Natasha took a deep breath and rolled her eyes as she took the cookie and lifted it in Steve's direction.

N: Take it back then, Steve.

S: No, now I...

N: Take it back, so we won’t have any problems.

Sharon: What Steve is trying to do is control the food so it won’t end. Not that Clint committed a grievous crime, but imagine how each family that arrives would feel to know that we gave special treatment to someone who is from our environment?

Natasha looked at Sharon and all she wanted to do was ask who had asked her anything. She was too angry to respond. Steve was already feeling bad for calling Clint's attention, he had no intention of showing indifference to Natasha and her son.

S: No need.

Sharon: We're just going to make sure it doesn’t happen again. Come, hon, come sit and eat.

Steve walked over and sat down next to Sharon. The whole table was silent after this episode.

Laura was the first to break the silence.

L: So, James, are we going to your first day at nursery?

James just looked at Laura, Natasha stood up with James.

S: We find something for you to work on, Natasha. But I think it's better for James that you help him fit in here in the bunker first.

N: I know that.

Sharon: When you're ready for work, come look for us.

Natasha nodded and felt a lump in her throat as she felt Sharon's hand on Steve's and the way he stroked Sharon's hand. He seemed to be in love and happy with her and that was precisely what she predicted would happen.

Natasha had two options in the Civil War era to stand by and watch it or go away and it happened the same way. But sometimes Natasha wonder if things would have been different if she had stayed after the night, that she and Steve made love.
Natasha and Laura went to the nursery.

As Natasha walked down the aisles, carrying little James in her arms, she thought about the night she and Steve had in the midst of the Civil War confusions...

~ Memories of Natasha ~

After the bombardment of King T'Chaka's death in Vienna, Natasha approached T'Challa, son of the late king to give condolences for the death of his father and also to evaluate his reaction to the death of his father.

Natasha knew he was planning revenge, as he stopped crying too fast and his look of sadness shifted to a look of hatred and then to a more serene look.

No one goes through a tragic event of this size and has so many reactions, unless your mind is working on something else. And she only confirmed her suspicions when talked to him, she would walk after T'Challa when he got up to leave, but she received a call on her cell phone and when she saw who was calling, she had to answer. She knew Steve would be worried about her.

After the call from Steve, Natasha looked around and saw a man on his back, walking toward a diner, wearing a cap. Steve could be camouflaged like a tree, that Natasha would recognize him anywhere by the way he walks, she knows him very well.

Steve refused to go with her to Vienna, but here he is anyway.

He called her to find out if she was okay, but he was there watching her, she was going to see it was a call just to disguise something.

Natasha was still a little sad for Steve asking if she would arrest him, didn’t he say he trust her? Why would he be doubting her protection now? This disturbs her immensely, but she could never confront him with it if she wanted everyone to believe she's 100% with Tony in this story.

Natasha followed Steve to the diner and watched Sam inside and then she saw Sharon approaching the two.

*I thought she was in mourning.* Natasha thought the moment she saw Sharon approaching Steve.

Seeing Sharon helping Steve passing confidential information to him, also bothered Natasha, not for jealous of them being more united after Peggy's death, but because she should be the one showing more support to him and she can’t.

It doesn’t really matter that Steve thinks that she doesn’t really care that much for him. Lie! It does matter! A lot!

Unfortunately this blindness of Steve in going against everything and everyone to defend Bucky only makes things worse.

After the arrest of Steve and Sam and the escape of the same, Natasha decided to guarantee that she wouldn’t lose Steve of view, he was inconsequent and this was very dangerous.

Natasha placed crawlers on Steve and Sharon's cell phone and she was able to track the footsteps of the two. Natasha noticed they were away from each other, obviously because Sharon was being a double agent between the government and Steve, so she couldn’t just drop everything and follow Steve all the time, but Natasha knew that sometime they would meet again, since Steve now trusts her more than anyone else.
Natasha sighed again, her heart hurts to come to the conclusion that Steve trusts more in someone else than in her, in fact, Steve must be not trusting in her at all now. *Had they both returned to phase one again? Like two complete strangers that has to work together?* Natasha doesn’t know.

Natasha faced a huge conflict between continuing in the position she was in or struggling to have Steve's confidence again.

After a few days Natasha's cell phone whistled, she woke up and noticed that it was the alert that she programmed to sound as soon as Steve and Sharon met again. Natasha typed a few commands on the phone and got the exact location of both.

Natasha got up and she was going to throw the phone on the bed so she could change clothes, but she noticed how much the points on the cell phone that represented Steve and Sharon were very close for a long time.

*Were they kissing?* Natasha sighed again and she got very annoyed by the possibility.

*Not after her aunt's death, he wouldn’t do it. Right?* Natasha wondered to herself, but now she can’t be thinking about it. She needs to act, she warned Tony that she had found Steve, Tony reunited his team and after they met, they flew to Germany where Steve was.

On the way to Germany, Natasha asked Tony to let her persuade Steve to change his mind.

**T:** *What makes you think he’d listen to you?*

**N:** *Nothing, I just...*

**T:** *You two are very close, I know that, but now he just wants to know about Barnes and yet you’re worried about him, he's not caring about you right now.*

**N:** *That's no reason for me not to try to protect him, to keep him and the others safe.*

**T:** *Well you can try, but if he doesn’t take your advice, you know what's going to happen.*

Natasha nodded, and as soon as they landed at the airport, Tony and Rhodey approached Steve first and even Tony was trying to win Steve only in conversation.

Natasha approached Steve from behind, which surprised him, she told him that he knows what's going to happen and if he really wants to get out of it, using the violence... Steve looked at Natasha and remained in silence for a few seconds. Natasha noticed that he heard her and was trying to process what she was saying.

Natasha was sure by the way he looked at her, that he still has consideration for what she says, but unfortunately Tony is very anxious and used his plan B: Peter Park.

Natasha rolled her eyes and took a deep breath because Tony rushed over and soon they found themselves in the middle of a battle between their own friends.

Natasha and Clint fighting with each other made them both laugh at it, because one knows the other very well and already know how to defend themselves from the blows, but Natasha is always willing to change her tactics unexpectedly which gave an advantage over Clint in the fight. Once, when she could kick his face, she felt her foot being paralyzed by a red cloud that she knows well. Natasha looked at Wanda and then she was hurled away which made her bruise her back.

Everything Natasha thought as she tried to recover from the pain she was feeling was that Wanda
was a bitch for coming into her fight with Barton.

Natasha got up and returned to the fight, but she was feeling a lot of pain and decided to change strategy, she knows Steve and knows that he will find a way to escape this fight, or at least he will win and manage to escape again the same way.

Natasha also thought that in order to escape, Steve would need a jet, all she has to do is keep the perimeter of the jet safe, she moved into the jet's shed without anyone noticing and waited almost an hour until she saw a tower being demolished and falling to block the access to the shed.

And again, a red cloud caught the wreckage of the tower falling to the ground, allowing Steve and Bucky to pass.

They both breathed a sigh of relief that they had managed to pass in time and as soon as they got up and were about to get ready to run, they faced Natasha Romanoff.

Natasha was supposed to stop the two right now, she's tired and hurt with Steve for letting his own team behind just to get away with Bucky.

**N: You’re not gonna stop.**

**S: You know I can’t.**

*No, you can’t.* Natasha thought.

Bucky is what Steve has of his past and it's how he sees life now, as if Bucky was his life and that he should protect him at any cost because nothing else makes sense to him.

Natasha feels the same as Steve, she fights for the world but she has no other reasons to fight or to be alive, but Steve still has Bucky and if Steve sees him as a reason to continue to live, she can’t stop him.

Natasha said she would regret what she was about to do and Steve understood as if she was saying she would regret shooting him.

Steve has already fought everyone in this war... Friends, enemies, even against Bucky.

Steve saw Natasha raise her arm to shoot and he didn’t even considered the possibility of attacking her back, or at least defend himself, he didn’t even lifted his shield when she fired.

Steve and Bucky looked back and saw the Black Panther falling on the ground with the shock wave he received.

**N: Go.**

Steve looked at Natasha and nodded, thanking her for doing that for him. When he got into the jet with Bucky, he saw Natasha firing again at the Black Panther.

**S: Natasha?**

Natasha looked at Steve.

**S: You can come with us.**

**N: I can’t.**
S: Why do I have the feeling that we won’t see each other again?

N: We will, Steve. Now go, before I regret.

Steve gave a small smile and took off with Barnes. Natasha left the airport without reporting to Tony, she already knew the drama that would be when T’Challa tell him what had happened.

Natasha checked into a hotel with a fake name and ID, she entered the hotel room and threw her suitcase on the floor, she closed the door and started undressing as she walked into the bathroom to take a shower, she sat down with difficulty into the tube because of the pain in her back.

As Natasha tried to relax in the tub, she began to think again about what she had done, she no longer wants to get involved in this mess and look like wrong in the eyes of both teams, what she could do for Steve, she did. The debt she had with him was paid, neither of them owed anything now.

Now Natasha could think about something else that she was avoiding, but it was bothering her the same way… If she put Clint in Steve's place, she would have done the same things she did, there's only one little detail: after finishing her mission, she certainly wouldn’t still be worried if some other woman is helping Clint or not at the moment and all she is thinking now is whether Steve called Sharon and if Steve, Sharon and Bucky will run away together.

That could only mean one thing: She is in love with Steve. At some point the feelings of friendship and gratitude became confused in her head, probably after Banner's departure. At that time, Steve did everything to keep her distracted, calling her out with him and Sam, or staying late at night in her bedroom chatting on countless different subjects, training and going on missions, always together. Steve kept her distracted until she finally no longer feels anything for Dr. Bruce Banner.

They spent a lot of time together, which made it harder to accept that they were separating because of Bucky and a treaty of government.

Natasha sighed almost three times in a row, shaking her head. Should she tell him? Was it just a brief confusion of feelings? She doesn’t know, but she needed to know, she needed to be sure.

Natasha got out of the bath and wrapped herself in a towel, she took the phone in her trunk and activated the tracker to find Steve, she located him still in Germany, and she knows he wouldn’t stay more than one night there, otherwise he would be found. Risk of being captured by the government or Tony again.

Natasha dressed and walked out of the hotel toward Steve's address, he was also staying at a hotel.

Natasha introduced herself as a government official at the front desk and asked to look at the guest list. She easily identified who they were, two men registered in two rooms that are interspersed and with one more room reserved for two more guests. Natasha imagined that the third room would be for Sharon as soon as she arrived and probably the fourth guest would be Sam Wilson.

Natasha thanked the receptionist and headed for the elevator, she arrived on Steve's floor and found a maid in the hallway. Natasha offered a tip for the maid to come into Steve's room and announce room service.

Steve and Bucky were in the room, talking about the possibility that their team had escaped alive and safe from that battle. Bucky was sitting on the bed and Steve stood next to the door.

S: Tony is not a killer, his intention was just to arrest us, he probably stopped the fight, after we left. When Sharon arrives, she will inform us...
Steve heard knocks on the door and took the shield that was resting on the wall. He gestured for Bucky to be quiet.

S: Who is it?

- Room service.

Steve looked through the magical eye and watched the maid and her cart with towels and bedding. Steve opened the door and the maid came in pushing the cart, Steve was going to close the door, but Natasha showed up. Steve looked at her.

S: Does Tony know we're here?

N: No... Just me.

S: But if you found us, it will be easy for him to find us.

Natasha made negative with her head.

N: I assure you, he won’t.

Bucky watched Natasha from inside the room. He stood up.

N: You learned the tips I gave to hide.

S: Not enough to hide from you.

N: I wouldn't teach you that, I still need some secrets.

Natasha gave a small smile.

S: What do you want?

N: Talk.

S: Talk?

N: Yeah…

Natasha entered the room and asked the maid to come out and gave her another tip.

Natasha looked at Bucky and he looked away.
Natasha looked at Steve again.

N: I need to talk to you alone.

S: I can’t leave this room and I can’t ask Bucky to leave, you can say what you have to say in front of him.

N: Steve... Please.

Steve looked at Natasha and sighed, he looked at Bucky.

B: It's okay, Steve.

Steve walked over to the interconnecting door and opened it, Steve gestured for Natasha to come in first and walked right past her, closing the door.
S: Nat... Please I'm sorry for all this. I didn’t want to get to this point.

N: You don’t have to apologize, I should apologize for not being on your side.

S: You didn’t have to stand by me, you got your own ideas about this treat and you did what you thought it was right. I don’t judge you for that, I don’t have the right. Nobody has.

N: Steve, I...

Natasha walked around the room and turned her back to Steve, it would be easier to admit what she feels without looking into his eyes than to have to face him. But Natasha was still in a mental and sentimental battle, which made her take a few minutes to speak.

Steve watched her and walked toward her, he touched Natasha's arm, which brought her out of her thoughts at once, she took a fright and turned to face Steve.

S: So me, you... we both made mistakes. I know it's hard to understand the reasons I had to act like this, but...

N: No, I understand your reasons.

Natasha nodded, and her look of compassion made him feel that he didn’t have to explain himself to her, she is not judging him.

S: It's not that I don’t care about our friends, but...

N: But you've already lost a lot, you don’t want to lose anything else, you don’t want to lose what was left of the life you had. I understand your motives and your reasons.

Natasha stepped in Steve’s direction, she stand a few millimeters away from Steve's body.

N: You owe nothing to anyone. None of us. You did too much, not only in this life, but in that life that was tragically interrupted as well.

Steve put both hands in Natasha's arms as he looked into her eyes.

S: You too, Nat. You've done enough. I know you always feeling like you in this eternal debt to the world, but I'm telling you that... It's paid. You owe nothing to anyone... You should go and live your life, forget about the Avengers, about SHIELD... You really deserve to be happy.

The touch of Steve's hands in Natasha's arms was the fuse so that Natasha could no longer control herself, she brought her hands up to Steve's face and pulled him down. Natasha stood on tiptoe and pressed her lips to Steve's.

Steve's first reaction was by surprise, he kept his eyes open and watched Natasha closely with her eyes closed, while keeping his lips on hers.
It's not that he had never thought of doing this before, but he had given up on the idea a long time ago.

For Steve, Natasha is feeling fragile and even with a little fear of losing him and the Avengers. She is extremely important to him, so he didn’t interrupt the kiss, he opened his lips and was the first to introduce the tongue on her mouth and as soon as their tongues collided, they exchanged intense and endless caresses.

Steve wrapped his arms around Natasha's waist, but then had to pull his arms away because Natasha grabbed Steve's jacket and removed it from his body.

Steve finished removing his jacket as Natasha unfastened all the buttons on Steve's blouse, then she moved her lips from Steve's a little bit to look where her hands were going.

Steve soon reached for her lips again. Natasha held on his belt and seems to have forgotten how it works, she just kept shaking it, hoping that the belt would somehow fall off.

Steve noticed her despair and he undid his belt and unbuttoned his jeans. Natasha moved her lips away from Steve's lips again, she grabbed his pants and crouched down, tugging down Steve's pants.

Natasha got up and pushed Steve away, making Steve fall on the bed.

Steve propped his elbow on the bed and watched Natasha take off her coat and lift her blouse until it was completely removed.

Staring at Natasha's belly and neckline, Steve sat on the edge of the bed and slid his finger into the straps of her pants. In a single movement, Steve pulled Natasha hard, making her come all the way to him on the bed, forcing him to lie down again.

Natasha laid her hand on Steve's face and pressed her lips to his again, the kiss was as intense like the first one, but this time the rush of desire made Natasha free Steve’s lips again.

Natasha laid her hand on Steve's chest as she corrected her posture and Steve tried to sit down too.

Natasha got off the bed and unbuttoned her pants. Steve tried to sit up to watch, but Natasha pushed his shoulder back.

Natasha removed her pants and Steve noticed that she wasn’t wearing any panties. Steve didn’t notice that he immediately opened his mouth when he saw Natasha almost naked.

Natasha put her hands up to her back and unbuttoned her bra. Steve's lips widened as he visualized Natasha's breasts, he sat on the bed, despite Natasha's protests that he should remained lying down, and nothing would stop him from having her right now.

Steve wrapped his arms around Natasha's waist and immediately pressed his lips on Natasha's nipple. Natasha looked down and could see the look of heat on Steve's face, which made her bite her lower lip and feel her inner part pulse even more of desire.

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Steve was first just licking her nipple, but now he started to give short kiss all over her breast, and did the same with the other breast. Natasha moaned, putting her fingers in Steve’s hair and holding tight on it, while Steve started to suck hard on her nipple.

Natasha let out a sigh as she gripped Steve's hair tighter to make him continue to suckle her nipple for as long as she wanted.
When Natasha was satisfied, she let out a loud moan and shoved Steve's head back, pushing him away from her.

Natasha laid her hand on Steve's underwear, she could feel that his member was already hard. Steve grunted when he feel Natasha grabbing his member and pulling out from his underwear.

Natasha started to rub his member slowly and gently and increased the movements bit by bit. Steve clenched his fist tightly and breathed harder to every move she made.

Natasha knelt on the bed, but kept her thighs apart, one on either side of Steve's body, she sat on Steve's member, which made Steve roll his eyes. Natasha started to moan as she felt his member penetrating her opening slowly until it was completely inside her.

Natasha stared in Steve’s eyes and his pleasure’s expressions made her more wet and horny, she started to move her body up and down slowly, then quickly, which made her moan even louder and Steve only grunted.

Steve doesn’t remember to have a better view in his life than Natasha’s breasts moving up and down that harder and her horn face, being hidden by her hair that also moved furiously against her face, each time he move his hips up, against her tights.

After a few minutes, while Natasha groaned louder, Steve got the feeling he was going to finally cum, he lifted his upper body and looked at Natasha, Natasha also noticed that he was about to end by his expression and the stiffness of his body.

Natasha ran her hand through her hair and left it all to one side to face Steve.

N: Are you going to…?

S: I… I g-guess…

Steve couldn’t even speak properly at the moment.

N: Can you hold on for a while longer?

S: I think so… I'll try…

Natasha slowed her movements to try calm Steve down, but he grabbed her waist and turned her onto the bed, getting his body over her.

Steve grabbed Natasha's waist and started the repetitive and rapid movements inside her again, Natasha placed her hands on Steve’s arm and then she had to seek support in bed because of the speed with which Steve penetrated her.

Each time Natasha's body seemed to be escaping from him, because of the force of the movements, Steve pulled her waist down again to fit her into his member again. The hard movements inside her opening, made Natasha start to scream.

Natasha grabbed the sheet and pulled it hard, she started to cum at the same time Steve managed to keep a steady pace. To contain her own screams, Natasha put the sheet on her mouth and bit it harder.

Natasha's body curved spontaneously, during the wave of orgasm that struck her body, then Natasha just threw her body against the bed, getting a little limp after her first orgasm of the day.
Steve was still at the same fast pace, but when Natasha became relaxed, he slowed down and lay completely over her.

Steve kissed Natasha's lower lip and stopped the movements.

**S: Are you okay?**

**N: Uhmm Yes...**

**S: You want me to stop?**

**N: What?**

**S: You're tired.**

**N: I was fighting a war a few hours ago.**

**S: Me too.**

**N: So... I can take a little more...**

Natasha smiled and Steve nodded.

Natasha lifted her head from the bed and she initiated a tender and long kiss with Steve.

Natasha hugged Steve's back, during the kiss and Steve took the chance to start moving his cock inside Natasha’s opening again, but more slowly this time.

Steve moaned directly on her lips, Natasha could only feel more pleasure as she felt Steve's gasping breath reach her lips. Natasha dug her nails into Steve's back and hugged him even harder, she wanted to feel all of him, she wanted Steve's feelings all to her.

Steve pushed his member even deeper inside Natasha and before he came, he opened his eyes and interrupted the kiss.

Natasha opened her eyes when Steve moved his lips away from hers and she meet that huge and lovely blue eyes that made her whole body freeze.

Steve has something different on his eyes that makes Natasha feels completely safe with him, it’s like being at peace.

At any point Natasha considered the possibility of making Steve come out from her parts, because she wanted to feel all of him, and she had him completely that night.

After Steve's body stiffened, at it’s apex, he soon relaxed and laid his head next on Natasha's neck. Natasha stroked his back.

Steve smelled Natasha’s neck to memorize her scent. Steve put his lips against Natasha's neck and placed a kiss on it, then he kissed her shoulder and laid beside her body on bed.

Natasha turned her face to look at Steve.

**S: That was... incredible.**

**N: It was.**
Steve look at Natasha.

N: But...

S: What?

Natasha sighed and made negative with her head, she looked away, giving a small smile.

S: What?

N: It's just...

Natasha closed her eyes and made negative with her head again.

Natasha sighed and laughed at herself.

N: I thought you... I thought were a virgin... I don’t know why I thought that, but...

Natasha laughed.

N: It’s silly, anyway.

Steve raised his eyebrows.

S: What makes you think I wasn’t virgin?

N: The way you grabbed me... You've done this before.

Steve nodded.

S: It wasn’t like that, but... I did.

N: Sharon?

Steve frowned and when he heard Sharon's name, he sat down on bed. As if only now he had realized what they had just done.

S: No...

Natasha noticed that something was wrong when she mentioned Sharon.

Natasha took the sheet and covered the top of her body, then Natasha sat up and looked at Steve, to analyze him, she knows what he is thinking.

N: Are you two really dating?

S: No...

Steve couldn’t look at Natasha's eyes.

S: I... I don’t know. I think so.

Natasha took a deep breath and shook her head, it was as if someone was stinging a long needle in her heart.

S: I’m just not sure, but you and I... We did this and...
N: Hush... It's okay, Steve...

Natasha did her best to not show how sad she was. She put her hand on Steve's back and when he felt her touch, Steve looked at her.

Natasha could feel the guilt in his eyes. She never wanted that.

N: This... I mean we... We're friends. We are very... very close, very connected to each other. So... I... I really consider you... You're very important to me.

Steve grabbed Natasha's wrist so he could hold her hand, Steve looked at Natasha's hand and stroked her fingers, then he kissed Natasha's palm and Natasha sighed and looked away to hide her weakness.

Natasha wanted to say that she loves him, that she fell in love and that she would fight for him, that he shouldn’t be with Sharon, because she is the right person for him, but she could never say that. She doesn’t accept the fact that she could be the right person for someone, even more when this person is Steve Rogers.

S: You're very important to me too, Nat. I think we both lost so much. We both understand each other and all this war... it made us be confused, maybe... You and Banner...

Natasha froze when Steve mentioned Banner. Doesn’t he know that she doesn’t think about Banner anymore? Doesn’t he know that he cured her of this brief blind crush she had on Banner?

S: You are fragile. I am too. I think that's why we gave in to our weaknesses and...

N: Yeah... That was definitely it. That is what happened.

Natasha said feeling like she had a rock or her throat.

Natasha nodded. She returned to her usual expression and looked at Steve.

N: We're friends.

S: They say we're like brothers.

N: Is that how you see me?

S: I don’t know, I think... I just like being with you, I'll care about what happens to you, and I would protect you with my own life. You know that, don’t you?

Natasha succumbed to the pain she was feeling, she could n’t help a tear trickling down her face.

Steve immediately became worried and wiped her tear.

S: Nat?

N: It's nothing, it's... I'm... I'm fine.

S: Come with me and the guys. You know the government will not accept that you let me get away, they will go after you, I can protect you.

N: I can’t.
Steve: Why not?

*Because I can’t bear to see you with her, you idiot.* Natasha screamed in her thought. Natasha shook her head and Steve realized that there was no point in insisting, Natasha is a very decided person.

Steve: Everything will be all right. Just take care, okay? Try to contact me sometime, all right?

Steve pulled Natasha into a hug, she couldn’t hug him back, but Steve held her in his arms for a long time.

Natasha: I need to go.

Steve: Nat, if you change your mind…

Natasha: I won’t.

Natasha stepped out of Steve's arms and walked into the bathroom, she took a quick shower and when she left the bathroom, she dressed and practically ignored Steve's presence in the bedroom.

Steve got up from the bed when Natasha went to the door and opened it to leave.

Steve: Natasha?

Natasha stood in the doorway, her back to Steve, completely still. She could never hear what he had to say, because if he insisted a little more, she would stay and she can’t.

Natasha: Goodbye, Rogers.

Natasha didn’t turn to see Steve again. She left and closed the door.

As she walked by the hall, Natasha crossed over to Sharon and Sam who were arriving at this very moment. They both looked at Natasha, who passed them as if she didn’t know them.

Sharon glanced back to see Natasha disappear as she entered the elevator. Sharon and Sam knocked on Steve’s bedroom door and Bucky received them.

Natasha left the hotel carrying Steve's son in her belly, without knowing that.

~ End of the memories of Natasha ~

Laura: Nat?

Natasha looked at Laura.

Natasha: I’m sorry, what?

Laura: Come on.

Laura opened the nursery door and Natasha walked in with James in her lap. Natasha looked at the other two helpers and nodded to compliment them.

All the kids were looking at Natasha and James. James didn’t even look around to see who was in the room.

Laura: James? Don’t you want to meet your friends?
James moaned and held onto Natasha's clothes.

**L:** He'll be fine. Sit with him here.

Natasha sat on the carpet with James on her lap. She turned James in front of the other children, but James was still trying to hide.

**N:** James? Listen to me, you're fine. Look at this.

Natasha reached over and took one of the toys from the carpet. Natasha showed it to James, he looked at the toy and was curious, he just had one little toy, that Bucky gave to him when they were on the other bunker.

James agreed to sit facing the other kids, so he could play with the cube that Natasha handed to him.

**L:** You're very good with children, Nat. I'm surprised.

**N:** Not with children, only with him and I had to learn. I had no choice.

**L:** I imagine. Why don’t you try this: Put him on the carpet.

Natasha followed Laura's instructions, James grabbed Natasha's arm and was about to climb back to her lap, but Laura picked up another toy that emits sounds.

**L:** Look what I have here, James.

James looked and reached for the toy. Laura handed it to him and James agreed to stay on the carpet.

**N:** Laura, there’s only babies here, what about the other children?

**L:** Don’t worry, it’s just because there's no way we can put the old kids together with the babies, they can be very clumsy. They are in the next room.

One of the babies approached James and took James' toy, not the one that Laura gave to him, but the one that really belongs to James.

James frowned and tried to get it back, but the baby hid and walked away with the toy. James stared at him and observed as if he were analyzing how to proceed about this situation.

Natasha thought that James was going to get the toy back, but he just remained sat and looked at Natasha, as if asking for help.

Natasha shrugged her shoulders and looked away. James grunted and crawled up to the boy and pulled the toy back, but soon the boy grabbed it back and the two began to grumble, trying to get the toy.

**L:** Francis Barton! This is not yours. Give it back.

Francis looked at his mother and looked down, then he looked at James and released the toy, causing James to lose his balance and fall back, but as they were on the carpet, he didn’t get hurt.

James came crawling back to Natasha, while Francis began to cry and complain about the toy. Laura took Francis's pacifier and placed it in his mouth, he continued to cry, but as he sat on his mother's lap, he calm down.
James looked at him, then at Natasha. Natasha raised her eyebrow and James picked up the other toy and handed it to Francis.

Francis hit the toy, knocking it out of James’s hand.

Laura rebuked Francis for his behavior.

**N:** It's okay, James. He didn’t want that one, he wanted your toy. Are you going to let him play with your toy?

James hid his toy, looking at Natasha.

**N:** No?

James lowered his head.

**N:** Alright, you won’t be able to play with the other toys from here then. Give me that.

Natasha pulled the other toy from James and he threatened to cry.

**N:** If you borrow yours to Francis, I'll let you play with this one.

Natasha spent the whole morning with James in the nursing room, he did very well for a first day and he even interacted more with other people, but if Natasha threatened to leave to go to the bathroom or just to stand, he already started to cry. But that was only the first day, which is normal with every child.

... 

Clint was in the productivity sector, working with the other professionals there, when Sharon came in and requested a conversation with him. Clint nodded and asked someone to take his place.

**Sharon:** I won’t take much of your time I promise.

**C:** Is everything okay? How this baby?

Clint smiled looking to Sharon’s belly.

**Sharon:** She’s great, thanks.

**C:** So… How can I help?

**Sharon:** I know how you and Natasha are closer and I didn’t want to be indiscreet in asking her directly, but... Do you know who James's father is?

Clint raised his eyebrows, surprised by the question, and more surprised that he didn’t have the answer for that. Even if he had, he wouldn’t say.

**C:** I have no idea.

**Sharon:** You're friends, didn’t she tell you?

**C:** No. She said her son is only hers and that's enough for me. Why do you want to know about that?
Sharon: Just… Curiosity.

Sharon smiled.

C: Well, your fiancé is very close to her too. Why don’t you ask him?

Sharon: Yes, true. I… I will. Thank you, Barton.

Clint returned to work and Sharon returned to the hall. She was approached by Ororo as soon as she reached the corridor.

O: Sharon Carter? The professor is waiting in the central office.

Sharon: I’m on my way right now.

As Sharon walked to the central office, she began to remember the day she went to the hotel to meet Steve and Bucky.

~ Memories of Sharon Carter ~

What's Natasha doing here? Sharon thought, with her brow furrowed. Sharon was highly suspicious of Natasha’s presence, since she was on Team Stark, maybe she came to spy on them and reveal to Tony and the government about their location.

But Sharon didn’t just think about it. As Natasha passed by, Sharon’s eyes followed her to the elevator. Why is her hair wet? Is she at a nearby hotel that has given her time to have washed her hair, come here, talk to Steve and Bucky, and run off with dripping hair?

Bucky opened the door for Sam and Sharon to enter the room.

Sam: Hey, man.

B: Hey.

Sam: Where is Steve?

B: He's... He...

Sharon noticed that Bucky was a little uncomfortable. Not enough for someone like Sam to notice, but for her who is accustomed to doing interrogations, yes, she could tell he was uncomfortable, maybe embarrassed.

Bucky didn’t know that Natasha had already left, but he heard everything that happened in the next room.

S: I'm here.

Steve was coming into the room through the door that interconnected the next room.

Steve glanced briefly at Sharon and looked down, then looked back at Sam. One more detail that Sharon noticed, but it wasn’t enough to justify anything.

Sam: What were you doing in the next room?

S: Taking a shower.
Sam: What did Natasha come here for? Are we at risk?

S: No.

Sam: How can you be sure? She will deliver us to Tony.

S: She won’t.

Sam: Steve ...

S: Believe me, she won’t. I trust her.

Steve looked at Sharon, and she nodded.

Sharon had also noticed that Steve was still with wet hair and he himself confirmed that he had just gotten out of the shower. Gathering her female intuition, plus the way to interpret the truth in the expressions of people, Sharon was certain of what had happened between Steve and Natasha.

Was she sad? Yes. Disappointed? Yes. Did she confront Steve with this? No. Why? Because for Sharon, at that moment, she and Steve weren’t dating, he never asked her to be his girlfriend, they were just kissing each other, and it was just two times.

By the other side, Sharon always felt something more in the relationship between Steve and Natasha, she believed If they hadn’t yet gone to bed, that at one time or another they would ended up going to bed.

~ End of the memories of Sharon Carter ~

Sharon was well settled with all these details, but ever since Natasha arrived in the bunker with a child in her arms, refusing to tell who the father was, it only made Sharon's mind remember that night and do the math. She can’t confirm whether it's Steve's or not, but she knows there's a possibility.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry for the hot scene, it must look a mess in english. In my language it was very beautiful and I don't know how it sounded here, but sorry anyway.
If James were his, she would tell. Why won’t she tell? She knows Steve would be a great father, so if it was his, she would have said. Why am I thinking about it? Where did I get that from, anyway? Just because they had wet hair that day at the hotel? Yes, Bucky was acting strange, and Steve had some guilty in his eyes, but what if the guilty he was feeling wasn’t for what she thought at the time but because he and Natasha are great friends and he regrets not choosing the same side as her? Maybe that day was just a reckoning. After all, he and Natasha now barely speak to each other. All that friendship I witnessed being born, flourishing and fortifying seems to have gone downhill after the Civil War. I have to admit I always thought they had feelings for each other, plus friendship. I was jealous of the complicity he and she had in those days. Then over time, I understood that it was just friendship, but there is always that little little bun that stays in my ear whispering that there is something more than it seems to have. When Steve looks at me, I know he loves me. I shouldn’t doubt him, but still I doubt him. Why?

Sharon Carter thought while she was in the small exam's room of the bunker, listening to the beating of her daughter's heart.

Sharon looked at Steve, who looked back at her with a smile.

**S:** Her heart is strong. Beats hard.

**Sharon:** True. Just like her father.

Sharon smiled and sighed.

**S:** I need to go now, I'll see you later, ok?

Sharon nodded and received a quick kiss from Steve who left the room.

Steve went to meet Tony Stark and professor Xavier in the meeting room to discuss some routine stuff of the Bunker.

...  

It had been just over a week since Natasha arrived in the bunker with her son James.

By the morning she took him to the nursery. Laura opened the door and welcomed them with a smile.

**L:** Hello. Good morning, James.

James had his toy in his hand and shook him in the air, greeting Laura.

Laura extended her arms to James.

**L:** Everyone is waiting for you and today we will watch a movie. You like it, don’t you, Jamie?

James didn’t complain when Laura took him from Natasha's lap, but he kept looking at Natasha, because she always come inside the nursery with him.
Laura looked at Natasha.

L: You can go now.

N: What???

L: He's fine.

N: Are you sure?

L: He's already totally distracted by the toys and the other kids. I think he's ready to stay here alone, without you, in case.

Natasha sighed and looked at James.

L: I know it's difficult, Tasha.

Natasha looked at Laura and she wasn’t going to hide it hurts to leave James there in the day care, even if she was only a few feet away.

L: I promise I'll call you if I need anything. Have they given you a W.T?

N: Yeah.

Natasha pulled some kind of cell phone from her pocket, but it works as a radio transmitter. Everyone who acts as leader, receives one, as well as the mothers and those in charge of the sectors.

L: Go. Go. Go.

Natasha looked at James and he had no idea that Natasha was leaving, when he saw his mother taking steps back, he held out his arms to Natasha.

L: Go, Natasha.

J: Mumm... Mumm...

Natasha turned her back and continued walking. She just heard James start yelling and crying, wanting to stay with her.

Natasha’s heart was broken, she slowed her steps and was about to turn around and get James, but she couldn’t.

He's fine, she'll call if he needs you. She'll call. He is fine. Natasha repeated herself to herself.

Natasha crossed the hallway and now she could no longer hear James's crying, she stopped and leaned against the wall and took a deep breath.

Sharon: Are you okay?

Natasha lifted her head, still taking a deep breath and looked at Sharon.

N: Uhm... Yes, I am.

Natasha closed her eyes tightly and shook her head.
N: It was the first time I left James alone, I mean with Laura.

Sharon: At the nursery?

N: Yes.

Sharon: I bet it's very difficult. I don’t want to stay away from my Maggie either.

Natasha watched Sharon put her hands on her belly.

Sharon: You're a good mother, Natasha.

N: I do what I can. I need to go.

Sharon: Sure.

Natasha went on her way and five minutes later arrived at the intelligence room, where she found Maria Hill.

H: Hello Mom!

N: Stop calling me that. I came to work.

H: Great.

N: But I'd like to talk to Fury first.

H: He doesn’t want to see you or anyone else. He mistreats everyone.

N: When does he not mistreat people?

H: He's in Wing D, room 404.

N: I'll be right back.

When Natasha left the intelligence room, the first thing that crossed her mind was James. She didn’t resist and called Laura.

L: He's fine!
N: Are you sure?

L: Yes! He cried because he saw you leaving, but soon he stopped. He's playing with the other kids now. Look, I'll send the video.

Laura activated the camera of her W.T. and Natasha watched James playing with the other children without crying.

L: See? He is fine. Now, relax!

N: Now I am, thank you, Laura.

Natasha hung up and was relieved and pleased that James was having social life, she went to the elevator and down three floors to reach the D-wing.

Natasha searched for Fury's room and could smell the drink outside the room. She knocked on the door.

NF: Go to hell.

N: I've already been there...

Nick turned his wheelchair and looked at Natasha.

N: And I came back.

NF: You should have stayed there.

N: It's good to see you, too.

NF: Look, if you came here for...

N: His name is James.

NF: So it's true.

Natasha nodded.

N: I'd like you to meet him.

NF: I don’t like children.

N: Fury...

NF: I'm not going, Natasha. I'm dead.

N: You're not dead, stop acting like it's the end of the world.

NF: No! Don’t come up with the same blabbermouth of these damn psychologists from here. I'll stay here waiting for Thanos to put an end to all this bullshit. You know you have no chance against him, don’t you?

Natasha looked away, then she glared at Fury.
NF: You're smart, you should know.

N: I know, Fury. But I have a son of a year and a half which is the only reason I haven’t given up and I will never give up on keeping him safe. I have to have hopes for him.

NF: Well, very well. This is great for you, but what do you want from me?

N: Your help.

Nick turned the wheelchair and approached the table with a bottle of whiskey.

N: Fury... Help me keep him safe.

NF: There's nothing I can do.

N: Fury, we need you, you can still use your mind.

NF: I'm not who you once met.

N: No, you're not. Never been then. The man I knew didn’t give up without a fight! He would die, fighting! You are no longer the man I described to my son. Stay here with your fucking drinks.

Natasha left Nick Fury's room and went back to Wing A, she meet Hill again.

H: So?

N: That's not Fury.

H: I told you.

N: What do we have to do?

H: I see that James is well adapted to the nursery.

N: What does James have to do with it?

H: I need you to get out of the bunker.

Hill picked up a small black plastic box and handed it to Natasha.

H: That's a power booster.

Hill turned on a screen projection, which showed a map of the location of all bunkers, both the Avengers and the Government.

H: This principal here is from the Government. Their repositories are defective and have been operating in half.

N: So the president decides to make a bunker for him and his politicians but they don’t produce all the things necessary to ensure the operation of their bunker?

H: They do, Natasha, but they’re not as effective as Stark's ones.
N: Does he know?

H: I asked him to do it and he said he would do it under the condition that the government allow civilians into their bunker.

N: I agree.

H: Me too.

N: And the government agreed?

Hill made negative with her head.

N: And you still want to help them?

H: Do you want me to let them die? They're still lives, Natasha.

N: Can’t you put some other agents to deliver this?

H: I could, but I would probably lose them. You've been out there, survived for over a year, I'm sure you're able to go and come, faster than any other agent.

N: Hill.

Natasha sighed.

H: I'll make sure James be fine. I promise.

N: You don’t know how to deal with children.

H: True. But I know who knows, he will have Laura, Clint, Pepper, Sharon who is pregnant, with all her maternal instincts in his prime. He will be surrounded by love. Don’t worry.

N: How many days until this bunker?

H: Agents used to take 6 days.

N: Six days away from James? There’s no way I will be without him for so long!

H: Listen to me, I said 6 days because I sent the agents and few of them reached the destination, and almost none came back alive, which made me send rescue trips and demand more time. Natasha, I believe you'll be back in two days. Three at the most.

N: I need to talk to you. Alone.

H: Guys, clear the room, please.

Natasha explained to Hill about James' intolerance to Lactose, and explained about the supplies she has kept for James in her room. Hill understood and promised secrecy about it and she promised to care of feed James at night.

Before leaving on a mission, Natasha went to the nursery and by the glass she watched James sitting with the other children, watching a movie on television.
Natasha put her hand on the glass and thought it was best not to come in to say goodbye, as it would be harder for both of them.

Natasha still managed to go to the sector where Clint works. Clint promised Natasha to take care of James while she was away.

...

Natasha set out on a mission.

...

James spent all day at the nursery.

At the end of the day, Clint appeared in the nursery and Francis, at the sight of his father, ran up to him and asked for a lap. Clint picked him up and gave Laura a kiss.

L: I'm just waiting Natasha to come get James. She is late.

C: She won’t come.

L: What do you mean?

C: She had to go on an urgent mission. He will stay with us.

Laura sighed.

L: A baby of his age can be great during the day without his mother...

Laura picked up James.

L: But at night, every child wants their mother.

C: Yeah, we'll do our best to keep him distracted. Let's go.

Laura waited for her other two children to be released from “school” and they all went to their room.

Lila was extremely excited for having another baby and helped to distract James, by playing with him all the time. But at some point of the night, Lila needed to sleep, too.

Clint put her on the bed and Laura was finishing breastfeeding Francis who had already fallen asleep.

J: Mumm?

James grunted and his eyes was filled with tears.

C: Heeeyy, buddy. Come here.

Clint took James in his lap and laid him down.

C: Your mother will come back soon.

L: Clint, do not mention her.

James soon began to cry louder.
C: I just tried to calm him down.

L: Don’t speak the word Mom or Natasha in front of him, that makes him remember.

Laura looked at Francis, who seems to be wanting to wake up.

L: Clint, take him out, otherwise he'll wake Francis up and we don’t need two babies crying and awake at night.

Clint went into the hallway with James and swayed him, trying to calm him and make him sleep.

A door beside Clint's room opened.

A guy wearing only a pair of jeans, with a badly made beard and hair resembling two horns, all messy, appeared in the doorway.

The man seemed to be in a bad mood.

- You know for how many days I can’t sleep?

C: I'm sorry, Logan. He is without his mother and...

Logan: I don’t care. I want to sleep. Take him elsewhere.

Ororo also appeared in the hallway, she looked at James and approached him smiling.

O: That evil guy scared you, honey?

Logan grunted, entered the room again and slammed the door.

O: What's the matter, my sweet little angel?

Ororo looked at Clint.

O: Where's his mother?

C: She had to leave for a few days.

O: Awww poor thing, come here with Aunt Ororo.

Ororo picked James up and placed him protectively in her arms. James was still crying, but gradually he stopped until he was only grunting.

James closed his eyes and just moaned. Sleep overcame him.

Laura opened the door and smiled.

L: You made him sleep? You are an angel! Thanks.

O: You're welcome. He is so cute.

Ororo put James on Laura's lap.

Laura picked him up and put him in the cradle next to Francis.

C: Thank God. Let's go to sleep.
Clint and Laura slept well for a few hours, till James woke up and started to cry again.

Laura ran up and picked him up before James could wake Francis too.

Laura opened the bedroom door and faced Maria Hill.

**H: Oh, finally!**

Hill was checking the hour.

**H: Natasha said he'd wake up around that time. You can leave him with me.**

Laura was confused and suspicious.

**H: She asked me to walk a little bit with him, that soon he goes back to sleep. If you want to do this, feel free.**

**L: I'm tired, but you're her friend. It's all right... I guess.**

Hill caught James in her lap and as she walked down the hall, James stopped crying.

Hill went to Natasha's room and picked up James's milk and bottle, then headed for the kitchen.

**H: Okay, here we are.**

Hill placed James lying on the kitchen table, James immediately began to cry.

**H: What? I have to prepare the milk, you wait a little bit. Why am I talking to you, anyway? Do you understand what I say?**

James cried louder and crawled to the edge of the table, he just didn’t fall to the floor, because Hill held him, quickly.

**H: Are you crazy, boy? Are you suicidal? Natasha didn’t tell me anything about that.**

Hill decided to put James on the kitchen floor, there's nowhere for him to fall from there.

Hill prepared James's milk and put the bottle in the microwave.

**H: Stop crying, I'm already doing it.**

**S: Hill!**

Hill looked back and looked surprised at Steve.

**S: What are you doing here at this hour? It’s not allowed.**

Steve stared at James on the kitchen floor, crying a lot.

**S: Where's Natasha?**

**H: On a mission.**

**S: Mission?**
H: That one for the government...

S: I didn’t know you’d send her. It's too risky...

Steve walked over to James and picked him up.

S: Hey... Champion, you're fine, you’re okay. Hush... Don’t cry anymore, it’s all right.

Steve looked at Hill.

S: This floor is very cold, Hill. How can you put a baby on the floor?

H: Look, I'm breaking a protocol here for Natasha, but...

S: I know about his milk. She told me. But with all this crying from him, he's going to wake everybody up and if they see you here, you'll be punished.

H: What can I do? Leave the boy hungry?

S: No. Why didn’t you try to calm him down?

H: Well, I don’t know how to deal with children. I just need to feed him, that's what Natasha asked me to do and that's what I'm doing.

Steve stared ate James, who was still crying a lot.

S: Hush, James... It's okay...

Steve stroked James's back. Hill took the bottle from the microwave and handed it to Steve.

S: It's too hot for him.

Steve put the bottle under the tap and turned on.

Hill yawned.

H: You're very good at it. Children give so much work, I prefer to deal with guns.

Steve took the bottle from the water and felt the temperature.

S: I think it's good now. Do you want to give it to him?

H: Oh no, no, no. Feel free to do it. You can even train when your daughter born...

S: Yeah, right.

Steve made negative with his head and put the bottle in James's mouth, who stopped crying and began to suckle the milk.

H: At last silence!

Hill stared James, then Steve.

H: Steve? Would you mind...
S: Yes, I'll stay with him until he's done here.

H: Thank you.

S: Is he sleeping with you?

H: No, in Clint's room. Do you mind leaving him there, after you finish here?

S: No, I don’t mind. I’ll leave him there.

Hill thanked Steve and retired.

Steve walked with James in his lap, holding the bottle for him and then he sat on one of the chairs.

After a few minutes, Steve noticed that James was watching him.

Steve smiled at James, he could notice that James is really special for him, since James is the son of the people he most admires.

Yes, Steve still thinks that James is Bucky's son.

When James finished the bottle, he was already with his eyes closed. Steve tried to get up, but James threatened to cry and he decided to stay more time with him on his lap until he was sure that James fell asleep.

... Natasha took exactly three days on the mission, as soon as she arrived, she was approached by Maria Hill, who demanded that she accompany her to the intelligence room to report the mission.

H: He is fine, I promise.

N: I want to see him.

H: You will, in half an hour. C’mon!

Natasha had to report the situation of the government bunker and the state of the city outside. As soon as she finished reporting, Natasha checked the time and ran to the nursery. She noticed that it was all locked up and frowned, then she ran to Laura's room.

N: Laura.

L: Tasha! You're back! James will be so happy to see you.

N: Where is he? I went to the nursery and everything was closed and...

Natasha was out of breath, thinking there had been some tragedy.

L: Easy, Tasha. It's because today is Saturday.

N: Where is he then?

L: With Steve.

Natasha's eyes widened, her heart started to beat very fast.

Laura frowned, surprised at Natasha's reaction.

L: He's fine, they get along just fine. Steve manages to calm James in two minutes. These days you were out, Steve was the salvation.

N: Where?

L: They are in the central square. Usually the parents take the kids there on weekends, because there's artificial sunlight and toys that Clint made for the kids. Clint is there with Francis, too.

N: I'll go there.

...

C: So what did Tony say?

S: He thinks we have to get him out of here.

C: Where would he go?

S: I don't know. Tony said he has conditions to survive out there alone, that is more dangerous for us if he leaves then to having him in here.

Clint and Steve interrupted the conversation, hearing James's cry.

Steve ran to the sandbox, where James, Francis, Torunn and other children are playing. Francis had just threw sand on James's face.

S: What is it, Champ?

James rubbed his eyes and cried even more. Steve took him in his lap and wiped James' face.

Steve blew James's eyes repeatedly.

S: It's okay, see?

Clint took a sip of the beer as he watched Steve with James.

Clint inclined his head to observe Steve and James better.

Clint frowned.

C: You guys are very similar.

Steve looked to Clint.

S: Huh?

C: He looks so much like you, I knew he reminded me of someone...

S: Natasha, obviously.
C: Nah... He looks like her, indeed but he also looks like you. Anyone who watches you with him, will think you’re his father.

Steve smiled and made negative with his head.

Steve looked at James.

S: You better, James?

Steve lifted James in the air and shook him, which made James laugh out loud.

Natasha arrived in the central square right now. She saw Steve lift James up and her heart stopped.

The smile that Steve was giving to James, and the way James was laughing with Steve, broke her heart because he doesn’t know that Steve is his father.

Natasha walked over to them.

C: JAMES! Look who is here.

Steve lowered James and turned to see who it was. He smiled when he saw Natasha.

Natasha took James from Steve’s arms.

N: You can’t shake him like that.

S: What?

N: He's too small, he can vomit.

S: I did that several times, he loved and didn’t throw up any time.

N: I know what is good or not for my son.

S: But I was just making him laugh.

N: I don’t want him to go sick, I am his mother and…

S: Natasha, you’re overreacting. I was just...

Clint looked at Natasha yelling and then at Steve trying to explain himself, then he looked at Natasha and then at James and then at Steve again.

C: OH MY GOD!

Natasha and Steve stopped arguing and looked at Clint.

Natasha noticed that Clint seemed to just discovered a bomb.

Clint looked at Natasha, pointed at Steve, then at James.

Natasha blushed and made negative with her head.

C: It's true!

S: What?
N: Clint! Don’t!

C: Oh my God, I can’t believe it. How could I took so long to figure it out!

N: Clint!

S: What? What is happening?

N: Nothing. I need... I need to talk to you, Clint. Right now.

Clint nodded and followed Natasha. Clint stopped for a second and turned to look Steve.

C: Watch Francis for me a little bit, would u, Cap?

Steve nodded.

Clint ran to follow Natasha, and walked in her room, after her.

Chapter End Notes

It seems that Clint figured it out. How long for Steve?
Chapter 6

When Natasha entered the bedroom, James was extremely clinging and refuse to be put on the floor. He laid his head on Natasha's shoulder and Natasha stroked his back.

N: I missed you too, James.

C: So?

Natasha turned to face Clint.

N: Enter and close the door.

Clint complied.

C: I was kind of just making a joke, but your reaction...

N: You should have disguised better, then!

C: Pardon, but me? Or it was because you got completely alarmed because Steve was with James? I think you should disguised that better. Are you losing your skills?

N: Clint, you can’t tell anyone. Not even to Laura.

C: I don’t understand. Do you know that Steve is Steve, right? Like, Steve Rogers, Captain America?

N: So what?

C: So what that even myself want him as a father. What are you doing, lying to him and James?

N: I didn’t lie.

C: Oh okay, no... You just omitted the child's paternity. Do you know how much Steve likes children? He appears in the nursery and all the children get crazy and happy to see him, Steve takes them to the central square and they all stay quiet listening to the stories that he tells. Natasha, he needs to know.

Natasha took a deep breath as if she was losing her temper.

N: James doesn’t have a father! He has a mother and it's me.

C: It's wrong, Tasha, sorry, but...

N: What? Are you going to tell him?

Clint made negative with his head.

C: I will not betray you, Tasha, but honestly... If you don’t let James have a father like Steve, that will be the biggest crime you’ve ever committed.
Natasha didn’t answer to that, she sighed and sat on the bed.

N: Can you stay five minutes with him? I'm just going to take a shower.

Clint nodded.

Natasha left James on the bed and went to the bathroom.

While Natasha was taking a shower, she thought about how she had acted badly with Steve, as if he was guilty of having impregnated her and she knows she can’t blame him for that. They both wanted to have sex that night and If he had known about her pregnancy, he would never let her go away at all, but that's not the problem, if she had stayed, would he engaged with her, or with Sharon? Natasha doesn’t have the answer to this questions and that makes her scared and angry at Steve. But she knows deep down that it’s unfair to him, the way she has acted.

Natasha came out of the shower and wrapped herself in the towel, she left the bathroom and looked at Clint.

N: Thank you, you can go, now.

Clint didn’t even look at Natasha, he got up and went to the door.

Before leaving, Natasha called him.

N: Clint?

Clint stopped at the door.

N: I… I'll tell him. I don’t know how, nor when, but I will say. For James.

C: It's the right thing to do and you know it.

Clint left the room and Natasha got dressed. She looked at James and smiled.

N: Did you have fun these days?

James held out his arms to Natasha and she took him in her lap and hugged him tight.

N: Mom will not leave you anymore, James.

James reached for the door and moaned.

Natasha stared at the door.

N: Do you want to leave? Okay, let's go outside.

Natasha stood with James on her lap and left the room, she walked down the aisles and greeted some people she met on the way.

Natasha returned in the central square and Steve was still there, she sighed and dared to approach.

N: Steve?

S: Oh, hi. Hi James, you're back.

James held out his hand to Steve and Steve shook his little hand.
N: I heard you helped James to calm down while I wasn’t here and I… I just wanted to say thank you.

S: No need, I like him a lot.

Natasha smiled.

N: And he likes you.

Steve smiled, then looked at Natasha and got his forehead frowned.

S: But I have a feeling that you don’t want him with me.

Natasha made negative with her head.

N: No, It's just...

Natasha took a deep breath.

N: I've been with him alone for a year, he refused to go with anyone but me and Bucky and when he started to get close to you, I think I got jealous… It was nothing against you.

Steve nodded.

S: I understand, but you don’t have to worry. James is obviously in love with you. No one will ever take your space as a mother. Want to see?

Steve stretched his arms out to James.

S: Come here, James.

James looked at Steve and to his arms, then James flinched and laid his head on Natasha's shoulder.

S: See? He's crazy about you.

Steve stroked James' head.

Natasha kissed James's forehead, longingly.

S: You're a great mother, Natasha.

N: You really think that?

S: Yes.

Natasha sighed, looking at Steve and nodded.

N: And you are... You will be a great dad too.

S: I hope so.

Natasha smiled.

N: You will be. I'm sure.
James stretched out his arms to Steve.

N: See? He agrees.

Steve grabbed James and lifted him in the air, James laughed and when Steve held him straight in his lap, James laid his head on Steve's shoulder. Steve stroked James' back and looked at Natasha, but Natasha had her mind elsewhere.

Natasha was watching James with Steve and the way he calms down near him. It has nothing to do with him being his father, James doesn’t know that he is his father, so it can’t be for that reason, he just likes Steve, but what Clint told me is hunting me now. Will I feel this guilty forever? Natasha was thinking, then she was taken away from her thoughts by Steve.

S: Nat? Nat?

N: Huh?

S: I think he's sleepy.

Natasha looked at James and he was yawning and his eyes heavy.

N: He is...

Natasha took James back and laid him on her lap and rocked him from side to side. James scratched his eye insistently, yawning again. James was annoyed by the itchiness in his eye and began to grumble.

S: Is he okay?

N: Yeah, yes... He’s struggling with his sleep time. The noise of the children makes him want to stay awake, but I'll go back to my room, I'm tired too.

S: I'll accompany you.

Steve took James' toy from the floor and followed Natasha down the hallway to her room.

Steve also asked about Natasha's mission, but she only released information that wasn’t confidential.

S: Next time, don’t go alone. I know you got lucky this time, but it's very dangerous. You could have called me to go with you.

N: I'm faster alone and don’t worry, I don’t intend on leaving again. At least, not without James.

Steve handed the toy to Natasha and opened the door of her room for her to enter with James.

N: Can you wait a little? I'm just going to put him in bed... I want to talk to you.

S: Of course.

Natasha entered the room and put James on the bed, she covered him and stroked his hair. Steve was watching from the door.

Natasha walked over to Steve.
S: Is it my impression or does he seem to be getting blond?

Natasha looked at James and nodded.

N: His hair has cleared up yes, but I don’t know if it will get to the point of getting blond.

S: I’m still not conformed.

N: With what?

S: You having him alone, and traveling out there by yourself. I know that you were with Bucky, but... I don’t know, Sharon is always surrounded by women who have had children and she always seems to have doubts. She is always asking about baby’s stuff to Laura and I don’t know if you had any questions while you were pregnant.

N: I had them all, Steve. I still don’t know how we survive. The biggest war wasn’t that one that was happening in the world by Thanos, but it was in my relationship with James. It wasn’t easy, I’m not gonna lie, he cried too much as a baby, he wanted to be nursed, I had no milk and I didn’t have anything to feed him, I didn’t know what I could give him or not. He didn’t come with an instruction manual and it was very, very complicated at first.

Natasha smiled, but Steve was serious with the look of compassion that always comforts Natasha. Steve can only imagine how hard it was for both of them.

N: We took time to... you know, to get along with each other but he's now the best thing that ever happened to me.

S: I know that. I can see in your eyes you love him.

Natasha stepped closer to the door and she bit her lower lip and closed her eyes tight.

N: Steve, may I ask you something?

S: Of course.

N: You remember when... In the Civil War... When we...

S: Yes, I remember.

Natasha opened her eyes and looked at Steve, she sighed.

N: Did you ever regret that?
S: Never... But I had someone, so it was wrong.

N: I'm sorry I invaded your room that night, I never wanted you to betray her.

S: I know that, don’t worry. If you want to know, I've always been attracted to you, in many ways, there were times that I thought I was in love, like really, really in love but... Over time I saw that I was confused with our friendship, because I really like you and...

N: I like you too!

Steve didn’t notice how suddenly Natasha replied to this, she just said what came into her mind at the time.

S: …I've never felt so close to anyone how I feel about you. Even now, I still feel that way. I think you're like a sister to me in a certain way, I guess that's why I feel so attached to James.

Natasha frowned.

N: Would you have sex with your sister?

Natasha asked sharply, with her eyebrow raised.

S: No... I...

N: So don’t call me that!

S: Nat, I... I didn’t call you that, I said you're like a...

N: Steve don’t! Don’t say that! You wouldn’t be attracted to your sister, so...

S: Okay. All right. Sorry.

Steve didn’t understand Natasha's reaction, he frowned in confusion.

S: Nat?

N: I need to rest.

S: Okay.

Natasha closed the door in Steve's face and then she leaned against the door and sighed.

Natasha didn’t realize that the sigh came with a tear in her face. She felt the tear roll and ran her hand over her face, she looked at her hand and hated herself for crying.

Natasha lay down next to James and stroked his hair.

*Even after so long and I still feel everything I felt for him at that time. Why didn’t I forget him after all this time? It was so easy with Bruce, after three months, I hardly thought of him. I thought that after those years I would forget Steve, but I didn’t. He's still inside me, he still makes my heart ache. Coming back here was a lousy mistake. Natasha thought.*

N: We should go back, James. Do you miss your Uncle Bucky?

Natasha kissed James's face and ran the tip of her nose against his cheek.
N: We were fine there with him, weren’t we?

~ A few years ago ~

- We can do this right now, if you like, ma'am

Natasha stared at nothing, as if she was in a trance.

- The sooner the better, less risky for you. Ma’am?

Natasha looked at the attendant.

- I’d tell you to think more about it, you don’t seem to be sure you want to do it or not, but you're three months old, you can’t waste time. At four months you'd be taking a lot of risks.

N: No, I... I will do it. Can be today?

- Yes, it will cost three thousand dollars.

Natasha took the card from her wallet and the girl watched.

- We can’t accept a card because we're not legalized, you know?

Natasha sighed and took the money in her wallet and handed it to the woman.

- Come with me.

The woman advised Natasha to take off her clothes and wear a hospital sweater, she asked Natasha to lie down and wait for the doctor to come and see her.

Natasha lay on the stretcher and the woman left the room.

Natasha stared at the ceiling and felt a strong nausea, she put her hand on her belly and sat on the stretcher, she thought she was going to vomit, but it was only false alarm.

Natasha lay down again and continued to stare at the ceiling. Ten minutes later the doctor came into the room and looked at her.

- Hi, sorry for the delay but we're full today, but it won’t be long here.

Natasha just watched the doctor pick up an object connected to an electric cable.

N: What is this?

- That's what'll get you rid of this problem.

The doctor seemed to be cleaning the device, and Natasha's heart raced when the doctor said "getting rid of this problem".

The doctor turned the device on for testing, and Natasha sat down on the stretcher.

N: I need to use the bathroom.

- That door on the right. Is it your first time?
Natasha didn’t answer the doctor, she ran into the bathroom and vomited as never before.

Natasha walked to the sink, she put her hands on the sink and slowly raised her head. Natasha looked at herself in the mirror and she was very pale.

Natasha washed her face and mouth, then left the bathroom.

- We need to start, I know it's scary, but I promise it won’t hurt too much.

Natasha made negative with her head.

N: I need my clothes.

- Ma'am... Please, we don’t make a refund in case of cancellation.

N: I just want my clothes.

Natasha opened the door to the ante-room and picked up her clothes, she dresses and left the clinic, not knowing where to go.

Natasha was only certain that she didn’t want to be in that place anymore, she bought a ticket to London, and then she arranged an apartment to stay.

Natasha had to change her identity for Natalie Rushman, since Natasha Romanoff was wanted by the government, she also darkened her hair to help in disguise.

Natasha tried some jobs, but because she was pregnant, it was harder to get one and when she did, she was sick all the time, which always caused her to be sent away.

Natasha was sitting on the floor of her apartment, eating an entire ice cream pot, around the fifth month of her pregnancy. Natasha threw the pot aside and ran to the bathroom, she vomited again quite a bit.

Natasha looked at her belly and frowned.

N: I know! I regretted it, okay? Stop punishing me!

Natasha sighed and looked at the empty apartment. She has no condition of raising a child in such conditions, she would need to get money, to buy his things, clothes, a decent place and she had to do it now, while her belly is not very big.

Natasha took money from Natasha Romanoff account and immediately she had to fled again, because Interpol would chase her in London to send her back to the United States.

For months Natasha moved from one country to another, she only stopped running away in the seventh month of pregnancy when they announced the end of the Sokovia Accords, thanks to Steve Rogers' persistence in releasing the prisoners and making a deal about the Avengers actions in the world.

The population supported Steve's initiative and pardoned him for All the alleged crimes against the government.

Natasha's last location was in South Africa. She no longer needed to hide, so she returned to the natural color of her hair.
Natasha was at a market, buying fruit, when she had the feeling of being watched.

Natasha frowned and glanced over her shoulder, quickly, just to see who it was. She didn’t see anyone.

After finishing shopping, she walked out of the market, carrying the bags and when she approached the bus stop, she suddenly turned and picked up her gun. Natasha was going to shoot, but she recognized who was following her around.

N: You?

Bucky: Hello, Natalia.
Bucky: I didn’t mean to scare you.

N: James...

Natasha was not entirely confident that Bucky really had returned to his normal state. She was still thinking about the weapon she carried and any attempt from Bucky, she would kill him right now, no matter how Steve would feel.

N: Do you recognize me?

B: Yes, Natalia.

N: I don’t believe you.

B: You were sixteen when I met you for the first time. You were already a woman even at that age, I was attracted to you, but you were still young. I trained you for a while, then they made me go away and when I got back you were already 18 years old. I fell in love with you, and you fell in love with me... For two years, we kept our relationship secret until we were discovered and they did everything to separate us, you tried to kill me. I tried to kill you.

N: More than once.

B: Yes, I was being controlled, but you weren’t.

N: I was also brainwashed, James.

B: I know, but I know it was through command words, but after a while, no one needed to recite to you, you were doing it for pleasure, that's why everyone thought you were too dangerous, you loved violence.

N: I'm not like that anymore.

B: No?

N: I don't have to convince you, you're nothing to me.

Natasha tried to walk away.

B: They're still after you.

Natasha stopped and looked at Bucky.

N: The Treat is over.

B: I'm not talking about the US government.

N: Ivan?
B: I want to help you to get rid of it.

N: Wha… why?

B: You helped me escape from the US government.

N: I didn’t help you, I helped Steve.

B: Yes. And I owe him a debt.

N: Then why are you here?

B: Is it his?

Bucky looked at Natasha's belly. Natasha didn’t confirm or deny it.

B: When T'Challa learned of your presence here in Africa, he got me out of hibernation.

N: I betrayed him, if he sent you behind me, it was to kill me or capture me.

B: That's not true. He said that the elders of his tribe saw the end of the world. He thinks you can help.

Natasha laughed mockingly.

N: Really, James? Did you believe in superstitions, now?

B: No, but in the evidences that T'Challa showed me, yes. I’d like to show you.

Bucky led Natasha to a car, along the way he explained what the Wakanda scientists were researching about the infinity’s stones.

In the middle of the way, Natasha felt dizzy and began to sweat a lot, she put her hand on her belly and Bucky looked at her.

B: Are you okay?

Natasha couldn’t answer, she sighed and tried to remain calm.

B: Do you want me to stop?

Natasha didn’t answer, but Bucky stopped anyway. Natasha opened the door and only had time to tilt her head out of the car and vomit.

When Natasha sat down properly again on the bench, Bucky handed her a cloth to clean herself and started to drive again.

B: You need a doctor. T'Challa can help.

N: We need to alert the governments.

B: He already warned.

N: Really?
B: The scientific community is divided. Some doesn’t believe that such stones exists, they think that the energies recorded can be some type of meteorism.

N: There is an institution called M.O.O.N, they will know if it is a threat or not.

B: They were already notified and they weren’t surprised, they said that these records happened far away from here and it would take more than a century for such an event to approach Earth.

N: Do you believe them?

B: I believe in T’Challa's concern.

N: The Avengers?

B: They were warned too. But you know they no longer have that name.

N: I figured that. Look... I can’t get involved.

B: We already are, but the first thing I want to do is keep you safe. I also don’t believe that this threat will happen tomorrow or a month from now, so I worry about the present. I'm going to Russia, I'm going to find Ivan.

N: What? This is stupid! You can fall into their hands again. It will put down everything that Steve did for you.

B: I have to try, you know we're the only ones who can actually dismantle Ivan's network.

N: Shoot down the KGB?

B: He's not the KGB.

Natasha made negative with her head.

B: He's the only one from that organization who still wants you back in the project.

N: You've been researching a lot about me.

B: Yes, I was hired to kill you for at least three times. I guarantee that it would even be a favor for KGB to eliminate Ivan, he greatly harmed the KGB with all this obsession in capturing you back.

N: So you came to ask me to go back to Russia?

B: No, I came to put you safely.

N: How?

B: You need to go to Wakanda, they have doctors, they will take care of you and help the baby’s birth, they will help you with the child.

Natasha made negative with her head.
N: I would put them at risk, I can’t.

B: You need to, T'Challa is aware and willing to shelter you.

Natasha yawned and looked out of the car.

B: Sleep. I'm not going to hurt you, we still have another 12 hours up on the road to Wakanda.

Natasha looked at Bucky and she only relied on his word because she's carrying Steve's son on her belly and she knows he wouldn’t hurt Steve or a part of him.

...

Natasha woke up when the car stopped to refuel, she went to the bathroom and when she returned to the car, Bucky handed a paper bag to her.

B: You need to eat.

Natasha took the bag and looked at Bucky.

B: It’s not poisoned.

Natasha took the lunch from inside and ate on the way. She fell asleep again and only woke when she arrived in Wakanda. T'Challa received her and settled her in one of the bedrooms.

Bucky didn’t have time to rest, he just left Natasha there and left, straight for the airport.

The next day, T'Challa continued Bucky's talk about the end of the world and said he and Tony are taking preventive measures, stocking non-perishable food and building underground bases to house as many people as possible.

N: Don’t you think it's a bit exaggerated?

TC: Miss. Romanoff, if it is, we'll have an off base, which will still serve as a deposit, there's no harm in building these bases, right?

N: I'm just saying we've faced a lot in this world. End of the world… I mean it sounds kind of absurd.

TC: I assure you that you have not faced anything like what is about to come.

N: Has James gone?

TC: James?

N: Bucky...

T: Yes. A few hours ago.

N: I appreciate what you're doing for me, but I cant stay. I can attract unwanted people here.

T: Don’t worry about that, I assure you that nothing goes into Wakanda without my wanting it. But you know that already, so why are you wanting to leave?
N: James... I mean, Bucky, he's going to my country. My country made him a bad man. He thinks he's under control, but he's not, they will arrest him, punish him, and then use him again. I can’t let that happen.

T: You're pregnant.

N: I am, but I can still fight. I intend to get him out of there, before it's too late, and I intend to get out of there, before it's too late for me too.

And Natasha went back to Russia, and for four days she remained hidden in a low-class neighborhood. Her cell phone doesn’t work in Russia, so she started accessing lan house computers to try to find Ivan, because finding Ivan, she would find Bucky.

The searches didn’t work, because she needed computers with more structure than those to hack into government systems.

Natasha then decided to go to a lan house in a more upscale neighborhood in Moscow.

At the lan house, inside of a mall, with more modern computers and faster internet, Natasha finally managed to hack into the government system, she entered the facial recognition system to try to locate Bucky and Ivan.

As the computer searched, Natasha quickly glanced at the desk and noticed that the attendant was looking at her with a certain curiosity and nervousness.

Natasha sighed and looked at the corner of the lan house and noticed a big man coming in and he looked straight at her, but then looked away at the counter.

N: Damn.

Natasha whispered to herself and looked at the computer again, she mentally begged the computer to speed up the searches.

No time, that man obviously didn’t go in there to use the internet. Natasha then decided to download files on a pen drive, while she noticed another man entering the lan house and looking at her.

Natasha lowered her head and removed the pen drive from the computer.

Natasha waited for the group of three teenagers, that was walking by the mall, finally get in the lan house. When they entered she got up in a hurry and walked past them.

As soon as she passed, the men ran after her, but since this group of teenagers was at the door, they ended up delaying the men.

When those mean finally left the store and looked in the hallway, Natasha had already mingled in the crowd. They decided to separate to search for her.

Natasha walked down the escalators and walked slowly, as if she were really just shopping. She was approached by a saleswoman at a children’s clothing store.

- Сколько месяцев? (How many months?)

N: Шесть. (Six.)

- Вы сказали, что вам нужно, когда вы выходите из больницы с ребенком? (Have you...
bought what you need for when you leave the hospital with the baby?)

N: Что? (What?)

Natasha looked back and saw two men who seemed to be looking for someone coming toward her.

N: Можете ли вы показать мне? (Can you show me?)

Natasha looked at the woman who nodded and took Natasha into the store.

- Это мальчик или девочка? (Is it a boy or a girl?)

N: Я пока не знаю. (I still don't know)

- Это будет сюрприз, то? Я бы умер от любопытства. Посмотрите вы можете иметь этот ребенок установлен белый или желтый цвет, это унисекс. (It will be a surprise, then, huh? I would die of curiosity. Look you can have this white, or yellow, because it is unisex.)

Natasha felt that there were more people entering the store, she looked to see and was relieved to be just a woman pushing her a baby stroller.

N: Я возьму это. (I'll take that one)

- Хороший выбор. Деньги? (Good choice. Money?)

N: да (Yes)

Natasha walked with the saleswoman to the cashier and while she registered the sale, the customer approached with the stroller, and asked the price of the biter on the shelf behind the cashier table.

The customer looked at Natasha and smiled. Natasha looked at her but didn’t smile back.

- Is it your first?

Natasha was surprised by the woman speaking in english and just nodded.

- I can tell, because you're nervous. This is my youngest, I have three already. At first you wanna kill yourself, but after it’s worth it. Their little fingers, when they call you “mom” for the first time, oh God, I cry every time.

The woman continued to talk and smile. Natasha still didn’t said a word. She handed the money to the saleswoman and reached for the bag with the purchase she made.

As Natasha turned to head for the store entrance, she felt a thin pain in her neck.

Natasha's vision blurred, her body stopped responding and she collapsed on the floor.

...

Natasha woke up only the next day, she was trapped, arms and legs tied. She opened her eyes and tried to recognize where she was... It was a room, completely dark, with only a very dim light bulb, just above her body.

Natasha also noticed that she was in a sort of stretcher, but a metallic one, because the surface was cold and very hard. Her back ached for hours in that position. Natasha looked at her belly and she
was scared.

*Move, please. Give me a sign. Please.* Natasha thought as she looked at her belly, but she wasn’t feeling anything, not even the dizziness she used to feel. *Please.*

Natasha tried to get up and debated her legs and arms, trying to break free, but then somebody opened the door.

Natasha recognized the man who was coming in, accompanied by the woman who had injected her inside the mall. It was the woman with the stroller.

Natasha was furious and struggled even more, trying to break free.

- *Hush... Just calm down, Natalia.*

Ivan came over and reached out to touch Natasha’s face, but she turned her face sharply and threatened to bite his hand.

Ivan: *You’re still a savage... Good to know. I’ve never lost faith in you.*

Natasha finally felt her baby kick her belly, she immediately stopped struggling and stared at her belly, she laid her head back on the litter, feeling relieved.

Ivan: *What? Did you think I’d take his life?*

N: *Stay away, don’t you dare touch me!*

Ivan: *I believe you’re not in a position to make demands. It’s a boy, you knew that?*

N: *Shut the hell up!*

Ivan: *Natalia, be nice and I’ll let you see him when he's born.*

N: *You're not going to touch my son!*

Ivan: *See? Your genius is very difficult to deal, so you won’t see him, as soon as he's ready, we won’t need you anymore.*

Natasha looked at the woman approaching her with a syringe.

N: *What is this?*

Ivan: *Sleep well.*

N: *IVAN! IVAN! IVAN STOP!*

Natasha struggled again, but she couldn’t help the injection that made her lose consciousness again.

The next day, when Natasha woke up, she was no longer in that filthy dark room. She was in a well-decorated room in a big bed.

Natasha looked at her belly and at her arms and legs. She was no longer tied up, so she immediately tried to get up, but her body would no longer respond.

Natasha looked around the room and noticed cameras scattered around the room.
N: You sick! You bastard! You'll pay for it!

For days, Natasha was confined to the room, unable to move.

Everyday the woman came in and out of the room, checked her heartbeat, listened to the baby's heart, fed her, and applied injections on her every day.

On the second week, Natasha decided to try a psychological approach. If Clint managed to reach her, so she could empathize with others, maybe this woman might still have some feeling in her.

As soon as the woman came in, bringing a tray of some kind of hideous vitamin, Natasha looked at her. The woman didn’t look Natasha in the eyes, she never did, she put a straw in the glass and put it in Natasha's mouth.

N: It makes me feel nauseous. Can I have something else to eat?

The woman didn’t answer, she continued to put the straw in Natasha's mouth. Natasha only ate to not to starve to death, she needs to eat for her son.

At the end of the meal, the woman put the glass on the table and picked up a syringe. Natasha's heart raced, she knows that these injections are paralyzing her.

N: Wh-what it your name? My name is Natasha Romanoff. I'm Russian, but I live in America. I was, I was just like you. Did you start early here like me? Did you?

The woman tapped the syringe glass and approached Natasha without answering.

N: I started with six years old... And you?

The woman searched for Natasha's vein. Natasha bit her lip and frowned.

N: Please, help me. My son is not... He can’t go through what you and me went through. Please... Save him.

The woman applied the injection and Natasha went blank again.

Natasha thought she has failed trying to approach the woman, but at the next day, when she woke up, the woman brought a different vitamin. It wasn’t yummy, but it was less worse than the others.

When Natasha had finished, she looked at the woman.

N: Thank you.

The woman got up and took the syringe.

N: Leave me awake, please. I won’t run away. I promise. Please.

The woman injected her again.

The next day, during the meal, Natasha didn’t give up.

N: What's your name?

- Katrina.
N: Katrina? Is your real name?

- Olga.

N: Olga... It's a nice name. How many months am I now?

O: On the eighth.

Olga stood up to get the syringe.

N: Olga? I need to get out of here. If you help me, I'll help you.

O: I can’t.

N: Listen, my baby’s gonna be born anytime now. I can’t have him here.

Olga searched for Natasha's vein. She injected the medication and stood up.

Natasha looked at Olga and she was surprised that she didn’t immediately lost her consciousness.

Olga went to the door and before leaving, she whispered.

O: Close your eyes or he will notice. It's the best I can do.

Olga didn’t look at Natasha, she left the room and Natasha closed her eyes, pretending to be doped. She doesn’t even know what Olga injected into her, but she stayed awake.

Olga came every day and pretended to be applying the medication to Natasha, and Natasha took another week to feel her fingers again, but she tried hard not to move.

O: He watches you every morning to see if you’re eating and making sure you’re doped. If he finds out...

N: I know. I know what he's capable of, I won’t harm you. I promise.

Another week and Natasha was able to regain completely her body movements.

Olga handed Natasha what would be the best times to try to escape and talked about how many guards she would find, but Olga said she would have to pass them alone, she couldn’t help her.

O: You’re almost on ninth month, your belly is too big to fight, you should wait and try another way to get out of here.

N: He's going to kill me.

O: He will not kill your son, he wants him. Think about it, you want him to live, don’t you?

N: I'd rather he die with me, than be tortured by Ivan. Olga... Thank you so much for everything you did to me.

Natasha followed Olga's directions and the only weapon Natasha had was a small knife, that Olga had been able to bring to her.

Natasha managed to leave the room and easily knocked over the guards at the door of the room. Natasha memorized the path that Olga guided her to follow and she was making the journey,
eliminating whoever was ahead.

After half hour, Natasha saw the door to the street, she heard footsteps behind her and more guards were coming to arrest her again.

Natasha didn’t think twice, she ran the most she could. She was sure Ivan wouldn’t let them shoot her and risk losing her and the baby at the same time.

Natasha kept running for the door and she was relieved when nobody shoot her. Natasha finally put her hand on the knob of the door to leave.

- STOP!

Natasha stopped and glanced down the hall, she frowned and was shocked to see who it was.

N: James?

Bucky: Who the hell is James?

Chapter End Notes

I know Ivan wasn't supposed to be the villain, but here he is.
Chapter 8

Natasha was shot on her neck. She fell to the floor immediately.

Hours later Natasha woke up and sighed, trying to open her eyes. Natasha was finally able to see that she was back in the first dark room and tied up on the stretcher again.

Ivan approached the stretcher with a sarcastic smile.

**I:** Good attempt, Romanova. I was thinking... Who would have helped you to escape. You corrupted one of my best recruits. But don’t worry, I've already made arrangements...

Natasha heard someone moan, as if this person were crying, coming from the corner of the room. Natasha looked in the direction and saw Olga, bruised all over her body, her face almost disfigured and with her nose bleeding.

**I:** What do we do with rotten apples from the tree, Natalia?

**N:** No! I ran away alone! She didn’t do anything!

**I:** Oh, really? I am not stupid, Romanova.

Ivan put the gun in Natasha's hand and director her hand in Olga's direction, but he took the precaution of getting behind Natasha's head so she wouldn’t shoot him, instead.

**I:** Cut the apple.

**N:** No!

**I:** Cut, Natalia!

**N:** I won’t do this...

Ivan made a gesture and his henchman began to hit Olga without stopping. Natasha closed her eyes and tears rolled down her face. The henchman took a taser and put it on Olga's neck, making her body tremble all over.

Olga stopped moving.

**I:** Is she tired already? How weak! See, Natalia? I never found anyone who resisted like you.

Ivan looked at the henchman.

**I:** Wake her up again and start all over again.

**N:** STOP! STOP! You're a monster, I'm going to kill you!

**I:** I really hope you can.

The henchman got a mini-defibrillator and applied a load on Olga’s chest. He repeated the operation three times until he was able to revive Olga.

**I:** Good morning, Olga! We'll stay here for a long time, we have all afternoon to hear you sing,
but you know, your suffering could end if your friend over here wanted to...

Natasha watched the henchman draw a knife from his pocket and slip past Olga's arm causing a long cut through it's extension.

Olga no longer had the strength to defend herself or try to escape, her body was there on the floor, broken and without reaction. Olga just moaned and cried in pain and it was killing Natasha.

Natasha looked at Olga and whispered "I'm sorry".

Natasha shot Olga's head so the death would be instantaneous and then she shot the henchman who was beating Olga.

Natasha dropped the weapon and cried wildly.

**I**: Good girl, Natalia. See you later.

Ivan left the room while Natasha was still trying to break free.

- Natalia, you're fine.

Natasha looked at the man coming out of the dark and when he come into the brightness, she could see him better.

Natasha shivered when she recognized Bucky, she was terrified and tried desperately to free herself.

**B**: Natalia?

**N**: Stay away from me!

Bucky leaned against Natasha's leg and she tried to kick him, but because her feet were stuck, she couldn’t. Bucky removed his hands from Natasha and motioned for her to calm down.

**B**: Natalia, please, calm down.

**N**: You shot me. You shot me! You’re a traitor! My son... My son!

**B**: He's fine, you're fine. It was just a tranquilizer.

**N**: I was going to run away.

**B**: To where?

**N**: It's your fault! Let me go! You let her die!

**B**: I could not risk my disguise now, Natalia, I would lose you, the baby and Olga would die the same way. I'm just helping you, I told you to stay in Africa.

**N**: I wasn’t going to let you become a weapon of destruction again. How do you think Steve would feel? Do you have any idea what he sacrificed for you?

**B**: Yes, I do and I know you're hurt because it made him walk away from you, you hate me for it. I'm just trying to repair the wrongs I've done.

**N**: Then let me go!
B: I can’t! Not yet. Ivan thinks I'm under his control. I promise I will not let him hurt you.

Natasha moaned, bit her lip and closed her eyes tightly.

Bucky looked at her with concern.

B: Natalia?

N: It hurts.

B: What hurts?

N: My belly. I feel something wet.

Bucky looked at Natasha's belly.

B: There's nothing here.

N: On my legs!

Bucky looked at Natasha's legs and noticed a spot of blood on her clothe. Bucky tried to disguise the expression of concern, but Natasha knows how to interpret a lie from a distance.

N: What? What is it?

B: I'll get help. Just trust me, okay?

Natasha closed her eyes again and bit her lip harder and moaned in pain. Bucky ran out of the room and called for help.

Natasha doesn’t know what happened next, she passed out before Bucky came back to the room with such help.

Natasha woke up in another place, unlike where she was before.

Natasha closed her eyes and reopened several times until she managed to stay awake.

B: Natalia?

Natasha turned her face sharply at the sound of Bucky's voice, she looked at him in shock, then looked at her belly.

The belly’s volume was gone. Natasha's nostrils flared at once, and she seemed to be having trouble to breath. Natasha put her hand on her belly and parted her lips, trying to breathe.

B: Look, he was born, he is okay, he is healthy, he has Steve’s eyes. He is fine.

Natasha looked at Bucky and then around the room, looking for her son.

Bucky noticed and approached the bed.

B: They're with him.

Natasha's eyes widened and she sat on the bed, then she got up with difficulty because of the stitches still sore.
B: Lie down, you need to rest.

N: Rest?

Natasha never looked with such hate at anyone in her life. She slapped Bucky’s face and tried to hit him again and again, but she fell to the ground, because she was still with medication in the vein to paralyze her.

Natasha groaned in pain.

B: Natalia, please, listen to me. He is fine. You were losing a lot of blood and you had an emergency delivery. They cut your belly and took him from you. They took him away and left you there, bleeding, to die. I had two options, running away with you and saving your life, or let you die and save your child.

N: You should have let me died, you bastard!

B: I intend to save both. I needed to get you safe first, I'll come back for him. I promise.

N: I need to get him.

B: Not in this state. I was just waiting for you to wake up to...

Bucky’s speech was interrupted by a huge flash that swept through the abandoned building they were in. Soon after the glare they heard a huge crash and they could feel the whole building pounding.

Natasha was still on the ground, due to the fall she'd taken earlier. Bucky threw himself over Natasha, he didn’t know if the building was going to fall, so he tried to protect her.

As the building stabilized, Bucky looked at Natasha.

B: Are you okay?

Natasha looked at Bucky.

N: Was that an earthquake?

Bucky approached the window and looked at a huge burning meteor and the gigantic crater that formed around it.

N: What was that?

Natasha struggled to her feet and went to the window. She looked incredibly at the scene.

N: My God. Where are we? Is my son there?

B: No, no, I came to the edge of town.

A lot of people started running and screaming, which caught the attention of Bucky and Natasha again. Natasha looked where the people were looking, so horrified.

N: James...

Bucky looked at Natasha and then at where she was looking.
B: We have to get out of here.

A shower of meteors on fire and smaller than the first, began to fall and make people run in despair.

B: Can you walk?

Natasha nodded and followed Bucky out of the room, they went down the stairs and on the way, they met some beggars who slept in this abandoned building.

N: We have to get them out of here.

B: There is no time!

Natasha started yelling at the people to get out, but no one listened to her. Bucky made her continue, pulling her hand, until they reached the street.

Natasha paused to watch one of the burning meteors crashing down the street ahead.

N: Looks like it's moving.

Bucky stopped and looked. The meteor seemed to be alive.

N: This is not a meteor.

The supposed meteor opened and something was about to come out of it, but Bucky pulled Natasha to run. The two ran through the desperate crowd, and tried to divert the meteors that were still hitting the city.

Bucky stopped on the sidewalk and tried to remove the lid of a manhole.

N: On the sewage?

B: It's not sewage, it's rainwater. It's safer down there.

N: James?

Bucky was struggling to remove the lid.

N: James!

Bucky looked at Natasha.

N: Look!

Bucky looked where Natasha pointed, it was another "meteor" in flames, opening. This time they watched to see what those things were.

Three "giants bugs" came out from inside the meteor, covered in lava and a slime. Those things began to stretch and stand. One of them jumped on a woman who was running to escape. The thing looked at the woman and took the identical shape from her, then killed her.

Bucky and Natasha couldn’t move and couldn’t believe the scene. The other things looked around for someone they could turn to and spotted Bucky and Natasha.

Bucky pulled the manhole cover back and managed to remove it.
B: Natalia, come on! GET IN!

Natasha came down the manhole, through a sailor ladder.

As soon as Natasha reached the small sidewalk that kept her separated from the water, she looked up.

N: James!!

B: Go north.

N: What? What are you doing? You have to come with me!

B: I'll get your son.

N: You're going to die! You can’t stay there.

B: Go north. Take that with you.

Bucky threw a pistol at Natasha and then he was ripped from the top of the manhole by one of the creatures.

N: No!

Natasha went to the stairs and started climbing again. She heard three shots and the manhole lid was closed before she could get out. Natasha hit the manhole cover, trying to open it.

B: I'm fine, I'll meet you in the north of the city. Run!

Natasha heard Bucky's voice and she was a bit relieved. She went down the stairs again, and it’s a good thing that Russia's rainwater tunnels have signs indicating the neighborhoods.

Natasha ran and on the way she heard terrifying cries of the population being attacked. Several times she wanted to help, but she could only think about her son.

In the middle of the way, Natasha heard a crash and stopped. A flare opened when a piece of the ceiling above her fell into the water.

Next to the wreckage one of the creatures fell in there together and looked at Natasha. Natasha took a while to get her weapon out, it was very surreal. She shot the creature that fell into the stream and was dragged down.

Natasha looked at the hole made on the ceiling and she could see a child crying on the street, calling for her parents and then she saw the kid being killed by one of the creatures.

Natasha was horrified. The creature spotted her from above and jumped into the tunnel. Natasha started to run, but the creature was much more agile than she was, and to worsen, four more creature jumped into the tunnel and began to chase after her.

Natasha could sense that she was being reached, she turned back and fired at the one, who was closest to her, and then saw another one jumping right on top of her.

Natasha and the creature fell and roll on the ground and the creature tried to make Natasha look at him so he could take her form.
The other creatures were coming in now, and Natasha thought she would die there, but she heard a huge crash and the roof collapsed again, falling over the creatures.

Natasha fired at the one who was on top of her and escaped. She started to run again into the tunnel.

After hours of running, Natasha was reaching the north of the city. She didn’t know exactly where she should go now, whether she should climb to the surface or if she should be down there.

- N-Natalia...

Natasha looked where the sound was coming and frowned, then Natasha heard a baby’s cry.

Natasha’s heart raced, she ran and saw Bucky with her son in his arms, inside a niche on the wall. Natasha looked at the baby and immediately took him in her arms and kissed his face.

N: You're okay, you're fine. I am here. Jesus...

Natasha couldn’t help but cry when she saw her son for the first time. The baby was very scared and still cried a lot.

N: We have to go.

Natasha looked at Bucky and noticed that he was unconscious.

N: James?

Natasha shook Bucky and he just moaned. When Natasha took her hand away, she noticed blood in her hand, she looked at the wound in Bucky's belly.

N: Bucky, we gotta go!

B: Go...

N: Not without you, come on. You've been through worse!

B: I'm going to delay you.

N: You saved me and my son, we won’t leave you here to die. Come on, lean on me.

Natasha put her son on one arm and with the other pulled the collar of Bucky's clothes, making him stand up. Bucky put his arm around Natasha’s neck and they continued to flee, slowly because of Bucky's wound.

N: I don't hear anything here. Can you hold him?

Bucky leaned against the wall and nodded. Natasha put her son in Bucky's arms and went upstairs, she was slow to open the top of the manhole, but as soon as she got it, she looked out and was apparently safe.

Natasha came down and picked up her son.

N: Let's go up.

Natasha climbed with her son on her lap and Bucky followed them with difficulty.
N: Let's rest here a bit.

~Back to the present times~

Steve returned to his bedroom, after Natasha had closed the door in his face. As soon as he entered, he came upon Sharon, sitting on the bed and staring at him, with a seriously gaze.

S: Hey…

Steve closed the door and removed the top of his uniform.

Sharon: I looked for you during the late afternoon, where were you?

S: I was with Natasha and James.

Sharon: Why?

S: She wanted to talk and I wanted to be close to James.

Sharon: Close to him, why?

Steve frowned and made a confused look.

S: What do you mean by “why”?

Sharon: You've devoted yourself to him a lot on these past few days.

S: His mother wasn’t here, I wanted him to feel good and I… I like him.

Sharon: You didn’t act like that for the orphaned children we have here.

S: James is not any baby. He is the son of Natasha and Bucky, that means he’s special to me and that I will protect him and have more affection for him. What's wrong with that?

Sharon: Is he Bucky's son?

S: Yes.

Sharon seemed to be ashamed of everything she had thought before.

Sharon: She said that he is Bucky’s son?

S: Why else would he have his name?

Sharon: But she said that???

Steve made negative with his head.

Sharon sighed and walked across the room.

S: Why are you so agitated? Why are you so bothered?

Sharon walked over to Steve and put her hands on his face. Steve looked at her.

Sharon: I want you to be honest with me. Okay?
Steve nodded.

Sharon: Are you James's dad?

S: WHAT?

Sharon: Steve, is there any chance you'll be his father?

S: Are you crazy?

Sharon: Just tell me. There's a possibility or not?

Steve made negative with his head and laughed, thinking it was some joke from Sharon.

S: Is this a pregnant thing, by any chance?

Sharon: You and Natasha, have you guys ever had sex?

S: W-w-what?

Steve's heart raced, he didn’t want to assume that he "betrayed" her, but he doesn’t like to lie to anyone, especially to his fiancée.

Steve nodded.

Sharon stepped back and placed a hand on her belly.

S: I-I... Sharon, listen, I don’t know how it happened.

Sharon: Do you feel anything for her?

S: I… No. I mean I like her, but it's not what you're thinking, that was a long time ago.

Sharon: How long ago? Two years ago?

S: What? I think so, I'm not sure...

Sharon sighed and looked at Steve.

Sharon: How old is James?

S: One.

Sharon: And you and her had sex around two years ago, so…? Can you count, Steve?

Steve shook his head in confusion. After a few seconds he finally did the math. Steve had his back to Sharon, trying to reason if there would be chances of James being his son.

S: It can’t be... It happened just once and she would tell me...

Steve kept shaking his head.

S: His name is James, just like Bucky... It's his... It can only be his...

Steve whispered to himself.
S: Or... He could be mine.

Steve turned back to look at Sharon.

S: I need to go there.

Sharon: Steve, wait!

Steve didn’t hear Sharon, he opened the bedroom door and ran down the hall to Natasha's bedroom.

Steve started knocking on the door and then knocked harder so Natasha would open it.

Tony: Dorito! What is happening? It’s late, her baby must be sleeping.

Tony appeared in the hallway, accompanied by Pepper, who was on her nightgown.

Bruce Banner also left his room and was putting on his glasses.

Bruce: Are we having any emergency?

Natasha finally opened the door, abruptly, she was with James on her lap and ready for any kind of danger that might be happening.

Natasha looked at Steve in shock.

N: Steve?! What is going on?

Steve looked at James and then at Natasha.

S: Is he my son?

Natasha changed the expression on her face, she looked away and was silent for a few seconds.

Natasha looked into Steve’s eyes again.

N: Yes.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Guys, u like the gifs I post on chapter or is it weird?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

S: He is?

Natasha sighed and rolled her eyes.

S: Wha... I mean h-how?

N: Well, we had sex, Steve. I got pregnant and I had a child. That’s basically how it works.

Tony: Excuse me? Okay ... Stop it. Now rewind this tape because my brain didn’t understand that information.

Tony rubbed his eyes and then blinked his eyes several times and looked at Pepper.

T: Can you pinch me?

P: Stop, Tony! Let's go in, this is none of our business.

T: Of course it is. Do you really think I'll leave just after that?

Sharon reached the hallway and everyone was silent.

Sharon looked at Steve, who was still looking at Natasha, wanting more explanation.

S: And you tell me like that?

N: You asked!

S: Yes, because I wanted to know if he is mine.

N: Not yours, he's mine, you just put him inside me.

Bruce: I thought you told me you couldn’t have children.

N: I thought so, but...

S: Natasha, is this serious?

Natasha sighed and took a step inside the room. Natasha threatened to close the door, but Steve pushed the door to open.

S: Why didn’t you say anything?

N: Because it doesn’t matter!
S: Doesn’t matter? You...

Sharon: Steve?

Steve looked at Sharon and then at her belly. Sharon's gaze contained something different like sadness, shame, and a little of anger.

N: We don’t have to talk about it right now.

S: Yes, we do!

Steve stared Natasha again.

N: I will not expose James more than that! And you should stop exposing your fiancée who is pregnant!

S: Let me in.

Sharon: Steve!

S: Sharon, I need to know. He is my son.

T: Hey! No, no. Am I the only one who thinks this conversation should continue here for everybody to hear?

P: Tony!

T: I have the right to hear this conversation.

P: No, you don’t.

T: As far as I know, I can be James's father too.

Natasha took a deep breath and rolled her eyes.

T: And Bruce can be and that Steve's boyfriend, the guy without an arm too.

Bruce adjusted his glasses and shook his head.

B: But we never... There is not the slightest possibility.

T: I demand a DNA test.

P: Tony, come in right now, or tomorrow I'm going to the collective dormitory.

T: Okay, okay. But just to register that if it's mine, I'll assume the kid.

Tony came into the room with Pepper and Bruce also went back to his room.

Sharon continued to stand in the hallway, hoping that Steve would have the slightest regard for her and let this talk for another day, but no, Steve entered Natasha's room and closed the door.

S: I don’t believe it.

N: So don’t believe it!
S: Why did you take him away from me? Why didn’t you tell me anything???

N: Low your voice, he's sleeping!

Natasha put James back on the bed and he grunted. Natasha caressed his face and then patted his butt until he stopped grunting and fell asleep again.

N: Hush... It’s okay… hush…

Natasha sighed and stood up, she looked at Steve who was just judging the whole situation.

S: So?

N: I didn’t take him away from you, I left that day without knowing that I was pregnant.

S: Why didn’t you come back , when you found out that you were pregnant?

N: Because I didn’t know what to do! I wanted to stop the pregnancy, I...

S: What? How could you...

N: Shut up, Steve, you don’t know what that is. You don’t know what is to be pregnant. I was terrified! I was sick for almost the entire pregnancy, I was still running away from US Government, the treat was still on. I heard about you and Sharon and about your engagement. Bucky found me and he said he was going to Russia, he was going to lose everything, and I went after him, but I fell into a trap. I had James while I was still in captivity, they took him from me and left me to die. If it wasn’t for James... I mean, Bucky... I would be dead and James at the hands of the KGB and HIDRA.

Natasha's voice faltered and she held on to keep no tears from falling. Natasha feels a strong tightness in the chest every time she remembers how desperate it was to wake up already having gone through a birth without knowing and not even seeing the child.

S: You should have tried to warn me.

Natasha made negative with her head.

N: You got engaged, things got really complicated. Thanos's war had just begun. You need to understand that I needed to save James. He has always been the priority. I could not go back.

S: That's no reason to not tell me that I had a son and you had him and didn’t come back here and when you came here, you said nothing about it.

N: I didn’t want to ruin your life! You wanted me to call or send a letter saying, "Hey Steve, remember the night at the hotel in Germany we had? So... I got pregnant, they kidnapped me, took my son off me and by the way the son is yours! Congratulations on your engagement!" It wouldn’t be easy to get your fiancée to understand a son out of your relationship.

S: How would a child ruin my life?

N: I told you to lower your voice!
Steve was red with anger and shaking his head.

S: You came back here and still didn’t tell me! You didn’t tell me, Natasha!

N: I thought you'd do the math and find out, or at least you would mistrust, but you did nothing and I decided it was best not to tell.

S: I would never imagine that you...

Steve was speechless, he took a deep breath.

S: I can’t think of a plausible reason for why you didn’t say it before.

N: I've already said my reasons, but it doesn’t matter because this only concerns me.

S: Only concerns you???? He is my son!!

N: You weren’t there, he doesn’t know you!

S: Because of you!

N: Don’t you dare blame me! He doesn’t need you, we don’t need you! We're okay so far, we don’t have to change anything. You live your life and we will live ours!

S: Are you out of your mind? I am his father and he will know that!

They were both screaming at each other, and they stopped immediately when they heard James' cry, who had just woken up with the shouting.

Both Natasha and Steve approached him, but Steve stepped in front of Natasha and caught James in his lap.

S: Hi, champ. Why are you crying? It's all right.

James screamed even more, Natasha reached out to catch James, but Steve swerved, which made James nervous and Natasha furious.

N: What are you doing????

S: Calming my son!

N: You're not calming him, you're scaring him!

S: Hush... It's okay, James.

Steve kissed James' forehead, but James stretched his little arms to Natasha, wanting to go to her lap.

N: He doesn’t know you, Steve! He woke up in fright, he will not calm down with you.

Steve looked at James and rocked him slightly from side to side, to try to calm him, but there was no point.

James was still calling for his mother and crying.

Steve handed James to Natasha.
Natasha picked James and kissed his forehead.

N: It's okay, James. Mommy's here, you're fine. Hush, hush...

James stopped crying and just closed his eyes, but continued to grumble.

Natasha looked at Steve and noticed that there was tears in his eyes.

N: Steve?

Steve made negative with his head.

S: How am I going to fix this for James? I feel the worst man on earth, now.

N: You don’t have to do this.

Natasha sighed.

N: Steve, your life doesn’t have to change. You don’t have to do anything for James.

S: I do have.

N: Steve...

S: If you try to run away with him... if you try to push him away from me, I swear I'll hunt you.

Natasha frowned, feeling offended. How dare he?

N: You would never find me! Do not threaten me!

S: I'm... I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Nat. I'm not threatening you. I just... I'm frustrated and nervous.

Steve ran a hand over his face, still showing how worried and apparently remorseful he was for not being a present father for James.

Natasha watched Steve and she wanted to stay in the defensive posture, but it was hard to see Steve blaming himself like that, it was precisely this, that she didn’t want to happen.

N: You didn’t know, okay? You didn’t know about him. You're not guilty.
S: I’m not sure of anything, right now.

N: Steve? Look at me.

Natasha walked over to Steve and laid a hand on his face.

S: I'm angry, Nat.

N: I know. You have the right to feel this way.

S: You don’t want him around me? Why?

Steve finally looked at Natasha and asked frankly.

Natasha slid her thumb across Steve's face and made negative with her head.

N: I just don't want to mess up your life.

S: You won’t. I love children.

N: I know, but...

Natasha sighed.

N: It won’t be easy.

S: Why do you say that?

N: Steve, Sharon is pregnant, she won’t accept you having another child.

S: I think she's okay with that, you don’t know her, she'll understand.

Natasha slid her hand down Steve's cheek to his chin, then she stepped away from him.

N: It's complicated, Steve. She is engaged to you, she is pregnant and we all confined here in this bunker. Emotions are stronger than before, she may look fine with that, but I’m sure she’s not.

S: I know her, she loves children, she'll love James.

N: I don't want you to force her to accept him.

S: He's part of me, she'll love him too.

Steve ran his hand through James' hair, who was already sleeping on Natasha's lap again.

N: Are you sure about that?

S: Yes, I am. Don’t worry, I'd better go now...

N: Yes.

S: She’s waiting for me...

Natasha nodded. Steve leaned over Natasha just to kiss James' face, which was on Natasha's
The nearness of Steve's face to Natasha's, made her sigh softly and close her eyes for a moment. She misses him so much, she miss his kisses and his touches.

Steve could feel Natasha's breath hitting his face and the warm air was like a kind of magnet that kept his face in the same place.

Natasha doesn’t know if her face has moved forward without her noticing, or if Steve has moved his face involuntarily close to hers, but there was only a few millimeters of distance between Natasha's lips and Steve's face, but Natasha knows that it was her who took the initiative to press her lips against Steve's face, but it was he who slid his face until Natasha's lips touch the corner of his mouth.

Natasha was about to catch Steve's lower lip in hers, but Steve walked away and walked to the door.

N: Steve?

Steve opened the door and stopped.

Steve didn’t looked back to see Natasha.

N: I'm sorry I didn’t tell you. I should have.

Steve nodded.

S: All right. Good night.

N: Good night.

Steve left the room and closed the door.

Steve was walking down the aisles of the Bunker, on the way to his bedroom, thinking about James and Natasha, about what they went out there and he did nothing to help. Steve was also thinking what was that moment inside Natasha’s room, he almost kissed her, and he doesn’t know if it was an accident like when they slept together or if he really wished to kiss her. It can’t be, he loves Sharon, Natasha is his friend, it’s just that, it’s just that… Steve decided not to think about that, it was nothing, he is more worried about James.

I have a son of a year and a half who doesn’t know who I am. Steve still felt devastated when he entered the room.

Steve switched on the lamp, to not wake Sharon, but as he lit the room a little, he noticed that Sharon was sitting up in bed, wide awake.

S: I didn’t know you were awake.

Sharon: How could I sleep?

Steve didn’t understand the accusatory tone in Sharon's voice, he sighed and started to take off his clothes, he didn’t want to think about it now. The discovery of the night still weighed on his shoulders.

Sharon: Aren’t you going to say anything?

S: What do you mean?
Sharon: Steve! She said in front of everyone that she has a child with you!

S: Sharon, we were at the beginning of our relationship.

Sharon: No, we were not. At that time you just gave me one kiss, Steve. We weren’t having a real relationship.

S: So it wasn’t betrayal?

Sharon: Now it was!

S: I don’t understand.

Sharon: We weren’t dating, but if you thought we were, that makes you a cheater. You thought we were dating and still went to bed with another woman.

S: Sharon, that was a long time ago.

Sharon: How do you think I'm feeling, Steve? Tell me? What will everyone say?

S: I… I don’t know, but they have no right to judge. Why are you worried about what people will say? You always told me to not care about others talk about me.

Sharon: It's different!

S: Sharon, I don’t want to fight. Not today. Can we talk about this tomorrow?

Sharon just took a deep breath and lay down on the bed and turned her back to Steve. Steve lay down next to Sharon and looked at her, then stared at the ceiling of the room.

S: I'm sorry for arguing in front of everyone.

Sharon: It was humiliating.

S: It wasn’t my intention. I just… I have a son, Sharon… I just found out that I am a father. My world just turned upside down. I lost my mind and…

Sharon: Fuck it! I don’t want to know.

S: Sharon?

Sharon: I don’t want to know! You can have your father and son relationship with him, but don’t do this to me, Steve. I don’t want to be part of it, it's not as simple as you think.

S: I thought you liked James.

Sharon: It has nothing to do with James, he's not guilty for having parents like you and Natasha. This has to do with me and with you, we will be a family and everything is very confused now. Everything will change.

S: Sharon, nothing's going to change.

Sharon: Everything has already changed.
Steve decided not to insist on this conversation. Sharon is hurt and angry, but she is a lovely person, next day she will feel better and change her mind. That’s what Steve thought.

…

The next morning, Steve woke up alone in bed. Steve already knows that Sharon went to work and wouldn’t even eat breakfast for being angry at him.

Sharon left a note warning Steve of the baby’s appointment.

Steve took a shower, got dressed and left the room, he went to refectory and didn’t see Natasha with James in line and not even sitting at tables.

Maria Hill was getting up from one of the tables. Steve approached her.

S: Hill, did Natasha come to have breakfast with James?

H: No, I'm taking her something to eat now.

S: Why? Dining in the dorm is only if someone is sick.

H: Yes.

S: Is she sick?

H: No, James is.

S: What???

H: Yes. Your son. Congratulations daddy. I just wanted to say that I already knew about that. Do you want to take this to her? I’m kinda busy this morning.

S: Yes.

Steve picked up the bowl and headed for Natasha's room, he knocked on the door and waited.

N: Come in.

Steve opened the door and saw no one in the room, then he noticed bathroom’s door open.

S: Natasha?

N: Steve?

S: Hill asked me to bring food for you. I heard about James. What happened?

Steve stayed in the bedroom because he didn’t know if it was Natasha who was taking a shower or James, but he could hear James’ crying.

N: It's a... a fever.

Natasha turned off the shower and looked around the bathroom.

N: I think I left the towel on the bed.
Steve looked at the bed and picked up the towel.

S: It's here. Can I enter there?

N: Yes.

Steve opened the bathroom door and handed the towel to Natasha.

Natasha wrapped James in the towel and went into the bedroom with him.

S: What does he have?

N: I don’t know.

S: Let's go to the clinic.

N: Not yet.

Natasha laid James on bed and dried him.

N: Easy, James, the more you cry, the worse your headache will be.

Natasha put clothes on James and then put him on her lap. Steve sat next to Natasha on the bed and slipped the towel through James' hair to dry it more.

Natasha looked at Steve.

N: It's not the first time he has a fever. Usually passes after a cold shower.

S: Why didn’t you call me?

N: He is not dying or anything, Steve. I can handle a fever. If he doesn’t improve, I'll take him to the clinic.

S: I just wanted to help.

N: You can help by holding him so I can eat.

Natasha stood with James and placed him on Steve's lap. James looked at Natasha and then threatened to cry.

Natasha took his pacifier from the bookshelf and placed it on James's lips.

N: It's okay, I'm here, James.

James calmed down and then looked at Steve. Steve looked at him and smiled.

S: Are you feeling bad, champ?

Natasha picked up the bowl and sat on the only chair in the room to eat, and while she was eating, she watched as James reached out to touch Steve's beard.

S: You like my beard, right? Will you have one when you grow up? You can have a big, or a sparse, or just the mustache or who knows only the goatee...
James looked at Steve and listened to his conversation as if it made some sense for him.

Natasha was eating and didn’t realize she was smiling as she watched them together.

The only person who was not smiling now was Sharon who was in the clinic, waiting for Steve to start the baby’s appointment.

- Miss Carter, we need to start, we have a lineup of people to attend to, today. Or we can schedule for the end of the day.

Sharon: No, I will do now.

Sharon glanced at the door once more, hoping Steve would arrive, but he didn’t.

Chapter End Notes

Well, I can't blame Sharon for being mad and I can't blame Steve, for wanting to know better his son, so... What do you think?
Natasha finished her meal and got up to pick up James.

**N:** Thank you.

Steve looked at Natasha.

**S:** Can I stay with him a little more?

**N:** You don’t have work to do?

**S:** That… Can… wait.

Steve was talking slowly because James was holding Steve's mouth and Steve was pretending to bite his little fingers to make him laugh.

Natasha looked at James who seemed to be feeling better.

**N:** Okay, I'll take the opportunity to take a shower while you're here… He seems fine with you.

**S:** He is. Don’t worry.

Natasha grabbed a towel and a change of clothes, then she went into the bathroom, closing the door behind her.

Steve made a lot of faces and sounds to James who tried to imitate Steve and was still amused by everything he did.

Fifteen minutes later, someone was passing through the corridor fast. This person stopped and returned to Natasha's door when she noticed the door open and see who was inside.

- Steve?

Steve looked at Sharon on the bedroom door.

**S:** Sharon?

**Sharon:** Where have you been?

**S:** Here with James.

**Sharon:** We had an appointment today for Maggie! You forgot???

**S:** I... I forgot but it was because James was not feeling well, he had a fever and I came to see how he is...

To make everything worse, Natasha was coming out of the bathroom, drying her hair and was surprised to see Sharon there.
Sharon glanced at Natasha and immediately remember when she crossed with her in that hotel.

Sharon: Just remember that you have Maggie. And me!

S: Sharon, I know I have Maggie and you, it was just because I was just helping Nat. I forgot this one appointment, I never missed any other, you know that.

Sharon: Whatever!

N: Sharon…

Sharon looked at Natasha.

N: I asked him to stay, I just wanted to take a shower and James couldn’t go to the nursery with the fever that he was. I'm sorry, I shouldn’t have kept Steve here.

Sharon listened Natasha but didn’t accept the apology because she knew Steve was there because he wanted to and she was angry at him, only at him for having forgotten the appointment.

Natasha walked over to Steve and picked up James.

N: Thank you, you can go now.

Steve got up and nodded.

Steve and Sharon left Natasha’s room.

As soon as Steve and Sharon started walking down the hallway, Sharon decided to make it clear how she felt.

Sharon: Listen, I know that all of this is new to you, but I told you that it's very humiliating. People have looked at me and talked about me in the back...

S: Who's doing this, Sharon?

Sharon: Everyone! I look like the woman who was cheated and the husband now assumed the child out of the relationship.

S: Sharon, don’t let this take bigger dimensions than it is. I couldn’t go today and I’ll do everything to not lose anything again.

Sharon: It's not just the appointment, Steve, you don’t seem to understand what I'm feeling.

S: What are you feeling? I don’t want you upset, just tell me. Talk to me.

Sharon: I already told you.

S: Is it James?

Sharon snorted and rolled her eyes.

Sharon: God, you don’t listen to me!

S: I'm trying, but you're always nervous, I don’t know what to say to make things better for
Sharon: Steve, I need to lie down.

S: At this time?

Sharon: Yeah. I'm tired.

S: Is it the baby? Are you alright?

Sharon: Yes, it's normal.

S: Do you want me to stay with you?

Sharon: No, I'll see you at lunch.

Steve nodded and followed Sharon to the door of their bedroom. Soon after, Maria Hill appeared in the hallway.

H: Steve, meeting.

S: Now?

H: Yes. They're all already there.

S: Natasha?

H: She's going too.

S: But James had a fever.

H: Clint's wife is staying with him.

Steve nodded and followed Hill through the narrow and metallic corridors to the elevator. The two of them boarded and went down to the meeting room.

When Steve entered the room, he noticed the presence of Thor, Tony, Clint, Natasha, Logan and Professor Xavier.

Hill sat down at the table next to Natasha.

Steve looked at Tony who was the only one standing in the room, seeming to be on a subject that is causing controversy among the others, because of their faces.

S: Where's Bruce?

T: He's been arrested.

S: Arrested?

T: Yeah, that's why we're here.

S: Again with that subject?

C: I said Steve would not accept this and I'm with him.
S: You can’t kick him out.

H: Actually, we can. The question is whether we will or not.

T: He forgot to take the medication for the third time.

S: Yes, but he only forgot in a long interval of time, it’s normal.

Xavier: I agree, it's perfectly normal to forget about taking a medication, one time or another.

T: Hey, didn’t you just say he didn’t take it on purpose?

X: No, I said that McCoy identifies with him and believes he could have stopped taking it because he was feeling like a caged animal. Beyond the confinement here, there is the mental confinement that is upon him.

T: I thought you read his mind.

X: No, I could never get into his mind, it's very messy, I don’t have that much power, but I know someone who has.

S: So we’re just speculating on what might have made him forget or not to take the medication.

Logan: He's dangerous, he should leave. You all are crazy to have him here.

S: Bruce is our friend, we can not do that. And I'm sure Clint and Natasha agree with me.

C: I agree, Cap.

Steve and the other presents looked at Natasha, who was downcast and thoughtful.

After a few seconds of silence, Natasha spoke…

N: He needs to go.

S: What?

N: He is dangerous to himself and to all of us.

S: You can only be joking.

Natasha lifted her head and looked directly at Steve, just for Steve, because he's the only one she feels she has a duty to explain herself.

N: I’m just thinking about James and the other kids. He may have forgotten to take this medicine once or twice, he didn’t hurt anyone this time, but he may in the next.

S: Well then let's make sure he takes the medication every day.

N: Will you make sure of that?

S: We all must make sure of that. He can’t stay out there in the world like that. He’s not an object that we can put out.
T: He is indestructible!

S: We don’t know that.

H: Steve is right.

Everyone was silent and looked at Maria Hill.

H: We don’t know Thanos and as far as I know, he's very powerful. In months, he has
devastated us, completely changed our way of life. We don’t know if he can destroy the Hulk
or not.

X: I believe that together we are stronger.

C: That's the reason we can’t leave anyone out, especially the green guy. He is essential to our
battle.

Thor: And I can handle Hulk.

N: You would only make things worse, Thor, you make him more angry and you two would
destroy this whole bunker.

T: Well, at least Natasha is here, she can sing her lullaby song and calm him down, if that's the
case.

N: I don’t know if I can still make him calm down.

T: Of course you can. Just do your magic.

N: Magic?

T: You know, bewitching men like me, like Cap...

S: Tony, this is a lot of disrespect.

T: I'm sorry, I was just joking.

S: It was a bad joke.

N: It doesn’t matter. I need to stay with my son.

T: It's agreed then that Bruce stays?

Logan: Big mistake.

Natasha got up and left the meeting room, she got into the elevator and before the door closed, Steve
came running and put his hand between the doors to be able to enter.

Steve came in and the doors closed, he looked at Natasha.

S: You are angry.

N: No.
S: You seem to be.

N: I am worried, Steve. Ever since I came back and saw Bruce in here I'm actually worried. This is no place for someone like him. He can survive outside.

S: What if he dies?

Natasha was silent.

N: I'm not selfish, but... I just...

S: You're thinking about James, about his safety.

Natasha looked at Steve and nodded.

S: You're not alone anymore, Natasha. You have me.

The elevator door opened.

N: James has you... you mean.

Natasha stepped out of the elevator and Steve followed her.

S: You too. You always will have me.

Natasha didn’t answer.

N: I'm going to get James.

S: I'll see you guys at lunch.

Natasha nodded.

At lunchtime, Natasha was already sitting with James at the Avengers table. Steve and Sharon arrived together after ten minutes and she already looked better.

Steve walked by James and ruffled his hair, James turned to see who it was and smiled when he saw Steve.

S: Are you eating everything, champ?

N: Kinda... It's a battle every day.

S: But he ate well when you were out.

James took the broccoli from his plate and handed it to Steve.

S: Daddy doesn’t want to, this is yours, son.

Natasha was annoyed that Steve was already calling himself “daddy” and referring to James like “son”. The truth is that she doesn’t want to share James with anyone and James is already clinging to Steve, faster than she predicted, and this is killing Natasha with jealousy.

S: Eat...
James still held out the broccoli to Steve and then placed it directly in his mouth, bit a piece, and spat right away.

N: James!

Clint: Guys, look how he looks like Steve.

Laura: He is, he's getting so blonde.

Pepper: I think it's the eyes.

Sharon nodded.

Sharon: There's something sweet in his gaze that looks like my fiancé.

Steve frowned a little because he felt some possessiveness when Sharon said "My fiancé", she usually doesn’t talk about him like that, but he thinks it was just his impression.

Sharon: Shall we sit down?

S: Of course...

Steve looked at James.

S: I want to see you eat everything. I'll sit there, but I'm watching you, little guy.

Steve walked to the end of the table with Sharon.

James reached out and groaned, as if he still wanted to talk to Steve.

Laura: Is he better, Natasha?

N: Yes, the fever is gone and he is all agitated again.

Natasha tried to give James more food, but he was still looking at Steve. Natasha looked in the direction of Steve and he was doing antics to James.

Sharon put his hand on Steve's arm.

Sharon: Steve, let's eat.

S: I'm eating...

Sharon: He won’t eat if you keep talking to him.

S: I just want to make him smile.

Natasha held onto James's waist and made him sit back in the chair to make him pay attention to the food.

N: James, come on, you ate almost nothing.

Natasha decided to finish her food and then concentrate to make James eat.

The others at the Avengers table and everybody at the refectory, as they finished eating, took their
trays to the counter and retired.

N: James... Everyone is gone and you don’t want to eat. We won’t leave here until you finish. I’m serious.

S: I'll take it back to you.

Natasha took a small fright. Steve now walks so quietly that she doesn’t notice when he is approaching.

N: Thank you.

Steve took Natasha's tray and led it to the counter.

Steve returned and sat facing Natasha and James, there was no one else in the refectory now.

S: So, James, how do you wanna do this?

Steve smiled and looked at Natasha.

S: Can I try?

Natasha nodded and handed the spoon to Steve. Steve got up and walked around the table to sit next to James.

S: I know this green thing here, looks bad, but you need to eat enough, so you won’t be sick and weak. If you mix this with beans, this way here...

Steve cut a very small piece of broccoli and mixed it in the beans.

S: You can hardly taste it. Here. Try...

James opened his mouth and ate what Steve had given him.

Natasha glanced James, surprised. Natasha made negative with her head and sighed.

N: Traitor.

S: Your mother is just jealous because you eat with me and not with her.

Natasha shook her head again and tried to look serious, but she ended up smiling.

N: I wanted it to be that easy, every day.

S: It will be. If you allow.

N: What do you mean?

S: I want to sit next to him and give him food.

Natasha looked away.

S: I don’t want to take your place, Natasha, but I want to have a place in his life too.

N: What does Sharon think of that?
S: Why would she talk about it? It's only during the meals, she can sit with us as well.

N: God, you really don’t understand anything about women.

S: When I think I'm close to understanding you all, I see that I know nothing about you.

Natasha smiled.

Steve finished giving James food and insisted he would take James on his lap to the bedroom, since the protocol for sick children was to stay away from the other kids so as not to infect them.

…

The days went by and Steve's relationship with James only improved, he even started to go to Steve's lap, willingly, and even wave at Natasha saying “bye, bye”. And sometimes he cries when Steve returned him to Natasha, wanting to stay longer with him.

But not all was like roses, while Steve was feeling happier with James, on the other hand, he was worried about the charges of attention and presence that Sharon seemed to demand more and more with time.

S: Sometimes it seems like you're jealous of my relationship with my son.

Sharon: Damn, Steve, I already said he has nothing to do with it.

S: So what's gotten you so far away from me? It’s been weeks that we can’t have a healthy conversation, you barely let me touch you!

Steve sighed and looked down, then looked back at Sharon.

S: I'm sorry if I screamed, I shouldn’t, I'm sorry. I want us to go back to the way we were before.

Sharon: But we're not like that anymore, don’t you see?

S: What has changed? Is it just because of...

Sharon: I swear I'll have an attack if you put James in the middle of our fight again.

Steve was silent because he was going to talk about James.

Sharon: You two spend too much time together.

S: But he...

Sharon: I'm talking about you and Natasha.

S: What?

Sharon: When James is at the nursery, you still walk around with her. Like all day.

S: We work together, we always have worked together.

Sharon nodded.
Sharon: Yes. Always.

S: Are you jealous of Natasha?

Before Sharon could respond, somebody knocked on the bedroom door, repeatedly with force.

Steve opened the bedroom door and Clint Barton came in.

C: Captain, there was a problem.

S: What happened?

C: T-the children… They are sick.

S: What? Which ones?

C: All of them.

Steve left the room and followed Clint Barton to the quarantine sector. When he got there, he saw a huge line of children being pinched by a device on the finger. The device indicates the presence of some disease or not.

S: How can all of them be sick at the same time?

C: We are confined, a disease spreads very fast around here.

Laura Barton stepped out of the room and walked over to Clint in the hallway and hugged her husband tightly.

C: How are they?

Laura: Weak. Too much fever, they’re vomiting. It's horrible inside.

S: Is it something that we are already dealt before or something new?

L: It's called Smallpox and it's very lethal. I thought we were free of this disease, but...

S: Is there a cure?

L: Yes.

S: And we have here?

L: A low stock. There is not enough for all these kids. We don’t know what to do.

C: It spread very fast.

L: We believe that this virus has undergone some kind of mutation, the symptoms are appearing very fast and...

A nurse appeared in the hallway and reported that two children had just died.

S: Who?

The nurse passed the names and Steve was, in a way, relieved that it wasn’t James. In fact, James
and Natasha were getting in line now.

Steve looked at Natasha and walked over to her. He laid his hand on James's back.

**S:** Is he sick?

**N:** I don’t know, he looks fine now, but they’re saying that all children are sick, but that some that are still in the incubation phase and the symptoms haven’t appeared yet. James had that fever weeks ago, remember?

**S:** Yes.

**N:** It's one of the symptoms.

Steve caressed James's face and was extremely worried, Natasha knew by the look on his face.

**S:** We lost two children.

**N:** Today?

**S:** Yes.

**N:** We won’t lose James.

**S:** Of course not.

As Steve and Natasha talked, the line was moving and finally it was James's turn. The nurse took James's hand and stuck a needle. James immediately woke up in shock with the pain and began to cry.

Natasha stroked his back and shook him calmly. Natasha looked at the nurse.

**N:** So?

- I'll test again.

**S:** Why?

- Because it turned negative.

Clint approached them and saw the nurse sticking James's finger again.

**C:** What's going on?

**S:** She's testing again, to confirm.

The nurse looked at Laura.

- You'd better call Dr. Cho.

**N:** What happened?

- It’s negative again.

**N:** That's good, right? He is not infected.
- Yes, but it's strange, he's been in touch with all the kids and we've been testing them for four days, they all are infected, he should be.

S: Four days and only today I know that we have an epidemic?

- It was only officialized today.

N: But why are you doubting James’ result?

- Because it's not normal. Maybe the test is wrong.

Laura returned with Dr. Cho.

Dr. Cho asked the nurse to collect blood from James and asked Natasha to wait for the result right there.

After an hour, Cho returned.

Cho: Lucky boy.

S: Is he okay?

Cho: Yes, he's stronger than ever.

N: Can he stay with me, then?

Cho: Yes, if he's healthy we won’t put him in the quarantine, but I don’t recommend that he stay too long outside the room, we never know what can happen. We will continue to monitor, first the children, then the adults.

Natasha kissed James's forehead, relieved that he was all right.

- But Doctor, it's weird because he's the only child who escaped.

Cho: No, there's a girl… Thor's daughter, she's not sick. I need to get back inside.

The days went by and more children died because of the virus that infected all the children in the Bunker, except James and Torunn. The adults became immune to the contagion. James and Torunn were examined every day, but their results always turned negative.

The healing medication was over and there were still many children in urgent need of the medication, including all the children of Clint Barton.

The solution wasn’t inside the bunker but outside.

Dr. McCoy managed with the help of Bruce Banner to make a medication that relieved the symptoms and delayed the effect of the disease.

S: I need to go out and provide more medication.

N: I'll go with you.

S: No, you stay with James.
N: No, I'm going with you, I know the ways, you don’t.

T: Natasha is right, we'll take care of James.

Logan: We don’t even know if the infectious disease building is still standing. You may be leaving here and even dying for nothing.

S: But we have to try.

T: Yes, go!

...

Steve and Natasha left the bunker on a mission to find the center for infectious diseases, or at least some entire hospital, to find a cure for the epidemic.

N: We need to land here.

S: But we're close to getting to those buildings.

N: Yes, that means that from there, we will have company.

Steve nodded and set the jet in the area that Natasha indicated.

N: The first thing we'll do is find a safe building.

S: Aren’t we going straight to the hospitals?

N: No. We can’t walk around here at night, we don’t see well in the dark, but they do.

S: I didn’t expect to stay more than one night out.

N: But we will. There's no other way.

Steve agreed with Natasha and she asked him not to talk to her or anyone else on the street. As normal as the person seems to be, he can’t try to save anyone.

N: Remember we're on a mission to save hundreds and it's not worth exchanging hundreds of lives for one.

And yes, Steve saw several people on the street, wandering aimlessly, some very bruised, others perfectly healthy.

Steve noticed that a young woman was looking at him from the other side of the sidewalk, he looked directly into her eyes and then looked down.

N: Fuck, Steve! I told you, don’t face anyone! She will follow us now.

S: What do I do?

N: Nothing. Just follow me.

Natasha and Steve continued walking for more than three hours in a row, with the young woman coming after them. Steve threatened to look back, just to know if they were still being followed.
N: You're going to kill us both!

S: I'm sorry.

Natasha turned the next corner and entered a building with Steve. It was already dusk, so they had to get rid of the girl quickly and find a building to stay the night.

Natasha looked at a building, which had first floor without walls, only pillars and the only access was a half destroyed staircase, without contact with the floor.

Natasha noticed that with a good push, Steve could climb up that staircase and help her up afterwards.

N: Do you see that building with that half staircase?

S: Yes.

N: After we finish here, go straight there. Don’t run. Walk. Come on.

S: Okay. But what do we have to finish here?

N: Close your eyes…

Steve was going to ask why Natasha told him to close his eyes, but soon he felt a weight on his body, making him fall to the ground.

It was the young woman who was following him. She mounted on him and when she opened her mouth, her teeth were sharp and dirty with blood.

Steve turned his face to the side and closed his eyes, he put his hands on her neck to keep her away from his face and also tried to hang her.

Natasha was looking around for something she could use to kill the girl. She found a piece of a twisted rebar and thrust it into the creature's back, which cried out in pain and turned to face Natasha, who immediately closed her eyes.

Steve pushed the creature aside and had the rebar come through her body, killing the young woman at last.

S: She's dead.

N: Come on.

Natasha and Steve walked faster to the building because the day was totally darkening and the number of "people" on the street was increasing.

Steve jumped and climbed the concrete stairs, then stretched out his hands and pulled Natasha into the building. They continued up the stairs and stopped on each floor to make a sweep and make sure they were alone in the building.

They finally stopped on the last floor. Steve leaned against the wall and slid his body down to sit on the floor, feeling exhausted.

S: How did you get through these things with James?
N: I don’t know, I guess he made me stronger.

Natasha walked over to Steve and sat down on the floor next to him.

S: Why didn’t you use your gun down there? To not attract more of them?

Natasha nodded.

S: They're smart then.

N: They are in a way. But I noticed that they are weaker in human form, I think they haven’t adapted very well with the human body.

Natasha crawled across the floor to the nearest window and looked at the city.

N: Come see this.

Steve followed her and looked out the window, he was completely astonished at the amount of people walking down the street… Children, teenagers, adults, pregnant women, old people...

S: Are they all dominated?

N: I’m not sure. Sometimes I just pretended to be, they don’t differ us from them so easy.

S: How do they differ?

N: By our reactions… Fear, cry, despair… They have no emotions…

Natasha continued looking to the city outside.

N: It's very sad to see the world this way. He was ours once and now… It's just sad...

Steve looked at Natasha and watched her as she spoke. Steve noticed that she was thrilled to reflect on the situation in the world and he doesn’t like to see her sad.

Steve doesn’t know why he stroked Natasha's back, in fact he knew it was a way to try to comfort her and to demonstrate that he also feels for the world and that he knows what she's feeling.

Stroking her back wasn’t a problem at all, but allowing his lips to get closer to hers was…

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, it was a long chapter. I couldn't even make a gif.
Some readers asked about the creatures on last chapter and I think that maybe I didn't wrote that right on the other chapters, so I'll explain now... Natasha was remembering how Bucky helped her to escape from Ivan, and she described there about how creatures from Thanos's army arrived on earth and started to assume people's form and caused the population to live on bunkers, always hidden... So, those creatures was what they were talking about on last chapter, and yes it looks like an apocalypse zumbi, but they're aliens, that can look like humans... I hope you all can understand now, that's the reason everybody lives on a bunker now.

Is he kissing me or am I kissing him? Why am I doing this? I didn’t kiss him, he kissed me. Natasha thought as she slowly opened her lips, so that Steve would place his tongue between her lips.

Natasha took a deep breath and when she felt the tip of his tongue touching her lower lip, she let out a short moan of satisfaction.

I thought I would never feel his breath in my mouth like that again. Why is it still so good to feel that? To feel him? Natasha thought as she discreetly turned her body toward Steve, who was now sliding his tongue into Natasha's mouth.

What is he thinking right now? Natasha wondered, as she corresponded to Steve’s tongue caress in her mouth.

Natasha moved her tongue over Steve's and he took the opportunity to suck her tongue to inside his mouth.

It was supposed to be a delicate and subtle move, but Natasha eventually let out another low moan directly to Steve's lips, which triggered him. Steve sucked her tongue harder, which made Natasha put her hands on his shoulder and tried to pull her tongue back.

As Natasha pushed Steve's shoulders back to loosen her tongue, Steve lost his balance and fell backward onto the floor. Natasha ended up falling over his body, since she was leaning over him with her hands on his shoulders.

Before Steve could open his eyes, Natasha pressed her lips to his again and slipped her tongue into Steve's mouth and stroked the full length of his tongue.

Natasha explored every corner of Steve's mouth. It was a mixture of abstinence with dominance and anxiety that made her massage his tongue constantly and even touch the palate of his mouth with the tip of her tongue.

Steve put both hands on Natasha's waist and squeezed tightly. One part of him was wishing to push her away, but the dominant part made him press her body against his.

Natasha placed both hands on Steve's face, as she kissed his mouth infinitely. Steve slid a hand from Nat’s waist to her back, then with the same hand he slid down, until he felt his hand filling one of her
buttocks and squeezing it hard.

Natasha didn’t complain about this, on the contrary, she shrugged slightly, leaving her crotch region, just above Steve's hip. Steve immediately forced himself to sit again, without stopping the kiss and without taking his hand off Natasha's butt.

As they sat down, Natasha slid her hands from Steve's face to his defined pectoral; she lowered her hands a little more and grabbed the hem of his shirt. Natasha lifted Steve's shirt and dragged her nails through Steve's belly as she finished lifting and removing his shirt off.

Natasha had to interrupt the kiss to take Steve's shirt off. She didn’t want to stop the kiss, fearing that he may regret and stop what they are doing and she needs so much to have him now, she misses being in touch with his body, that single night a few years ago, had been very little for her.

As soon as Natasha finished removing Steve's shirt, she looked at him and waited for his reaction and for Natasha's surprise, he didn’t stop, he put his other hand on the button of Natasha's pants and unbuttoned it, very easy, which made Natasha a little annoyed by his ability on removing woman’s clothes that easy with just one hand… Natasha wonder how many times he and Sharon must have done it for him to become such an expert at undressing bodies. And yes, she still feels jealous of him.

Natasha didn’t have time to be angry or to think about giving up… She lost her breath when she felt Steve's hand slide the zipper of her pants down and then his fingers down her panties, strumming her clit at the correct intensity.

Steve had his face and neck completely red as he watched the expression of pleasure on Natasha's face, and even when she tried to glue her body on his, to kiss him again, he didn’t allow it, he wanted to watch her.

Natasha understood and gave a small, almost imperceptible, smile.

Natasha got rid of the jacket she was wearing and then got rid of her blouse.

Steve looked directly at Natasha's bra and bit the tissue that connected one bulge to the other. Steve bit into it and tried to pull it off, which made Natasha laugh and make Steve irritate with her bra.

Steve decided to put his hands on her bra and rip it off.

Steve had to stop for a few seconds, just to stare at Natasha's breasts, as if it were the first time he’d seen them. Well, it’s the second, so he’s still very impressed.

Maybe the other time, he didn’t pay so much attention, but now he is, and this look of desire, I recognize in any man. Natasha thought as she smirked, extremely pleased to see that she still had a big effect on Steve.

Steve put a hand under each of Natasha's breasts and lifted them, then joined them and squeezed tightly one against the other. Natasha groaned as she watched Steve’s tongue run through her nipples, almost at the same time.

Steve could feel Natasha's nipples stiffening with his tongue. Steve gave hiccups alternating between one nipple and the other, causing more moans from Natasha's lips, who started to move her hip back and forth, as she felt Steve’s erection pulsate beneath her.

Natasha just screamed when Steve bit her nipple hard. Steve stopped at the same time and looked into her eyes, startled.
Natasha was panting and she shook her head.

**S: Did I hurt you?**

Natasha shook her head.

**N: I don’t… I don’t like teeth…**

Steve nodded and lifted his face to Natasha's, she pressed her lips to his and they explored each other's mouths again.

Natasha unbuttoned Steve's pants and slipped her hand inside his pants and noticed that he wasn’t wearing any underwear.

As soon as Natasha's hand touched his cock, Steve grunted and released her breasts to grab Natasha's buttocks again and press her body against his. Natasha pulled Steve's rigid cock out of his pants and smoothed it steady, which made Steve bite Natasha's bottom lip.

The moment Natasha prepared to get up to take off her pants, Steve’s W.T. started to peck. They both stopped the kiss, but remained with their lips glued. They both opened their eyes and then frowned. *Who could it be?* They both thought.

What was very strange and unusual was someone calling the W.T from someone, who’s on a mission out of the bunker, there is a huge risk of calling attention of those terrible creatures who take on human forms. If someone is calling it's because it's an emergency.

The first thing Natasha thought of was James and that something would have happened to him and Steve thought it would be some emergency with Sharon and her pregnancy.

**N: James! You have to attend!**

Steve nodded and picked his W.T as Natasha stepped off him.

Steve looked at the viewer who was calling.

**S: It's Sharon.**

Steve looked at Natasha and made negative with his head.

**S: I'm sorry, I need to answer.**

Natasha took a deep breath and tried her best to pretend she didn’t care, she nodded and searched for her clothes while Steve got up and adjusted his pants.

Steve walked around the room so he could speak to Sharon.

Steve answered the call.

**S: Sharon?**

A silence followed, which distressed Steve.

**S: Sharon? Is that you? Are you all right?**

*Sharon: Yes.*
Again a silence.

S: What happened?

Sharon: I shouldn’t have called.

S: Why? Is it something with Maggie?

Sharon: No... No. No. She's fine. I just wanted to hear your voice.

S: Sharon...

Sharon: I know it should only on emergency, but we got into a fight these days… I’ve been in a strange mood and I should have said goodbye before you left, I’m sorry for ignoring you so much. I miss you.

S: It's okay… I miss you too.

Sharon: Get home safe.

S: I will.

Sharon: Good night, my fiancée.

Steve could hear Sharon small laugh when she called him that, but the mood between them was still strange, it could tell by the heavy atmosphere that was when they had nothing more to talk to each other.

S: Sharon? Is James, okay?

Sharon: Uhm... I think so.

S: Do you think so?

Sharon: Well, I didn’t see him, Clint is with him.

S: But you know that all the kids got sick, James is my son, so...

Sharon: I know he's your son, I'll check on him. If he's okay, I'll ring twice to your W.T. Ok?

S: Yes, I appreciate that.

Steve ended the call.

Steve stopped in the hallway and took a deep breath, he put his hand on his forehead and felt a huge remorse for betraying Sharon, and this time there is no doubt that it was betrayal because they’re engaged. He never knows why he can’t resist Natasha, he loves Sharon.

Before Natasha showed up at the bunker, Steve and Sharon's relationship seemed different from what is now, like when they announced they were getting married… They were all smiles, caresses and support, but since Steve discovered to be James's father, the jealousy and fear of Sharon increased absurdly, and she had never shown jealousy or fear of losing him.

In fact, the only person Sharon was afraid of losing Steve to, was Natasha, but this before they
started to date, and just because Steve and Natasha used to work and had fun together all the time, but that was a long time ago, before the Civil War.

When Natasha disappeared in the world, there was no more threat for Sharon, and Steve was genuinely in love with her and willing to marry her and live with her forever. Nothing more was a reason for them to fight.

Neither Sharon nor Steve know exactly how they started to move away from each other, they just know that it was after Steve know about being James’ father. When the night came, at the time of intimacy, Sharon deviated from all his touches and during the day, she avoided him or they started to argue about anything. The only moment of respite was when it came to dealing with matters relating to their daughter.

Steve looked at the entrance to the room, where he had left Natasha. *What to tell her? It wasn’t for that to happen, I honestly don’t know why I kissed her, I don’t think of her like that, what were we doing? What did I do?* Steve inquired himself, not having the courage to walk into the room and face Natasha.

*Am I going to hurt her? She doesn’t love me, so she won’t be hurt, maybe angry. I just have to apologize. What was I thinking? I only love one woman and she’s there in the bunker, waiting for me with my daughter in her belly.*

Steve concluded, taking another deep breath and walking into the room. Steve looked at his shirt on the floor and then looked for Natasha and didn’t find her.

**S: Nat?**

Steve called her and got no answer, he saw that the room had one more door at the other corner and walked there. The door was open and the room was probably a waiting area as there were three sofas and a desk.

Natasha was lying on one of the sofas, sideways, facing the back of the sofa. Steve couldn’t get into the room, he almost turned to walk away and to not to have face her.

**N: You can sleep on the other couch, it's better than the floor.**

Steve looked at her and wanted her to turn and look into his eyes and say something, but she remained motionless. Steve stepped into the room and lay down on the couch facing Natasha's.

*Apologize!!! What are you doing? Apologize!* Steve screamed at himself in his mind, but he looked at Natasha and his lips seemed sealed.

*That is so wrong. Why did you do this to them? It’s not fair!* Steve wondered and couldn’t close his eyes, he spent hours looking at Natasha lying down.

*I've never felt so strange in my whole life. Why do I care so much about you, Natasha? Why?* It was Steve's last thought, before he finally fell asleep.

As soon as the dawn came, Natasha got up and approached Steve on the couch.

**N: It's time.**

Steve opened his eyes in alarm and sat down. Natasha turned away and walked to the room door. Steve watched her.
S: Natasha?

N: No, Steve. No need. Don’t say anything.

S: But...

N: I understand that it was a fragile moment of the two of us... Again... It was wrong, I'm glad it didn’t go until the end.

Steve didn’t try to argue, he was even relieved that Natasha wasn’t angry, sad or feeling used… Steve soon thought they are friends and this closeness between them can sometimes be confused with something else and that’s why they had that moment last night. But how to know if it’s a usual thing for friends to have moments of desire as strong as what they felt last night and that night in the hotel room in Germany?

The two of them left the building and advanced for hours until finally finding an abandoned hospital.

N: No matter what you see, we can’t help these people... Many of them seek help in the hospital, but most are just fooling us.

S: So there's a minority who could still be health and...

N: Yes.

S: We can’t leave them behind.

N: We can and we will, we have a single mission here and I really want to go back to my son as soon as possible.

S: He's fine.

Natasha looked at Steve.

S: I asked Sharon to check him and she said she'd give me two rings to confirm that he's okay. When we woke up, I checked my device and she had given.

Natasha nodded.

N: Still, I'm feeling something wrong.

S: About this hospital?

N: About James.

S: You’re just missing him.

N: Probably. Let's finish this.

...

Tony: Dr. Cho, did you want to talk to me?

Cho: Yeah, Tony, it's about this kids epidemic.
T: I'm very worried about that.

Cho: Me too.

T: I hope that Steve and Natasha will be back soon with these vaccines.

Cho: Tony... Have you ever stopped to think how those children got sick?

T: I imagined that some virus was through the air and it arrived here.

Cho: That would be very unlikely. We live enclosed here and this virus needs a host.

T: Do you think someone brought the disease in here, then?

Cho nodded.

T: But it's been months since we got new people... Do you think any mutants brought this disease?

Cho: They didn’t bring any children with them, and we know that this disease is only reaching children.

T: So there is no one else who could have brought this disease here.

Cho: Yes, there is.

T: Who? Do you mean Natasha?

Cho: Her son.

T: He is not sick.

Cho: He had a fever before the epidemic starts, I believe the virus hasn’t been able to penetrate his system but that he may be transmitting to the other children.

T: Are you sure it's James?

Cho: No, I would have to do more tests on him to be sure, the results wouldn’t come out so fast and I'll need more blood samples to test.

T: He is very young, Cho.

Cho: He needs to be isolated.

T: No way, he is all shy with everybody, he cries too much wanting his mother, he won’t be in a room alone.

Cho: Tony, I'm almost sure it's him. We still have about ten children still healthy, but should we isolate ten just to protect one?

Tony frowned and sighed.

Tony walked across the room and then rubbed his forehead, reluctant to accept the idea.
T: I can’t do that to him. I need to know the opinion of the others, someone who’s close to the kid, like Clint.

Cho: He won’t accept it.

T: Natasha will kill me and you and everyone here for allowing this.

Cho: She'll have to understand, Tony. I don’t want to do this as much as you, but we have already lost eight children, we have thirty-two patients and five in serious condition.

T: I know, I understand you. I just need some time...

Cho: Okay, let me know what to you decide.

The only person Tony talked about that was Pepper Potts, because she's the only person who can somehow put some sense into his head.

T: I really don’t want to do that, not just because he’s the son of my friends, but because he’s just a baby.

P: I understand, Tony. And I understand that is necessary that he be isolated for the safety of the other children, let Cho do the tests soon and eliminate him as the source of this disease. The sooner, the faster all this disorder goes away.

T: How do you think Natasha and Steve will react?

P: Bad. Very bad, but they will have to understand that the situation here is chaotic, we can’t lose all these children.

Tony folded his arms and was silent for a long time. Pepper could feel the wrinkles of Tony Stark's jump over his forehead.

Pepper walked over to Tony and laid a hand on his arm, making him uncross his arms and then making him hug her.

P: Don’t blame yourself, you’re doing the right thing this time.

T: Are you sure?

P: Yes.

Pepper kissed Tony's cheek for a long time and hugged him tightly next.

…

At the end of the day, Clint arrived from work at his room.

As soon as he walked in, Clint walked over to the chair and sat down. Laura approached Clint, and touched Clint's shoulder.

Clint was hoping to get a kiss and a hug, as he received every night when he arrived, but Laura only touched his shoulder.

Clint lifted his face to look at Laura.
C: What is it, woman?

The concern on Laura's face made Clint get up from his chair immediately.

C: Our children?

L: They remain hospitalized, but they are still stable.

Clint looked around the room.

C: Where's the Cap-Baby?

L: They took him.

C: They? Who?

L: Tony and Dr. Cho came here and told that James who was infecting the other kids.

C: What the hell? The boy is not even sick!

L: Yes, they said it was some child who came from the outside who brought the disease in here.

C: What did they do with James?

L: They just told me that he would have to stay in isolation.

C: He's just a baby! He must be freaking out now without someone he's used to. I'm going to talk to Tony right now!

Laura was going to try to calm Clint, but he left the room, like a lightning, he went to Tony's room and slammed the door.

Tony opened the door.

C: Where's the boy?

T: He's fine, he's being treated well. I made sure of that,

C: WHAT AN ASS YOU ARE, STARK! You know damn well how James is with strange people, he must be terrified.

T: Clint, take it easy.

Pepper curled up in the robe and approached the door.

P: Do you want to see him?

Tony looked at Pepper and shook his head.

P: I think he'll feel better if he sees that James is fine.

C: Take me to him.

Pepper and Tony accompanied Clint to the elevator and down with him to the F-wing.
The F-wing was extremely cold, the air conditioning was much stronger there, the walls all white, and as if that wasn’t enough people there were wearing special clothing like if they were dealing with chemical weapons.

C: What the fuck is this place???

T: Our research and medicine center. We store blood bank, laboratory and ward infectious diseases with isolated boxes to prevent propagation.

P: We have to wear this from here.

They arrived at the anteroom in the isolation area, the three of them donned the special clothes, put a mask on their faces and a cap.

Clint made negative with his head.

C: I don’t believe that.

T: If we are not being decimated by diseases like the other bunkers, it’s thanks to these actions.

They entered the isolation area and Clint was surprised to see that more people were being isolated, he had no idea that such place existed there.

Clint looked at a pale blond girl in one of the paneled glass pews, looking straight at him.

C: What does she have?

T: I don’t know.

C: Are her eyes bleeding?

T: Probably.

In the other box, a man seemed to be insane, shaking his head and beating desperately in the glass, trying to leave.

C: Oh my God, Tony.

T: He tried to eat his own children.

C: Is James here? How could you? How could you do that to him, Tony?

T: I put him in a separate room.

As they walked to the end of the hallway, Tony opened the door to a single insulating box.

Clint came in and could see a nurse in a special outfit like theirs and mask on her face near the cradle of James, stroking his back to try to calm him down, but totally in vain.

Clint approached the stall and was horrified to see how much James was crying, despite the useless efforts of the nurse who tried everything to make him sleep.
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C: I'll get him out of there.

T: Clint, no. I brought you here for you to see that he is fine.

C: Look at the kid, you call it fine?

Pepper: Tony meant physically well.

C: Natasha is going to kill you two and all the nurses, she's going to become a She-Hulk and put this place down. And Steve is going to help her, he's crazy about this kid.

P: Yes, she will be angry and that is why we’re speeding up the exams so soon, he won’t be in that situation anymore.

C: That's absurd, I'm going to get him out of here and there's nothing you can do to stop me.

T: Actually there is.

C: Oh so are you going to fight me?

T: No. I will just remember that Lila, Cooper and Francis are all hospitalized and a Lila is in serious condition.

C: She is not.

T: Yes, she is, I was informed a half hour ago.

Clint looked less exalted and more worried, he was undecided whether to get James or rush to try to see his daughter and give some support to his wife Laura.

T: You won’t be able to see Lila if she is in a serious condition, you know the protocol. Your wife must already be accompanying her and your other children and I understand that it is hurting in her heart to know that her children are close to death, especially Lila now.

Clint looked shocked at Tony, who used the word death to make a bigger impact on him and it was true, in a matter of hours, children in serious condition ended up dying.

T: This agony you are feeling, many other parents may also feel, otherwise we discover the cause of this epidemic and eliminate it. I didn’t want to do this as much as you. You think I don’t mind putting a baby, who has not even two yo in a glass box, like an animal in a zoo? I'm as pissed as you are, but I have done what I understand to be necessary for the good of the majority. And isn’t this what we should do in times like this? Isn’t it for what we fight for? To keep everybody safe.

Clint just took a deep breath and looked at James, who had just been caught in the lap by another nurse, wearing a protective suit.

C: That's very cruel, he's terrified.
A slender Asian woman appeared at the door of the room where they were, holding a clipboard.

**Cho:** Clint.

Clint turned to look at the doctor.

**Cho:** James is used to you, at least more than with the nurses. I'd like you to come in, but you have to promise not to try to get him out of there, and wear your outfit and protective gear.

Clint nodded.

Cho looked at Tony and he made negative with his head.

**Cho:** He's been crying for hours, he vomited of so much crying and he was even choking, we need to calm him down, he didn’t sleep, he didn’t eat...

**T:** Okay, okay, he can go. I trust him.

Tony put his hand on Clint Barton's shoulder, who looked at him and nodded.

**Cho:** Follow me.

Clint accompanied Dr. Cho and he had to walk through a small chamber, where a white smoke disinfected the clothes of those who passed by. Clint followed all Cho's instructions and had access to "James's room".

The nurse put James back in the crib, who sat down and looked exhausted from crying. The nurse withdrew and left James with Clint.

**C:** Hi Cap-Baby-Spider. Hey, big boy, it's Uncle Clint, do you recognize me? Remember me, right? You're used to Laura, I know, but I'm nice to you, too.

Clint rested his hands on the crib and looked at James, who only trembled, while tears still rolled down his reddish face.

**C:** I'm wearing that mask, but it's me, Uncle Clint. Are you missing your mama? Why are you crying? Do you want to come on my lap?

James didn’t move, but Clint caught him in his lap anyway.

**C:** Okay… Here we go… That’s right… You’re alright. You’re alright.

Clint stroked the back of James, who finally gave up and laid his head on Clint's shoulder.

**C:** Very well. It's over, it's over.

James seemed finally calmer, a few minutes being nursed by Clint and he fell asleep. Dr. Cho took advantage to collect more blood samples, he was too tired to wake up with the needle, he just grunted and went back to sleep.

...

**S:** Where should we look?

**N:** On Vaccination Center or labs.
S: Do we know exactly what we need?

N: Yes, Banner explained. Having an active principle of the vaccine, they can replicate to produce more, for sure it is written the name of the vaccine in the jars.

S: This hospital is huge, we should split up to find it faster.

Natasha moved her head quickly toward the hospital corridor, as if she'd been startled.

S: What? Did you see anything?

N: I don't know. I think it was nothing. Anyway, we have to be very careful. Hospital must have many civilians who came to get aid, but not just civilians.

S: That's good, isn't it? They can help us and maybe we can help some of them.

N: Steve, I told you… Even if they are civilians, they may be insane or with some illness we don't know, or be one of those damned creatures.

S: Okay.

N: Let's start from the bottom up. You get the last floor and I'll be right under yours.

Steve nodded. Natasha gave Steve the name of the vaccine they must find. The two of them hurried up the stairs of the hospital. The hospital had five floors, and on the way they watched some people wandering in the corridors, but no threat as no one tried to attack them.

Upon reaching the fourth floor, Natasha stopped and Steve was already climbing the stairs, but stopped and looked at Natasha.

N: Go.

Steve stood in the same place and wanted to say something, but didn’t know how.

N: What are you doing? Go.

Natasha whispered.

S: I think we should be together.

N: No, we'll be faster if you search on one floor and me on the other, you said that yourself.

Natasha could see that Steve was worried, she looked at him and sighed.

N: I'll be fine.

S: Please.

N: I promise.

Steve looked at her for a few more seconds, then climbed the rest of the stairs and began rummaging through the rooms. Natasha did the same on her floor.

After an hour, Natasha went down another floor in search of the vaccine room. As she took a long time there, she thought that Steve had already gone down to the second floor, but Steve was still in
the last, because he had just found what they wanted... The vaccines.

Steve took three samples of the vaccine they needed, and decided to take some more of the other diseases as a precaution.

Natasha took her flashlight and entered a long corridor with several doors giving access to rooms that were used as a room for hospitalization, you could see that because the rooms were with stretchers and monitoring devices.

Beyond filthy, the hallway was very dark and there was only the sound of a creaking door, every time the wind passed through it.

Natasha again had the impression of a figure passing behind her and turned immediately and lit the hallway with her flashlight.

Natasha frowned as she saw nothing and decided to take out her gun.

Natasha walked back down the aisle, and then she looked back to make sure no one would attack her from behind.

As she reached the end of the corridor, Natasha noticed the "Research Center" sign above the last door and thought she would be more likely to find the vaccine there, she put her hand on the doorknob and turned slowly.

Natasha opened a crack in the door, then slung the barrel of the gun into the doorway, along with the flashlight, then opened the door and entered the room.

Natasha noticed that the room was huge, there was a large table with microscopes and other medical devices in the center of the room and several shelves scattered on the walls with various chemicals she had no idea what it was but decided to approach the shelf to see if it had identification tags.

Natasha lowered the weapon and held it in one of the glasses with green liquid to read what it was.

The sound of something rolling on the floor at the back of the room made Natasha scare and let the glass fall to the floor and crash, she immediately looked towards the back of the room and pulled her gun again.

Natasha approached the table on the middle of the room and walked along the long design of the table until approaching the back of the room, and for her surprise, she saw a blond girl, about nine years old, sitting, hugging her own knees and her face buried between her arms.

Natasha pointed the gun at her head, but didn’t come closer, she was trying to interpret the actions of the girl.

If the girl were one of those creatures, she would be attacking her right now. These creatures don’t show fear, as she is demonstrating now, but Natasha doesn’t trust, she also is trembling with fear, not knowing what to do.

N: Hey.

The girl stopped shaking, and buried her face in her arms even more.

N: Are you alone here? What's your name?

The girl didn’t answer.
N: It's okay. You don’t have to be afraid of me.

- I'm not afraid of you, you're like me.

N: Yes... Yes... You know that, that's good, you're smart.

- I'm afraid of him.

N: Him?

Natasha only realized how distracted she was by the girl when a shadow cast over her and she had to throw herself on the floor to divert from the man behind her.

He, certainly, was dominated by one of those alien creatures. As soon as Natasha threw herself on the floor, she eventually let the gun and the flashlight fall.

Natasha almost turned to look at the man, but she remembered that she couldn’t look directly into his eyes, because that’s the way the thing can assume her form.

Natasha looked where the gun went and crawled quickly to get the gun back, but the man grabbed her ankles, pulled her and tried to make her turn around to face him.

Natasha grabbed the legs of the long and heavy table, and kicked the creature until he release her, then she tried to get up to run to the gun.

When she managed to stand, he again grabbed her feet, making her fall, but this time near her gun.

Natasha held the gun and the man turned her body, making her lie belly up, while Natasha prepared to shoot. She was able to fire the shot, but she didn’t hit the man. In fact, she doesn’t even know which direction she shot.

...

Steve heard the shot and immediately went downstairs looking for Natasha.

S: NATASHA!

Steve heard the noise of things in the room down the hall, he was going to run there, but other people also heard the noises, started to appear on the stairs and saw Steve and then ran after him to attack.

Steve ran down the hallway and upon reaching the room, he shot the man on top of Natasha's body.

Natasha pushed the man's body to the side and stood up.

S: Are you okay?

Natasha was panting from the fight and nodded.

S: We have to get out of here.

N: Yes, but there's the girl...

Natasha looked in the direction of where the girl was and saw her lying on the ground.

N: No...
Natasha approached the girl and saw the bullet hole in her head. Natasha was horrified because she knew that the shot she fired wrong was what hit the girl.

*S: We have to go, they’re here! Natasha!*

Natasha shook her head and nodded, coming back to herself. She and Steve fought the creatures that were down the hospital corridor and ran towards the stairs to get down, but Natasha stopped next the window.

*S: Natasha?*

Natasha shook her head.

*N: We have to go up.*

*S: Up? We have to get out of here. Down is the only way.*

*N: They're all coming here.*

*S: Huh?*

Steve approached Natasha and noticed the crowd of people crowding near the hospital. You couldn’t even see the ground, just people, many, many people.

*S: How are we getting out of here?*

*N: Come on.*

Natasha pulled Steve's hand up to the roof with him. Natasha looked around the buildings, and noticed they were far apart from it.

Natasha pulled a device under her jacket and attached it to Steve's wrist.

*S: What is this?*

*N: My steel rope, you're going to shoot at the window of that building.*

*S: Is it that long?*

*N: There is only one way to know.*

The two of them moved closer to the parapet and Steve grabbed Natasha's waist with one arm and Natasha hugged his waist to hold herself. Steve threw the steel rope and luckily, the hook of the rope managed to reach the window.

*S: I don’t know if it's stuck and safe.*

Steve tugged at the rope to test, but it didn’t seem to be clinging somewhere firmly.

*N: It doesn’t matter, it's our only chance! Go!*

Steve took a deep breath, held Natasha's body tighter and threw themselves away from the roof.

The two hit their bodies on the front of the building, but there was no serious blow to the point of injury, the two of them entered the building and ran again to the roof. From that roof and on, they
only had to jump from one roof to the other until they reached the edge of the city.

N: Now let's get down.

S: Can't we stay here until dawn? There will be less of them scattered around.

N: No, they saw us jumping the buildings, there must already be a lot of them here and more will come. We have to go now.

Steve just nodded, he went down the last building with Natasha, they fought some more creatures, as Natasha had predicted they would, and when they left the building, they just ran as far as they could in the direction they'd left the jet.

The creatures couldn’t run fast enough in a human body, which gave a good advantage to Steve and Natasha, who were able to board the jet and take off in time.

N: We have to go in the wrong direction...

S: What?

N: If we go in the direction of the bunker, they can find the bunker… Remember that they are hunting us, we have to rid them.

Steve nodded and turned off the scheduled route for the return.

After a few minutes in the air, Natasha threw herself on the back seat of the jet. Steve looked at her in the rearview mirror.

S: Are you alright?

Natasha nodded, but said nothing else. She leaned her head against the wall behind the bench and closed her eyes.

Steve thought she was just sleeping because she was exhausted and didn’t suspect of anything.

After an hour, Steve looked at Natasha, who was motionless in the same place and position.

S: Do you think we can go in the right direction now? Nat? Natasha?

Steve watched Natasha's body fall to the side and then to the floor.

S: Natasha?!

Steve activated the autopilot and ran to check on her. Steve laid her down on the bench and removed her hair from her face.

S: Natasha? Talk to me! Are you okay?

Natasha shook her head and opened her eyes for a few seconds and closed it again.

S: What's happening?

Steve noticed the ripped sleeve of Natasha's jacket, he looked at the skin of her arm and it was scratched thoroughly, with blood marks dripping from there.
Steve looked at Natasha and he was very worried, already aware that the creature scratched her arm.

S: Damn. Hold on, Natasha.

Steve took the first aid case and bandaged Natasha's arm. He had to re-pilot the jet in the right direction for the bunker, but checked her wrist every half hour.

Natasha woke up three hours later and sat down.

S: Hey... Don't push yourself. You will be fine.

Natasha was pale and made an expression of pain, she placed her hand on the bandage on her arm.

S: Don't touch it.

N: What is this?

S: That man in the hospital, he scratched you and you went blank for a few hours.

N: What?

S: You look better now. It's gonna be okay.

Steve nodded as he put the jet in automatic mode, he got up and walked over to Natasha.

N: He scratched me?

S: That's what it looks like.

Natasha closed her eyes and sighed.

N: How many hours until the bunker?

S: Three more hours, we'll arrive early in the morning. I'm going as fast as I can.

Natasha was still feeling dizzy, she tried to get up, but couldn't. Steve put his hand on her knee and shoulder.

S: Please, don't try to get up now.

N: You have to land.

S: What?

N: Now...

Steve frowned, confused.

S: What are you talking about?

N: He scratched me, I feel sick.

S: Yes, we'll help you in the bunker.

N: I can't go back there, not like this. I can infect others.
S: Natasha, we don’t even know the effects of a scratch. He didn’t take your form or anything and...

N: That's right! We don’t know, and we can not risk! Leave me here anywhere, Steve.

Natasha felt her body heavy again, and her eyes began to disobey her commands, closing all the time, until they beat her and she didn’t open them again.

Natasha only had the strength to mumble a few words.

N: Leave me here.

S: Hush...

N: Steve...

S: It's okay… You'll be fine.

N: You have to leave me.

S: You know I would never leave you.

Natasha lost her consciousness again.
When Steve was approaching the bunker, he called the W.T. of his fiancée, Sharon Carter.

Sharon: Steve? Is everything all right?

S: No, we have a problem.

Sharon: What happened? Didn’t you get the vaccine?

S: We did it, but it's something else. It's Natasha.

Steve could hear Sharon took a deeper breath when he said the word Natasha.

S: She’s hurt.

Sharon: Hurt? Very serious? I'll alert the medical staff to come.

S: No, please don’t.

Sharon: I don’t understand.

S: She was scratched by one of those creatures.

Sharon: God.

S: Yes... I need you to help me get her into the bunker without anyone noticing.

Sharon: What? Are you crazy?

S: You know if they know, they won’t even let her in.

Sharon: Because of a scratch?

S: She's sick and she passed out.

Sharon was silent.

S: Sharon? Do it for me and for James. We have to help her.

Sharon: If she's sick, Steve... I'm sorry, it's too dangerous to bring her inside.

S: She will get better, she has the serum.

Sharon: Yes and that’s exactly why she wasn’t even supposed to get sick with a scratch. This is serious, it can trigger another epidemic. Aren’t the children’s enough? It's very irresponsible to bring her here in this state, you know that.

S: Sharon, please. I can’t leave her here alone.
Sharon: And will you risk contaminating the entire population of the bunker? Wow, Steve, how much do you love her?

S: She's my friend, Sharon. She wouldn’t leave me behind. I didn’t understand your question.

Steve lost his patience with Sharon, showing jealousy at this point that he needs help, but Sharon is right. The protocol is for not bring sick people into the bunker.

Steve pondered this, he calmed down and tried again.

S: Sharon, I just need you to get us to one of those isolation chambers. You're a good SHIELD agent, I know you'll find a way to get her inside and ensure the safety of the others in the bunker.

Again a silence followed. Sharon sighed heavily.

Sharon: How long until you arrive?

S: I believe one hour or less.

Sharon: Okay.

S: Are you going to help us?

Sharon: Yes.

Sharon turned off the W.T. and went to make arrangements for the arrival of Steve and Natasha.

It took Steve about 45 minutes to finally land in the flight field, he stepped out of the jet carrying Natasha on his lap and he also was carrying a small bag with the vaccines.

Steve walked to the entrance of the bunker and waited for the door to be opened, but it remained closed. Steve was going to put Natasha on the ground to reach his W.T. in his pocket and call Sharon, but Sharon appeared behind him.

Sharon: Over here.

Steve looked at her in confusion and followed her.

As the bunker is buried beneath the ground, for those who see from afar, it seems only a natural geographic deformation. To get access, you have to go down a small ramp made of dirt.

It was almost a tunnel, but without a roof. And apparently it seemed to be the only access to the bunker.

Steve climbed the ramp until he stepped out of this “tunnel” and followed Sharon who walked to the other side of the bunker structure.

Steve was looking at that pile of grass covering the bunker and he was trying to figure out what they were doing there.

As Steve got closer, he could see a door, very well disguised, seemed to be part of that mini bunker mountain.

Sharon had a mask in her hand and put it on Natasha's face. Steve looked at her.
Sharon looked at Steve without smiling or showing any kind of emotion, she inspected the bandage that Steve did on Natasha's arm and decided it was okay, as there was no blood leaking from the bandage.

Sharon opened the door and stepped inside the bunker, followed by Steve with Natasha in his arms. Steve noticed that they were in a kind of metal duct where there was a lot of huge electrical cables. Sharon's idea to get in there was perfect, because they would have no contact with anyone in the bunker and also because the duct circulates around all the perimeter of the bunker.

Sharon: Follow me.

Sharon started to walk the duct and warned Steve to not touch or stepping to avoid electrocution. As they neared the exit closest to the elevator, Sharon opened the door and they disembarked in the hallway. Steve looked around and saw no one around.

Sharon: I sounded the alarm and everyone is in the main courtyard. We have five minutes until they realize it was a false alarm.

Steve nodded and the two of them got out of the elevator to the F wing. When they got there, there were some professionals of that sector, who saw nothing unusual, since it was the area for people who went crazy or need to be isolated by Illness or any other reason.

And it does not matter the emergency, the F-wing, quarantine areas and medical center always continue to function normally.

Sharon approached one of the professionals and asked if there were any chamber that they could put Natasha on.

The guy who was there only thought strange that no one warned him that someone else was coming, but there is a chamber for Natasha.

Sharon: Cho is busy and asked me to register her here.

- Patient's name?

Sharon: Natasha Romanoff.

- Condition?

Sharon: Is she lucid?

Steve nodded.

- Patient is lucid, Okay. Sick?

Sharon: Yes. Unknown disease. She’s here to go through exams to find out what she have.

S: She had a fever and she passed out before we got here.

- Infectious?
Sharon: No one knows.

- She had contact with the outside?

Sharon: Yes.

- All right, I'll put her in chamber number 13.

The doctor called his assistant and asked for a stretcher.

S: I'll take her there.

- You can’t go in there with her, not in those dirty clothes like that.

The assistant returned with the stretcher and Steve put Natasha on the stretcher.

- Give her a shower and prepare her for the chamber.

Steve looked at the assistant and then at the doctor.

S: Is he going to bathe her?

Sharon: What's the matter, Steve?

- No, he'll deliver her to the nurses to bathe her. I have to go, excuse me.

S: Wait. After I take a shower, may I visit her?

- Of course, but you'll have to wear special protective clothing.

Steve nodded and watched the doctor and his assistant disappear behind a door with Natasha’s body.

Sharon: Steve?

Steve looked at Sharon.

Sharon: James is here too.

Steve frowned in confusion and looked at Sharon.

Sharon: He's been here since yesterday.

S: Is he sick???

Sharon: No, not exactly. Cho and Tony think James is the one who spread the disease to the other children because he is the one who recently arrived from outside and had that fever a while back...

S: What?

Sharon: He's fine, he's here just to do tests to see if he's the source of the epidemic or not.

S: Who's there with him?

Sharon: Right now, no one.
Steve walked toward the access door to the chambers.

Sharon gripped Steve's arm.

Sharon: Steve! Clint has come to visit him when he can, but Lila is in serious condition. I tried to stay with James, but he strange me and he cries too much.

S: He strange everyone, he can't be isolated, he's just a baby.

Sharon: Steve, we're losing all the kids. We have to find out the source. Try to reason.

S: My son is not a lab rat!

Sharon: I know that. Don't you care about our daughter?

S: What are you talking about? Of course I care!

Sharon: If she were born and James was the transmitter, would you let Maggie get sick?

S: I can't believe you're asking me that.

Sharon: I'm just trying to make you understand why James is here. There's a father and a mother crying about the death of their children, Steve.

S: Do you blame my son for that?

Sharon: I didn't say that! You distort everything I say. I said we have to make sure he is not the source of this disease.

S: What if he is?

Sharon: I don't know, he'll have to stay here, I guess. But you got the vaccine, so everything is going to be okay and James will be fine. That's what we expect.

Steve looked at the door again.

Sharon: If you go in there like this, you will put at risk everything that they have been fighting to keep clear of virus and dirt, you need to take a shower. I will take the vaccine to Dr. McCoy, and as soon as you are clean and calmer, you come back here and visit James.

Sharon now began to feel angry at Steve.

Sharon: And by the way, me and your daughter are fine. Thanks for asking.

S: Sharon...

Sharon turned his back on Steve and got into the elevator.

Steve ran and walked in with her.

S: I'm sorry for not asking how you are, there's so many things going on right now, I was scared for Natasha and you talked about James and my head... I don't know, I just got really angry but it's nothing to do with you and Maggie. I know she's fine, because she's in you and you're careful.
Sharon: But you should have at least asked.

Sharon just sighed and when the elevator stopped on the pavement of the research center, she landed and looked at Steve before the doors closed.

Sharon: I just wanted everything to be like before.

S: What do you mean by that? Before?

Sharon shook her head and the elevator doors closed.

Steve went to his room, showered, changed into an outfit and immediately went back to F-Wing. He was told to wear special clothing and wear a mask. As he passed the hallway of the chambers, he saw Natasha unconscious in one of them.

Steve stopped in the hallway to watch her and the doctor approached him.

S: How is she? She woke up?

- Yes, but she soon went back to sleep.

S: Sleep?

- She's got a fever, we're doing everything we can to control it. The fever makes her sleep constantly like that.

S: I want to be with her.

- This is not recommended, we don’t know if this is contagious. Besides, you're here to see your son, right?

Steve looked at the doctor.

- Tony and Dr. Cho are in there in the isolation room. Do you want to stay here some more and then meet us there?

Steve looked at Natasha again, took a deep breath and shook his head.

S: I want to see him.

Steve followed the doctor to the anteroom of isolation, where Tony was.

Steve had no idea how it was that James had been isolated. The chambers are cold enough and inhumane enough, but that was too much. James was crying, two nurses and Dr. Cho inside the room, with clipboards in hand, making several notes and completely ignoring the boy's despair.

Tony looked at Steve and walked toward him. Steve already knew that whoever authorized this, it was Tony.

When Sharon explained, Steve was quieter, but now that he's seeing how James is being treated as a deadly chemical weapon, Steve got really upset.

T: Steve, I just want to say...

Tony didn’t finish the sentence because Steve punched his face hard, which made Tony fall on the
floor. The doctor was startled by the scene.

- Mr. Rogers, this is no place for this, I'll have to call security ...

Tony bent over and then stood up, putting his hand on his bleeding mouth.

T: It won’t be necessary, doc.

S: I wanted you to have a baby, Tony. And that you watched him the same way I'm watching James crying scared in that place.

T: You talk like he's being beaten. You know that's the protocol. The protocol that you, me and Bruce created, with the help of the bunker leaders. You agreed, I know you're hurt because he is your son, but if it was the son of another person, wouldn’t you have done the same?

Steve still stared at Stark.

T: Anyway, Cho came to take James out of isolation. He’s not the source of the epidemic.

S: You mean he got stuck for two days here, for nothing?

T: It wasn’t for nothing. We needed to do the tests. Now he's free to go.

S: You're unbelievable.

- Mr. Rogers, you can go in and get James.

Steve followed the doctor and as soon as he entered the room, he took off his mask and took James into his lap.


Steve kissed the side of James's forehead.

Tony was now entering the room. Steve stared at him.

S: You're lucky that it wasn’t Natasha to see this.

T: By the way... I need to talk to you.

Steve and Tony left the room with James and went into the corridor where they could talk to each other.

Tony watched Natasha in one of the chambers.

T: What happened?

S: She had an accident.

T: What kind of accident?

S: She fell.

Tony looked at Steve, with a disbelieving face.
S: Listen, Tony, I was not going to let her out there! You weren’t there, you don’t know how it is!

T: Do you know what will happen if they know we have someone here who has been scratched by one of those things out there and is sick?

Steve shut up. He felt guilty, but he wasn’t sorry for the decision he made.

T: People were going to freak out, thinking they were going to die with a new epidemic. They would be furious and rebel, or God knows what other reactions people confined can begin to have. We've seen everything in here, haven't we?

S: Where do you want to go with that? Do you want to tell everyone that I brought her here? Go ahead, report me. Expel me.

T: That's exactly what I want to prevent it from happening. Only me, you, Sharon, Cho and her team know the truth. We will keep this a secret for the good of Natasha and the bunker population. As much as you hate me, you must know that I consider you my friend, as well as Natasha, and it’s only for this reason that I will help you.

S: People will ask questions about that.

T: Yes, we will say that it was an accident and that she is recovering.

S: Clint and Hill would be suspicious. They need to know.

T: Yes, just them.

Dr. Cho approached them in the corridor.

Cho: Tony, I need to get back to my quarantine patients.

S: Did the vaccine do anything?

Cho: Not yet, but it will. As soon as McCoy, Tony and I started multiplying that vaccine. And it would be great to have Bruce's help if he's more in control.

T: He is, I already talked to him. I'm going to help McCoy because he's already started the work since Sharon delivered the material. Are you coming, Steve?

S: I'm going to stay with Natasha.

Cho: James can’t be near her at all.

S: I know that.

Cho: And you too if you want to be close to your son and your pregnant wife. We won’t spread another epidemic.

S: I know!

Cho and Tony walked out of the hall of the chambers and boarded the elevator.
Steve turned James toward Natasha’s chamber and pointed at her inside the chamber.

S: Your mother is right there, see?

J: Mum... Mum...

S: Yes. You miss her, don’t you? She misses you too. She loves you very much, James.

Steve kissed James's forehead and shook him slightly in his lap.

Steve stayed so long in that hallway, watching Natasha, that the doctor's assistant even laid a chair for him to sit with James.

Steve didn’t even know what time it was, he only realized it was late when Sharon appeared in the hallway.

Sharon: Steve? What are you doing?

S: Waiting for Natasha’s news.

Sharon: You got James out of isolation and you're standing here alone with him?

S: He misses his mother. He only slept now, but he cried a lot. I thought staying here would help.

Sharon: No, it just gets worse. He will want to be with her and he can’t. And Steve, he needs to eat, he needs to bathe, you know that, don’t you?

S: I know... What time is it?

Sharon: It's past dinner time.

S: All right, I'm not hungry.

Sharon: But he must be and he must be in need of a shower. Come on, come on.

Steve looked at Sharon and nodded, he got up and got on the elevator with Sharon.

As they reached the main pavement, from the bedrooms and dining room, Sharon walked into the kitchen and Steve stopped in the hallway.

S: He's asleep.

Sharon: We have to wake him up.

S: No, it took him a long time to sleep.

Sharon: Steve, he's a baby, he can’t sleep without eating something. I separated a soup for him and you. Yes, you will eat, because I haven’t seen you eat anything since you arrived.

Steve had no choice but to accompany Sharon and have dinner. They woke James up to eat and then went to the bedroom.
James fell asleep again, faster than expected.

**Sharon:** He sleeps here with me in bed and you sleep on the floor, I've already left it tidy for you.

Steve nodded. Sharon was already lying on the bed and Steve put James lying next to her.

Before going to the makeshift bed on the floor, Steve looked at Sharon and approached his face to her to give her a kiss, but Sharon turned her face, letting the kiss catch her cheek.

Steve frowned and sighed.

*S:* Are we still like that?

**Sharon:** Like what?

Steve sat on the edge of the bed and put his hand on her belly.

*S:* I know you're angry, and I don’t know what I should say to make you feel better. It wasn’t enough for us to get away when I went on a mission, but now that I'm here, it seems we've stayed away from each other again. We weren’t like that, Sharon.

Sharon stared at James asleep and didn’t reply to Steve, she closed her eyes tight.

*S:* If this is my fault, I'm sorry. I don’t want you to feel bad.

Steve kissed Sharon's belly and lay down on the improvised bed.

Sharon wanted to make amends, but she didn’t know how to communicate with him, without her getting too angry, she allowed herself to cry when Steve wasn’t looking at her.

...

James slept well until dawn, when he began to weep desperately.

Sharon yawned and was about to get up, but Steve was already on his feet.

*S:* It's okay, I'll take care of him.

Steve caught James in his lap and James began calling for his mother.

Steve walked around the room and tried to distract him with various things, but nothing calmed him down.

*S:* Sharon?

Sharon just moaned, indicating that she was listening.

*S:* I'm going for a walk with him.

Steve left the room with James and he knew it was time he wanted to take a bottle, so he went to Natasha's room and got the special milk and the bottle of James.

Automatically as he walked down the corridor in Steve's lap, James calmed down. Steve prepared his bottle and decided to go down to Wing F so James could see his mother and also why he needed
to know something new about her.

Upon reaching the F-Wing, Steve walked into the corridor of the chambers, he approached Natasha's chamber and noticed that there were nurses inside her chamber.

When Steve stood facing the chamber, he noticed that Natasha was awake and the nurses were talking to her.

Steve tapped the glass of the chamber and the nurses looked at him.

- **Someone came to see you.**

The nurse warned Natasha, who still had a fever and heavy body.

Natasha looked at the glass of the chamber and when she saw James, her heart crumpled and Natasha started to cry.

Steve was worried, not understanding the reason for the cry. James was almost asleep with the bottle in his mouth and didn’t even see his mother.

- **Aw. I know how it hurts to stay away from our children, honey.**

Natasha felt pain in her whole body and even talking was difficult.

**N: My son...**

- **He's so cute, isn’t he? Don’t worry, sweetheart, you'll get better and you'll soon be able to hold him in your arms.**

**N: I miss him so much. I just...**

Natasha's eyes began to betray her and they began to close themselves.

**N: James...**

Natasha wanted to ask to hold James a little, but until her voice failed, she closed her eyes, and could no longer open, but she was conscious.

*I just want to be with him, please. James...* Natasha though, her heart aching for not having seen him when she reached the bunker, it hurt that she'd just seen him and couldn’t keep him close to her.

Natasha thought about how much James must have cried these days that he was without her and she wonders how many more days he will have to cry to be with her again.
Well someone is about to arrive in the bunker. Does anyone have a guess on who might be?
I'm so excited for u to see that!
When Natasha awoke again, she was still inside the chamber. She blinked her eyes a few times until she was able to keep them open.

Natasha looked at the person next to her.

- How are you feeling?

Natasha looked better at the pair of blue eyes and recognized him.

N: Steve?

Steve crouched next the stretcher and took Natasha's hand.

The nurse came to argue that Steve was too close to Natasha and that it was too dangerous to be in that position. Steve stood up again.

S: How do you feel? Are you feeling any pain?

Natasha frowned.

N: James? Where's James? Why aren’t you with him?

S: He's at the nursery.

Natasha looked completely lost, she shook her head and closed her eyes tight.

S: Are you feeling better?

N: Yes and you're an idiot.

Natasha opened her eyes and looked at Steve.

N: I said that you should have left me out there, I can’t believe you brought me here. Are you crazy?

S: I said I would never leave you.

N: Stop that. The vaccine! Did you give the vaccine? Have they started to make more?

S: Natasha, they already vaccinated all the children, we lost many, but we managed to save the rest.

N: So fast?

S: No, it wasn’t fast... It's been more than one week since we started the vaccination.

N: One week? I slept for one week?
S: Two, actually. Almost two.

Natasha sighed.

N: Two?? How is James? How is he without me?

S: He's fine.

N: Don’t lie to me.

S: He misses you, okay? In the early days, I could hardly come here to see you, because he cried for almost 24 hours, I tried to cheer him up by bringing him here, but it only made things worse. After the children of Clint began to improve, Laura could give more attention to James and he soon began to cry less, now he’s been fine.

N: Wasn’t Hill staying with him?

S: She helps me at dawn with James, but you know, she’s a cold person.

N: And Sharon?

S: She tries, but James didn’t get used to her. He cries every time she approaches, so I’d rather have them stay away, but she wanted to, she tried to help too.

Natasha sighed.

N: I can’t stand being away from him anymore, I need my son.

Natasha's voice faltered, and she was about to cry, but she restrained herself.

N: Ever since Bucky rescued James for me, I never stayed a day without seeing him. I came here and it is the second time that I move away from him. I shouldn’t have come back.

Steve sat on the edge of the bed and held Natasha's hand tightly.

- Mr. Rogers, please. The protocol!

The nurse warned again.

Steve got up and looked at Natasha.

S: Don’t say that. I missed you.

N: You missed me? You didn’t even remember that I existed.

S: Are you crazy? I thought of you every day, wondering if you were okay. Alive, I knew you were because you’re very smart, but I didn’t know if it was everything okay with you.

Natasha looked away and sighed.

N: Please don’t say such things ever again.

S: What things?
N: That you missed me, that you care about me. I don’t want to hear it.

S: Why not?

Steve was silent and realized that the subject really messed with Natasha.

- Visiting time is over.

Natasha looked at Steve with some desperation.

S: I'll be back today, but they won’t let me in, but I'll be right outside. I promise.

N: Bring me something from James, I need to smell him. Please.

S: Okay.

N: Steve?

S: Huh?

N: You said I’ve been here two weeks... What day is today?

S: Day 31.

Natasha started to cry and shiver. Steve was already moving away from the stretcher, but he returned.

- Mr. Rogers, you need to leave.

S: I'm going in a minute.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: What is it?

N: It's his birthday.

S: James? Today?

Natasha nodded as she looked up to hold back the tears.

N: Do something for him, can you sing happy birthday to him, for me?

Natasha's tears came down involuntarily.

N: Tell him I love him very much.

S: He knows that. I'm not going to let it go blank, okay? I'll talk to Clint and Tony, we'll have a little party for him. I promise.

Natasha nodded.

- Mr. Rogers, do I need to call the security?

Steve wanted so much to be able to hug Natasha to comfort her, but they would never let him inside
again to see her, so he just stroked the back of Natasha's hand and left.

After Steve left F-Wing, Natasha's doctor entered her chamber. Natasha hates him, he's always in a good mood and talks to her, as if talking to a child.

Basically, the doctor gives bad news like this "Oh yes, we will to amputate your foot, but isn’t it great that we will keep the rest of your leg? It's wonderful, isn’t it? You so lucky" Natasha really hates him.

*He must be on drugs.* Natasha thought, sighing.

- You're awake! Good, Miss. Romanoff! This is really good.

The doctor looked at the nurse.

- And her fever?

The nurse approached Natasha and retrieved the thermometer that was under her arm.

- No fever, doctor..

- No fever? Look that! Good, very good! And the wound on her arm?

- I was waiting for you."

- Oh, let's take a look at this young lady. Shall we?

The doctor approached Natasha's stretcher and stretched out her arm. Natasha wanted to punch his nose, but she stayed calm. The nurse removed the bandage and the doctor examined the wound.

Natasha usually recovers from wounds in 2 or 3 days at the most, because of the serum.

Natasha was surprised and worried to notice that the wound was still open.

- Good, very good.

The doctor said and Natasha looked at him in disgust.

N: How can this be good? It didn’t heal.

- It's healing and your fever is gone.

N: It's open, it's not healing. It wasn’t suppose to be like this yet, you shouldn’t have been informed about my serum.

- I was. But this bruise is not common, and the chemical composition found within your wound does not compare with anything existing with what we have already seen on Earth.

N: Of course, I was scratched by an alien.

- But yes, it's healing, pay attention. In the first few days you didn’t stop bleeding, we gave you stimulants for that and it didn’t work. We thought you would bleed to death, but now you no longer bleeding, it means your body is finally reacting. This is really good.

N: Doctor?
The doctor looked at Natasha.

- May I help?

**N:** I... I really wanted to see my son.

- Awn, you do, I know.

Natasha took a deep breath to keep her patience.

**N:** Please.

- But it's very dangerous, he's just a baby, his immune system is not even complete yet. You understand?

**N:** If I wore that special clothes to protect him?

- Look, I know how you feel, young lady.

**N:** You don’t know.

- Have patience, young lady. We're doing everything for you to get better.

**N:** What are you giving me?

- A cocktail of antibiotics.

**N:** Is it enough?

- We hope so.

...  

When Steve went up to the A-wing again, Sharon was calling his W.T.

**S:** Hi?

**Sharon:** I'm already here. Are you coming?

*Shit!* Steve thought. It was Maggie's ultrasound today, and he'd forgotten about it and he was going to get busy with James' party.

Steve was closer to the nursery than to the examining office, but he didn’t want to upset Sharon again.

**S:** Yes, I am. I'll be there in two minutes.

**Sharon:** Okay.

Steve ran down the hallways and managed to get to the office just in time for the exam.

Sharon was inside the office, sitting on the stretcher the moment Steve entered. She smiled, pleased that he hadn’t forgotten about her and her appointment.

Steve gets thrilled every time he sees his daughter on the ultrasound, Sharon looked up at him and
laughed at Steve's wet eyes.

- She's well and healthy. She's going to be a strong girl.

S: Thank you, doc.

Steve helped Sharon down from the stretcher and waited for her to change. As they left the office, Steve and Sharon were approached by two young mutants. Kitty and Jubilee.

S: Hi, can I help you?

Kitty: Yes, we are aware of your marriage.

Jubilee: And we want to know if we can help. We know it's next week, and if there's anything we can do...

S: Next week?

Sharon: Oh God, yes, it is next week. I didn’t see the time pass.

Kitty: Great! That means there's a lot to do and we're so bored in here. Let's help!

Jubilee: I'll take care of the decoration. And Kitty's invitations and...

K: Calm down, Ju, they didn’t say whether we can or not help.

The two teens looked at Steve and Sharon with puppy eyes.

Steve looked at Sharon...

S: I think all help is valid.

The two teenagers started jumping and celebrating excitedly, they withdrew and Steve looked at Sharon.

S: Sharon, I need to tell you something.

Sharon: What is it?

S: I'd rather talk in our dormitory...

Clint Barton was coming in the hallway with his daughter Lila in his lap.

C: Captain. Agent 13.

S: Clint! It was you I needed to talk to.

Steve remembered James' birthday and decided that the conversation with Sharon should be later.

Steve looked at Lila.

S: How are you feeling, miss?

Lila didn’t answer, she had her head on her father's shoulder.
C: She's a lot better, I didn’t even dare to send her to school today and I'm not even working as you can see.

S: No problem, it's understandable. I need a favor from you.

C: Of course, say it.

S: Today James is completing two years old.

C: Really?

S: You know that Natasha is hospitalized and...

C: Say no more! We'll make him a little party. It could be in the refectory.

Sharon: I think it should be in the nursery itself. Refectory would attract a lot of people and take on large party sizes.

C: Truth.

S: Well, in the nursery then.

C: I'm going to talk to Laura and help fix it up there.

Clint retired and Sharon looked at Steve.

Sharon: What can I do?

S: Aren’t you feeling tired with this belly?

Sharon: Steve...

S: Okay... I think you can ask the kitchen staff to prepare a cake and a juice to serve for the kids.

Sharon: Okay.

Sharon stepped away from Steve, but stopped to remember that Steve wanted to talk to her.

Sharon: What did you want to tell me?

S: Oh... I forgot.

Sharon: Okay? If you magically remember, let me know.

S: I will.

Sharon walked away and Steve decided to go to the command center, he hasn’t worked or helped on the bunker issues since returning from the mission, but since he has already forwarded the details of the party, he was able to check if Tony hasn’t done any crazy thing there.

No one really understands Steve's relationship with Tony. They fight more than they talk, but still, one needs the other. If there is a party, one makes a point of the presence of the other.
Steve invited his Avengers friends to his son's party later, and of course he called Maria Hill as well.

...  

At party time, the avengers gathered in the nursery, with the children.

Steve looked at the cookies being served and looked at Sharon who hugged Steve's waist.

S: Cookies? It was supposed to be just the cake, we can’t spend that much on food.

Sharon: It's for your son, Steve.

S: Even being my son.

Sharon: Relax. He deserves it and I had permission from the cook, she made a point, because her daughter was also sick and she was saved by the vaccine you brought.

Steve smiled a little awkwardly.

S: You've seen Sam? I haven’t seen him since I came back.

Sharon: I saw him yesterday, I think, but not today.

S: Damn, I didn’t even let him know about James's party.

Sharon: He knows your mind is busy with a thousand things right now.

S: Anyway, remind me to look for him later, I have to apologize.

Steve looked around to look for James and saw him picking up a cookie from the children's table and ran up to him.

Steve crouched and took James' cookie from his hand. James frowned and prepared to cry.

S: You can’t eat that, James.

Steve picked another cookie from the other tray.

S: Here, this one you can.

James grabbed the cookie and put it in his mouth to eat. Steve took James on his lap and walked back to Sharon again.

S: Should we talk to them about the wedding now?

Steve whispered to Sharon.

Sharon: What do you mean? They already know.

S: Yes, but if we forgot, they may have forgotten too. It's good to remember them that it will be next week.

Sharon: I don’t want to announce today. It's James' party, leave it for another time.

S: Okay.
Steve stretched his face, asking for a kiss to Sharon, but she disguised it and started playing with James, who thought she wanted to steal his cookie and hid it behind his back.

Steve doesn’t remember the last time he had some kind of intimacy with Sharon, and before that, the reason was the mission, then his closeness to Natasha and James, but now she’s been extremely calm in the last days, her mood improved 100%, so Steve thought it was all right between them again. So why did Sharon still avoid any intimate contact with him?

Laura: Shall we sing happy birthday?

The children gathered around the cake and Steve tried to put James on the floor, but he grabbed his clothes to stay on his lap.

Steve crouched down with James and helped him clap his hands.

Sharon filmed the happy birthday singing with Steve’s W.T.

After the happy birthday singing, James smiled and held out his hands to Maria Hill, who raised her eyebrow.

H: What?

Steve stood with James.

S: He wants you.

H: Me? For what??

S: I think you remind him of his mother. It must be that face you make as if you hate being socializing.

H: Yeah, we’re like the same. Almost twins, everyone talks that.

S: It's his birthday, and his mother is hospitalized. Please Natasha and pick him up, Hill.

H: What can I do...

Hill picked James up and waited for the cake and juice to be served for everyone.

Thor stepped closer, holding his daughter in his lap.


Torunn smiled at James, who flinched in Hill’s lap.

H: It's okay, James, she won’t bite you.

Laura was close and listening to the conversation.

L: Well, actually she will. She bites and hits everyone.

Thor: She has teeth! And force! She has to use!

L: Thor, we talked about this, that's not how it works. The children are terrified of her, she will end up without any friends. She needs to learn to be more loving and to apologize.
Thor: Torunn, apologize.

T: Sorry.

L: Awnnn... See, James?

H: There's no excuse for that, don't take James.

S: Hill!

H: James, if she bites you, you see her ponytail? Grab it! Grab and pull, but pull hard, you are strong too.

S: Okay... Hill... It was a bad idea to let him in your hands.

Steve took James from Hill's lap.

S: No, James, you can't hit anyone and pull no one's hair, specially when it's a girl.

H: Oh God! That's why he'll always be beaten... Don't say that I never tried to teach something useful to this boy...

Hill checked the hours.

H: Guys, I need to go visit the grumpy old man.

S: I'm owing a visit to Nick Fury.

Sharon: He almost shot me the last time I went there. How did he get a gun?

H: He's Nick Fury! Strange would be see him unarmed. I have to go. Bye, James, Happy birthday.

…

After the party, James fell asleep and Steve took him to his room, along with Sharon.

Sharon: I know, you're going to visit Natasha now.

S: She asked me to bring something from James to her, I'm going to take that sweater he wore today.

Sharon: Okay.

S: We'll talk when I get back.

Steve left the room and went to F wing.

Upon reaching the hall of the chambers, he spotted Natasha sleeping.

Steve walked to the door to access the chambers and knocked.

- May I help?

S: I know it's past visit time, but how could I just hand this over to Natasha? I won't be long.
- I'm sorry, just tomorrow, and she's asleep.

S: I know, but I know she's missing her son. Could you give it to her, yourself?

- I can’t, this object hasn’t been sanitized, it’s against the protocol.

- For God’s sake, Allan, get this and give it to her.

The doctor was seated at a table inside the room.

The nurse took the sweater from Steve.

S: Thank you.

- But do not bring anything else, I will not allow it any more.

Steve nodded and the door was closed, he was in the hallway facing Natasha's chamber and saw the nurse entering her chamber to deliver the sweater.

Natasha woke up with the sound of the door being opened and as soon as she saw James' sweater in the nurse's hand, she sighed with relief, she grabbed the sweater and sniffed.

James's scent had an anesthetic effect on Natasha's heart.

Steve grinned as Natasha's expression improved. She looked at the glass at Steve and said thank you to him.

Steve couldn’t hear, but he could read on her lips what she said and he smiled gently, demonstrating that it was a pleasure to do this to her.

Steve gestured for her to wait and picked up his W.T. Natasha waited and looked at Steve's face in confusion as he tried to do something on the device.

Steve still suffers with technology, he knows how to make a call, and knows how to watch videos, but the W.T. has a function of projecting images into the air like a hologram and he wanted to put the video of James's birthday for her to watch.

It took almost ten minutes, but Steve managed to put the video and Natasha watched with a smile on her face. She was happy because James seemed to be happy, he was smiling and clapping his little hands, she was much calmer now.

But of course Natasha has that hyper-protective, almost suffocating mother side, she was already wondering if James doesn’t remember her anymore, if he learned to call Steve “Daddy”, and if he's already attached to him and others than her.

Natasha pushed these thoughts away, the most important is that James is happy.

…

When Steve arrived in the room, Sharon was already asleep. James was beside her and he thought it was better not wake her.

Tomorrow he would tell her about the kiss between him and Natasha on the mission, she is already feeling better, so she will understand. He's going to marry her in a week, she'll let it go and they'll be together. He, she, Maggie and James will be a family.
Maggie... Steve thought. How is he going to make Sharon go through the stress of a betrayal, while she is pregnant with Maggie? It could put their daughter's life at risk. It's better she knows nothing about his kiss with Natasha. Maybe after the marriage and the baby’s birth he will tell.

*But marry with a lie? It seems wrong. Okay, let's think about this tomorrow morning.* Steve finished and lay down to sleep.

...

The next morning, Steve woke up and saw Sharon coming out of the bathroom with James in her lap, wrapped in the towel and still wet.

S: Sharon, you should have woken me up.

Sharon: You looked tired. I just gave him a bath.

S: But he's heavy for you.

Sharon: Don't be dramatic.

S: Seriously, I don’t want you taking weight, soon Maggie will be born, you need to rest.

Steve got up and picked James up from Sharon's lap.

S: He didn’t cry?

Sharon: Awesome, isn’t it? I think he’s used to me, now. Finally.

Steve looked at James and smiled.

S: Well, James, very good, because we will all be a family.

Steve looked at Sharon and noticed that she looked away immediately after that sentence.

Sharon: Dry him and take him to the nursery.

S: Listen, about what I wanted to talk to you about yesterday...

Sharon: Not now, take him and when you get back, I'll be here and we'll talk.

Steve nodded.

Steve laid James on the bed and dried him with the towel.

J: Papa?

Steve was completely paralyzed.

S: Did you hear that?

Sharon: That what?

S: He said papa.

Sharon: What?
S: He said Papa.

Sharon: No, he didn’t. I didn’t listen. And papa could be lot things, you trained him to say daddy and not papa, remember?

S: Oh...

Steve lost all the excitement.

S: James, can you say that again?

James was putting his foot in his mouth and just smiled.

S: He said! I swear.

Sharon: I believe you, Papa.

Steve smiled like a fool, he kissed James' forehead, put on his diaper and his clothes and took him on his arms.

S: Come on. Say goodbye to Aunt Sharon.

James shook his little hand at Sharon.

Steve left the room with James, and in the hallway he ran into Logan, finishing smoking a cigarette.

S: Logan, right?

Logan didn’t answer.

S: I would like to ask you to not smoke in here, it’s dangerous, we have children and...

Steve went silent, because Logan threw the cigarette on the floor and stepped over it.

S: And it’s not a healthy habit, you should quit.

Logan: And you should quit wishing to rule the world. You’re not my boss, nor my leader, I didn’t vote for you to be the leader of anything and... Everybody here acts like you’re a God.

- He didn’t mean that.

Logan and Steve looked at the young woman, with long red orange hair.

Steve noticed how Logan lost his voice and was practically hypnotized by Jean Grey.

She must be using magic on him. Steve concluded.

- Right, Logan?

Logan: Hmm.

- Hello, I'm Jean.

S: The girl who reads minds, I know. Steve Rogers.
Jean: Speaking like that seems like I read all the time, but it's not like that.

S: I know. Sorry.

Jean held out his hand to Steve, who greeted her.

Jean: Don’t care about Logan, he's grumpy anyway, but he’s very lovely inside. James knows that, right, James?

James looked at Jean and smiled, then James looked at Logan and held out his arms to him, but Steve made him lower his arms. No way, Steve would allow that ogre to hold his son and he wanted so badly to tell James to not smile at Logan, but it would be very rude of him.

Jean: James likes him.

S: I think he's scared because of this Logan look.

Logan: Yeah, because you are very handsome, right?

S: I didn’t mean it.

Logan: I know...

Jean: Logan... Please. I was trying to find you, the Professor wants to talk to you, I accompany you, come.

Logan nodded and walked past Steve, practically growling, James laughed, amused.

J: Wolf.

S: No, James, it's not a wolf. Let's go.

Steve took James to the nursery and handed him to Pepper Potts. Laura was off today.

Steve returned to his dorm and Sharon was waiting for him as promised.

Steve sighed and closed the door behind him.

Sharon: Before you say anything, I need to tell you something.

S: Me too. You first.

Sharon opened her mouth and seemed reluctant to say what she was going to say, only a sigh came out and she closed her eyes.

Sharon shook her head, then sighed again, as if she was taking courage to say what she wants to say.

Sharon looked into Steve's eyes.

Sharon: I can not marry you.
Chapter End Notes

Two chapters to a new member on the bunker!
S: What?

Sharon: Look, do not complicate things more than they already are.

S: What? What do you mean? Complicate? You just said you don’t want to marry me anymore!

Sharon: I don’t want it now. I feel confuse.

S: What do you mean?

Sharon: I’ve thought a lot about it, and I believe we will regret if we get marry now. At least, I will.

S: I will not, I love you.

Sharon: Steve, you...

S: What? You don’t believe me?

Sharon: I believe, but that’s not the problem.

S: What's the problem then?

Sharon: The problem is that you don’t love just me.

S: What??

Sharon: Steve!

S: Don’t start with that again.

Sharon: Can you look me in the eye and say that you don’t feel anything for her?

Steve was looking at Sharon's eyes and he opened his mouth to deny it, but he shut up and looked away.

Sharon let a tear fall instantly and walked away from him.

Sharon: I knew it. I always knew.

S: No, you didn’t know. I said nothing.

Sharon: Your silence only confirmed it.

S: No! Because I can’t say that I don’t feel anything for her, she is the mother of my son.

Sharon turned and faced Steve again.
Sharon: Do you like her as a friend?

Steve nodded.

Sharon: You fucked her and you don’t see her as a woman anymore?

S: I see.

Sharon: You see...

S: Sharon, but you're seeing things that doesn’t exist, I love you, I asked you to marry me. This jealousy of Natasha...

Sharon: Don’t you fucking dare to say it's a thing of my head, Steve! I've been watching you for a long time, this is not about just today, it's not based on an isolated event. You always seemed completely in love with her.

S: I was, you're right, but it was in the past, I assure you that's over, she was with Bruce, I overcame her and fell in love with you.

Sharon: Yes, the only reason you didn’t stay together was because of Bruce. If that day in the hotel room, if she had stayed with us, who would you be with today? Would we be together today? Do you know?

Steve shook his head and couldn’t look into Sharon's eyes.

S: I don’t know.

Sharon sat down and collapsed in tears.

S: Sharon, why do we have to talk about situations that didn’t exist? You're suffering for nothing. Don’t do it.

Sharon: Am I? If you really loved me, you would never think of another woman. You are still very attached to her. Yes, the link between you is James and it is eternal. I can’t handle it. I can’t.

Steve approached Sharon and crouched down next to her, he held Sharon's hand and placed a kiss on the back of her hand.

S: I promise to you that I won’t spend so much time with her. I'll ... As soon as Natasha gets better, I'll see less James, I'll stay by your side, you don’t have to do this, I'll be by your side all the time.

Sharon: I don’t want this! I don’t want you to stay away from your son, but I don’t want to beg your attention, I don’t want you to stay with me in the obligation.

S: It is not an obligation.

Sharon: Steve! Enough! I can’t do this anymore. I'm so sorry.

S: Sharon... I won’t let this happen, I... I love you, I'll fight for you.
Sharon: Fight for what? It’s over, Steve!

S: It’s not!

Sharon: Yes, it is. I’ve made my mind, there’s nothing you can do.

Steve put his hand on Sharon's belly.

S: But what about Maggie?

Sharon: I don’t know, you're her father and I know you'll be a good father, but... me and you, we’re no longer together.

S: Don’t do this, Sharon. Please, I need you, I'm sorry if...

Sharon: I don’t want your apologies, I just wish the last few months had been different and I can’t change that, and neither can you.

S: Do you hate me?

Sharon: God, Steve, no! I love you so much. But I love myself first and Aunt Peggy taught me to respect myself and I can’t go through this. It's too humiliating, I wasn’t educated like that.

Steve held Sharon's hand and kissed again, while Sharon was crying and staring at him.

S: I never meant to hurt you, I'm so sorry. I... I will respect your decision.

Sharon: You can stay here with James, I'm going to another dorm.

S: Sharon, you don’t have to, there's no other dorm available right now.

Sharon: I know, I'm going to split the dorm with Hill.

S: You don’t have to leave, please, I will.

Sharon: No, you need to stay with James and this place will remind me of you and it hurts enough now.

S: Sharon...

Sharon: I have to go, I get my stuff later.

Sharon let go of Steve's hands, wiped her tears, and stood up. Steve took hold of her hand again, but Sharon let go and walked to the door, she opened it, and before she left she looked at Steve again.

Sharon: I'm sorry too.

Sharon left the room and Steve sat on the floor to try to understand what just happened. He's feeling sad and guilty about everything, maybe he spent too much time with James and Natasha, but he'd just known he had a son, he's just trying to get his son to get used to him and compensate him for the time he wasn’t present, he can’t regret about that.

But maybe he shouldn’t spend so much time with Natasha, he spent 3 to 4 hours a day with her, even though the hours are divided by his day. And he, definitely, shouldn’t have kissed her.
Maybe Sharon is right, he feels something for Natasha, it's not like he felt a few years ago, but there's something that attracts him to Natasha in a way, but he knows he never lied to Sharon when he said he love her, he loves her, but he can’t love two people at the same time. Who does he really love?

Steve got up and took almost an hour to get out of his dorm, he was angry with himself and he decided to not visit Natasha anymore, unless there was some emergency. And Steve really didn’t visit her today, not the next day or the next after that.

... 

Hill: Look at you, you got attacked by an alien, you were sick for a whole week, and your were confined to this place, without any sun, and even pale like that, you still look good.

Natasha was asleep and had just woken up with Hill's speech, she yawned and looked at her friend.

N: Sorry to disappoint you.

H: I'm really disappointed, I thought you'd be awful, almost moribund.

N: Why don’t you just admit that I'm beautiful and period?

H: Never.

They both smiled.

Hill sat on Natasha's bed.

Natasha looked at her in shock and then around, looking for a nurse to fight with Hill for sitting on her bed.

N: Hill! What are you doing? Where are your special clothes? Your mask! You have to use! And you can’t sit here!

H: Oh relax, your blood tests were normal the last three days.

N: Really?

Hill nodded.

H: Do you think I would risk myself? I have a life to live! If you can call this a life...

N: Great, I'm getting out of here right now.

H: Ham, no, you can only leave tomorrow.

N: Why?

H: They want to test again just for warranty.

N: Damn, I thought I'd see James.

H: Only tomorrow. But cheer up, there's only one day left.

N: How is he?
H: Well, his mouth is already healing.

N: Healing? From what? What happened?

H: Steve didn’t tell you?

Natasha shook her head.

H: Yeah, I figured... Anyway, Clint was able to build some kind of wooden bike, and Tony is very annoyed with him, because Clint took the wheels out of one of Tony's projects and... Clint put James to ride the bike, like all the kids were doing, but Barton's youngest son, that little boy...

N: Francis.

H: Yeah. He pushed James and he fell with his face on the floor.

Maria started to laugh, remembering the scene.

H: Oh it was so funny!

Natasha reacted as if James had broken one leg.

H: Calm down, he just got a cut on his lip, but he's fine, he even tried to ride the bike again. Why didn’t Steve tell you that?

N: He didn’t come here this last five days, I thought something had happened and he didn’t want to tell me.

H: But James fell today.

N: Why didn’t he come then? He was always coming. Is he fine?

H: Hmm... Now that you've asked, he's weird.

N: What do you mean?

H: He's been sad...

N: Sad? Why?

H: I have no idea. Oh! Although his and Sharon's marriage was canceled...

N: What?!

H: Yes. That’s the reason he’s sad.

N: Of course it is!

Natasha started to think to herself if Steve told Sharon about the kiss on the mission and if that would be the cause of the marriage being canceled.

N: He hates me now.
H: What?

Hill was tapping something on her W.T. and got distracted.

Natasha looked at her and shook her head.

N: Nothing.

H: I have to go, this place makes me claustrophobic.

Hill got up and looked at Natasha again.

H: I need to tell you, James loves me.

Natasha frowned, disbelieving.

H: He loves me! He can’t see me, that he wants to come to my lap.

N: He's a man.

H: Oh God! He's only 2 years old.

N: Well, it’s an instinct, I would say.

H: You’re just envy. Just because he loves me more than you.

Natasha laughed and Hill left the chamber.

Natasha's doctor came in shortly.

- Good Morning!!!

Natasha stopped smiling, she hates this doctor.

- How are you feeling, young lady? I have some great news.

N: I'm leaving tomorrow.

- You already know? Good, very good, young lady. You can stay with your baby boy, very good, very good. We'll miss you here.

N: But I won’t.

The doctor began to laugh.

- You're very funny, young lady. I'm just going to get some blood now and another one at night, and if everything be right, early in the morning, you'll be free.

The doctor collected Natasha's blood and at night the nurse picked up more sample and the next morning, Natasha was free to finally leave the F Wing.

- I'm so sad you're leaving, that I could infect you with something to just keep you here.

The doctor said smiling and Natasha frowned.
This guy is a complete psychopath. Natasha concluded.

N: I wanted to thank you for the attention and the care of all of you.

The doctor and the nurses smiled and accompanied Natasha to the exit antechamber, as the nurse opened the door to the corridor, Natasha smiled broadly at the sight of her son in Clint Barton's arms.

N: James!

Natasha ran to Clint and got James on her lap, who started crying for missing his mother.

Natasha filled James with kisses and held him tightly in her arms. Natasha sniffed James's hair repeatedly.

N: I'll never leave you again, James.

- Hello James!

The doctor waved at James.

- Nice to see you again and see you're fine.

Natasha looked at the doctor and frowned.

N: Do you know him?

- Of course!

N: How?

The doctor opened his mouth to explain, but one of his patients, a young woman who has been hospitalized for more than four months there, began to have a crisis and needed to be medicated to calm down.

The doctor closed the door and Natasha walked to the door to understand how he knew James, but Clint grabbed Natasha's shoulder and turned her toward the exit to the elevator.

C: He knows because Steve brought James to see you a few times.

N: Oh... yeah, that’s right.

Natasha said, and she wasn’t quite sure of that, but it could only be because of that... James never got so sick to have been hospitalized in that place. They wouldn’t do that to James who is only two years old. Natasha thought.

Natasha got into the elevator with Clint and as they climbed back to Wing A, Natasha kept kissing James, who stopped crying and laid her head on his mother's shoulder.

C: I have a surprise for you.

N: What is it?

C: I'll show you.

Upon arriving in A Wing, Natasha headed to her room, accompanied by Clint Barton. Clint opened
the door for Natasha to enter.

C: Tadaaammm!

Natasha entered the room and noticed that there was a wooden crib.

N: Clint!

Natasha hugged Clint and James pushed Clint.

N: It's beautiful, thank you.

C: Oh don't you push me, Cap-Baby!

Natasha broke the smile and put James inside the crib, then she pulled Clint by the arm into the room and closed the door.

C: Ah, I forgot to show you this...

Clint pulled the side of the cradle up and the protective grille lifted.

C: He is growing up so I did this, so the crib can become a bed for him later.

N: Clint. That’s awesome. Thank you.

Clint lowered the railing and looked at Natasha, he was soon worried about Natasha's expression.

Clint walked over to Natasha and leaned against her arm.

C: What happened?

N: Do you know anything about Steve's wedding?

C: Oh yes...

N: Was it my fault?

C: Yours? Why should it be your fault? From what I heard, Sharon didn’ want to get married any more.

N: She didn’t say why?

C: Not for me. But she's living with your friend Maria Hill, maybe she knows. Why do you think it was your fault?

Natasha looked at James, then walked over to the bed and Clint followed her.

C: Tasha, what happened?

Natasha looked at Clint and sighed.

Clint sat down beside her and looked at her, hoping she had the courage to speak.

N: It's that… While the mission outside, he kissed me.
C: He kissed you? Steve? So you two still...

N: No, no... It's not that, it's just that we were alone and the feeling of the world abandoned, those ruins, the atmosphere of the night made us feel something, I don’t know...

C: Tasha, did you just kiss? Nothing else?

N: No... I mean yes, but we almost did it...

C: But it was he that kissed you?

N: Yes. I remembered better while I was hospitalized, he kissed me.

C: So he still has feelings for you.

N: I don’t know, I don’t think so.

C: Tasha... Do you still have feelings for him?

Natasha looked at James in the crib and her silence answered Clint's question.

C: God dammit!

Clint sighed as well and he was thoughtful.

C: At least he's single now.

Natasha turned her head slowly to stare at Clint, with the greatest disbelief in the world.

C: What? I thought that would be good for you. Right?

Natasha stood up, shaking her head.

N: I didn’t want it to be that way. Steve is extremely correct, he will never forgive...

Natasha lost her voice and approached James's crib as she stroked James' hair.

N: I know he has real feelings for her.

C: And he kissed you, so he also has it for you.

N: No, I said it was a thing of the moment.

C: Okay, so if you and I were there. Or either you and Tony, or Thor, would have happened the same thing?

N: God, no!

C: See?

Clint stood up.

C: I need to get to work. Call me if you need anything.

N: Okay.
Clint opened the door to Natasha's room, and just then, Steve was walking down the hall, accompanied by Professor Charles Xavier.

Steve didn’t know that Natasha was back, he knew she would be free from F Wing, but not that she would already be in her room.

Steve looked at Natasha and he seemed to be awkward and unsure of how to act.

C: Cap... Professor...

Clint greeted them both.

Steve took a step toward the door to Natasha's room.

S: You look good.

N: Thank you. I am.

S: Good.

The two were silent and this time it was a disturbing silence, which bothered the Professor and Clint Barton as well.

S: I need to go show the new dormitory wing to Professor.

James stood in the crib and looked at his father at the door.

J: Papa.

James made a hand gesture, calling Steve. Steve looked at him tenderly and smiled.

James was the only one who could get a smile from Steve after Sharon cancelling the wedding.

Charles Xavier: Don’t worry, Rogers. We can go later. Your son misses you.

S: No, I'll talk to him later.

C: I'll show professor the new wing, without problems, I'm going to install new beds there, too.

A silence of seconds that seemed like an eternity followed. They all waiting for Steve to agree, and Natasha knew he was avoiding her on purpose.

S: Okay...

C: Well, come on, Professor.

Clint and the professor withdrew.

Steve looked at Natasha and then looked at James.

S: I see you got a new bed, buddy.

James held out his arms to Steve, Steve came in and picked James up.
S: I'll miss you kicking me in the night in bed.

James looked at Natasha and held out his arms to her.

J: Mommy.

Natasha smiled at James.

N: It's the first time he says the whole word.

S: He learned a lot of things these days.

Natasha smiled a little, the jealousy she had of James was giving signal.

Steve pointed to the bathroom.

S: It's time of?

J: Baaath!

S: That's right, James. Bath. Good boy and what is this here?

Steve held onto James's foot.

J: “Fut”. “Shuu”.

S: Shoes, well done, James.

J: "Nauna"

N: Nauna? What is it?

S: Oh, it's Laura. I delayed to understand, but when he sees her, he calls her Nauna.

Steve smiled and Natasha too, the two of them looked at each other and then the smiles collapsed.

Natasha sighed and walked to close the door, then she turned to face Steve.

N: We need to talk.

S: About what?

N: I heard about your wedding.

Steve immediately changed his expression, he looked to the other side.

N: Steve, was it my fault? I can talk to Sharon, I can explain about the kiss, and...

S: Natasha! No. There's nothing you can do, I've tried and she doesn't know about the kiss, I'm the one to blame here.

N: Why did she break up with you, then?

S: She said that... She thinks that I...
Steve looked at Natasha and he was afraid to say what Sharon really thinks about them.

S: She doesn’t want any more.

N: I'm sorry. I understand you're avoiding me.

Steve shook his head and sighed.

S: I know, I avoided you, I'm sorry. I just... I wasn’t feeling well to see you.

J: Nauna.

Natasha looked at James.

N: I'm going to take you to the nursery, James, you'll see Aunt Laura, okay?

S: I'm sorry, the last thing I want is to push you away, too.

N: It's okay. If you need to talk, fight, or anything, you can count on me.

S: I will.

Steve smiled and Natasha gave a half smile.

J: Nauna.

N: Okay! I just came back and he already wants to leave me.

Natasha took James from Steve's lap. Steve opened the door for Natasha to pass.

N: Thank you.

S: See you later, James. Goodbye.

James waved his hand, then blew a kiss to his father.

N: Do you blow kisses now? Traitor.

Steve closed the door and waited for them to disappear into the hall.

Natasha left James in the nursery and she was heartbroken because he wasn’t even crying. He just threw himself into Laura's lap.

L: He's late!

N: My fault.

L: How are you?

N: Glad to be back.

Natasha kissed and smelled James's neck that tickled and laughed.

N: Steve will pick him up later.
L: Okay.

Natasha withdrew and decided to go to Nick Fury's Wing. She knocked on his door.

NF: Go away.

Natasha tried to open the door, but it was locked.

N: It's me, Nick.

After five minutes of silence, Nick Fury opened the door for Natasha, she came in and made company to him all morning.

Natasha left Nick's room and walked down the hall to board the elevator, but at that moment the hallway lights went out and then went on. Natasha paused and frowned, but decided to go ahead because it must be just a fault in the electrical system.

Just before Natasha got close to the elevators, the lights flickered and Natasha heard what appeared to be some sort of crash, a big one, she frowned again and stopped.

The lights went out and the emergency lights came on. There were red lights like sirens, blinking non-stop.

Natasha had already called the elevator, but with electrical failure, she could only climb the stairs, Natasha ran to the stairwell and as soon as she climbed three steps, she heard a roar that she knows very well.

Natasha froze for a few seconds, her face trembled and her only thought was James, she has to reach him before the Hulk reaches the sector where he is. But maybe he already is there. How would she know?

Natasha's heart was pounding so fast that as she climbed desperately fast up the stairs, she had the feeling she was going to faint right there.

N: James!

Natasha kept repeating to herself, to stay focused and keep going upstairs.

Near the B Wing, there were already more people, they all were desperate and they wasn’t sure of what to do. Most of the people were going downstairs, others were trying to go upstairs.

Natasha deflected and even pushed whoever came in front of her. She needs to get her son.

Natasha finally arrived in Wing A. It was a sea of people running toward her.

Again there was a crash, followed by another and followed by the Hulk’s roar.

N: James!

Natasha pushed people away, and she didn’t know where all this people was coming from, it didn’t seem to have so many people in the bunker like this before.

The further away Natasha walked from the staircase, the fewer people had on the way, as everyone was running to protect themselves.

Natasha watched had a view of the nursery from afar and noticed that half of it was destroyed, her
heart squeezed.

N: JAMES!

Natasha screamed and ran into the nursery, she searched everywhere and there was no one there, no children.

N: James!

Natasha heard the Hulk’s roar and it was probably in the kitchen because of the proximity of the sound. Natasha ran up there and Thor was in a terrible fight against the Hulk.

N: You’re just making him more angry!

Tony was in his Iron Man armor.

T: Natasha! Time for the lullaby.

Natasha looked at Tony.

N: I can’t find my son!

T: He and the kids are fine! Pepper and the mutants got them out of there in time.

N: Are you sure?

T: Yes, but soon they won’t be fine if we don’t calm the hulk.

Natasha nodded. As she approached the Hulk, he was mounted on Thor, punching him in the head.

Natasha wasn’t confident that it would work. She was trembling more than anything.

N: Hey, Big guy…

The Hulk stopped punching Thor and immediately looked at Natasha. Natasha noticed something different in his gaze, it was pure hatred, it wasn’t like before, but she needed to try.

N: The sun is getti...

Natasha couldn’t finish the sentence, because the Hulk dropped Thor and started to run after her.

T: Uhm… Is he going to kiss her or? Okay, he’s not going to kiss her and he's not stopping. He’s not stopping!

Tony shot the Hulk, before he could hit Natasha, it was enough for the Hulk to try to attack Tony.

T: Mary, Jesus, Joseph and the apostles!

The Hulk held on the Iron Man’s armor leg and no matter how much Tony made force to fly and let go, the Hulk's strength was greater.

The Hulk also held Tony's armor head and began kneading with his hands, Tony's armor began to fail and soon after the Hulk prepared to break Tony's body in half, he just didn’t because his movements had Just being paralyzed.
Natasha, Thor and the Hulk looked at the man in the wheelchair and at the young redhead beside him.

Charles Xavier: Jean, he's very strong.

Jean: I'm here, Professor.

Charles: I can’t hold him for long.

Charles was sweating and seemed to be weak. Jean stepped in front of the professor, placed two fingers on the side of her forehead and pointed the other hand toward the Hulk.

Jean managed to get him to release Tony's armor.

Professor, I can’t. It's very confusing! Jean said in thought to Charles Xavier. You can do this, Jean, concentrate, Jean? The professor began to close his eyes. Professor?

Professor Charles Xavier fainted.

Jean frowned and her hand trembled as she tried to keep Hulk standing still, but she really needed to calm him down, but she still don’t control her powers enough to calm him down and keep him paralyzed.

The Hulk watched her with hate and began to win back his movements.

When Jean began to lose her strength, a red cloud entered the environment and circulated the body of the Hulk.

Natasha glanced at Wanda Maximoff in the hallway, pointing her fingers and twisting them toward the Hulk.

Thor took the opportunity to rescue Tony and took him to get medical attention.

With the help of Wanda, Jean managed to invade the mind of the Hulk and after ten minutes, the two together managed to calm him down.

Bruce returned to himself, but he was still overwhelmed by the powers of Jean and Wanda.

Wanda looked at Natasha.

W: What do we do with him?

Natasha opened her mouth to speak, but she was interrupted by Steve Rogers, who had just arrived on the scene.

Natasha noticed the tears on Steve's face and the hatred he was looking at Bruce Banner.
S: If we could kill him, that's what we would do with him. Since we can’t, he has to leave. Right now and never come back!

Natasha frowned and she was surprised with Steve's behavior, she had never seen him with such hate before. If he's so angry and crying like this... That can only mean that something happened to their son or to Sharon.

Chapter End Notes

Well there’s a lot of pain coming ahead
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

First, I want to thank everyone who has commented on the fanfic. Secondly, for all staron shippers who are reading: The fanfic is not about staron, the title of the story says that it is Romanogers. It's no use getting angry and hating on Natasha and Steve and their son, it won't change the fact that the story always revolves around them.

All the other characters just have the function of adding drama to the story, so yes, it's all about Natasha, Steve and James. I'm sure there are other fanfics staron / buckynat that you can follow and be happy, but not mine.

From now on, Sharon will only suffer, sorry, so let me spare you from the pain that is about to come, if you keep reading from here, be prepared. Sharon will find her happiness in my fic, but it will take long and it won't be through Steve.

I hope you all can understand, if you can't, I can't do nothing else.

Thank you.

P.s: Someone said that I have tagged staron in my fanfic, let me clear this up. AO3 asks what relationships there are in the history, I pointed to tall the main relationships here, it doesn't mean that these are going to be canon, so in order to prevent stress, I removed the tag. Hope you can be happy now.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wanda and Jean Gray were looking at Steve, waiting for him to regret his decision, but Steve stood and stared at Banner with hatred.

S: Get him out of here. Now!

Natasha walked over to Steve.

N: Steve?

Steve didn’t look at Natasha, he looked at Wanda.

S: I won’t ask again!

Wanda nodded, and she and Natasha looked at each other, surprised at Steve's reaction.

Natasha nodded, authorizing Wanda to obey Steve's orders.

Jean and Wanda helped Bruce Banner to his feet.

W: Come on, Bruce, we'll arrange things for your departure.

S: He leaves now! Without taking anything! He's already taken too much of what he could!

Natasha leaned against Steve's arm so he would stop screaming and talk to her, Steve pulled his arm
so violently that it made Natasha take two steps back.

Steve looked at her and didn’t apologize, he turned around and started to walk down the hall.

Natasha stood still for a few seconds and decided to try again.

**N: Steve?**

Steve walked faster and Natasha had to run to catch up.

**N: Steve? Why are you like this? What happened?**

Steve looked ahead and the look of hatred, mingled with tears, was leaving Natasha completely distressed.

Steve's silence only despaired her.

**N: Steve? Talk to me!**

Natasha stepped in front of him and shoved his chest.

**N: Is it James? Did something happen to him?**

Steve looked at Natasha and she had never seen Steve with such hatred like this before, he looked like someone else.

Steve made Natasha move to her side and continued to walk.

**S: James is fine.**

Natasha always be in shock every time Steve acts more harshly on her, because she gets more hurt than she should be. She was relieved by James, but still puzzled over what irritated Steve so much.

Natasha ran after Steve again and when she stopped in front of the infirmary, Natasha didn’t have to ask what happened anymore.

Blood and more blood. There was a long, thick trail of blood coming from the other hallway to the infirmary and down to a specific bed.

The woman in this bed was covered with blood from chest height down, and there was more blood dripping between her legs, the sheet of the litter, once white, was wine the color of her blood.

Natasha doesn’t remember witnessing anything like that scene before and she's seen so many things, but none was so grotesque and disturbing like that.

Sharon Carter, Captain America's ex-fiancée, was gripping her belly tightly, as if trying to cling to Maggie Carter's obviously dead fetus.

Sharon screams deafeningly, she screams and she cries in protest, she doesn’t admit to losing her first daughter. She was complete with her daughter, Maggie's daughter was complete, she already had a heart, hands, arms, legs, fingers... She had everything, she was a strong baby, the doctor always said "She's strong." That's not fair, she doesn’t admit losing her complete daughter.

No matter how many people were there running with towels, surgical instruments, gloves, masks, Natasha couldn’t hear anything else, she just stood there at the door of the infirmary, wondering what it would be like to lose James, it's an unbearable pain to think about, but Sharon is feeling it, and
there is nothing she can do to ease her pain.

Natasha looked at the man next to Sharon, holding on to her hand, crying as much as she is, in her blood-stained clothes with the blood of their complete daughter.

*He will never recover from that.* Natasha looked at Steve Rogers and a tear trickled down her face, she could feel his pain and there was nothing she could do to help or soften it. *There is no consolation for anything like that.*

Natasha only moved when a nurse came in front of her vision and began to rattle fiercely and gesturing, but Natasha didn’t hear anything she said. The door was closed and Natasha automatically blinked.

**N:** Steve...

She said it quietly to herself. Natasha shook her head and seems to have come back to herself.

**N:** James!

Natasha ran down the hallway for news of her son. There was not even a civilian in those corridors of Wing A. They all panicked.

Natasha went downstairs and met Scott, Ororo, and Nightcrawler.

**N:** Do you know where they took the kids?

**Ororo:** They’re with Kitty and Jubilee in the D wing. How’s things up there?

**N:** Under control.

**Scott:** I’m going after Jean.

Scott warned Ororo and left.

**N:** I’m going to see my son.

**Nightcrawler:** I can take you there.

**N:** I know the way.

**Nightcrawler:** I mean I can go faster.

Nightcrawler held out his weird hand to Natasha. Natasha looked at Ororo, who encouraged her with a nod. Natasha held onto Night’s hand and in a thousandths of a second they were teleported into a room where the children were.

The children were startled by the appearance of Nocturne and by the sudden appearance. Many cried and ran.

**J:** Blue!

**N:** James!

Natasha approached her son and took him in her arms, she hugged him tightly and kissed his face.
James pointed at Nightcrawler who was smiling at him.

**J:** Blue.

**N:** Blue? Yes, he is blue. That's right, James.

Nightcrawler: He is not afraid of me.

**N:** It seems that not.

Nightcrawler smiled once more at James and disappeared, causing screams and crying of the children again.

Laura: Natasha!

**N:** Laura!

Laura walked over to Natasha and hugged her.

**N:** Glad you're okay. Where is Clint?

**L:** He's fine, he came here and then came up to help.

**N:** I need to go too.

**L:** Clint said that Hulk hit Sharon. I hope she's fine.

**N:** She is not.

Laura frowned.

**L:** She died?

**N:** Pretty much it.

**L:** The baby?

Natasha nodded.

**L:** God.

...

After a few hours the peace was restored inside the bunker for the confined citizens inside. They made a joint effort to repair the damage caused by the Hulk, men and women helped to repair everything as fast as possible.

Natasha also helped as much as she could, but Laura called her W.T. telling her that James was calling for her. Natasha said goodbye to the staff and went to get James.

**N:** James?

James was thrashing in tears on Laura's lap and still struggling his legs, Natasha frowned and picked him up in her lap.
N: What is it, James? I am here.

J: Papa.

Natasha sighed and a part of her was annoyed that James is calling his father now.

L: He was calling out for both of you, but I thought I'd better call you because Steve should be with Sharon now.

N: Of course. I'm going to take him to get something to eat.

L: Yes, he didn’t want to eat anything after lunch.

N: Thank you, Laura. See you tomorrow.

L: Bye James.

James was screaming and throwing himself back into Natasha's lap, he calmed down as she started up the stairs to Wing A with him.

N: Stop crying like that! You haven’t lived with him for so long and I don’t like this behavior, do you understand?

It was enough for James open his mouth and start to scream and cry again.

When Natasha finished climbing the stairs, she placed James on the floor, she crouched down and looked at him.

N: James!

James sat on the floor and threw himself back and struggled to the floor. Natasha took a deep breath and stood up.

James stopped crying and looked at his mother because she started to walk away, leaving him behind.

Natasha stopped walking when she heard him being quiet, she looked back and James began his show again.

N: Stop it right now James! I'm leaving without you if you continue with this scandal.

James didn’t stop, Natasha stood firm and kept walking, she turned the corner of the hall and James could no longer see his mother, he thought she was really gone, he screamed and this time the cry was real.

Natasha was standing in the next hallway, she walked back down the hall and walked over to James, who stretched his arms for her lap, but Natasha didn’t pick him up.

N: Finished?

James's face was covered with tears, Natasha held out her hand to him, James got up and held Natasha's hand. Natasha made him walk to the dorm, only when they reached the door, she picked him up.

James laid his head on Natasha's shoulder and when she entered the dorm, Natasha noticed that he
was already falling asleep.

N: James, please don’t sleep now, you have to eat. James?

Natasha sat on the bed and James was already with his eyes closed, she didn’t dare wake him, she lay with him on her bed and stayed for hours caressing his hair.

Natasha had her mind on Steve and how he must be feeling now. Losing a child must be the worst pain in the world, Natasha can’t imagine pain worse than that.

Natasha kissed James's face, who grunted, complaining of too much affection coming from her when he’s sleeping.

*I don’t ever want to lose you, James.* Natasha thought.


Natasha kissed James again, and this time he cried.

N: Hushhh... Sorry, my love. Go back to sleep.

Natasha decided to put James in the crib for him to sleep in peace and better.

Then Natasha took a shower and lay down to sleep. But she just lay watching James in the crib.

Hours later when she finally fell asleep, James woke up crying with hunger.

J: Mommy.

N: I know, I knew you'd wake up earlier.

Natasha got up and took James's milk.

J: Moommy.

N: We’re going, calm down.

Natasha took James in the crib and went with him to the kitchen, she prepared his bottle and handed it to James who now holds the bottle by himself.

Natasha took advantage that James was still sleepy and decided to stop in front of the infirmary just to see how Steve and Sharon are.

Upon reaching the door, Natasha saw Sharon on the stretcher, seemingly asleep and Steve sitting by her side, holding Sharon's hand with his head on the stretcher.

Natasha thought he was sleeping, which was great, since she must be suffering a lot... If it were her, she wouldn’t be able to sleep.

What Natasha didn’t expect was James calling his father, because he saw him.

James's sleep passed at the same time he saw his father. Natasha frowned and looked at James, then at Steve, who was already holding his head up and staring at them.

Natasha nodded, telling Steve not to answer James's call, but Steve was already getting up.
James was holding his arms out to Steve, he wasn’t going to turn down the son.

Steve approached them in the hallway, Natasha tried to analyze him, but it was difficult.

N: I'm sorry, I thought he was sleeping.

S: It's all right.

Steve picked James up and kissed his cheek. James laid his head on Steve's shoulder and put the bottle back in his mouth.

Natasha looked at Sharon.

N: How is she?

S: Devastated. They doped her. She couldn’t stop crying. They thought she was going to faint.

Steve answered without looking at Natasha.

N: And what about you?

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Me?

Steve sighed trying to find the right word to define what he was feeling. He did not find a word, so he just shook his head and threatened to cry again.

James looked at his father and put his hand on his chin, Steve looked at James and now he started to cry.

S: I'm sorry, I didn’t mean to scare him.

N: He's not scared, he's worried about his dad.

Natasha took a risk and stroked Steve's arm to comfort him. She didn’t know if he would reject any affection now, but he himself stood facing Natasha and expected a hug. Natasha hugged him and Steve cried even more, she stroked his back and let him drain the tears.

The two were silent until Steve stopped crying, another few seconds and he took a deep breath and left Natasha's arms, looking a little more recovered.

Natasha looked at him and nodded. Her gaze indicated compassion for what he was going through at the moment.

N: You'll be okay.

Steve nodded, he looked at James asleep on his shoulder.

S: Here. Take him.

Steve handed James back to Natasha.

N: If you need anything.
S: Okay.

N: Tell Sharon I am sorry.

Steve didn’t even say he would, but it was obvious that he wouldn’t send any message from Natasha to her. Talking of Natasha to Sharon was out of the question.

... 

The next morning, when Steve awoke, he was still sitting next to Sharon’s stretcher. Steve looked at her and noticed that she was awake, he got up and took her hand.

S: Sharon?

Sharon stared at nothing, her eyes completely blank, it was as if he wasn’t there.

S: Sharon?

Steve shook her hand and snapped his fingers in front of her face. Sharon didn’t even blink.

S: Nurse! Hurry! Nurse!

A nurse ran to Steve.

S: There's something wrong with her, she doesn’t react.

- I'll call Dr. Cho.

S: Quick, please.

The nurse went to Cho's office and brought her to Sharon's stretcher.

S: What's happening?

Cho sat next to Sharon's stretcher and turned on a small flashlight and looked into Sharon's eyes.

Cho: Okay.

S: OK? What does she have? Tell me.

Cho: Steve, every person handles a loss in a way, she's in shock, it's not easy to go through what she's been through...

Sharon finally nodded at Steve and looked him in the eye.

Sharon: Steve?

S: It's me, Sharon. I'm here.

Sharon: Is Maggie all right?

Steve looked at Sharon and then at Cho, completely confused.

Sharon: Is she?
Sharon sat up and started to get agitated.

**Sharon:** She's so beautiful, isn’t she?

**S:** Cho?

**Cho:** Sharon?

Sharon refused to look at anyone but Steve.

**Cho:** Sharon?

**Sharon:** You saw her, our daughter… did you hold her? Did you stay with her all night? She cried? Is she fine?

Steve noticed tears coming from Sharon's eyes, he didn’t dare say that their daughter is dead, he just nodded.

Sharon lay down on the stretcher again.

**Sharon:** My Maggie. My beautiful Maggie.

**S:** What's happening?

**Cho:** Sharon, can you hear me? Do you know what happened yesterday?

**S:** Sharon?

Sharon continued to stare at Steve.

**S:** Cho is asking if you remember what happened yesterday...

**Sharon:** I-I... I was at the command center with the professor... Xavier.

**Cho:** Yes.

**Sharon:** And I heard a noise and when I went out to see what it was... He was there.

Sharon's breathing quickened and she became extremely agitated as she held onto Steve’s arm.

**Sharon:** He was there! HE WAS THERE! HE…

Sharon closed her eyes and remembered, she began to scream hysterically.

**Cho:** I'll sedate her again.

The nurse brought the medication and applied it into Sharon's vein, who had to be hold by Steve and Cho to take the medication.

Sharon got sedated for the next 5 days and every time she got out of the sedation effect, she couldn’t deal with reality and collapsed.

Cho asked to talk to Steve in her office.

**Cho:** Steve, I can’t keep her here.
S: What do you mean?

Cho: We have to take her to F-Wing.

S: What?

Cho: She's not in control of herself.

S: She's not sick.

Cho: She is, Steve.

S: She's not with a diseases that can affect the others, she won’t hurt anybody, there's no harm...

Cho: I have other patients here, they can’t be subjected to the stress that she is causing, you know we have to be able to attend everybody, but with Sharon here, we have to direct all the attention to her. At the F-Wing she will receive a better attention.

S: Is anyone complaining? I can talk to them.

Cho: Steve, you don’t understand, she has to go to Wing F, we'll treat her with antidepressants there and won’t have to keep her doped 24 hours a day, to keep her from hurt herself. You can visit her down there, but the decision is made.

Steve knew deep down he couldn’t keep Sharon there, she needed to be isolated, he still tried to convince Cho to let her in his dorm, so he would take care of her, but Cho thought it was a bad idea, because they need to observer how she reacts do medication, and Sharon tried to hurt herself once, one distraction from Steve and she would do it again.

After Sharon went into isolation in the F Wing, she continued taking antidepressants, but her mind was lost. Sharon started to see any object like Maggie and treated the object like if was her baby.

Sharon accepted Steve's visits very well for the first month, then she started to ignore him.

In the third month after the loss of his daughter, Steve was more conformed over his lost, he didn’t cry any more and he was already back to the Bunker’s duties.

Steve was assigning tasks for Scott Summers and Jean Gray to rearrange the new dormitory wing, set priorities for who would receive a dorm.

There were four types of dorm in the bunker, the type 1 was for a family to live in, it has 2 rooms interconnected and 1 bathroom, just like it was Steve, Clint, Tony’s ones. The type 2 is for one person to live in, it has 1 room and 1 bathroom, just like Natasha’s one. The type 3 is for two people to live in, it has 1 room, two beds and 1 bathroom, just like Maria Hill’s one. And the type 4 is the collective dorm, with a lot of bunk bed and 2 locker rooms, one female, other male. In the type 4 the bathroom is shared for everyone.

S: Do you understand how it will work?

Sc: Yes, perfectly.

JG: Let's get started, Scott.
Steve handed the clipboard with the dice and watched a man running down the hallway that looks very much like Sam Wilson, who Steve doesn’t see for long.

Steve ran after him.

S: SAM!

The man turned and Steve realized it wasn’t him.

S: I'm sorry, I thought you were a friend of mine.

The bunker emergency siren began to ring. Steve climbed the stairs immediately and came across Maria Hill in the hallway.

S: What's happening?

H: The system detected the presence of someone near the bunker.

S: Banner?

H: Hardly it would be him.

Natasha and Tony were approaching them now.

T: Do we already have an ID of the subject?

H: He's getting closer and we'll have a better picture now.

Hill project in her W.T., the images of the bunker’s security cameras.

N: I can’t see anything, is this a sandstorm?

T: Right there, I'm watching him move.

Tony pointed at the man

S: What's that he's wearing?

N: I don't know, but it's appropriate for such storm.

The man was dressed in a sort of brown cassock with a hood on his head, it was impossible to identify him because of the clothes and the sandstorm.

The man came stumbling over the wind and looked weak.

H: The external weapons are in his sights and ready. Should I shoot?

S: No!

N: We don’t know who he is.

T: Does it matter? We can’t let him in.

H: It’s dangerous.
S: It could be a civilian.

T: It can be one of the creatures too.

S: There is a way to know.

T: How?

N: Emotions! Creatures doesn’t know how to react appropriately to situations.

H: He's coming off the field of view, he's in the access tunnel, guys.

T: He can’t enter. Unless he can cross steel.

They all watched the guy on the canvas screen and they became more attentive when they saw the man taking off his hood.

As soon as they identified the mysterious man, they were all amazed.

S: Open that door!

T: Wait!

N: Open it, Tony!

T: No! We don’t know if he's him, and usually he's not him, so...

Steve held Tony by the collar.

S: Open this immediately!

T: Unnecessary, Rogers. Remember that the last time you wanted to beat me to defend your precious friend, you started a war!

N: Tony, open it! It's him!

Tony looked at Natasha.

N: I wouldn’t put my child at risk, trust me.

Tony took a deep breath and looked at Hill.

T: Be prepared.

Hill held her gun and pointed to the door.

Tony was only with his Iron Man's glove in his hand, he also prepared to shoot.

T: Lucy?

- Yes, Mr. Stark?

H: Did you get another robot to talk to you, just like Jarvis and Veronica? God, how needy are you?
T: Open the main door, Lucy.

- Opening Main Door now.

The door clicked and then it opened. Bucky came in and threw himself on the floor, he started to cough a lot.

The others had to cover their faces because of the amount of sand entering the bunker.

T: Lucy, close the access.

- Yes, Mr. Stark.

The door was closed.

Bucky was weak and remained on the ground, coughing and spitting a pile of sand.

Steve and Natasha approached him at the same time on the floor.

N: James!

Bucky heard Natasha’s voice and moved his head to look in her eyes.

B: I found you.

N: Yes... Yes, you did.

B: James?

N: He's fine, he’s great! God, I am so happy to see you.

Natasha stroked Bucky’s face.

B: Good to hear that...

Bucky Barnes smiled, then fainted. Natasha hugged him, trying to lift him and Steve was still struggling to understand Natasha's intimacy and concern with his friend James Barnes.

Chapter End Notes

Here comes more drama! hahahaha
I forgot to thank those ones who supports the fanfic, that has good criticism and not only
hate over a ship. Thank you so much.
Tony: Guys, if Bucky remains in the bunker, he has to stay here in F-Wing.

S: Tony!

Hill: He's right, Steve. We've just gotten rid of an epidemic that has wiped out 35% of our children, he can’t stay between us all like it's normal.

S: He can be tested, as Natasha was.

H: Yeah, that's what the doctors will do, but until the results, he will remain here and we have the protocol to keep him here for at least 72 hours for observation.

Hill looked at Natasha who was facing Bucky's chamber, watching him sleep.

H: Natasha, do you agree?

Natasha nodded.

N: Whatever that is better for everyone.

Natasha glanced at Steve.

N: I'm sure he's okay.

Steve nodded.

T: Well, we're all in agreement. I need to get back to the command center. Steve, I need you, too. It got more complicated without Sharon and Sam in the Command Center.

S: Sam... Where is he?

T: If you who are friend of him doesn’t know, imagine me.

H: I'm going up too, are you coming, Natasha?

Natasha crossed her arms and stared at Bucky Barnes.

N: I'll stay here.

S: I wanted to stay too.

T: We need you there.

S: Are you going to be okay?

Steve asked Natasha, but she was slow to notice that the question was to her. After a few seconds, Natasha nodded.

Steve remained in silent and watching the way Natasha looked at Bucky.

*How much does she care about him now? It's true that he helped her and James, but all this concern*
that she is now, that look of who needs to help Bucky... It was at least strange, since before that, she also wanted to see him dead or behind the bars. Of course she could have seen that Bucky is actually a good person, as he knows he is, but... Did they have something when they got together at Bunker South? Is it possible? It’s totally possible, she’s beautiful and attractive and Bucky is a nice guy, he always had lucky with the ladies, but no, she has a child, she couldn’t have be with Bucky. Could she? Am I angry? Why?

Steve stepped into the elevator with Hill and Tony, and continued to watch Natasha until the doors closed.

Inside the elevator, Hill seemed to have thought about something, and her expression showed it.

T: What?

H: I've been thinking...

Steve looked at Maria Hill.

H: I haven’t seen Sam for more than two weeks.

S: I don’t remember the last time I saw him. Every time I think about looking for him, something appears and I get distracted.

T: I saw him this week, at the refectory. He was late for the meal and I was finishing eating. Oh and I remember that he wanted to eat and the kitchen staff said they wouldn’t serve more food, but I intervened and asked them to give the meal for him.

S: That's weird, he didn’t come and talk to me after the Hulk accident. Was he okay?

T: He seemed normal to me.

S: Do you mind if I go to his dorm first?

T: Actually yes, we have urgent matters to solve at the command center.

H: I can go check him out, Steve, go help Tony.

S: Thank you, Hill. Tell him to look for me as soon as possible.

... 

Hill went to Wing B, the wing of Sam Wilson and hers as well. Hill went to Sam's room and knocked on the door.

H: Sam? Are you there?

Sam: Yes.

Hill frowned.

H: Is everything okay?

Sam: Yes.
H: We're in need of you at the Command Center. We haven’t see you a few time… something happened? Are you hurt?

Sam: No.

H: Sam?

Sam: Yes.

H: Could you open the door?

There was a long pause in response.

Sam: Yes.

Hill waited almost five minutes until Sam opened the door. Hill looked at him.

H: Sam, are you sick?

Sam: No.

H: You...

Sam: If I am, will you come in here and take care of me?

Hill was with her hand on her gun, she was serious, finding his behavior, before opening the door, very strange, but now that he flirted with her and smiled, she was relieved.

H: Idiot. You scared me. Did you know what happened to Sharon?

Sam: Yes.

H: Steve got really bad, why did you...

Sam: I tried to talk to him, but he was visiting her and I thought it was best talk to him another day.

Hill narrowed her eyes and watched Sam, she nodded, but she didn’t believe Sam's story much, and he noticed.

Sam: You know, it's hard to be here...

H: I know.
Sam: I think I'm too stressed.

H: All right, everybody is, that's why we have medicines that can help.

Sam: I have here, I've been taking, I just...

H: Do you need space?

Sam: Yes.

H: Okay.

Sam: But I'm going to work tomorrow, I'm feeling better already.

Hill gave a small smile and withdrew from Wing B.

...

After 72 hours of isolation of Bucky Barnes, it was found that he was in good health, no illness was detected in him and he was released to join the Bunker community.

Who came to get Bucky, it was Steve, to introduce him to the Bunker's facilities.

S: You'll have to stay in my room.

B: Anywhere I can stay it will be fine.

Steve touched his friend's shoulder and smiled.

S: It's good to have you back.

Bucky smiled and nodded.

B: I heard about what happened to Sharon and your daughter, I'm so sorry.

Steve was silent and looked away. He was fine, as long as no one touched on the subject.

Once a week, Steve used to tell a history to the children of the Bunker's school, but he stopped after Maggie's loss because any girl reminded him of Maggie and hurt him immensely.

Steve closed his eyes and then reopened to ward off any memory of his lost daughter, he smiled again and looked at Bucky.

S: Come on, I want you to meet Professor Xavier.

...

Steve introduced Bucky to Professor Xavier and Dr. McCoy, then he presented Bucky to Jean Gray, Scott and Rogue.

Steve also tried to introduce him to Logan, but he didn’t seem to be in a good mood. As always.

After making the proper introductions and installing Bucky in his room, the two of them headed for the refectory, because it was already dinner time.

As they waited in line for the meal, Natasha approached with James on her lap.
N: I bet someone will be very happy to see you, James.

Bucky and Steve turned to look at Natasha.

Bucky looked at James and smiled.

Bucky caught James on his lap, but he immediately started to cry.

J: Papa!

James held out his arms to Steve.

B: Don’t you recognize me anymore, James?

N: Of course he does, he just needs to remember.

B: He's so big now.

Steve picked James up and pointed at Bucky.

S: It's okay, James, don’t you remember him? It's Uncle Bucky.

James laid his head on Steve's shoulder, but kept an eye on Bucky the entire time.

After picking up their food trays, the three of them went to sit at a table.

N: Where are you going to stay, James?

S: Huh? Oh, you're talking to Bucky, I'm not used to hearing someone calling him that.

N: You can stay in my dorm with me and James if you want. Those collective dorms are a bit uncomfortable and you would have to share a bathroom with a lot of people.

B: No, I'm in Steve's room.

S: Yes and he couldn’t stay in your room anyway.

N: Why not?

S: B-because... He's a man.

Natasha shrugged her shoulders and shook her head, indicating she didn’t understand the meaning of this motive.

S: I mean y-you... You need privacy. You and James. And I'm alone there, so no problem having my friend with me.

B: Now that I am realizing that James called you a “Papa”... This is very good, since she didn’t want to talk about James at all for you, but I knew that when he got here, you would end up finding out . He looks a lot like you.

Steve was still with James on his lap while Natasha was feeding him.

B: You know what, James?
James looked at Bucky.

**B:** You have the coolest parents in the world.

**J:** Bu...

James pointed his finger at Bucky.

**J:** Buck.

**N:** Bucky, James. That’s right, it's him, your Uncle Bucky.

**J:** Buuck.

**N:** Bucky!

Natasha looked at Bucky.

**N:** At least now he recognized you.

**B:** Buck, huh?

Bucky held out a hand to James and James grabbed Bucky's finger and smiled.

Steve didn’t know exactly what he was feeling at Natasha's change of mood, she was much happier now that Bucky was with them, and James seems happy to be back with him as well.

Steve, somehow felt left out, they looked like a family, where the father, who was traveling and is back now.

Bucky participated in James' life from birth and he didn’t. And now Steve had no more family to be formed, he had lost his daughter and his fiancée, he had James, but he lived with Bucky more than he did, probably will want him as his father, probably always saw him as a father.

A stupid thought, but it's what Steve was feeling, mixed with the pain of his unborn child.

While Natasha wanted to know why Bucky had left the South bunker, Steve passed James onto Natasha's lap and stood up.

Natasha looked at Steve, surprised that he was standing so suddenly.

**N:** Steve? Are you alright?

Steve just nodded his head.

**S:** Yes, I just lost my appetite.
Steve looked at Bucky.

S: Do you remember the way to the dorm?

Bucky nodded.

Steve picked up his tray, returned it to the kitchen counter, and left the refectory. Natasha watched every move of him.

B: What happened?

N: He's upset.

B: I noticed, but why?

N: I think it's because of his daughter, it's not the first time he's like that and he doesn’t want to talk about it. I’ve been trying to make him talk, but he pushes me away.

B: He has to recover from that. He needs to talk about it.

N: I know what would help him.

Bucky walked around the table and sat down in Steve's seat.

Bucky pulled James into his lap, and this time he didn’t complain, he really recognized Bucky.

N: James?

Both Bucky and James looked at Natasha, but she was talking to Bucky.

N: Could you finish giving him his food? I'll talk to Steve.

B: Of course. We'll eat all of that, won’t we, James?

N: If you're done and I'm not back, you can take him to Steve's room and I'll pick him there.

B: Are you sure? He just recognized me now, he's going to cry.

N: He won’t, he loves you.

Bucky looked at James, who was clapping his hand on the table.

B: Okay.
N: Thank you.

Natasha left the refectory and went to Steve's room, she knew he would be there.

Natasha knocked on the door and entered the dorm.

N: Steve?

Steve was sitting in a chair with his arms folded on the table and his head on his arms. Natasha knew he was crying and her heart couldn’t bear to see him in pain.

S: Is James with you?

Steve asked, not lifting his face to look at Natasha.

N: I left him with Bucky.

S: They get along, don’t they?

N: Yes.

Natasha approached Steve's chair, she reached out to touch Steve's back, but she didn’t dare touch him.

S: That's good for James.

N: It is. Steve?

S: I'm fine.

N: You're not, I know you're hurt, you need to talk about it.

S: No.

Natasha crouched beside Steve.

N: You'll feel better if you talk.

S: She didn’t have any chance.

N: It wasn’t fair to her, I know.

Steve was no longer crying, but his red eyes indicated that he was, he lifted his head and looked at Natasha.

S: I didn’t want you to see me like this, I know you miss Bucky, you should be with him and James.

Natasha shook her head.

N: He's not going anywhere, now and I'm worried about you, I'll stay with you.

S: I don’t really want to talk.
N: Okay.

Natasha got up, walked over to Steve's bed and sat down. Steve thought she was leaving and he was surprised that she had gone to sit down.

S: I said that...

N: I know. We don’t have to talk, but I don’t have to leave you either.

Steve looked at her and then looked at the table, he nodded and after a few seconds, he smiled.

S: Do you remember when we used to train together?

N: Of course.

S: Do you think...

N: Yes, we can do that.

S: Tomorrow?

N: Now.

S: Now?

N: Is there anything better to do?

S: But what about James?

N: He's fine with James... I mean with Bucky... Whatever.

Natasha smiled and got up.

Steve got up too and gestured to the door.

S: Ladies first.

Steve opened the room door for Natasha.

After leaving the room, they went to the elevators.

S: We can use the E Wing. Tony has turned into a kind of 5D simulator.

N: Great, I need this. And you too.

Steve and Natasha went down to E Wing.

As soon as they arrived, Natasha visualized three large rooms with computers in front, to program the type of training, whether beginner, moderate or advanced.

Natasha also noticed a small room with a sort of improvised boxing bag.

N: Did you do that?

S: Yes. As much as we have all this technology, I need my good old boxing.
Natasha smiled.

**S:** Do you want to try it?

Natasha nodded.

The two entered the room and Natasha looked at the boxing bag.

**N:** What did you use to do that?

**S:** Sand and fabrics.

**N:** Seems good.

Natasha struck the boxing bag and he barely moved.

**N:** What else did you put in there?

**S:** I put two weights here and here.

Steve indicated the top of the bag and the bottom of it.

**S:** It's really not that heavy, I think you're weak now.

Steve was right behind the boxing bag and when he said that, Natasha punched the boxing bag again and it moved, hitting Steve and causing him to lose his balance and stumble.

**S:** Good! Anger and competitiveness always improve your performance!

**N:** Don’t tease me, Rogers.

**S:** If I tease you, what will happen?

**N:** You'll have to pay to see.

**S:** Oh yeah?

Steve raised both eyebrows as he wrapped a white mesh in his hand. Natasha raised an eyebrow and smirked.

Steve threw a mesh at Natasha, she held it and threw it away.

**N:** This is for weak.

Steve laughed and nodded.

**S:** All right, I'm weak, then?

**N:** It's what it seems.

**S:** All right, Romanoff.

Natasha smiled again and as Steve stepped toward her, she started to jump, like short jumps backward, just to warm up.
As soon as she moved to a freer area, Natasha bent down and stretched a leg toward Steve ankle, intending to hit his ankle and make him fall, but Steve jumped at time and at the moment Natasha stood again, he tried to kick her waist, but Natasha lowered herself quickly and slipped under Steve's leg, and before Steve's leg touched the floor again, she reached out and hit his neck with her forearm.

Steve was also prepared for this blow, even though he allowed to be hit, he held her wrist, twisted and moved it to Natasha's back, immobilizing her body. Steve had to leave his body glued to her, so she wouldn’t be able to counterattack.

**S: See? Weak.**

**N: Shut up!**

Natasha threw her head back and struck Steve's mouth hard and he was forced to let her body go, so he could wipe the blood from his lower lip.

**S: I thought it was just a workout.**

**N: What? Are you gonna cry now? What kind of man are you?**

Steve laughed and shook his head.

The room was getting hot with their training, Natasha decided to take off her jacket, and stay only with her tank top and legging on. She throw the jacket on the floor and Steve couldn’t avoid, but look at Natasha's body.

Natasha predicated that this would happen, she uses to do that to distract her opponents, so she took the chance to use her famous blow, she jumped and fastened her legs around Steve's neck.

After she managed to sit on Steve's shoulder, Natasha put her arm underneath Steve’s chin and pulled hard.

**N: Who is the weak now?**

Steve didn’t even try to stop the suffocation, he just grabbed Natasha's waistband and threw her away pretty easy.

Natasha’s back hit a wooden bench and then she fell to the floor, she remained motionless and made an expression of pain.

**S: You need to train your expressions more if you want to convince me that you really got hurt by that.**

Natasha was on all fours and put her hands on her back in the area where she had been bruised.

Steve wasn’t taking it seriously, because she likes to fake things, but he saw the bruise on her back and immediately became worried.

Steve felt so guilty, that he ran up to her and crouched next to her body.

**S: Natasha? Are you alright?**

Natasha looked down and shook her head, indicating she wasn’t.
S: I'm sorry, I didn’t measure my force! Come on, I'll take you to the infirmary.

At the time Steve tried to get Natasha into his arms, she rode over him again, but as he was still crouched, her weight made him fall to the ground, Natasha took the opportunity put her leg around Steve's neck and she kept his arm stretched to immobilize the movement of his body.

S: That's forbidden!

N: For whom?

S: You cheated!

N: Are you surprised?

S: Not really.

Steve said as he did his best to stretch his legs and try to get out of the blow, but it seemed that the more he moved, the more he got stuck.

Steve tapped his hand on the floor three times because he was already turning purple getting out of breath.

Natasha let go of him and stood up.

Steve stood up after her.

N: Do you want to stop?

S: I can do this all day.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

N: Sounds good to me.

Steve reached out to Natasha and pulled her to her feet.


Steve looked into Natasha's eyes and smiled. It was Steve's first genuine smile after his daughter's tragedy.

S: Me too. I remember that we used to train together almost every day.

N: Yeah. I don’t know, train here makes me feel normal.

S: What do you mean by normal?

N: Well... In here we don’t have so much what to do... I waste more my brain than energy, and I used to keep it balanced outside.

S: Yeah, I get your point. I feel the same, but we can do it.

N: What?

S: Train. Every day, like we used to do, we have time.

N: We have all the time in the world, right now, don’t we?

Natasha smiled and Steve smiled too, he watched her for a few seconds and he didn’t know why but he leaned toward her and pressed his lips to hers.

Natasha wasn’t expecting for this kiss, she took a few seconds to close her eyes and realize that she was kissing the man she loves. Why is he kissing me again? Natasha thought.

Steve just kept his lips pressed against hers and after long seconds, he pushed them away and looked at her.

Natasha sighed softly and opened her eyes.

S: I'm sorry, I don’t know why I did this...

Steve made negative with his head.

N: You...

Steve interrupted Natasha.

S: I think that's what I wanted to do during the time we were training together, back there, when I was in love with you, but I never had the guts to do it. I was so into you.
Natasha sighed again.

**N:** What does that mean?

**S:** I don’t know. Some kind of repressed desire from the past? I don’t know.

**N:** From the past? You mean that today, you don’t feel...

Natasha’s W.T. started to whistle, she looked at the device and it was a call from Maria Hill.

**N:** Hill.

**H:** Where are you? Will I have to put electronic crawlers in everyone in this bunker?

**N:** Did something happen?

**H:** Yes! That.

Hill activated the W.T. camera and filmed James crying and squirming in Bucky's lap.

**N:** I'm going up.

**H:** Up? Where are you?

**S:** Is it James?

**N:** Yes.

**H:** Who's there with you? Steve? God, are you guys making another James?

**N:** Hill!

**H:** Oh yeah, I'm sorry.

**N:** Not appropriate.

**H:** Totally not appropriate due to recent events. But I was just kidding. Anyway it would be good if one of you come up here to calm this child down. Laura tried to get him on her lap, but James didn’t want to go to her lap. He wants to cry in the arms of Steve's friend.

Hill put the camera at Bucky.

**H:** God, look at this man's face, he's totally desperate, Nat. Is he the one who helped you take care of James out of here? Are you sure?

**N:** Hill, I'm going right now, okay?

**H:** Nat? You know that looking from that angle, he's not bad at all.

**N:** What are you talking about?

**H:** You know exactly what I'm talking about.

Natasha rolled her eyes and turned off the W.T.
N: I have to go.

S: I'll go with you.

N: Okay.

They both took the elevator and inside of that piece of metal, there was a silence, a huge silence that was a little disturbing for both of them.

As soon as they arrived at A Wing. Natasha and Steve made their way to the refectory and there, there were only Bucky, James, and Hill.

S: Hey, champ, what happened?

James held out his arms to Steve. Steve took him in his lap and stroked his back.

N: What did you do with my son?

Natasha asked jokingly.

B: Nothing, he yawned and I said "Let's sleep, James" and he started to scream and cry...

Natasha smiled.

N: He does that when he is sleepy but doesn’t want to sleep. Come on, James.

Natasha held out her arms to James, but he refused to go to her lap. Natasha frowned.

N: James. Come with me. Let's go.

Natasha held onto James's arm and he grabbed Steve's blouse tightly and tried to climb him.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Alright, he can stay with me tonight.


S: Why not?

N: Because... Because he's going to cry.

S: I'll calm him, I can do that, I've done it before.

H: Uhm, guys... Where's Bucky going to sleep tonight?

S: Don’t you trust me?

N: I trust, but...

S: It's just one night, Natasha!

N: I...

Natasha sighed and scratched her forehead, she hates being away from James.
N: Okay.

S: It's just one night, he'll be with you in the morning.

H: Yeah, Natasha, let him spend some time with his dad. And... Bucky can stay with me.

B: What??

N: What?

Bucky made a confused look and looked around, feeling embarrassed.

H: Steve's already going to be with James, so...

Natasha cleared her throat.

N: Steve's room is big, Hill. Yours is tiny.

H: And?

N: And that he can’t sleep there!

H: Because you don’t want?

N: Hill. Stop it. Don’t do that.

H: Ok... I'm going, it's past pickup time.

S: True, we all must go.

Hill was the first to leave.

Natasha touched James's back and her gaze was pure sadness, it seemed like she was handing James over for adoption or something, she kissed James's face.

N: Are you sure?

S: He'll be fine and his company makes me feel better.

N: Yeah, I know...

B: Look who's the mother of the year!

N: Shut up, James.

Natasha and Bucky looked at each other and smiled. Steve felt dislocated and uncomfortable again by Natasha and Bucky's entanglement.

N: I'll go to my room before I regret it.

Natasha left the refectory.

Steve and Bucky walked in the opposite direction of Natasha to go to Steve’s dorm, but in the hall, they came across with Sam Wilson, which was strange, because it's late and no one should hang around, especially in a wing that this person doesn’t belongs.
S: Sam?

Sam looked surprised to see Steve and Bucky in the hallway, he disguised and smiled.

Sam: Steve!

S: What are you doing here?

Sam: I... Steve, I need to apologize. I tried to find you after what happened to Sharon, but I was so...

Sam took a time to finish the sentence, he couldn’t remember the right word.

Sam: So... Stressed.

S: Stressed?

Sam: Yes, my medicines weren't working, and I was very depressed.

S: Why didn't you tell me? I would have helped... Anyway, I apologize for being so oblivious and not knowing what you were going through, I should have looked for you, but I was worried about James, about Sharon and the Hulk...

Sam: It’s all right.

Sam looked at James in Steve's lap.

Sam: This is James. Hi, James.

James looked at Sam, not recognizing who he was.

Sam: Can I hold him?

S: Yes.

Steve passed James onto Sam's lap. In a few seconds James started to cry very loud.

Sam handed James back to his father.

S: I'm sorry, he's not used to going with everyone and he hasn’t seen you much.

Sam: It’s fine. I need to go back to my dorm. Good night.

S: Good night.

B: Good night.

Sam walked toward the corridor leading to the elevators. Steve and Bucky watched him leave.

B: Strange.

S: What?

B: He didn’t talk to me, it was like he didn’t see me.
S: It must be the depression he had, that changes people.

B: You don’t have to tell me that.

James sneezed and laid his head on Steve's shoulder.

S: Bless you, James. Let's go to sleep.

...

In the middle of the night, Steve heard knocks on the door, he was in bed with James, he got out of the bed, with caution, to not wake him up.

Steve opened the door.

S: Natasha?

N: What happened?

S: What?

N: I was in the kitchen, waiting for James.

S: What?

N: He always wakes up this time to nurse.

Steve yawned and scratched his eye.

S: He's still sleeping.

N: There is something wrong.

S: Natasha, there's nothing wrong with him, he's just asleep.

Natasha entered Steve's room and went straight to the bed.

N: James?

S: You're going to wake him up for what???

N: James.

Bucky was the one who woke up.

B: What's happening?

Natasha laid her hand on James’ face and he was a little warm.

N: I think he has a fever.

S: What?? He has not. He was fine.

Steve walked over to the bed and sat next to James. He laid his hand on James's forehead.
S: It's normal!

N: No, I know my son!

B: Why are you arguing, guys? Just measure his temperature.

N: True.

Natasha took James in her lap.

N: He doesn’t wake up.

S: Natasha, calm down! I'll get the thermometer and I'll be right back.

Steve ran out of the room, meanwhile, Bucky stood up and touched James's face.

Bucky looked at Natasha.

B: You and Steve… how are you two?

N: What do you mean?

B: You left me there, claiming that you still had feelings for him and that’s why I didn't want to come along with you to this bunker.

N: James, I don’t want to talk about this now.

B: Okay

James grunted a little.

B: He's waking up...

N: James?

Natasha shook him lightly so he would wake up, but James only grunted and went back to sleep.

Steve hurried back into the room with the thermometer in his hand. Bucky stepped aside to give Steve space, who placed the thermometer under James's arm.

Natasha was kissing James' forehead repeatedly.

They waited for the five minutes of the thermometer in silence.

S: Ready!

Steve picked up the thermometer.

S: See? No fever!

Natasha breathed a sigh of relief and looked at James.

N: Why didn’t he wake up?

Bucky decided to went back to bed.
Steve sat next to Natasha and laid a hand on her knee, he wasn’t angry for Natasha thinking that just because James was sleeping with him there, that it would have been something wrong.

Steve felt compassion and understands the love and concern that Natasha has for James.

**S:** He's fine. I would call you right away if there was anything wrong with him.

**N:** I'm sorry, I know, but I...

**S:** I know.

Steve stroked James' hair and then kissed his face.

**S:** You can take him if that will make you more calm...

Natasha looked into Steve's eyes and she shook her head. She trusts him fully, James couldn’t be in better hands, and besides there's Bucky here. James is completely safe.

**N:** He can stay. I think he's growing up so fast. He hasn’t slept during the day, so it's normal for him to sleep more at night. And he's attached to you, I have to deal with it.

Steve smiled.

**S:** You don’t have to be jealous, James loves his mother. You're irreplaceable, Natasha.

Natasha smiled and put James back on the bed, she kissed his face and stood up.

Steve followed Natasha to the door.

**S:** You can stay if you want.

**N:** Here?

**S:** Yes.

**N:** There are a lot of people in here already.

**S:** There's always room for one more. I can sleep on the floor.

**N:** No. Everything is fine.

Natasha was silent and peered into the room to see if Bucky was asleep. Apparently he was.

Steve was watching her.

**S:** So, you and Bucky...
N: Huh?

S: Do you two have something?

N: No... We... No!

Natasha shook her head.

N: Before I came back here, we had some thing there... But it didn’t last.

S: Why not?

N: Well, be-because...

Natasha sighed. *Because you exist, that's the reason.*

N: Because he's not the one who I love.

S: And you love someone?

Natasha held her breath for a few seconds and then she shook her head.

S: I'd like to know if you do, we're friends, right?

N: Yes. We are.

Steve and Natasha went silent, but it wasn’t that uncomfortable silent. It was like the time, when they were working together for SHIELD and Natasha used to break into his apartment, to eat his food, and he just gave up on complaining about that and they watched Netflix for hours, and then they just enjoyed to be next to each other, even with nothing to say.

S: This is so weird.

N: What?

S: I felt that desire to kiss you now as I felt earlier today and that day when we were out of the bunker... I shouldn’t say that.

N: You should.

Natasha closed her eyes and shook her head.

N: I mean... We tell each other everything, so you should tell me... Because I felt it too.

S: Did you?

Natasha’s heart was pounding so hard against her chest that she even had a vomit craving, she confirmed, nodding.

S: What does that mean?

N: You don’t know?

S: I think I'm confused and needy. I couldn’t think about it now, right? It's wrong...
Natasha was extremely disappointed, she disguised her disappointed very well and just nodded.

*You never know, Steve and I can’t handle it anymore, you kiss me and then you say it meant nothing and that you don’t understand why you kissed me. This is not fair.* Natasha thought.

**N: I'm going to bed.**

**S: Okay... Good night.**

Natasha didn’t smile, she just left and went back to her dorm.

Steve stood in the doorway, watching Natasha leave.

...

Over the next three weeks, Steve improved a lot because of his new nighttime activity with Natasha. The trainings helped the two keep their minds healthy inside that metalized environment of the bunker.

During the weekends, Steve and Natasha trained throughout the morning. James stayed with Hill or Bucky while they practiced.

**N: I'm starving!**

**S: It's lunch time already. We can go.**

Natasha nodded and she and Steve made their way up to the A Wing, running up the stairs. They arrived exhausted at the refectory, but with a smile in their faces.

They took their trays and sat down at the table. Bucky was already there.

**N: I forgot to get James with Hill.**

**B: Don’t worry, she's coming with him over there.**

Natasha sat and watched Hill approach, with slightly swollen face and red nose.

Hill put James on Natasha’s lap.

**H: There. Your mom.**

**N: Hill, are you okay?**

**H: I am, it's just that I'm allergic to your child. Are you put something different on him? Some perfume or soap?**

**N: No, what could I put on him, different from the soap that everyone here use?**

**S: You may be allergic to something else. I'll send a team to your dorm today to check for mold or moisture.**

**H: Thanks.**

Hill turned her head and let out a big sneeze, which attracted the attention of everyone in the refectory. Hill covered her nose with her hand in time.
N: It's okay, guys, it's just an allergy!

Natasha warned before everybody starts to freak out, thinking that might be a contagious thing.

Hill sneezed again and again, and the third time, when she took her hand away, she noticed drops of blood on her hand. Natasha was the only one who saw the blood in Hill's hand.

Hill disguised it and put her hand on her pants, she looked at Natasha and Natasha looked at her with concern but didn’t question in front of anyone, so Hill wouldn’t be treated like an animal like she was when she stayed in F Wing.

S: Aren’t you going to get in line to eat? It's getting big.

H: I'm not hungry. I'll eat later.

S: You should go to Cho after lunch, she can give you some medicine for this allergy.

Hill nodded and left. Natasha got up and placed James on Steve's lap.

N: I'll be right back.

Natasha ran after Hill down the hall.

N: Hill.

H: I know. The protocol. I go to the infirmary first.

N: Maybe it's nothing.

H: Yeah.

N: I'll go with you.

H: No, I'm fine.

N: Hill...

H: Natasha, I'm going alone.

N: I don’t want you to go alone.

H: If it's nothing, it'll be idle and if it's something, you're at risk of being infected.

N: Don’t say that, you don’t know if it's any disease or not.

H: Exactly, don’t be worried for nothing. I don’t need this.

Natasha sighed.

N: Okay. Once you know what it is, call my W.T.

H: I will. Thanks.

Natasha returned to the refectory.
S: He doesn’t want to eat.

N: James... You need to eat.

Natasha took James in her lap and sat down.

N: He will eat with me.

After lunch, Steve, Natasha, and Bucky still stood in the refectory talking, until the Bunker's emergency siren started ringing.

- Attention to all citizens of the bunker! Go immediately to your dormitories and remain there until the second order.

The announcement was made through a loudspeaker and the people in the refectory was staring at each other, startled.

Steve got up and spoke loudly for everyone to hear.

S: There's no reason to panic! It's just an alert! Proceed to your dorms as requested. Calmly and orderly!

Bucky: Natasha, come on!

Natasha stood with James on her lap.

N: What is it, Steve?

Natasha asked, but her heart was tight, the first thought in her mind was Maria Hill.

S: I don’t know, I'll check.

N: We should go with you.

S: No, you need to stay with James and protect him, go to your dorm and close the door.

N: But what about you?

S: I need to know what's going on and help out what I can.

Steve looked at Bucky.

S: Stay with them.

Bucky nodded and Natasha couldn’t argue, she didn’t want James to take any chances to get sick, so she went to her dorm with Bucky.

As soon as Natasha and Bucky retired, Steve could watch more people sneezing and saw traces of blood in their clothes.

S: Another epidemic?

Steve ran to the command center. Tony was there, nervous and asking the agents to scan all dorms for sick people.
S: Tony!

Tony: I knew that allowing more people here was a mistake!

Chapter End Notes

Two persons are going to die. Can you guess who? (Not Sharon)
As soon as Natasha entered her dorm, she placed James on the carpet and he ran after his toy.

Natasha was frowning and walking around her tiny dorm.

B: Natalia.

N: James don’t... Bucky.

B: Take it easy, we don’t know what it is.

N: I know. I think I know.

Natasha looked at Bucky and sat on the bed.

N: I think Hill is sick.

B: It was just a sneeze.

N: You didn’t see, but there was blood in her hand.

B: Really? Shit! I'm sorry, I know she's important to you, but hey, she'll be fine.

N: Bucky... It will get worse.

B: Why?

N: They will come after you again.

B: But I was tested.

N: But you were the last one to come here, so that makes you the prime suspect.

B: I can stay in isolation again, that’s not a problem for me, I'm used to it.

N: I hope it doesn’t get to that point.

Bucky and Natasha heard knocks on the door.

- Nurse! Open it.

Bucky opened the door while Natasha walked over to James and took him in her lap.

B: Come in, please.

The nursing staff was dressed in the F-Wing suit. Completely covered and masked. As soon as James saw one of them, he screamed and cried desperately.

N: James. It's okay, they won’t hurt you.
- Let's test you first, while she calms the child. Please sir, sit down.

Bucky pulled the chair and sat down. The two nurses checked his temperature, pulse, the reflex and dilation of Bucky's eyes. At the end, they stuck a device on the tip of Bucky's finger.

- Negative.

- Test again.

The nurse followed the instructions and stuck Bucky's finger again.

- Negative.

- Are you James Buchanan Barnes?

B: Yes.

- You will have to be removed to F Wing for further tests.

B: You just saw that it turned negative.

- We have orders to test you as many times as necessary, you can come willingly or doped.

B: I am not refusing, it won’t be necessary to use violence.

- Now you.

The nurse turned to Natasha. James burst into tears and grabbed Natasha's blouse. The nurses didn’t wait for Natasha to try to calm James, they tested Natasha and then James, which was really difficult because he was struggling.

N: Hey! Take it easy, you're going to hurt him!

- I'm just doing my job, ma'am, he needs to be quiet.

N: And you need to be kinder.

Natasha stood up ready to start a fight, but Bucky grabbed her arm.

Natasha took a deep breath as the nurses stuck the device on James's finger.

N: So?

- I need to check again.

N: Are you kidding? I'll stick that thing in your face...

Bucky once again restrained Natasha.

- Negative for him too.

- Come with us, James.

Bucky squeezed Natasha's hand a little bit and looked at her.
B: It'll be okay.

Natasha nodded, while Bucky was escorted to F-Wing.

...

Natasha was confined in her dorm for nine hours with James until somebody knocked on her door.

The door was opened and Natasha was relieved to see Steve, she ran up to him and hugged him. Steve hugged Natasha's waist.

S: How is James?

N: He's fine, he just fell asleep. His tests was negative.

S: And yours?

N: I'm here, aren't I?

Natasha stepped away from Steve so she could look into his eyes.

N: They took Bucky.

S: I know.

N: The test was negative and yet they took him.

S: I've already visited him, they will keep him there for 36 hours this time.

Natasha sighed and she was reluctant to ask about Hill because she was afraid that something bad had happened to her.

Steve already knew that Natasha was worried about her best friend.

S: She's stable. She is isolated with five more infected citizens.

N: What does she have?

S: Cho said it doesn't seem to be anything external.

N: What do you mean? Has anyone created this disease?

S: That's what it sounds like.

Natasha frowned.

N: Who would do something like that?

S: That's what we're trying to figure out.

N: I need to see Hill.

S: I'll stay with James. You can go, the confinement order is already suspended.

N: So fast?
S: We managed to get everyone who got sick. No children were infected, we tested everyone, and we immediately isolated who needed to be isolated. This epidemic didn’t spread like the other because after the last one, we took precautions to prevent it from happening again.

N: Great. I go there visit Hill, then.

Natasha was about to walk out the door, but Steve took her hand and slowly let her hand slide and just held her fingers lightly. Natasha stopped at the same time and looked at Steve.

No more games, Rogers. Natasha thought and pulled out her hand.

Natasha ran to the elevator and went down to the F-wing.

In the first isolation chamber, she saw Sharon Carter talking to herself.

Natasha approached the glass and Sharon looked at her.

Sharon was silent for a few seconds, staring at Natasha.

Did she recognize me? Natasha thought and waved to Sharon to try to establish some contact. Sharon looked away and started talking to herself again.

Natasha made negative with her head and went to the third chamber, where Hill was. Natasha had to put her hand over her mouth for the fright she took when she saw the state of Maria Hill.

Her eyes were completely red and blood was dripping from her eyes. The color of her skin was so purple that she looked as if she was already dead.

How did this happen so fast? Natasha was thinking, when her thoughts were interrupted by some noise in the chamber next to Hill's.

Natasha walked over to see that chamber and saw several doctors or nurses, she couldn’t tell who was what. They ran with a defibrillator and applied an electric discharge to the patient's chest. They applied once, twice, three times. They applied medication to the victim's heart and attempted to resuscitate with defibrillator again.

Natasha heard that continuous whistle and the nurses slowing, after the doctor closed the patient's eyes. Another nurse closed the curtain of the chamber, preventing Natasha from continuing to watch.

Natasha returned to Hill's chamber and she never felt so distressed in her life. How much longer does Hill have until they discover a cure? It's not fair to her, she can’t lose Hill. Who made this? Who did this to her friend?

Hill took a while to notice Natasha's presence in the hallway.

Hill hates when someone see her in a state like that... Weak, even if for reasons of illness, she frowned and gestured for Natasha to leave.

Natasha’s look of compassion and concern irritated her even more.

Natasha knows her and no matter how it hurts, she would have to make Hill's wish. But what Natasha didn’t expect was to see the door to the access of the chambers being open, and from there, Sam Wilson was coming.

Natasha looked at him without understanding what he was doing there. If he was sick, they wouldn’t
let him out of there like this and apparently he is fine. Is he here under someone's order? Natasha thought.

The weirdest part was that Sam walked by Natasha and didn’t greet her, he got into the elevator and went away.

Natasha looked at him and then at the door, where the chief doctor of F Wing looked at her with a big smile. She still hates him.

- You're back, young lady. I'm happy to see you.

Natasha frowned even more. This doctor is completely crazy, one person has just died, others are about to and he is smiling and yet he looks happy.

- I said you'd come back.

N: I'm leaving already.

- I hope not for long, young lady.

N: Stop call me that.

The doctor laughed, thinking she was just kidding.

Natasha headed for the elevator, she pressed the button to call the elevator and while waiting, she looked over her shoulder and the doctor was still looking at her with the same sinister and irritating smile of always.

Something is wrong with this doctor. I need to tell Steve. Natasha thought as she stepped into the elevator.

Upon arriving at A Wing, Natasha went to her room and upon entering, she saw Steve lying on her bed, with James lying on his chest.

It was the most beautiful scene Natasha had ever seen, she wanted to be able to let Steve sleep, but she feels there is something wrong with that doctor and she needs to tell Steve.

Natasha approached Steve and touched his shoulder, it was enough for Steve to wake up in shock.

Steve looked at Natasha and Natasha put her index finger to her lips, motioning for Steve to be quiet.

Natasha picked up James and Steve was able to stand up, Natasha placed James in his crib and then pulled Steve into the hallway in front of the room.

N: Steve, you said this virus was made synthetically in here, isn't it?

S: Yes. And it looks like the children's epidemic too, but an outside component was used. Someone here has been going out there, or has come here loaded with dangerous chemical components from the outside world.

N: I have a suspect.

S: Who?

N: The chief doctor of Wing F.
S: Dr. Berman?

N: Yes. I always found him very weird, but only because he was too nice and that annoys me, but there is something wrong with his behavior.

S: What do you mean?

N: When I was getting free from the F Wing, he said something strange about how he wanted me to stay there longer and said I would go back.

S: This is weird, do you think he could be just flirting with you?

N: I thought so, but he calls me a young lady, I don’t think he sees me that way, I think he really wanted me to go back there, sick, just like his patients who were discharged.

S: But that doesn’t mean he's infecting people, he doesn’t even leave the F-Wing.

N: Exactly. I think the stress and loneliness of being in that wing... Maybe he's gone crazy and he’s doing it to have more people with him over there.

S: God! Sharon's there!

N: She doesn’t look fine, Steve.

S: I'll get her out of there.

Steve turned to leave, but Natasha took his arm.

N: We have to investigate and be sure, first.

S: I'm going to talk to Tony and Professor Xavier.

N: Steve, there’s something else you need to know too.

S: What?

N: I think I know how he has infected people without leaving there.

S: He has a helper.

Natasha nodded.

S: Do you know who it is?

N: I think... I have a hunch.

S: Say.

N: You won’t like to know.

S: Say it, Natasha.

N: It's Sam... I saw him coming out of Dr. Berman's office and he walked by me without greeting me, it was like I wasn’t there for him... His eyes… Seems empty.
Steve changed his expression completely, Natasha was sorry for coming to Steve first, he would never accept the idea of his friend helping a sociopath to spread diseases to the population of the bunker.

Steve frowned and took two steps away from Natasha. He looked at the floor and seemed to be reflecting on what he had just heard.

Natasha thought it would be the end of their friendship.

S: There is a possibility…

Natasha was surprised.

S: Bucky said that Sam was different, as if he didn’t know him, and I… Well… Thinking now, it’s true, he was acting weird. Sam would never not show support for me after I lost my daughter, he would have come to see me no matter what he was going through. Hill also commented something about Sam being strange, but she thought it was some kind of depression…

N: What do you want to do? I didn’t say anything to anyone, I came to you first, I think you should decide, he is your friend.

S: We have to be sure.

Steve sighed and shook his head.

S: I'll talk to him.

N: Not alone.

S: He's my friend, he won’t hurt me.

N: Maybe he's not your Sam anymore, Steve. I'm going with you.

S: No, James can’t be alone.

N: I don’t want you to go alone. I'm leaving James with Laura and I'll call Clint to help us, he's more focused.

S: I'll need to tell Tony.

N: I'll meet you on the Wing B staircase.

Steve nodded and walked over to Tony's room.

Natasha entered the room again and picked up James, who began to grumble at being awakened.

N: It's okay, James. Hush…

Natasha made James lay his head on her shoulder and spent a few minutes shaking him lightly so he would go back to sleep.

As soon as Natasha was sure that James went back to sleep a, she crouched down and picked up his blanket in the crib and covered him.
N: Ready, let's go.

Natasha walked to the door and she had a surprise. Sam Wilson was in front of her dorm with another child in his arms. The kid looks asleep.

Natasha was astonished and her heart froze to see the approximately 3-year-old child on his lap. Natasha also noticed that Sam had a syringe pointed at the child's neck. Natasha's heart began to pound.

N: Sam?

Sam stared at her, but it was a totally vague look.

N: Sam... Who is this child? Sam?

Natasha was trying to stay calm so as not to wake James and not pressure Sam into committing any nonsense.

N: Sam, can you tell me if this child is alive?

Sam: Yes.

N: Is he alive?

Sam: Yes.

Natasha was calmer.

N: Why don’t you hand him over to me and I'll make sure that he goes back to his parents.

Sam: He has no father, no mother. He is one of the orphans. You have James.

N: Yes, I have James.

Sam: We tried with other orphaned children, but they died. When we tried with James, James didn’t die.

N: What are you talking about?

Sam: The Doctor told for you to give me James, and I'll give you this child.

Natasha's lips twitched and her forehead frowned, she couldn’t say she wasn’t going to deliver her son to him, because it could trigger some kind of anger in Sam, it's not known what kind of drug Sam is in, but he's sweating like a pig and blinking in a weird form.

Natasha could swear that he's looking like people who were dominated by those terrible aliens creature, but it would be impossible, since Sam was confined all the time in the bunker. And he is talking and reasoning, but he doesn’t seem to be feeling any emotion.

Would the doctor have infected Sam with the DNA of some genetically modified creature and so he can reason even though he is dominated?

N: Sam. I need you to let me go, okay? I can help you.
Sam: I need to take James to the doctor.

N: Sam... Listen to me, this won’t end well, if you're still yourself, remember this is your best friend’s son, Steve.

Sam: I need James. He said... He said James and Torunn, and he said without James, other children will die until we have James.

N: Why does he need James?

- SAM!

Natasha could hear Steve's voice in the hallway, calling Sam.

Sam looked at Steve and his eyes blinked nervously.

S: Did you infect James?

Sam: James is good. James doesn’t die, the other children died.

S: Did you use James to infect those children and to spread this disease?

Sam: Yes.

Natasha closed her eyes, trying not to believe what she had just heard.

Sam looked back at Natasha again.

Sam: You take this child, James comes with me.

S: He's not going anywhere.

Sam: Then this child dies.

Tony: No, you can’t get away from this, Sam. Wake up and deliver this child.

S: Listen to me, Sam! You're not guilty, this is not you, this was Dr. Berman, correct?

Sam: Yes.

S: I'll help you.

How did Steve and Tony know what was going on?

A few minutes ago, Tony and Steve were arriving on the B-Wing staircase, and they hadn’t found Natasha there as it was agreed, so the two decided to go to Sam's room and found a series of transparent balls with colored liquids inside, probably several different types of viruses.

Natasha could hear the sound of some gun being prepared to shoot and she didn’t know if it was Tony or Steve, but Tony had the mechanical voice, so her was in Iron Man's armor, so Steve prepared the gun.

Natasha had a single gun attached to her ankle, but any sudden movement, Sam could react badly and she doesn’t want him to hurt that child or James, it is not known how this product that he has in his hands reacts in contact with the air.
S: SAM!

Steve shouted.

S: Release that child, he's just an innocent boy. He has nothing to do with it.

Sam: I... I can’t!

Sam shook his head and when he reached for his pocket, Tony activated his armor weapon to shoot.

S: Tony, no!

Sam took a ampoule out of his pocket.

Sam: Doctor said if you fail, kill everyone.

S: SAM! Listen to me! Do not do it!

Sam put the child on the floor and raised his hand with the ampoule and looked as if he was going to throw it on the floor, but then he pointed the syringe at James.

S: SAM! No one has to die. We will set you free from that. SAM! PLEASE!

Sam: James is good. He's coming with me.

Sam ran toward Natasha, but before he could walk through the door, there was a sound of three shots, and Sam fell to the floor.

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas, everyone.
Chapter 20

After the sound of the three shots, Natasha just kept her hands over James’ ear and stared terrified at Sam's body on the floor.

Soon after, Natasha saw Steve running and bending over Sam's body. Steve knelt beside his friend and turned him around to look at him and try to save him. Steve started a useless cardiac massage to try to revive Sam Wilson, but he was already dead.

In the next scene, Tony, without the helmet of his armor, approaches them and tries to say something to Steve, who doesn’t accept what he has to say and pushes Tony back.

Steve shakes Sam's body, then hugs him with tears in his eyes.

Natasha didn’t notice that while all of that, James was crying scared, not understanding what just happened.

Natasha approached Sam's body and stared at Steve. As always, Natasha could feel his pain.

- What were you expecting to happen?

Natasha glanced down the hall, following the sound of that voice and she saw Nick Fury in his wheelchair with a gun in his hand.

NF: Don’t look at me like that! Even being retired, I still have to avoid catastrophes because you guys are too pussy. Oh my dear friend, oh my poor child, bla bla bla... Lame!

N: Fury!

NF: What is it? Are you as soft as all these assholes? Were you going to let him infect your child, this unknown child or all of us that live here in this hell?

Nick looked impatiently at Steve.

NF: Stop crying! Your friend has been gone for a long time, this is not Samuel Wilson. Don’t cry for him.

N: Fury! Stop it!
NF: Well, you're all welcome.

Nick Fury turned the wheelchair and started spinning the wheels to leave, Natasha didn’t know whether to stay with Steve to support or if she should follow Nick.

Curiosity was killing her, she ran to Nick.

N: Nick! How did you know?

NF: I have an eye everywhere, Romanoff. Do you really think I don’t know what's going on here? I saw all this upheaval of you up and down, my wing, my dorm has no acoustic protection, you mothafuckers won’t let me sleep. And you… The biggest Russian Spy, ask me how do I know that two epidemics in a row were caused on purpose! Doesn’t it seem suspicious to you?

N: Of course, yes, I mean… But...

NF: So, there you go. I eliminated the pawn from the game for you, now all you have to do is eliminate the rooks and the queen. Time doesn’t stop. Tic, tac.

Nick Fury withdrew and Natasha turned her attention to Steve, who was more in control now.

Steve looked at Tony and Natasha.

S: He's right.

T: What?

S: Sam already died a long time ago and I didn’t realize, they turned him into something else and I failed to save him.

N: You had no way of knowing that, Steve. It's not your fault.

S: It's not his fault either.

N: Of course not.

S: We need to arrest the doctor.

N: Not just the doctor.

T: He had more help, he couldn’t do all this without other people.

S: The question is how many people did he recruit on this mission?

N: Tony, there is a device to test if someone has a virus, right?

T: Right. Let's test the entire F-Wing team. Anyone who's infected we will know they're under Dr. Berman's domain and we'll arrest them.

S: We can’t arrest them, we don’t know if they are some type of time bomb, just waiting our attack to do something bad, we have patients down there.

N: We have to kill them.
T: Kill?
S: Yes.
T: Guys...
S: We can’t take that risk again. I lost my daughter because I was weak. If I had expelled Bruce before, that wouldn’t have happened.
T: We are talking about 25 people. 25 workers.
N: None of them are reliable, even being virus free, they knew there was something wrong, so they were being complicit.
T: We can’t prove that.
N: What do you suggest, then, Tony?
Steve got up and approached Tony and Natasha.
S: I believe that anyone who is healthy should be interviewed by Professor Xavier and that young lady who can also read minds.
T: And the others?
S: Eliminated. Do you agree?
T: In that case, yes.
Tony just nodded.
N: I think we should first isolate all of them, separate the healthy from the infected, and then we should announce what we intend to do for the entire bunker population, after all, we’re still a society, and they should be entitled to say what they think about it.
S: This is important, Nat. Otherwise they’ll see us only as dictators soon. Everyone here works and help so everyone has the right to decide with us.
Steve and Tony looked at each other, then looked at Natasha and nodded.
...
For the next four months, Dr. Berman and his allies were Judged. Some of them were sentenced to death, some were expelled, and others just arrested.
The epidemic was controlled and one of Berman's ally agreed in revealing the cure in exchange for a more soft sentence.
Maria Hill left the F Wing without any sequel and Bucky was released because it had been proven that he wasn’t the transmitter of the epidemic.
Steve mourned his friend for almost a month, but he was slowly recovering and realizing that the one he saw dying wasn’t Sam. Sam was a good friend, a good person, and he would never do the things he did on his own. Steve would trust his life to Sam and if they were living in the outside world, Sam
would be the godfather of Steve's children, because he can’t imagine anyone better to replace him as father than Sam Wilson.

...

Steve thought the doctor was keeping Sharon crazy inside F Wing, but even after the doctor's departure she still had the same hallucinations about her daughter, but she made a new friend: Bucky Barnes.

During the period of isolation of Bucky, they get to know each other better. Sharon's chamber was facing Bucky's and every day he tried to establish some kind of communication with her and he had to insist a lot until Sharon smiled at him.

...

Three more months later, Tony was opening the second and more complete recreation area of the Bunker.

Designed by Pepper Potts and built by Clint Barton, the new recreation area had artificial trees, lawns, benches and even a large swimming pool, with showers dotted around.

Tony was boasting to Clint and Pepper about the sustainable construction of the new recreation area. The water was collected directly from the groundwater and the water passed through a system of renovation to avoid waste.

Thor approached the recreation area with his daughter Torunn, he was wearing only a bathing shorts and Torunn wore the same swimsuit as the other children, made by the bunker artisans for all the girls.

Thor: This is a beautiful job, Pepper.

Clint: And Clint!

Tony: And Tony!

Pepper: And all the builders!

Clint smiled excitedly, Thor smiled sympathetically.

Thor: Good job, everyone.

Torunn: Bath, daddy!

Thor took Torunn to the pool.

Hill approached the area too, wearing her usual outfit and a pair of sunglasses, even tho, the sun was artificial, but the light was strong anyway.

T: Hill, didn’t you received a bathing suit?

H: I did.

T: Why aren’t you wearing it?

H: Because I don’t want to.
Natasha was approaching, wearing a robe and carrying James in her lap.

Tony looked at Natasha.

T: There's who I expected to see here.

N: Don’t get excited, Tony, I won’t get in the water.

H: Why are you in a bikini, then?

N: Because my son will get in and if necessary, I will get in to rescue him or something...

C: He won’t drown, this kid is smart. Come with Uncle Clint, James.

Natasha put James on the floor and Clint held out his hand to James.

N: You can go, James.

James looked at the pool and the children in the water, then held Natasha's hand and stared at her with beady eyes.

N: James, I'm not going in, if you want to go, go with Clint or we can stay here.

James bowed his head and was quiet.

C: Come on James!

Laura started shouting Clint from near the pool area, calling him to stay with Francis and Lila.

C: Last chance, James...

James buried his face in Natasha's leg.

Tony approached Natasha and spoke lower.

T: You should go, Tasha... I mean poor child... Seeing all his friends in there... C’mon.

N: Tony! You’re despicable, you know that?

Tony looked at James over his glasses.

T: Hey kid, do you want a stepfather?

Natasha rolled her eyes and walked with James away from Tony. Hill joined Natasha.

H: Everyone in this bunker is getting fat, there's only Thor to admire and that Scott Summers guy.

N: He's very young.

H: So what? He’s 18, he’s ready for me.

N: You are disgusting.

H: Well... I've been without sex for ten...
N: Months?

H: Days! Are you crazy?

Hill stared at Natasha in shock.

N: Hill! With who? Forget it, I don’t want to know.

H: I'm tired of all them, I want something new like... Like... That mutant.

N: The Beast?

Natasha laughed at her own joke.

H: It's not me the one who enjoys a monster if you know what I mean.

N: That's not nice to say.

H: The truth hurts, right?

N: Logan?

H: Yes! He's always in a bad mood, that guy really needs... You know, he and me... we could help ourselves, I'm sure. And you, how long have you been without...?

Natasha frowned and shook her head.

H: Natasha Romanoff! One month? 2? 3? God!

Natasha took a deep breath and looked away.

H: My goodness, Natasha! You've been with Steve all the time, you guys go that wing down there every fucking day and I thought you were there to...

N: No! God, no. We only train and Steve is still recovering from Sharon and...

H: Oh c'mon Natasha! It’s been a long time already, he's already got over it. He's already happy again, his mood has improved a lot.

N: He is, I know, but...

H: But what? He doesn’t want?

N: I guess he doesn’t.

Natasha frowned and lowered her tone as she answered.

H: I don’t admit it, Natasha. You're my friend and you're beautiful and you're hot, like very hot, I would fuck with you and if he doesn’t want you, he can fuck off. The armless one is crazy about you, why don’t you give him a chance?

N: Barnes? Hill... I don’t want to play with Bucky's feelings. He's a nice guy and he's good to James, I don’t want to ruin it.
H: You can’t and I will not let you wait for Steve forever. Say what you feel and tell him to decide!

N: It's not simple like that.

H: Yes, it is! You put him against the wall. Say everything you have to say and If he doesn’t take some action, kick his ass! C’mon, you’re the one who taught me to not run after a man.

N: You took my advice too seriously, I never said that you couldn’t trust any man ever again.

H: Well, I don’t trust them.

N: Not all of them are like John, Hill. They won’t hurt you, you know how to fight now.

H: Don’t come like a therapist over me, I'm fine and we're talking about you and that sick platonic passion you have for Steve.

N: It's not... It's not so platonic. He gave me some signals, you know? But he just kisses me and then he says he doesn’t know what's gotten into him and it's just those damn signs...

Natasha shook her head and sighed.

H: So, Natasha. Be the Black Widow! Wake up!

Natasha looked at her friend and nodded.

N: You're right... I'll tell him and it's his last chance to decide!

H: And if he doesn’t want you, grab the armless one! Show him what he's missing.

J: Daddy!

James pointed to Steve arriving in the recreation area with his friend Bucky. Natasha and Hill looked at both of them and silenced.

James released Natasha's hand and ran to Steve.

J: Daddy!

Steve was greeting Tony and Pepper, but he left everyone waiting to crouch and hug his son.

S: James, have you taken a dive in that pool already?

James shook his head and pointed to the pool.

S: Why didn’t you go?

James pointed at Natasha. Steve looked at her.

S: Didn’t your mother take you there?

James shook his head.

S: Daddy will dive with you, ok?
James smiled and nodded.

Tony folded his arms.

T: You're not going to be in a swimsuit here, are you? I heard you have a tummy and you better not embarrass yourself in front of others...

Pepper: Tony, you're the one with a tummy here. Steve looks great as always.

S: Are you coming, Bucky?

B: No, I'll stick around here only.

Steve put James on the floor and took off his shirt.

Hill and Natasha just watched from afar.

H: Mercy!

Natasha cleared her throat.

Steve just kept his diving shorts one, also standardized for all the men in the bunker, he held onto James's hand and walked toward Natasha, who tried to look away and pretend to be paying attention to the children in the pool.

S: Ladies.

Natasha looked at Steve.

S: I'm going to take him to the pool, okay?

Natasha just nodded.

Steve turned to head towards the pool, but James held in his mother's hand to pull her along.

N: James, I said I won't go in.

James looked down and looked like he was about to cry.

Natasha crouched and looked into his eyes.

N: James, your father is going with you, you will be safe. I'll be right here if you need me.

S: Come on, James.

Steve pulled James by the hand, but he stamped his foot and continued to pull Natasha.

J: Come on, Mommy.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Come on, Mommy...

Steve smiled and Natasha sighed.

N: I hate you.
S: It’s not that bad, pool is fun.

N: Not for me.

James had tears in his eyes already.

N: Don’t cry, James, I'll go, okay?

Natasha unzipped the robe and pulled it out.

N: I'm going, see?

Natasha turned to deliver the robe to Hill to hold and Steve couldn’t help but look at Natasha's body, she was wearing a swimsuit, but he knows and remembers very well of everything underneath it.

Tony looked dismayed.

T: Okay, bring the artisans here, who ordered a swimsuit and not a bikini for Natasha?

Pepper: You're very despicable, Tony.

Pepper got angry and walked away, Tony ran after her to apologize.

Steve wasn’t the only one checking Natasha's body, Bucky watched from afar as well.

When Natasha turned around, she could tell how Steve was red and that he was checking her body when she turned, but Natasha pretended not to notice and ignored.

James extended his arms to Natasha, asking for a lap.

N: No lap now.

S: Come on mine, son.

Steve lifted James up and shook him which made James laugh out loud. Steve walked toward the pool next to Natasha.

N: That's great, I say he can’t have a lap and you give him a lap.

S: I don’t see how a lap can be bad.

N: The bad is you contradicting my orders.

S: I didn’t mean to, I just wanted to make him smile.

Natasha rolled her eyes and sighed again.

N: No problem.

S: Okay, let's go inside.

N: All right, but hold him all the time, he doesn’t know how to swim.

S: I know that. Relax, Natasha.
Steve went into the water with James.

As soon as he stepped in, Steve reached out to help Natasha down the stairs, but she dismissed him and took a good jump in the water.

Natasha swam under the water until she reached Steve. James knew it was his mother and thought she was going to get him, he lifted his legs and hugged Steve, screaming and laughing at the same time.

Natasha emerged with her hair all back and smiled at James who threw himself into Natasha's lap.

N: Your turn...

Natasha tried to put James in the water, but he opened and lifted his legs up in the air like a frog and grabbed the handle of Natasha's bathing suit.

N: James, are you scared of the water?

S: You don’t have to be afraid, look...

Steve dove in and swam around Natasha. James stared, and again he thought it was some catch-and-play game, he screamed and laughed.

Steve emerged from the water and for Natasha, it seemed she was watching a movie scene… That spontaneous and loving smile, the movement of the head to remove the excess water, those drops sliding through the middle of his pectoral until passing through the labyrinth that his abdomen forms...

Natasha shook her head to wake up and took a deep breath. Hill's right, I need some… Action... Urgent! Natasha thought.

Out of the water, Hill looked at Steve's friend, who as always, seemed out of place. She walked over to him and gave him a small smile.

H: You’re not a fan of water, huh?

B: I don’t have good memories with water tanks.

H: Yeah, I don’t think so...

B: But I like to see people happy...

Hill looked in the direction of the people and then at the people that Bucky was actually looking at. Steve and Natasha.

H: Do you think they're happy?

B: Huh?

H: These people?

B: They seem to be. In a way, I think we're learning to live here, but I'm not sure if we should get used to live down here, like that.

H: Do we have another option?
B: Yes. Fight!

Hill smirked.

H: Maybe you're right, but to fight, we need reinforcements. We barely know our enemy.

B: That's the problem. We need to know them.

...

After a few hours, James, who was already much safer in the pool, began to yawn and show signs of sleep.

N: Finally.

S: It's almost lunch time, we're not going to put him to sleep, he needs to eat.

N: Okay.

Natasha said as she stepped out of the pool, followed by Steve with James in his arms.

Natasha approached Hill and Bucky.

Hill handed Natasha's robe and she put it on.

Bucky looked at the floor to hide as much as he could that h was staring at her too.

S: You two should have entered, the water was great.

H: We had fun from here.

N: I'm going to change James and I see you in the refectory.

S: I'll take him to the room for you.

N: No need.

S: I want to.

Natasha looked at Hill and Hill nodded.

Natasha let Steve carry James to her room.

At the door of the room, Natasha picked up James, who was already sleeping.

Natasha looked at Steve.

N: I need to talk to you.

S: What is it?

N: Not here...
S: Is something wrong?

N: Yes, but... I'd rather be alone with you.

S: Of course.

N: After lunch, I'll ask Hill to stay with James and we can go to the gym.

S: Our gym.

Steve joked and smiled. Natasha nodded and she was so nervous she just gave a small smile.

S: I'm going to change, too, but I'll be there.

N: Okay.

Natasha entered the room and closed the door. She stood for a few seconds with her eyes closed, thinking of how to tell Steve that she is in love with him, that she has loved him for many years and has never stopped loving him for all this time… How to say that? Would it be decent to confess her feelings? She waited so much, already. How much time was necessary to respect his mourning? Natasha had many doubts in her head.

*I need to tell him and he can’t fool me anymore, it’s now or never.* Natasha finished in thought.

N: James! Don’t sleep.

Natasha bathed James and changed his clothes. She also took a shower and when she left the bathroom, James was already sleeping in the crib. She needed to wake him up, and he complained and cried a lot. He cried even when she went to the refectory to eat.

B: What happened to him, Natasha?

N: I had to wake him up and he gets a bad mood when he's sleepy.

H: I think we know who he’s like, then.

N: Shut up.

They all had lunch and by the end of the meal, James had already fallen asleep again. Natasha got up and put James on Hill's lap.

N: Stay in my room, so he won’t strange.
H: You can trust me, I'm a good babysitter.

Natasha looked at Hill and the way Natasha looked at her, made Hill aware that Natasha was nervous. The good thing is that Hill knows how to encourage Natasha with just the look and immediately Natasha felt safer.

Natasha looked at Steve who was distracted by Bucky.

N: Steve?

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Now?

Natasha nodded.

S: I haven’t finished yet...

Steve noticed the worry on Natasha's face and it must have been something really serious for her to be like that, he wiped his mouth on his napkin, apologized, and withdrew from the refectory with Natasha.

As soon as they arrived at the gym, Steve was dying of curiosity.

S: Natasha, what do you want to tell me?

N: I...

Chapter End Notes

Will she tell him?
Will he correspond?
Natasha interrupted her speech she took a deep breath and rethought calmly, how she should say what she had to say.

**S:** Nat?

Natasha looked at Steve, as if she had been brushed from her thoughts, everything she had programmed to say disappeared.

**S:** There's something wrong and you want to tell me about it?

**N:** Shut up, Steve.

Natasha closed her eyes and sighed in frustration. She got angry because he spoke right at the moment she was getting courage to say and now her mind is blank, so he's the one to blame.

Steve frowned and was startled by Natasha's gratuitous aggression.

**S:** Did I do anything?

**N:** God! Steve! Just shut up, okay? Please, just... Be quiet.

Natasha took another deep breath and tried to regain her composure. She shook her head, remembering that he doesn’t know anything, so she shouldn’t treat him badly, especially when she's about to say that she loves him, but right now she's angry.

Natasha turned her back on Steve and took a few steps to try to get back what she had to say to him.

Steve just waited... almost ten minutes, looking at Natasha on her back, already aware that something is disturbing her immensely.

Whatever it is, he's patient, he's going to give her the time she needs.

Natasha turned and looked into Steve's eyes.

**S:** Nat?

**N:** Do you remember when I invaded your hotel room in Germany?

Steve said nothing, he just nodded. How could he forget?

Natasha sighed and nodded, coming to terms with herself that it was time to tell the truth.

**N:** Before going there, I was in my hotel room... I started thinking about when we first met and I... I didn’t like you at all. Coulson was always talking about how great hero and soldier you were and that he and his father wanted to be like you... It was so fucking annoying how everyone was saying that you were good.

**S:** I don’t see myself like that.

**N:** I know! I discovered that when we needed you and you weren’t bragging about what you did for us, like Tony always do. I tried not to see you as a nice guy, but you were a nice
person, you were a good man… It’s kinda hard not like you.

S: What are y…

N: Steve, just listen to me, okay? Every time you saved me, you never saw it as a debt, I saw it that way. I swore to save your life when you needed it. I thought it was just for wanting to pay a debt that I had with you, but it wasn’t. It was because…

Natasha looked away, staring at the ceiling and shaking her head, denying to herself the right to declare what she feels.

N: Because… I felt something for you, I didn’t know exactly what it was, tho. I started seeing you as a great friend, I thought it was just that, because I've never cared so much about anyone like this before. Never.

Natasha had to sigh once more and she was now staring at the floor.

N: Steve, I don’t know how this happened, or when, but…

Natasha laughed softly, alone, amused by the very fact that she was about to say.

N: I fell in love. With you.

Steve's brow, which was wrinkled before, turn to be relaxed and his eyes contained surprise. Natasha finally looked him in the eye.

S: At the hotel?

Natasha made negative with her head.

N: At the hotel I just realized I was already in love with you, I don’t know when it happened exactly, but… You and Sharon were starting to have something stronger and… I thought I should try it once, at least.

S: You came to my hotel, with that intention already?

Natasha nodded and sighed. The way Steve was asking her made her feel guilty about it.

N: I needed to know what it was like to be with you, so I'd say goodbye and we wouldn’t see each other again, but… I got pregnant, and even pregnant I didn’t expect to see you again. I just thought about leaving you, so you could be happy with someone else. I never saw myself able to make you happy as you deserve.

S: Natasha...

N: It was wrong, I know. I know that.

Steve shook his head and he was silent for a few minutes, which made Natasha even more distressed.

S: I don’t think it was wrong what we did, Nat. If I thought again that night, I couldn’t do anything different, I would do it again. I wanted to be with you, and you know… It's kind of funny, because before the Civil War, I was in love with you.
Now it was Natasha who made a look of surprise.

S: It wasn’t very strong, but I was into you, specially when you helped me with HYDRA and SHIELD, but... you were always pushing me to a lot of women, you got me really confused, I thought you didn’t feel anything for me and you even started to flirt with Bruce...

N: I didn’t know at that time what I was feeling, I mean I think I knew, but I blocked somehow...

Steve sighed again and ran a hand over his beard, staring at the floor. Steve shook his head.

S: And these days, you still...?

Steve looked at her and Natasha nodded.

Steve looked down again and scratched his forehead nervously.

S: I was an asshole.

N: What?

S: I didn’t notice. I... Sharon...

Steve shook his head again.

S: Why didn’t you tell me?

N: Sharon became your fiancée and she was pregnant, what right had I to intervene and say what I feel?

S: But we're friends, Natasha. First of all, we are friends. Right?

Natasha nodded.

S: Friends tell what they feel for each other. And friends don’t hurt each other. I can’t deal with the fact that I've been hurting you all this time. How did you feel when I was with Sharon, kissing her and talking about our daughter?

Steve frowned and shook his head, feeling extremely guilty about it.

S: If I had known...

N: Stop, Steve. You didn’t know and I didn’t want you to know, I just... I thought I could live here fine, without having to feel something for you again, but when we were on that mission and you kissed me... Everything changed...

Steve closed his eyes and shook his head.

S: I shouldn’t have done that.

N: Steve, stop blaming yourself, if I didn’t want to, the kiss wouldn’t have happened. That is not the point. You kissed me and then recently you told me that you wanted to kiss me again. What does that mean?
Steve looked at Natasha and made negative with his head.

N: You still don’t know?

For the first time Natasha's voice faltered at the end of her question.

Steve turned his back and rested his hand on the wall, he made negative with his head.

Steve stared at his feet and changed his tone to a softer, more restrained one.

S: It's not that I don’t feel anything for you. You are beautiful and I feel extremely attracted to you, I always felt this way.

N: I don’t want to be just an object of desire for you.

S: I'm not saying that, Nat.

N: So what are you saying?

Natasha asked more sharply and aggressively. Steve looked into her eyes.

S: I'm saying I don’t know if what I feel is the same as you feel for me. Probably not.

Natasha lowered her head and pressed one lip to the other. She closed her eyes and nodded several times, trying her best to not feel so stupid for confessing her feelings.

Steve looked at her and couldn’t help feeling his heart clench as he saw Natasha like that. The last thing he wants in this life is to hurt her, she's in a special place in his heart, but he doesn’t know where she is in his heart right now.

N: You love her... I understand...

Natasha looked at Steve and this time her eyes were filled with tears.

S: Nat...

Steve moved toward Natasha, but she took a step back and shook her head and smiled.

N: It's okay. I get it.

Only one tear escaped and rolled down her face. Natasha wiped it immediately and stepped back, moving toward the door.

S: Wait!

N: No.

S: We can talk.

N: There's nothing more to talk about.

S: Nat, maybe we...

Natasha shook her head.
Natasha was no longer with her eyes wet, she gave a cornered grin to Steve and walked out the door.

Steve ran to the gym door, but Natasha had just entered the elevator. She didn’t want to hear what he had to say and in fact, Steve wanted to make a proposal.

Natasha went up to the A Wing and ran to the refectory. She looked around and didn’t find who she wanted. Natasha then decided to go to the manufacturing sector.

Natasha ran downstairs and when she arrived in the manufacturing sector, she spotted Thor, Clint, Bucky, and a few other workers at work. There were just a few because during the weekend it is optional to work or not, except in emergencies.

Natasha ran over to Bucky and grabbed his wrist.

Natasha didn’t answer, she ran to her dormitory, and when she opened the door, Hill was just putting James in the crib.

Hill looked at Natasha completely red and at Bucky who was in a tank top, grease ax, and body shining with sweat.

Hill took out the key and handed it to Natasha.

Natasha pulled Bucky out of her bedroom and headed for Hill's room.

As Natasha tried to open the door to Hill's bedroom, Bucky looked around and looked at Natasha in confusion.

B: What are we doing here?

N: You know exactly what we came here to do.
Natasha opened the bedroom door and threw Bucky into the room. And yes, Bucky knew, he knew at the time that Natasha appeared in the manufacturing sector and looked at him like that.

Natasha pushed Bucky against the bed and he lay down. Natasha lay on top of Bucky and pressed her lips to his. Bucky put his arm on Natasha's back and reached up to grip the back of her neck.

Bucky forced himself to sit down and held Natasha on his lap. Natasha moved her lips away from Bucky's and grabbed his tank top and lifted it to remove it, Bucky helped her by lifting his arm and then grabbing Natasha's neck again.

Bucky tried to kiss Natasha again, but she swerved and stretched her neck to Bucky. Bucky kissed and sniffed the extension of Natasha's neck, distributed kisses to her chin and finally tried to catch her lips again, but Natasha pushed him to lie on the bed again and didn’t let him kiss her again.

In fact, throughout their sexual act, Natasha allowed just one more kiss, when it was about to end. They stayed in that room for hours. Natasha was in need and she was angry and sad and she knows no other way to unload tension but through intense sex and is still a form of revenge for the "rejection" of Steve Rogers.

... 

A few hours ago, after Natasha left him at the gym, Steve spent about half an hour thinking about what he had just heard.

As much as Natasha had asked him to not feel guilty, it was hard for him not to feel that way. Maybe he noticed something, but he didn’t think it was that intense.

Knowing that he had hurt Natasha, hurts more than when he hurt Sharon with the news of having a child out of the relationship.

It was indeed unbearable for Steve to deal with the fact that he caused Natasha's pain.

Steve doesn’t know why he doesn’t know how he feels about her. Every time he had the opportunity to think about it, something serious happened and he directed his thoughts to resolve it.

I don’t think of her as an object of desire, how can she think I see her like this? I’m not that kind of guy. It was stupid to compliment her, she knows she's beautiful, I acted like all men act with her, I was stupid and rude. I hate to think she's thinking I'm a bad person now, that she's thinking I see her as any man sees her. Not that way, definitely not that way. Steve thought as he punched the boxing bag hanging from the ceiling of the gym.

Steve also remembered that Natasha mentioned Sharon and that he loves Sharon. It was funny to think about it now, because Steve barely thinks of her now, even though he still visits her every day.

Steve punched the boxing bag again. Do I still love Sharon? I love her, she was going to be my wife, the mother of my daughter, but I haven’t thought about her in so long. Since I started spending more time with Natasha, my head is much more focused on her and James. This is not fair to Sharon, but I can’t help it. Maybe... Would be possible that I feel something for Natasha beyond friendship?

Steve made the boxing bag stop moving and leaned his forehead on it as he took a deep breath, trying to get an answer.

It's obvious that I feel something for her, I am here worried and feeling bad for knowing that she suffered for me and all I think now is a way to keep her from being sad. I want her to be happy, that's what I want most in this world but this could be just some remnant of the passion I felt for her
one day, or maybe that feeling never went away completely and it returned to give signs and grow the moment I saw her inside this bunker again. How come I haven’t noticed this before? I wasn’t paying attention... But maybe if she accepted, we could try. That's what I wanted to tell her, we can try to be together, perhaps... I must say to her now.

Steve finished and punched the boxing bag so potent that it popped the bag. Steve ran up the stairs to keep the adrenaline in his body, he was excited to tell Natasha that he was willing to find out exactly what he felt for her along with her.

Steve knocked on Natasha's bedroom door.

Hill answered the door.

James woke to the sound of the beats and immediately began to cry.

Steve looked at James and then at Hill.

S: Natasha is not here?

H: No.

S: Do you know where she is?

H: Yes.

Steve stared at Hill, waiting for her to tell him where Natasha was.

S: Can you tell me?

H: I think you'd better stay with your son.

Steve frowned, confused.

H: I have work to do, so...

S: It's Sunday.

H: Exactly.

Hill left the room and Steve was still looking at her.

S: Hill? Where's Natasha?

H: She's in my room.

S: I want to talk to her, can you stay with James for only half an hour, I'll be back.

H: No, I can’t. And she doesn’t want to talk to you now, trust me... Stay with your son here... It's better for you.

Steve continued not understanding what Hill meant by that, but he stayed in the room with James.

Steve closed the door and crouched near the crib.

S: Hey, buddy, I'm sorry I woke you up.
James yawned and still grumbled.

S: Are you still sleepy? You should sleep. I'll stay here with you.

Steve sat on the floor next to the crib and put his fingers between the little railings of the crib. James grabbed Steve's fingers and stopped grunting, he yawned once more, but it took him a long time to get back to sleep, he close and open his eyes several times, just to make sure his father was still with him there.

After hours, Steve ended up napping with his head resting on the crib, but he kept his hand in place for James to hold.

James opened his eyes and looked at his sleeping father beside the crib, he let go of Steve's hand and stood up. James rested his hands on the bar of the crib and stood on tiptoe to try to leave the crib.

James tried several ways to escape, until he managed to really escape. James remained hanging on the crib bar, he released his hands to go to the floor, but it was a considerable distance for a two year baby, he fell on the floor.

It was not an impact that hurt him, but it was enough to wake Steve.

Steve stepped out of the crib and widened his eyes, watching James lying on the floor in front of him, standing up now.

Steve was still confused by the sleep he was in, he frowned and yawned.

S: James? How did you? You weren't...?

Steve picked up James and put him on his lap, then looked at the crib.

S: Who took you out of the crib?

J: Jamie.

James smiled and pointed at him.

S: You? Did you leave the crib alone?

Steve stared at the crib and shook his head, trying to figure out a logic to it.

S: It's too high, how could you do that?

Steve got up and put James in the crib.

S: I'm going to use the bathroom, you stay there. OK?

J: Okay.

Steve smiled for James to respond and for clearly understanding what he was told.

Before entering the bathroom, Steve picked up James's toy and put it into the crib.

S: Be quiet, buddy, okay?

J: Okay.
Steve smiled again and ruffled James' hair.

Steve went to the bathroom and after five minutes, he left and looked at James out of the crib, standing near Natasha's bed.

**S: James!**

James looked at his father.

**S: How do you do that?**

Steve approached James.

**S: Why am I asking and doubting? You're my son.**

Steve ruffled James' hair again.

James handed the toy over to Steve.

**S: For me?**

Steve picked up the toy.

**J: Vrum, vrum.**

**S: Vrum vrum? Is that a car or a doll?**

**J: Car.**

**S: Oh it's a car. Okay. You wanna play with daddy?**

Steve knelt next to James and pushed the toy across the bed and made a car sound with his mouth. James watched, then laughed.

**S: Your turn.**

Steve gave the toy to James, who mimicked the sound Steve made and pushed the toy through the bed and then through the carpet.

... 

Natasha sighed, lying naked beside Bucky's body. Since it was a single bed, she still had part of her body over Bucky's.

Natasha stared at the bedroom door as Bucky stroked her back.

When Bucky decided to kiss Natasha's forehead, she lifted her upper body and looked at him. Bucky smiled sweetly at Natasha, which made her want to die instantly.

**N: I need to go.**

Bucky unmade his smile a little.

**B: It's okay, Nat.**

Natasha shook her head and sat down on the bed. Bucky leaned against her arm.
B: I know you love him, it's okay.

Natasha looked at Bucky with surprise, but already knowing that Bucky knows the truth.

B: I always knew that. I just allowed myself to have a relationship with you when we were in South Bunker because there was no Steve there, there was no competition and I thought we could be happy together. You, me and James, we could be a family. I always told myself it was a matter of time, until you forget him and start looking at me as you look at him.

N: I never lied to you.

B: I know.

N: I like you, James, I really do. But it's not how I feel when I'm with Steve. I don’t know why I am like this, he doesn’t even love me.

B: If you could watch what I watched a few hours ago.

Natasha looked at Bucky, waiting for an explanation for that phrase.

B: The way he looks at you, the way you were together in the pool. He loves you...

N: No, he doesn’t. Don’t say that. I just told him how I feel and he said he doesn’t know what he feels.

B: I believe him, I believe he doesn’t know yet. But he feels, I'm sure.

N: Anyway, I'm tired of that.

B: So you came to use me.

N: No, James...

Natasha touched Bucky's face.

B: It's okay.

N: You're right. I’m sorry.

B: I allowed it to happen because I wanted to.

N: That will not happen again.

B: I hope it happens.

Natasha frowned and then she realized that Bucky was just joking and laughed right away.

N: Idiot.

Natasha stood up.

N: I'll take a shower.

B: I'll go with you.
Natasha looked at Bucky and he was laughing again. Natasha laughed and shook her head.

Natasha took a shower and then let Bucky take his.

**N:** James must already be awake and making Hill crazy, I need to get back.

**B:** Let’s go.

...

In Natasha's room, Steve have been a horse, a car, and now he he’s being a rocket, lying on the floor and raising James in the air with his hands.

When Natasha approached the room, outside she could hear James's laughter and then frowned in surprise. How is Hill making James laugh like that, that is practically impossible.

Steve stopped moving James into the air, but kept him up at the sound of the door being opened.

Natasha opened the bedroom door, but she was looking at Bucky who was right behind her.

Steve watched them both, but didn’t suspected anything. He sat down and left James on his lap.

Natasha froze to see Steve inside her room.

Just the way Natasha reacted, made Steve remember what Hill said about Natasha being in her room and that he shouldn’t go there. Steve looked at his friend, Bucky, and noticed that they both looked as if they'd just gotten out of a shower.

The silence that followed was so big and so tense that even baby James was quiet, but he’s the one who broke the silence.

**J:** Mommy.

Natasha looked at James and then at Steve, who was standing right now.

**N:** Steve, I...

**S:** Natasha...

They both said it at the same time and then said nothing.

**N:** I didn’t know you were here.

**S:** I came to talk to you.

**N:** About what?

Steve looked at Bucky and made negative with his head.

**S:** Nothing.

**B:** I... I'm going to... I can stay with James if you have to talk...

**N:** No.

**S:** No.
They both responded at the same time.

Steve walked to the door with James on his lap.

S: I think you need more privacy than I do. I'll stay with James and you two can...

Steve couldn’t finish the sentence, the anger he was feeling was too big to deal with them right now.

Natasha didn’t try to stop Steve from leaving with James, but before Steve took two steps, Tony appeared in the hallway and looked at him.

T: You're here, great. I need to talk to you and Romanoff.

S: Not now, Tony.

T: Now, it's an emergency.

Tony talked to Steve, Natasha and Bucky inside Natasha's room. What he had to say was a request. The government Bunker claimed to be short of supplies due to the old Tony's demand that they accept civilians inside their Bunker.

N: If it weren’t for the civilians in there, I'd say to let them starve to death.

T: I knew you would say that and I know someone here is going to say that we won’t let anyone starve.

S: Of course I won’t let them starve!

T: Well, Romanoff is the best to go to the government bunker here, she know the route.

N: The problem is the load I will have to take there. I can’t do it alone.

T: You’re right. But I also know someone here who is going to say that he doesn’t want you to go alone...

Tony waited for Steve to confirm, but all that had happened was a strange and tense silence.

T: Uuuu....

B: I'll go with her.

S: No.

Natasha and Bucky looked at Steve.

S: I will.
N: No.

Natasha shook her head.

N: I can't leave James without someone he's used to.

S: Bucky stays with him, he's used to him, right? You used to be a family, am I wrong? You will probably be back to be a family again.

Natasha narrowed her eyes and frowned, confused by Steve's words.

T: Oh God... Is this really happening? Should I record this? Let me see...

Tony started touching his W.T.

Natasha took a deep breath and looked at Steve.

N: You need to stay with James.

S: Why don't you stay? I'm going with Bucky.

N: And you two would die out there.

S: You don't know that.

N: Yes, I know.

B: Natasha... I think Steve is the best to go with you. I don't fight like I did before, without my arm. It's safer with him, I'll take care of James.

N: We will take at least two or three days.

Natasha looked at James and took him from Steve's lap.

N: I can't leave you.

T: They need us, Natasha... There are 400 people... We can't let more of us die. And in the end, we will all fight against the same enemy.

Natasha looked at Tony and sighed, she kissed James's face.

N: I hate it.

Tony put his hand on Natasha's back, showing sympathy.

T: I know, me too.

N: When do we have to go?

T: We are separating what we can and tomorrow morning, you will be ready.

Tony looked at Steve.

T: Are you going?
Steve nodded.

...

That night, Steve and Natasha didn’t talk anymore.

The next morning, the exchange of words was the minimum necessary for them to go on a mission.

Again, they could only fly to a certain point. The remainder of the ride would be made through two tricycles designed by Tony Stark himself.

The Tricycles have a large back hatchback to carry the supplies.

After removing the tricycles from inside the plane, the two were putting on their gloves and arranging their helmets to mount and go.

Natasha looked at Steve.

N: Do you know what you can’t do?

S: Don’t try to communicate or help anyone.

N: Keep this in mind.

Steve nodded and rode the tricycle.

Natasha mounted on hers and put on her helmet.

The two drive around the perimeter of the cities, because Natasha found it was safer.

The two made some stops and at night they arrived in the government bunker, where they spent the night in the collective dormitory, with several civilians.

Natasha commented on the ease on the way to the bunker without being interrupted or attacked. The cities seemed more dead than the usual.

The next morning, the two of them prepared to leave the bunker. They rode on their tricycles and decided to return by the same route, since it had been safe to pass by before.

The two made the stops almost in the same places and when they were near the last city, Natasha felt she should look up, her intuition was very strong.

Natasha saw nothing abnormal in the sky or in the buildings, which seemed completely empty.

Natasha touched the button on her helmet, which had a direct communicator with Steve’s.

N: Steve, stay close.

S: Why? Did you see anything?

N: No, that's the problem.

S: I'm coming.

Steve was a little further behind Natasha and sped up to stand beside her and kept the speed.
N: I think we should...

Natasha couldn’t finish the sentence, a man jumped from the third floor of a building, right on Natasha's bike. The scare made Natasha lose control of the tricycle and it moved against Steve's.

It happened so fast that Steve couldn’t dodge from her tricycle. The impact made Natasha and the man fly to the ground.

Natasha's tricycle rolled over and eventually crushed the man who tried to attack Natasha. Steve was able to brake the tricycle a little far, and soon the tricycle engine started to catch fire.

Steve jumped out of the tricycle and watched Natasha's body rolling down the floor until her body hit the wall of a dilapidated shop.

Steve pulled his shield that was attached to the tricycle and ran to Natasha.

S: Natasha? Are you hurt?

Natasha frowned and made negative with her head.

N: We need to get out of here now.

Steve helped Natasha to her feet.

N: We need to run, they're watching us from above.

Steve nodded and the two just ran around, still meeting some of those terrible creatures in human form.

As they ran and fought against the creatures, Natasha observed the number of dead bodies in the streets of the city.

Steve and Natasha hid behind debris, having managed to get a good distance from the creatures. They had been running for hours, and they needed to catch their breath, and as the sun was coming down, it would be good to find some shelter they could spend the night.

Natasha started looking for the nearest building to find shelter, but they all seemed too dangerous, even more now that they were attacked from above.

S: That one.

Despite having a building in front, Steve indicated the building behind, being more destroyed than the others. Natasha agreed with Steve's choice, he already understood the system. If they stay in the buildings that look safer and more welcoming, they will find more danger there.

Creatures already understand the human nature of seeking places with these characteristics.

N: Come on.

Natasha and Steve rushed toward the building, and as they passed the first building, Steve heard what looked like a baby's crying. Instinctively, he slowed down.

Steve looked inside the building and saw a young woman, seemingly fainted on the floor and beside her had a baby crying desperately.
Steve stopped and Natasha paused as she noticed Steve standing. Natasha went back to where Steve was.

N: Steve, we have to go!

S: It's a baby.

Natasha looked into the building and saw the baby crying.

S: He can’t be dominated by one of those creatures, he’s crying.

N: We can’t do anything! There's someone beside him and it could be a trap!

S: If it was, it would already be attacking the baby.

N: If that girl don’t attack the baby, someone will, because he is crying and will attract attention of the creatures and we will be attacked too if we remain here!

Steve walked to the window of the building.

N: Steve! What fuck are you doing???

S: I can’t leave him here.

N: What? God! We've already talked about this, Steve! Several times.

S: I'm sorry, I can’t.

Natasha put a hand to her face and sighed, she looked around to see if anyone else was around.

N: Stay here.

S: No. I’ll go.

N: No, I'm faster. You give me cover, if that woman moves, shoot her head.

Steve nodded.

Natasha came in the building through a windowpane. She drew her weapon and walked lightly up to the baby, she looked at the woman lying on the ground, and then at the baby wrapped in a filthy blanket.

Natasha was still suspicious, even though it was just a baby. The right thing would be to ignore and move on, but she also thought of James and she knew that Steve was thinking about her lost daughter.

Natasha crouched next to the baby and picked him up.

The fallen woman reached over and grabbed Natasha's arm. Natasha got scared and pointed her gun at the woman's head, as did Steve, and he didn’t just shoot because Natasha could shoot herself and she didn’t.

The woman was so thin and pale-faced, she was crying and Natasha could realize she wasn’t dominated by one of the creatures.
- Save her. Please.

N: We'll help you.

- No. I'm already dead. But please take care of her. They're coming, you have to go.

The woman said in a low and weak voice.

Steve walked into the building to find out what was happening.

Before the woman pass away, she looked at the baby in Natasha's arms.

- I'll wait for you in heaven, Sarah.
S: Come on. We have to go.

Natasha was still crouched with the baby in her arms, next to her mother’s dead body.

Steve grabbed Natasha’s arm and got her to her feet.

S: Let’s go!

Natasha and Steve ran to the building they were going before and immediately went up the stairs to the last floor.

S: Do you think we'll be safe here?

Steve didn’t hear Natasha respond, he was doing an on-site survey, he walked over to her and Natasha was sitting on the floor, holding the baby who was still crying.

Steve saw tears coming down Natasha's face and crouched next to her.

S: Nat?

N: She is alone in this world.

S: No, she is not. We found her.

N: If we hadn’t stopped as you said...

S: But we stopped! We saved her! She'll be fine.

N: Her mother...

Natasha couldn’t stop crying.

N: It's not fair. This is not life. We must defeat Thanos.

S: We will.

Steve hugged Natasha and sat down next to her.

S: Can I try?

Steve reached out to pick up the baby and Natasha handed her to Steve.

Steve looked at the baby and moved her from one side to the other slightly.

S: Sh... Hush, hush... You're fine... Sarah. It's your name, right?

Incredibly the baby stopped crying and just kept mumbling, looking at Steve.

S: That's my mother's name, you know that? You're beautiful like her.

Natasha looked at Steve and she watched the way he treated the baby.
It was so unfortunate that he hadn’t the opportunity to see James at that age and his unborn daughter, Maggie... He's a good father and to have taken this opportunity from him, it was totally mistaken and she'll never forgive herself for it.

Natasha got up and walked to the window, she watched the sky getting darker and looked at Steve.

**N: We made a mistake. I made a mistake!**

Steve looked at Natasha and frowned.

**S: What are you talking about?**

Steve thought Natasha was referring to the baby's rescue.

**N: We need to go!**

**S: It's getting dark. We can’t.**

**N: I know, but she'll be hungry, she'll cry and scream. We have nothing to feed her here. We have to go!**

Steve understood what Natasha said and nodded, he stood with Sarah in his lap, and the two of them made their way down the stairs quickly, until they reached the ground floor and ran as far as they could until they left the perimeter of the city.

After a few hours of running, Steve looked at Natasha who came a little further back.

**S: You need to rest, we have to stop.**

**N: No, we can’t stop. I'm afraid that some of them saw us coming this way. We have to continue.**

**S: It doesn’t matter, we do like the other time, we skip flying in the opposite direction until we get back on the route.**

**N: I can go on, the distance is shorter now...**

**S: Yes, we are almost there. Just one more hour.**

And the two of them ran on an arid region with little vegetation and a few rocks.

Natasha still had to stop once or more to catch her breath, she demanded that Steve continue and that he should go without her if necessary, but of course he refused.

**S: I'll carry both of you, if necessary.**

Natasha, who was sitting on a small rock, tried to catch her breath and shook her head.

**N: Come on.**

Natasha gathered her last strength to run to the plane on a lower level valley, so the plane was out of sight of any creature watching them from the city.

Steve and Natasha got inside the plane and Steve closed the gate.
Natasha threw herself on the floor, feeling exhausted.

Steve approached her.

S: Are you okay?

Natasha nodded.

N: Water...

Steve went to the nearest closet and got water for Natasha, he handed the bottle to Natasha who opened it and took a long sip.

S: I need to take off. Can you hold her?

N: Yes. Just bring me a blanket.

Natasha held out her arms and Steve handed Sarah to her.

S: Can’t you stand up?

N: Not now.

S: Will you stay with her there, on the floor?

N: Yeah. Just take the blanket and let's get out of here.

Steve went to one of the benches and pulled underneath that bench, a kit with a blanket, sheet, lifejacket, and a few other things.

Steve took the blanket from the kit and handed it to Natasha.

Natasha put the blanket on the floor beside her and laid Sarah on the blanket, she wrapped her with the blanket.

Natasha looked at Steve.

N: Go.

Steve was worried about the baby being on the floor, but then he remembered that Natasha had taken care of James, she must know what she's doing.

Steve went to the pilot's seat, he sat down and activated the airplane's turbines, then took off.

Steve piloted manually just to detour the path to detect possible threats and then he put the plane back on the route and activated the autopilot.

When Steve got up to check Natasha and the baby, he noticed they were both asleep. Natasha was laying on the floor and she left the baby close to her body to keep her warm and secure.

Steve took another kit under the seat and removed another blanket, he opened the blanket and put it over Natasha's body.

Natasha opened her eyes in fright as she felt the blanket over her body but she calmed down at the sight of Steve and noticed where she was.
Steve sat on the bench facing Natasha.

S: Do you feel better?

N: Yes.

S: How is she?

N: Complete.

Natasha sighed and looked at Sara.

N: Tony will freak out.

S: I'll talk to him.

N: You know the procedure... She will be isolated. 72 hours.

Steve shook his head.

S: I'll stay with her there for 72 hours, if necessary.

Natasha looked at Steve and he was determined.

When they arrived with the baby in the bunker, there was no other way. Tony and Logan complained a lot about the baby and demanded the 72-hour isolation.

Steve kept his promise, he spent the 72 hours in the F-wing chamber along with the baby.

S: They're taking a lot of blood from you, aren't they? Every day they come and stick you. It hurts, I know. It's ending, I promise.

The baby was looking at Steve and just blinked.

S: I know it's a lot of news to you that is so tiny, but you're going to be well treated here. I'll guarantee that. We will find a family for you or you'll stay in our mini-orphanage that's not too bad also...

The baby made some sound that Steve understood as if it was a protest, he gave his finger for Sarah hold while talking to her.

S: It's not bad, but you're going to have to share Aunt Pepper's attention with a lot more kids, but you're the youngest, you'll get special attention.

The baby made another sound and Steve smiled.

S: I'll visit you yes, I'll always see you.

Steve smiled again and shook Sarah's hand.

Steve went silent for a few minutes watching Sarah and reflecting on his lost daughter.

S: Would Maggie look like you? You don’t know who she is, I know. I think you remind me of her because you’re a baby too. I’m glad I found you.
- I think James would be jealous.

Steve nodded toward the chamber door to watch Natasha coming in now.

Steve looked at Sarah and shook his head.

**S:** He has nothing to worry about.

Natasha approached Sarah's crib and smiled at her.

**S:** After all she's going to our orphanage.

Natasha looked at Steve.

**N:** Are you sure?

**S:** Well, no. I didn’t want her to go to that place, do you think any family would accept her? It's so hard for someone to want a baby. It would be a lot better if she got someone who really cares about her and treats her in a special way.

**N:** You mean like you?

Steve looked at Natasha.

**N:** Steve, you're alone. You can keep her.

**S:** What? Me? I can’t keep her.

**N:** Why not?

Natasha walked around the crib to get closer to Steve.

**N:** You certainly have a huge void inside you... You were already expecting a baby that never came... But now, you found one and I don’t think it was random.

Steve was staring at Natasha with an expression of who was thinking about what she had just said, he sighed and looked at the baby.

**S:** I don’t think I can, I'm not married. She needs a mother.

**N:** Steve... If she goes to the orphanage, she will have no father and no mother. But with you, she would at least have a father.

Steve was smiling like a fool, even without realizing, with the possibility of he staying with Sarah.
N: She will have the best father.

Steve looked at Natasha, impressed.

N: James thinks you are.

S: He's very young.

N: And he’s already crazy about his dad. He's been asking for you.

S: I'm missing him so much. I should have come up to get him, but...

N: I know. He will understand.

Natasha stroked Steve's arm and looked at Sarah.

N: She's beautiful. You deserve her.

Steve looked at Sarah and smiled.

S: I'm going to need help.

N: Well... You can count on me. And there are a lot of people to help out, Steve.

After another 24 hours, Sarah was released to join the bunker community and because she’s a child, there is a public hearing to decide her fate.

Some family could offer to take care of her and if no one volunteer, the child is sent to the orphanage in the care of Pepper Potts and now also in the care of Jean Gray, who joined Pepper to help orphaned children.

During the hearing of Sarah, there was a committee formed by civilians and there were the final judges, the professor Charles Xavier and Tony Stark.

As soon as Tony asked who wanted to adopt Sara, there was a great silence in the middle of the audience.

Children mean responsibilities, cost and time. No one wanted to stay with children, especially babies, who tended to get sick in an environment like the bunker.

Natasha was next to Steve and looked at him.

N: Go.

Steve looked at Natasha, still feeling uncertain whether or not to ask for Sarah's custody. It’s a lot of responsibility and inside the bunker, he already has several responsibilities.

S: What if they call me for an emergency? How will I take care of her?

N: The way I do with James, I leave him with someone that I trust until I get back.

S: What if I don’t come back from this emergency? How does she stay?

N: I always wonder that when I leave James with someone and honestly... I don’t know... you'll never know… Steve, you will always be afraid. That's what it means being a father, it's
living in fear that something may happen to your child all the time, and it's forever.

T: Well, if no one here is going to volunteer, I would like to apply.

Natasha and Steve looked at Tony in amazement.

T: I am the owner of the bunker because I built it, I am still rich in different ways... Me and Ms. Pepper, we’re in a serious relationship again and this time it’s for real. Anyway, we talked and decided that a baby would help us to keep our relationship healthier and since the baby came here in the bunker, we thought: Why not? And I think I'm quite capable of taking care of the baby. And don’t forget that Ms. Potts works with children, she takes care of the children at the orphanage very well, right Pepper?

Pepper who was in the first row with Sarah in her arms stood up, smiling and nodded.

Pepper: What Tony wanted to say is that Sarah will be loved and safe with us, which is more important.

T: Pepper, honey, I told you to call her Dorothy. That's the name we chose for her.

Steve and Natasha were so incredulous, that they couldn’t react immediately.

Natasha approached the counter.

N: Tony, you were even complaining about her arriving here in the bunker.

T: Just as I complain about anyone who comes from outside to here. For security and protocol reasons, it was nothing personal against the child.

N: Tony, you can’t do this, she has a name and you want to change it.

P: I told him that, Nat.

T: She's very young, she doesn’t even know her name is Sarah yet. Anyway, why are you getting into this?

S: Because I want her.

Again, a silence filled the room as everyone looked back to stare at Steve Rogers, who was now approaching the counter and facing Tony.

T: Excuse me? Did I hear you right?

S: I'm sorry, Tony, I was going to say it earlier but you soon announced that you wanted her too and I was in too much shock to react.

Tony stood up from the counter and walked over to Steve, Natasha and Pepper.

T: I think if we were in a real court, the guard would be mine, because I have a bride and it's the healthiest home for a baby to be.

S: What do you understand about children, Tony?
T: Nothing, but I have Pepper.

S: And I have James.

T: Oh for God's sake, Rogers, you've been a father for what? A year?

S: True.

N: It wasn't his fault, Tony. Steve deserves to be with Sarah, she is already used to him, he knows how to make her stop crying, he stayed 72 hours next to her in isolation. How many times have you visited her there?

Tony was silent.

Natasha looked at Pepper.

N: And you?

Pepper shook her head.

Sarah got scared by everyone screaming near her, she woke up and started crying hysterically.

P: Sh...

Pepper shook Sara lightly, but it was only making her crying worse.

Pepper looked at Natasha and then at Steve.

P: We didn't know you intended to be with her, Steve. We thought she would ended up at the orphanage and we thought we could take care of her and make her ours, but that decision only came a day ago.

Steve looked at Pepper and realized she was being honest.

S: I didn't say anything either, I was still thinking about it.

Steve stroked Sarah's back to try to calm her down a bit, then Steve looked at Pepper.

S: I'm sure you and Tony would be great parents to her.

P: You too.

Pepper handed Sarah over to Steve.

Steve looked at Sarah and moved her from side to side. Sarah was still bawling a lot, but Steve began to talk to her in a lower tone and gradually her hysteria subsided and she was silent.

- I think that says a lot.

The four of them turned and looked at Professor Charles Xavier approaching in his wheelchair.

CX: You can have her, Steve.

T: Excuse me, but what?
Pepper intertwined Tony's arm.

P: We can wait for another baby.

CX: Or maybe you're already expecting one.

Pepper's eyes widened and she looked at the professor.

P: Am I?

T: Really?

Charles smiled and nodded.

Pepper hugged Tony and kissed his lips to celebrate.

Natasha looked at Steve.

N: Congratulations, Dad. You have a baby girl now.

Steve looked at Natasha and smiled.
Chapter 23

Steve looked at Natasha and smiled, while the crowd was getting out from the courtroom.

S: At least clothes she'll have, if Sharon doesn’t mind. I know she's not capable in the moment to judge, but I don’t know if it would be disrespectful.

N: I think she would understand and I think she would want Sarah for her too. Look at that little face, she's so beautiful.

Natasha caressed Sarah's head and looked at her.

N: She's so tiny.

Natasha smiled and Steve too. Natasha held onto Sarah's hand.

N: Look at all those little fingers. It's very impressive.

S: Yes, it is.

N: I remember when I stopped to look at James right by the first time... I thought he was so perfect, I couldn’t believe I'd done something so perfect like that.

S: We did...

Steve raised his eyebrows and looked at Natasha who looked back at him.

S: I'm joking.

N: It’s true.

Sarah started to cry again.

N: Awn... What is it?

Steve shook her lightly, but this time it didn’t work. Sarah turned her head toward Steve's chest, opened her mouth, and when she didn’t feel anything, she started to scream.

N: Awn, she's hungry... She's trying to breastfeed.

S: I'll take her to the kitchen.

Steve turned his back on Natasha and walked down the hall, then he stopped and looked back.

S: But what if she has the same as James?

N: Intolerance to milk? What were they feeding her at F Wing?

S: I... I don’t know, I didn’t notice.

N: If she had any intolerance, they would have told you there.

S: But I'm not her father, they wouldn’t have told me.
N: But you were responsible for her there.

S: Damn, I should have asked.

Natasha approached Steve and took Sarah from his lap and Sarah also tried to suck on her and screamed even more hungrily.

N: It's alright, sh...

Natasha looked at Steve.

S: I just remembered that the cooks have a spreadsheet with the food that each person here can receive or not.

N: Great, take her there then.

Natasha was passing Sarah to Steve's lap, when Steve's W.T. began to whistle. Steve answered the call and Hill was calling him at the command center and said it was urgent.

S: Hill, I'm busy right now, I just adopted a baby and I have to...

H: What?? Adopted a baby? That girl you brought from outside?

S: Yes, her name is Sarah.

H: Steve, we need you here now, you know that. Leave her at the nursery and come here.

N: Steve, I can stay with her, no problem.

S: Are you sure?

N: Of course. I promised I would help.

S: Thank you.

Steve kissed Sarah's hand.

S: I'll see you later.

Steve ran down the hallways to pick up the elevator and go to the Command Center.

…

Natasha headed for the kitchen and knocked on the door. A cook came to meet Natasha and took Natasha's doubts about the baby's food, which had no lactose intolerance. Natasha thanked her and went to the kitchen area reserved for parents.

As Natasha swayed Sarah in one arm to try to make her cry less but without any success, with the other she prepared the special milk for newborn and put to warm in the microwave.

As she waited, Natasha looked at Sarah.

N: Why are you so desperate, Sarah? Is there something wrong? Are you feeling something? Maybe pain, fever…
Natasha lifted Sarah's body a little and pressed her cheek to Sarah’s forehead to feel the temperature, but it was normal.

N: What is it, huh? You’re alright, honey…

The microwave whistled indicating that it was ready. Natasha took the bottle from inside the microwave and tested the temperature of the milk on the back of her hand. It was good to feed her.

Natasha sat down on one of the benches and gave Sarah the bottle, who sucked a little bit and then started to cry again.

N: Sarah? Here, take it, c’mon.

Natasha tried to give her the bottle again, but Sarah refused to take the bottle and persisted in crying, which began to let Natasha afflicted.

The cook opened a small window that allows communication between the environments.

- Is everything all right, my dear?

Natasha looked at the cook and nodded.

N: I’m not sure, she doesn’t want to suck the milk from the bottle, but she's hungry.

- She's not yours, is she?

N: No.

- Oh! She's that baby they brought in from the outside... Poor little thing. Look look...

The cook looked at the baby who insisted on turning her face to Natasha's chest to try to nurse.

- She's used to breast milk... Tsc. Poor baby.

N: What do I do now?

- You'll have to insist with the bottle, there's no other way... Do you know any moms in the bunker who are breastfeeding?

Natasha made negative with her head.

- That would help her to calm down, but keep insisting, dear, she has no choice.

Natasha looked at Sarah and sighed.

N: I know, Sarah... You miss your mommy. I'm so sorry.

Natasha kissed Sarah's forehead.

N: Let's try again, you need to nurse, please.

Natasha put the bottle in Sarah's mouth again, but because she was crying she ended up choking with the milk.

Natasha put the bottle on the table and put her on her lap immediately. Natasha patted her lightly
until she stopped coughing.

- Is she okay?

N: Yes, she is.

- It's just like that, dear. Don’t give up.

N: I know.

Natasha was moody now.

N: I've been through this before.

After Sarah choked on her crying, it only got worse. The bottle seemed to be Sarah’s number one enemy and Natasha also for doing that to her.

Natasha insisted once more and for being hungry, Sarah accepted the bottle, but every three minutes she would stop nursing to cry in protest.

- Awn, see?

Natasha was serious, just looking at Sarah and feeling her chest tighten as she remembered how James used to cry also with hunger and she couldn’t do anything to help him.

- Are you ok, darling? You're doing great! You're a great mother!

N: I'm not... her mother.

- I know, you told me, but you're being a great mom for her right now. They're calling me in there, it's close to lunchtime. Call me if you need anything.

N: Thanks for your help.

Natasha raised her head a little, but didn’t look at the woman, she wasn’t in the mood to deal with anyone now. She feels too helpless when she remembers the first few months of James' life, it's an eternal debt she'll have with him.

Sarah ended up taking the whole bottle. Natasha only noticed when she heard the noise of her sucking the air from inside the bottle.

Natasha took the bottle from her and Sarah made a face as if to cry.

N: It's over, Sarah.

Natasha touched the bottle to Sarah's lips again and she sipped the bottle, even empty.

N: It's empty, Sarah. You want more?

Natasha took it from her and got up to go to the counter, but Sarah started to cry again. Natasha returned the bottle and Sarah stopped crying and closed her eyes.

Her breath was even faster by how much she wept.

Natasha looked at Sarah and only wished that Steve don’t suffer what she had suffered with James
when he was at that age.

…

It was lunchtime, but James was having lunch at the nursery with the other children. It’s optional if the child eats with the parents or in the day care.

Natasha like to eat with James, but for being taking care of Sarah, she let him have lunch at the nursery.

Steve and Hill arrived in the refectory near the end of lunchtime. They picked up the tray and joined Natasha at the table.

Hill looked at Sarah.

H: So that’s Steve’s new baby.

S: Sarah...

Hill nodded and sat down.

H: Look at her face, it looks like my knee.

N: Hill, don’t say that.

S: My daughter is beautiful, you are just jealous.

H: Yeah, right.

Steve smiled and looked at Natasha.

S: Do you want me to hold her now?

N: No, she's calm now. Eat first.

Hill began to eat and looked at Natasha.

H: So, how did James react to his new little sister?

N: He doesn’t know yet.

S: He will love to have a sister. He loves children, now he even cries to leave the nursery. Now he'll have someone to play with. Anyway, we should do it together.

Steve looked at Natasha as he chewed.

N: Do what?

S: Introduce Sarah for him...

H: That would be like watching one of those Christmas movies I watched as a kid. The perfect family!

Steve and Natasha were embarrassed by Hill's joke, which had no intention of making them embarrassed.
Hill felt the tension and took a sip of water.

**N:** I want to see his reaction, so it's okay if we do it together.

**S:** Okay.

Sarah yawned and began to cry to fight against sleep.

**H:** Oh my! I didn’t know babies could yell so loud like that.

**N:** Damn.

**H:** What?

**N:** I need to use the bathroom.

Natasha got up and Hill was at her side, so Natasha held Sarah out for Hill to pick her up.

**N:** Hold her.

**H:** What?!

**N:** Hurry up!

Steve was trying to finish eating to say he would hold Sarah.

Hill dropped her fork on the plate and held Sarah in her lap.

Natasha ran out of the cafeteria.

**S:** I'll get her, don’t worry.

Steve wiped his mouth on his napkin, got up, and walked around the table, but when he got ready to pick up Sarah, he noticed she had stopped crying.

**S:** She stopped.

**H:** You can get her anyway.

**S:** But she's almost asleep, if I catch her, she'll wake up.

**H:** And then you make her sleep again. Here. Take her.

Hill stretched Sarah to Steve, who luckily didn’t start crying.

Steve took Sarah in his lap and looked at Hill.

**S:** Are you still going to need me at Command Center today?

**H:** I don’t think so, you've solved our problem already. If there is an emergency I'll call you.

**S:** Okay, I have to prepare my dorm for Sarah.

**H:** Well, you're already in a family room. You even got a crib, right?
H: Steve, I… I just want to say that it was very noble of you to save this baby and now adopt her. If you need anything, as long as is not in the middle of the night, you can ask me. I’m nice, but not if I have to do something at dawn and certain people just don’t get it… I mean Natasha...

S: I get it. Thank you, Hill.

Steve walked to the exit and stopped.

S: Hill? Can you return my tray when you finished?

H: It was only an offer and you already asking for favors...

Hill said earnestly but obviously jokingly.

S: If Natasha comes back, tell her I went to my room.

H: Okay.

Upon arriving in the room, Steve left Sarah on his bed and then went to make sure the crib was clean. Steve took a sheet and a blanket that had still embroidered the initials "M.R" of Maggie Rogers.

Steve prepared the crib, then put Sarah to sleep on it.

Steve stayed almost half an hour standing by the crib, watching her sleep, he didn’t know what to do, whether he could go out and work since she was asleep, or if he should stay, if she woke up.

Of course he used his head and stayed, if she woke up alone, she would be very scared.

Steve sat on the bed and waited for Sarah to wake up, but she must be in a heavy sleep. Steve ended up taking a long nap.

Steve woke up two hours later with Sarah's strident cry. He almost jumped out of bed and approached the crib.

S: Hey, it's okay, I'm here.

Steve caught Sarah in his arms and she didn’t stop crying.

The room’s door was opened and Steve saw Bucky entering the room.

The two hadn’t seen or talked with each other since the day Steve left on a mission, and Steve had already figured out what had happened between him and Natasha.

Bucky was a little embarrassed, he approached Steve.

B: So this is Sarah?

S: Yes.

B: Why is she crying like that?
S: I don’t know. I think she's starving, I'm going to the kitchen to prepare something for her to take.

Steve walked to the door.

B: Steve?

Steve stopped before leaving.

B: I've decided that I'm going to the collective dormitory.

S: Why? Is this because of Natasha?

B: No… No. No way. It's just because you have a baby now, you'll need more space.

S: We'll find a way. The collective dormitory is very impersonal and totally without privacy, Bucky.

B: I don’t mind.

S: Well, at least let me try to get a room in the new wing for you.

B: I... thank you, I just don’t want to get in front of anyone in the waiting line.

S: Ok.

Steve nodded and headed out into the kitchen. Steve prepared Sarah's bottle and tried to feed her, who didn’t want to nurse and persisted in crying.

The same cook who was talking to Natasha earlier, reopened the little window.

- Oh the baby from the outside again. Poor thing, she's having a terrible fit with the bottle. You need to get a mother of milk for her.

S: One what?

- Mother of milk... Anyone who is breastfeeding, can breastfeed her. It'll help her feel better.

S: I'll try to find it, thank you.

- You have to do as your wife was doing earlier.
S: My wife? Who? Natasha? No, she's not my wife...

- Oh, I'm sorry, I thought so.

The cook watched Steve.

- You're a very handsome man, Captain.

Steve frowned, surprised by the sudden compliment, but he was polite, so he smiled and thanked, though ashamed.

- I thought she was your wife, girlfriend, anything... But since you're single, you might want to meet my niece, she's beautiful and she's just turned 18.

Steve frowned even more, finding the idea utterly absurd, for not knowing the girl and by the girl’s age.

S: I'm sorry, I don’t have time for that right now.

- She's good with children, she'd be a good mother.

S: I'm not looking for that right now, but thank you.

- Are you sure? And what about that friend of yours who came from outside too? Would he be interested?

S: What are you trying to do with her, exactly?

- Don’t take me wrong. I raised the girl after her parents were killed out there, but now I can no longer afford to take care of her, I know it's awful to say, but I still have two sons and a husband. You know it's hard to have to share what we've got for so many people. I want her sake, if she could take her own family, she'll receive things for her family, so I want her to get married soon.

S: I understand, but food is not something charged here in the bunker.

- But personal items are. And she’s a girl, she spends more soap, more products, more water, more energy... God knows how we spent money with her clothes, she grows too much. One of my boys is getting married and I'm going to need more space.

S: Look, I wish I could help, but I can't. If she counted on you all this time, you should find a better way to make her independent. Marriage doesn’t mean she'll never need you again, I'm sure she sees you as a mother.

- Oh, that's true, my heart aches at this situation, but okay, I'll see what I can do... and don’t give up, she'll take the bottle.

The cook closed the window and Steve turned his attention to Sarah, who took some of the bottle, but continued to cry.

Steve checked the time and saw that it was time for James to leave the nursery.

Steve sent a text to Natasha, asking if he could take Sarah to meet James now and Natasha replied by saying yes.
Steve went to Natasha's room with Sarah in his arms, still in tears.

Natasha was already inside the room and heard Sarah's cry outside, she went to the door and opened it.

**N: James? There's a surprise for you here.**

Steve came into the room with Sarah in his arms. James looked at his father and smiled and then he looked at the pile of cloth wrapped in his hand.

**S: James...**

Steve crouched on the floor as Natasha closed the door.

James walked over to his father.

James rested his little hands on Steve's knee and stood on tiptoe to try to see what he had there in the middle of that cloths that was screaming so loud.

Steve lowered the cloth and showed the baby to James.

**N: Hey, James... This is Sarah.**
James frowned at the baby. He expected anything but a baby. He doesn’t even understand why there is a baby in his father's arms.

James pointed his finger at Sarah and touched her eye, which scared Sarah and made her cry even louder. He just wanted to know if she was real.

Natasha took James's hand.

**N:** No, James. She is a baby, you can’t stick your finger in her eye.

**S:** James, she will be... I mean, she is already your sister. You can cuddle her, like that.

Steve took James's hand and slipped it into Sarah's arm. James just stared, still not understanding what was going on, but he didn’t like the idea of another baby on his father's lap, so he threw himself into Steve's lap, causing Steve to lose his balance and fell to the ground, but Steve managed to keep Sarah safe.

At the moment, Natasha pulled James by the arms and looked scared to Steve.

**S:** It's okay, she's fine. She’s fine.

Natasha knelt, frowned and looked at James.

**N:** James, your father is with a baby in his arms, you can’t just throw yourself at him like that! That was very mean of you!

James didn’t understand why they were fighting him, and he didn’t understand that he could have hurt the baby, he just bowed his head.

**S:** It's okay, James. Come here, you can sit on that leg.

Steve can’t bear to see him sad.

Steve tapped his thigh lightly, calling James. James went all the way down to Steve and sat on his lap.

**J:** Baby.

James pointed at Sarah.

**S:** Yes.

**J:** Sad baby.

**S:** Yes, she's crying. But sad? I don’t think so... Nat, do you think she's sad? What do I do?

**N:** She’s not sad! She must be hungry again.
S: No, I just gave her a bottle, but she took less than half. I don’t know why she’s still crying. There are times she doesn’t stop. Is this normal? Should I take her to Cho?

Steve was extremely concerned.

J: Pum, pum.

N: Pum pum?

Natasha crouched next to Steve and James pointed at Sarah.

N: Did she made pum pum?

S: What?

N: Yeah, it smells like she did. Did you change her diaper?

S: Huh?

N: Steve, has she been wearing the same diaper since morning?

S: I-I think... Yes, I didn’t think about that.

Natasha took Sarah from Steve's lap and looked at her.

N: Your father left you dirty all day, did he? He is a very bad man!

S: I forgot!

N: If a baby cries too much, first you check if she’s not hungry, then if it’s not the dirty diaper, then if it’s not sleep... If it’s not any of those you may consider that there is something wrong, but there is still possibility that she’s only crying because she wants attention.

S: See? I said I wasn’t ready for this parenting thing...

N: And I said I would help. When in doubt ask me... I mean to Laura, she has more experience.

Natasha lifted Sarah a little and kissed her cheek.

N: If she is without changing diapers, she is also without a bath. It would be better give her a warm shower, so she'll be calmer. Can I?

S: Sure.

As soon as James saw Natasha kiss Sarah, he stood up and hugged his mother's legs.

James lifted his arms.

J: Up, up, Mommy.

N: James, not now, I'm going to bathe Sarah. Stay with your father.

J: Up!
James held even tighter Natasha's legs, then grabbed her belt and started climbing her. Steve got up and held James in his lap.

**S:** James, you stay with me.

Natasha looked at Steve.

**N:** I told you... Jealousy... and it's just the first day.

Natasha walked with Sarah into the bathroom and Steve was surprised that Natasha was bathing the baby in the sink.

Natasha explained to Steve how to hold the baby's body so she wouldn't slip during the bath.

**N:** Newborn bath is very fast, because they don't get dirty like us.

**S:** Wow, you really know how to take care of babies, I don't know if I'm able to bathe her without some accident.

**N:** Kind of, James slipped a few times. We were both scared to death when it happened. He cried, I cried... It was a tragedy... Thank God, Bucky was there to help me.

Natasha realized what she had just said and they went into a strange silence for a few seconds.

**N:** Sorry.

**S:** All right, I wasn’t there to help.

**N:** But it wasn’t your fault, you didn’t know...

Natasha held Sarah up in her lap and put a towel on her back as she walked toward the door, she kissed James's arm when she walked by Steve.

**N:** But we both get along very well later, don’t we, James?

Steve watched them and he loved to see the motherly side of Natasha, he couldn’t help but smile, he feels good witnessing moments like that.

Natasha walked to the bed where she put Sarah and while drying her, Natasha talked with Sarah affectionately, which made Sarah give a discreet smile.

**J:** Mommy?

James held out his arms to Natasha. Natasha looked at James and mimicked the pout he was making. His gaze was already breaking her heart in two.

**N:** Okay, James...

Natasha just finished drying Sarah's feet and stood up. She caught James in her lap.

**N:** Your father will take over now.

**S:** Me?

**N:** Steve! Now all you need to do is put on the diaper and clean clothes... Do you have any?
S: In my bedroom, I have the clothes that were for... Maggie.

N: You can get a blanket from James to cover her, just so she can get back protected to your room. And you'll need diapers. It’s expensive in my opinion.

S: I still have the ones that Sharon and I bought for... Maggie.

Steve seems to gag a little, every time he mentions the name of the unborn daughter, it still hurts.

N: That's good, you'll spend less then.

S: Yeah, and I was about to donate her stuff to the orphanage.

N: Glad you waited for a while.

Steve nodded as he finished wrapping Sarah in a blanket.

Steve took Sarah in his arms.

S: Come on, Sarah. Give your brother a kiss.

Steve approached Natasha and she leaned James towards the baby, but James turned away, but it didn’t matter either, because Steve and Natasha were no longer paying attention to the children now.

Steve and Natasha were very close to each other, and it had been a long time since that had happened, so it was only for a moment that their eyes met and got stuck in each other.

It was only when James pushed Sarah by the arm that made her cry and the two woke up.

Natasha and Steve were disgruntled and to disguise, Natasha looked at James angrily.

N: James, you can’t do this, she's just a baby, I already told you!

S: He's really jealous. I don’t want him to feel that way.

N: It's okay.

Natasha looked at Steve again.

N: He'll be fine.

Natasha sighed as she looked at Steve who stood for a few seconds in the same place, as if he didn’t want to leave.

S: Thank you, Nat.

Natasha made negative with her head, demonstrating that he didn’t need to thank her.

S: See you later, James.

…

When Steve arrived in the room, Bucky had already left and taken his things with him.

Steve shook his head as he walked to the crib and put Sarah into the crib.
Steve found a note from Bucky saying thank you for having housed him and telling him that he went to the collective dormitory to give more space to the baby and that it wasn’t for Steve to feel bad about it that he was okay.

S: He's stubborn.

Steve looked at Sarah in the crib.

S: Your Uncle Bucky is very stubborn...

Steve approached the crib and played with Sarah's hand.

S: I am too. Will you be that way?

Steve smiled.

S: Do you know who would like to know you? Sam... He was one of my best friends. He is no longer here, but he would love you, he would probably be your godfather or maybe Bucky, I don’t know. Sam would be mad at me if I chose Bucky, instead of him, he was very jealous, but deep down he adored Bucky. He loved everyone, everyone loved him, he was a great guy, he would make you smile, I'm not good at it.

Sarah smiled a little.

S: Thanks for the smile, now I'm going to take a shower. Are you going to be okay here? I'm not going to close the whole door, okay? You say something and I'll come back running.

Steve let go of Sarah's hand and walked to the bathroom door.

Steve looked at Sarah.

S: You need a toy too, don’t you? You have nothing to do there... Yeah, I know... I won’t be long.

Steve took the faster bath in his life, before putting on his clothes, he wrapped the towel around his waist and went to the door to check if Sarah was all right and she was raising her feet in the air and shaking her hands, playing alone.

Steve finished drying himself and put on a suit, as he left the bathroom, the bunker signal was already ringing, announcing the beginning of dinner.

S: Let’s eat?

Sarah yawned. Steve took her in his arms and carried her to the refectory, already carrying her bottle, because he never knows when she will be hungry for sure.

When Steve was in line, the cook caught sight of him and sent her niece out of the kitchen, to go to Steve and help him with the baby.

As the girl approached Steve, the cook approached abruptly and hold her niece by the arm and whispering to her, "Go there and offer him help, go, go. And straight yourself, men like him like girls who are decent, go, go". The lady's whisper was so loud that Steve could hear, like some people in the queue and Steve could still hear her niece replying, "Auntie, I'm... I’m ashamed, please, don’t make me do it" and the aunt answered something about her to stop and soon had her shut up because
they were very close to Steve.

- Mr. Rogers... Captain...

S: Hi. Good evening, Mrs. Johnson.

- How's little Sarah doing?

S: She's fine, just in that fight to take the bottle.

- Oh, that's the way it is, but do you know what she needs? A mother! A maternal figure in her life, I mean, that would calm her down. Have you met my niece Juliana yet? Remember that I told you about her?

Steve just saw one person turn red as ashamed as Juliana is now and that person is him.

Steve didn’t want to make the girl uncomfortable, so he tried to be as cordial as possible.

S: How are you?

Ju: F-fine...

- What? Speak out loud, Juliana! He barely heard you!

S: I heard her, I heard. Don’t worry.

Steve saved the girl from another wave of embarrassment.

- I told you she was beautiful, didn’t I?

S: Yes, she’s very beautiful, indeed. I bet you have a boyfriend.

Juliana smiled and shook her head, she was relieved that Steve was treating her like a child and not as a future wife.

- She's very good with children. She helped me a lot...

The lady shoved Juliana, and looked at her as if Juliana had a rehearsed speech to say... And she had.

Ju: You want me to hold Sarah? So you can eat?

S: No .. Thank you, you should eat.

- She already ate! She eats very little, she’s so kind, she always left food for someone, this girl is a blessing! The man who marries her will be very lucky!

Ju: Auntie, please.

Steve was already feeling sorry for Juliana, her aunt really wants to push her to someone at any cost.

Apparently the early conversation didn’t help.

S: I'll take your help. You know how to hold a baby, right?
Ju: Of course.

Steve handed Sarah over to Juliana's lap.

- Oh wonderful, wonderful! She'll sit with you so you can watch over the baby!

Ju: Auntie, no. I can't sit at the Avengers' table.

S: You can. Just follow me, I'll introduce you to everybody.

The aunt smiled and returned to the kitchen.

When Steve went to sit down, he brought Juliana with him and on the table there were only Maria Hill and Bucky.

Steve introduced Juliana to them both.

H: Oh great, you already got a babysitter for the whine.

S: Her name is Sarah.

Juliana was very shy about being on the table of the most famous citizens of the bunker, she practically remained with her head low all the time.

Bucky: Aren't you hungry?

Steve had to nudge Juliana into letting her know the question was for her. Juliana looked at Steve and then at Bucky.

Juliana shook her head.

Ju: I already ate, thank you.

Bucky nodded, he only asked because he saw that she was feeling very out of place and maybe that would help her to relax in their presence.

Every time Bucky starts to eat, he stops for a few seconds and moves his neck and during these movements, he makes a pain face.

Ju: Can I ask you something?

Bucky, Hill and Steve looked at Juliana.

Bucky nodded.

Ju: You're not doing any physiotherapy, are you? For your amputated arm...

Bucky just looked at her and everyone was quiet with the question, no one talks about Bucky's amputated arm.

Ju: I'm sorry, but it's because you need to do, so you won't feel any more pain. Your body is not prepared to not have the weight of one arm, you have to balance in some way, your spine feels that...

Steve smiled as he ate watching Juliana.
S: I think we have a physical therapist here.

Juliana smiled.

Ju: My aunt always feels pain in the body, and I help her with massages, she said that I'm good at it and that's what I would do if... If I didn’t live here, I would study to be physical therapist...

S: Too bad we don’t have anything to train new professionals here, but maybe a course could be of some use.

Ju: Do you think they would teach me?

S: Yes, why not?

B: Well, I would take a massage.

Ju: I'll do it for you.

H: I can do a massage for you too.

Steve and Bucky frowned and looked at Hill.

S: Since when you know how to do massage, Hill?

H: Since always, we have all kinds of training at SHIELD... I know how to do many things, by the way...

Steve looked back and toward the food area, all the time, waiting for Natasha to show up with James, but she hadn’t arrived yet.

S: Hill, you know about Natasha? She doesn’t usually delay giving James’ food.

B: She won’t come.

Steve looked at Bucky.

B: She asked me to take a soup for her later...

Steve frowned without understanding... First because he asked Hill and not Bucky, second because Bucky was warned that Natasha wouldn’t come and he wasn’t, and third because Bucky was assigned to bring food to her in her dorm.

S: It’s not allowed.

B: It's not for her, it's for James.

H: Why didn’t she come?

B: James slept and she didn’t want to wake him and she’s not hungry.

S: So you're going to take James's food?

B: Yes.
Bucky could see that Steve was a bit frustrated.

**B: But anyone could take... If you want, you...**

**S: She asked you, so... I really have to stay with Sarah.**

Steve doesn’t know how to disguise what he feels, especially when he is jealous and in his head, Bucky taking food to James, it means that Bucky will spend the night there with Natasha, doing God knows what and in the presence of his son.

Steve wanted to go over there now, pick up James and take him to his room, but he couldn’t rush to that point, he used the wits to convince himself that Natasha would never do anything in front of her son and that James being there would actually ensure that nothing would happen between her and Bucky.

After dinner, Steve gave Sarah a bottle, then he went to his room, and changed her diaper to make sure she slept well. Steve laid her down in the crib and decided to use the rest of the night to draw and try to get his mind off that Bucky is in Natasha's room now.

... 

Natasha heard knocks on the door, she got up and opened the door.

**B: Is he still sleeping?**

**N: Yes... He played a lot today at the nursery, I didn’t want to wake him because he gets unbearable when he's awake. Thank you for bringing the soup.**

**B: It was nothing.**

Bucky handed the soup to Natasha.

**B: Are you going to leave me outside?**

**N: I'm sorry, I thought you... That you had things to do. Come in...**

Bucky smiled and entered the room.

Natasha closed the door and placed the soup on the small bookcase in the room.

**N: So how are you?**

**B: Well, I left Steve's room.**

**N: Why??**

**B: He has the baby now, he needs space.**

**N: Where are you sleeping?**

**B: In the collective dormitory at E Wing.**

**N: Bucky...**

**B: I like it when you call me James.**
Natasha smiled.

N: I don’t want to confuse my son.

B: I know.

N: You could have stayed here.

B: Not a good idea.

N: Why not?

B: Because it would be harder to be so close to you and not be able to touch you.

Natasha sighed and looked away.

B: And it's not as bad as it looks the collective dorm, I get closer to visit my new friend.

N: Sharon?

Bucky nodded.

N: It's so strange that she accepts your presence and not Steve's.

B: I think Steve is part of the trauma in her life, he was the father of her daughter and looking at him should make her remember and suffer more...

N: I guess you’re right.

B: But she has improved, she forgets that the pillow is Maggie when I'm there, the doctors asked me to visit her every day.

N: Must be boring.

B: Nothing is boring when there is absolutely nothing to do around here.

N: I know what you mean...

B: And actually I really enjoy talk to her.

N: Really?

B: Yes. I need to go.

N: You just arrived...

B: I know... Like I said, it's hard to get close to you in a four-wall environment and not feel anything...

N: Barnes... Stop it.
Natasha said in a good mood, shaking her head.

B: But if you say you want something... Like right now... No commitment, because I know you don’t love me, but I'd say yes anyway.

Natasha walked over to Bucky and raised her eyebrows.

N: What are you saying, Barnes? Do you want to do that again?

B: If you say yes...

Bucky held Natasha's hand, who smiled and made negative with her head.

N: I can’t, James is here.

B: I know... We can go somewhere else.

N: Barnes...

Bucky felt Natasha's response even without her replying in words, that complacent smile of hers, only indicating that she was moved by the invitation, but that she wasn’t interested.

B: Well, at least I tried, I couldn’t not try anything... I can’t believe that someone wouldn’t try with you...

N: Yeah... But there are those who don’t try anything...

Natasha was referring to Steve.
B: He's crazy, totally. I need to put some sense into him.

N: No... I gave up.

B: What?

N: Yeah. I don’t need anyone, we're just friends.

B: If so, why can’t you and I try to be together again?

N: Because I love you, Barnes, but not the way you want and not in the way you deserve it... I want to keep our friendship and I understand that this is exactly what Steve does to me and to be honest... it's the right thing to do. We can’t play with our friends’ feelings.

B: You’re right. I'm going to my room. I mean for my bunk, at least I have one for myself and my stuff...

Natasha smirked a little, but her lips lingered.

N: The proposal for you to live here with us is still up.

B: I’ll think about it.

Bucky kissed the back of Natasha's hand and left the room.

...

In the middle of the night, Sarah woke up screaming and Steve jumped out of the bed, he got up and before anything else, he checked the diaper and it was clean.

Steve thought she was hungry, he took her in his lap, and went into the kitchen. Steve prepared the bottle and again Sarah refused to take the bottle, it was an endless cry.

Steve tried anyway, make her take the bottler and tried to remember the footsteps Natasha had told him, to check for hunger, her diaper, sleep, and if it wasn’t any of that, could be because she wants attention or something serious. But how to differentiate one from the other?

Steve was pacing back and forth in the kitchen, shaking Sarah, still trying to get Sarah to get the bottle, without any success...

S: What do you want? You're making me worried, Sarah, tell me what to do...

Steve didn’t try to force her to take the bottle any more, she continued to cry and he decided to call Natasha to make sure if he should go to the medical center or not with Sarah.

Steve went to Natasha's room and knocked lightly on the door. If she was in a deep sleep, he wouldn’t wake her, he would go straight to the doctor.

Steve didn’t hear any response after he knocked the door, nor even the sound of anyone moving inside the room.

Steve was about to move to the medical center when he heard Natasha's bedroom door being open.

Steve looked at her and clearly breathed a sigh of relief. Natasha’s eyes were half closed with sleep.
N: Steve? What happened to her?

S: She doesn’t stop crying, I don’t know what to do...

Natasha could hear James grunting at Sarah's crying.

S: I'm sorry, I didn’t want to wake James, I'm leaving...

N: No. Wait. Let me try.

Natasha rubbed her eyes to try to be lucid, then she took Sarah in her lap.

N: Come in or we'll wake everyone up.

S: Are you sure?

N: Yes.

Steve came in and closed the door.

Natasha checked Sarah's diaper and was clean.

S: I checked, I made the bottle and she doesn’t want to take it, I don’t know if it's attention or if she's sick...

N: I don’t think she’s sick.

Natasha walked with Sarah to the bed and laid her down.

N: James had colic at times... I had to do some massages to help...

Natasha put Sarah on her bed and Steve approached to absorb any and all information about caring for babies.

Natasha lightly squeezed Sarah's belly and then made circular motions, which made her stop crying and just grumble.

N: She is not in pain... She didn’t worsen the crying, so...

S: It's attention.

N: I don’t know, she's very little, I think she just wants some cuddle.

Natasha looked at Sarah.

N: Is that it, Sarah? Do you miss your mother? She loved you very much, I know, you're missing her, sweetheart...

Natasha stroked Sarah's arms and legs, then kissed her forehead.

S: That's... Impressive.

Natasha shook her head and lay down next to Sarah, but let her legs off the bed, she placed Sarah's body next to hers and kept stroking her arms until she stopped mumbling.
S: It's working...

Natasha looked at Steve and nodded, but she looked at him reprovingly. Steve understood that he should be quiet, because obviously Natasha was trying to make her sleep.

Natasha almost succeeded, but two minutes later, James awoke with his father's voice and began to cry. Sarah wept together.

N: God...

Natasha felt defeated, Steve went to get James in the crib and Natasha took Sarah in her lap.

N: It's okay...

James woke up just to go to Steve's lap, laid his head on his shoulder and went back to sleep. But Sarah was more awake than ever now.

Steve sighed and put James back in the crib.

N: You should try to feed her again. I think it's hungry...

S: Do you want to give it to her?

N: No, I think you should do it, it's a unique moment where a bond is established, especially at this hour...

Natasha got up and handed Sarah over to Steve.

N: Sit...

Steve sat on the edge of Natasha's bed with Sarah and tried to give her the bottle. Again the cry increased and she turned her face, refusing to nurse.

Natasha looked at James and she was afraid of him waking up and spending the rest of the night awake.

S: I can't. I'm sorry. I can't do that. It's just the first night and she's in trouble.

N: Are you going to give up on her?

Natasha frowned looking Steve.

S: No... I don't know, I want her to feel good...
N: What do you think would happen to her in an orphanage?

S: I didn’t mean it, but Pepper wanted her... and she's a woman.

N: So what?

S: Sarah gets calmer with you, the cook said about a mother figure, I think Sarah is like that because of that.

N: Steve, she's like this because this place is new for her, people are new for her, you're the only one she’s used to.

S: But I feel bad, really bad, Nat. I can’t deal with her suffering.

N: That means you love her. My chest hurts when James cries for real... You feel it because you care about her.

Steve sighed and tried again to give her the bottle, Sarah finally accepted and began to nurse.

N: She's fine. See?

Steve watched Sarah nurse and Natasha sat next to Steve, waiting for Sarah to finish.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: You're tired, I should go.

N: No, it's okay...

S: Nat?

Natasha moved her gaze from Sarah to the striking blues in Steve's eyes.

S: Thank you.

N: It was nothing.

Natasha gave a small smile and sighed, she doesn’t know why but suddenly she felt strange, as if she and Steve shouldn't be together now. And the only sound they could hear was each other's breath, and all they were seeing was each other's eyes, there was nothing to cut off the attraction that their eyes have for each other.
Steve brought his face close to Natasha's so slowly that Natasha only noticed how close he was when Sarah grunted that she was being sandwiched against Natasha's body.

The two of them moved their faces away at once. They were embarrassed.

Natasha ran her hand around her neck and she couldn’t help but feel very hot when Steve was so close to kissing her.

S: I'm sorry.

N: For what?

S: I almost kissed you and I know I shouldn’t.

Natasha just sighed and looked away.

S: But this time, I want you to know that I really wanted to kiss you and I know why.

Natasha looked at Steve abruptly and in shock.

S: I feel something Natasha, I do, I wish I had said that day, but I was very shocked to know that you were in love with me, I didn’t know if it was correct... I really didn’t want to and I still don’t want to hurt you.

N: I wouldn’t stress about it.

Steve looked at her in surprise, because Natasha said very coldly and indifferently.

Natasha got up and walked over to James' crib, then she remained with her back to Steve.

N: Since that day… I feel better, I understood that we are friends.

S: But I...

N: I'm fine with that. Actually, I'm great, I allowed myself to do things that I was depriving myself of doing and...

S: Bucky.

Natasha turned and looked at Steve. It wasn’t about the sex with Bucky that she was talking about, I mean... it was also about that, but she was feeling free, she was no longer being sad around the corners of the bunker, suffering without Steve, suffering wishing to have his love and only to receive a simple "I don’t know" in return.

Once she put it in her head that it was time to be The Black Widow, she doesn’t come back.
So now that Steve thinks the reason is Bucky and that she has feelings for him, that's fine, it's his problem, he decided to see that way.

Maybe Steve thinks she's dating Bucky and now it doesn’t matter what he thinks, she won’t explain herself to anyone.

Natasha raised her eyebrows, then looked back at James.

Steve was silent and didn’t ask and didn’t say what he wanted to say.

**S**: She's finished, I'm leaving.

Natasha looked at Sarah and nodded.

**S**: Thanks again.

**N**: Not for that... Good night, Rogers.

**S**: Good night, Romanoff.

Steve left Natasha's room and went to his.

... Late in the morning, when the day was beginning to dawn, the Steve's W.T. began to ring.

Steve took time to put Sarah to sleep last night and she soon woke up crying with the sound of W.T.

Steve picked her up and then answered Tony Stark's call.

**S**: What is it, Tony?

**T**: We have company.

**S**: What?

**T**: It's good that you come here at the C.C. (Command Center) and see with your own eyes. I'm going to wake Hill up now.

**S**: Tony! I'm with Sarah, I can’t go now. Tony? Tony???

Steve took a deep breath and looked at Sarah.

**S**: It's okay, Sarah. The problem is that I can’t leave you here alone, so I'll have to take you with me.

Steve left the room and went to the command center, he opened the door angrily and saw Tony looking at the screens, that contains the images of the bunker's security cameras.

Tony stood, watching his agents monitoring the images.

Steve was angry for the time Tony called him, knowing that now he has Sarah.

**S**: What is it, Tony?
T: Oh God, it’s early! Why is she like this?

S: Because you woke her up!

T: Thank God I got rid of her, but lucky you, dad.

H: All the babies cry, Tony, yours won’t be any different.

Hill had just entered the command center.

T: So I'm developing a cry controller.

H: You're unbelievable, Tony.

Sarah screamed even louder.

S: Sarah, calm down...

H: God, doesn’t she turn it off?

S: She's a baby, you should stop referring to her as if she were an object, I don’t like that.

T: God, Steve is so dramatic!

H: He is and only because...

- GUYS!!! What are you doing???

The three of them looked at Natasha at the front door for the command center, looking at them reprovingly.

After a few seconds of silence, the three of them began to speak at the same time.

H: Tony started.

S: He started.

T: No, she started.

H: Did I start? I was awake for you, I got here and...

S: You woke up Sarah, Tony! She didn’t sleep all night and now...

N: SHUT UP! STOP! What are we doing here?

T: First, Steve has to make this girl shut up.

S: Don’t talk to her like that.

T: She does not understand!

S: You don’t know that.

H: Excuse me!
Hill took Sarah from Steve's lap and looked at her seriously.

**H: Enough, Sarah! You stop crying, right now!!!**

Steve, Tony, and Natasha stopped to watch Hill talking to Sarah as if she were a soldier or something and the most surprising thing was that Sarah stopped crying.

Hill looked at Steve and smiled proudly.

**H: See?**

**N: All right, I left James alone in the room to know what's going on. What is happening, after all?**

**T: Oh yes. I wanted to show that for y'all.**

Tony pointed to the screen that shows the outside images and then asked his agent to zoom in.

Hill, Natasha and Steve approached the screen, looking with curiosity and incredibility as they saw the camera footage.

**N: W-what the hell is that?**

Chapter End Notes

More people coming. Any guess on who might be?
T: I've been asking myself the same question since I got here.

H: What is that? Did those alien creatures mutate?

S: I've never seen anything like that in my life, I thought nothing else could surprise me, but...
Is everyone seeing a moving tree or is it just me?

N: We're all seeing the same thing. Why are they with a skunk as a pet?

H: It's not a skunk, idiot. It's a raccoon.

N: Did you just call me an idiot?

T: Guys! What should we do?

H: Yeah, not opening the door would be a great idea.

T: Of course we will not open, but should we shoot?

H: Are the weapons positioned?

T: Of course.

N: God, look at that man's face...

S: That one seems to be the only normal of the group.

Steve pointed to the only human in the group, who soon began to do a weird dance, making everyone frown with his strange behavior.
S: I take back what I said.

T: Should I shoot?

S: No, they're just standing there... I mean, dancing...

H: Why they're dancing?

N: What are they listening to?

S: Tony, can you open the communication channel?

T: Hey, kid!

Tony whistled and one of the young agents nodded.

- Yes, Mr. Tony?

T: Stark. Mr. Stark, I told you!

- I'm sorry, Mr. Stark.

T: I'm only joking, Patrick.

- It's Peter, sir.

T: I know!

Peter followed Tony’s orders and opened the communication channel. Everyone was confused by the music that was playing.

N: Do they know Michael Jackson?

T: Oh, you mean Jackson 5?

N: Whatever!

- Oh hey! We got it, guys! I said the dance would help...

Everyone inside the command center was silenced, they were scared, because they didn’t know that it would be possible for the strangers out of the bunker to hear them in there as well.

When Tony asked to open communication it was only to hear what they were talking about, not to actually talk to them.
Tony looked at the agent Peter.

T: Did you turn on our sound from inside too?

Tony whispered.

- I can hear you! Heeyyy.

- Y-yes... Y-you said to open the communication.

Tony put his hand on his forehead and sighed.

N: Why is he speaking our language?

- Because I'm American!

- And I'm a Zen Whoberi. Last of my kind.

Hill sighed and opened her mouth in amazement at the greenish-skinned woman.

H: She speaks our language.

- I speak more than 500 languages.

- I'm Groot.

Natasha and Hill screamed at the same time and gave a step back when the tree pronounced itself.

N: What's happening?

H: We're having a collective outbreak! It's the only logical explanation!

- Oh! For God's sake! They are very stupid and you think these guys could help us. I'm out of here!

H: The raccoon talks too, I'm going to faint.

- My name is Rocket!

S: Who are you?

- I am the Starlord.

S: What?

- His name is Peter Quill.

Said the guy with bluish skin and rough appearance.

Peter Quill: Yes, I am Peter. Captain America!!! OOOHHH I LOVE YOU.

Peter gave a scream as thin as a woman's scream.

PQ: I can't believe, I'm a big fan of yours! I even have a lunch box with the design of your shield! You still look like the little cards I had. What an honor, sir.
S: Thank you... But Mr. Quill, what are you doing here and how did you find us?

PQ: Well, we have sensory machines on our ship, that one over there. Pretty cool, don’t you think?

T: We're wasting time. What do you want?

PQ: Well we have a common enemy... Called Thanos...

S: Where are you from?

Peter pointed to the sky.

PQ: Each of us came from a different planet, except for me, I came from here, but I was kidnapped by that blue guy there, who says I'm family, but try to kill me sometimes...

Raccoon: Are you going to open that door or not?

H: Of course not!

R: But we came to help!

H: We don’t need you. Thanks.

N: Hill!

H: What?

T: They may be infected by some of those creatures... It's very dangerous.

PQ: What creatures?

S: We'll have to talk about it.

T: Talk?

S: We know that at some point Thanos will get here. He sent one of his armies only and to be honest, we haven’t found so far a way to get rid of them.

T: Do you want to take help from a bunch of dancing lunatics from the space?

PQ: I like that name! What do you think, Gams? Dancing Lunatics Space... D.L.S!

Gamora: I prefer Guardians of the Galaxy as it is.

N: Guardians of the Galaxy?

PQ: Yeah. That's what we call ourselves.

Natasha and Hill looked at each other and were silent.

Although the Avengers could see the Guardians, the Guardians couldn’t see them, just listen.

Natasha decided to take the lead.
N: Peter Quill?

PQ: Starlord...

Natasha rolled her eyes and sighed to try to be patient.

Peter chuckled.

PQ: Women on Earth are just like you, Gams. I could hear her sigh of impatience that you always do and I bet she rolled her eyes...

S: She did.

Steve laughed.

PQ: See?!

Natasha looked serious at Steve and he broke the smile when he noticed Natasha's deadly stare at him.

S: Sorry...

Steve cleared his throat.

Peter was still laughing.

N: Mr. Quill... We need time.

R: But what? Why? We came to offer help! The only way out for all of you is to decide whether you want to die or not. Enough! Me and Groot are out! C’mon Groot!

PQ: Calm down, Rac. Let's hear the lady.

N: I'm just asking for some time so we can inform the rest of the bunker, we live in a community here. Do you know what is this?

PQ: Of course! We used to live in those things too, but it's very annoying. Too many rules, you can’t steal...

Gamora: Not even kill...

Steve frowned, confused.

N: You wait for us, only until we clear everything for everybody.
PQ: It may be. But be careful for not to waste too much time.

R: How much time do you need? 2 hours? 3?

N: A couple days.

R: DAYS?

PQ: You can have your time, lady of the seductive voice. Could you show some of your face around here for us, just to see if it matches with the sound of your voice... OUUUUCH!!!

Peter ran a hand over his arm to relieve the pain he felt when Gamora passed a knife through his skin, causing a shallow cut.

Natasha smirked.

N: I like her.

Tony gestured for his agent Peter to terminate the communication.

The agent cut off the communication, but Peter Quill thought it was still activated.

PQ: She's very jealous… Gams, you know? My girl. She's my girl. Right, Gams?

Gamora crossed her arms, rolled her eyes, and sighed.

PQ: Let's dance, baby. Come here.

G: I do not want to dance, Quill.

PQ: What do you mean you don’t want to dance? Come dance for our friends, I've heard everyone on Earth loves to dance!

G: I said I do not want to dance!
PQ: Okay. Come you then, Raccoon.

R: Blah!

Raccoon started muttering to himself and walked out of the bunker entrance, toward his ship.

PQ: Drax, my man! Doon’t let me down, buddy... C’mon! Draaaax!

Drax went away, following Raccoon.

PQ: Groot!

Groot was the only one who kept Peter company and rocked the branches while Peter sang and danced a song, believing that he was being watch by the Avengers.

PQ: Guys? I wanted to know if my dance is still current around here yet, because you know...

Meanwhile, inside the bunker, they started to talk among themselves about the Guardians.

T: We can’t let them in.

N: We need help, how long do you think we'll be able to live here?

T: I don’t know, forever? People are reproducing themselves, we're getting on very well.

H: God, Tony, if everyone starts to reproduce and the population grows too large? How's everybody's food going to be?

T: We will do birth control.

N: I don’t want to live here forever.

H: Neither do I.

T: Why not?

N: Because I want my son to live a normal life, this is not normal, Tony. I want him to feel the
sun on his skin, I want him to be able to dive into a lake, into a river and have contact with fish and other animals. I want him to know people from other places and to have knowledge of everything I've known in the world.

T: All you had knowledge of? I don't think it's a good idea, he'd be traumatized...

N: You understood what I said.

S: Tony, do you think when Thanos arrives, he won’t find us here? Even the Guardians found us easily... Our technology is not the same as theirs.

T: I designed this place together with Pepper and the best existing engineers, the bunker is extremely sturdy.

N: We can’t predict the power of Thanos, the small sample of power he gave us, is out there for anyone who wants to see. Half the population decimated, perhaps more than half!

S: Tony, I'm not saying you didn’t do a good job with the bunker, you did, we would all be dead if it wasn’t for you. But I have to agree with Natasha, one hour we'll have to fight Thanos and these guys are out there, they can help us with weapons and tips on how to beat him... We've never had a chance to meet someone who knows Thanos, We should unite them.

N: All help is needed.

H: Yes, including a shy guy who turns green when he's pissed and who is indestructible!

Steve looked at Hill and she wasn’t sorry for what she said, because it was true.

T: What will we do then? Announce to the bunker that we will go to war?

S: They know.

N: Accepting the help of the Guardians doesn’t mean that we are at war against Thanos now. Maybe they'll tell us how long we have until Thanos arrives and we can prepare.

H: And I think there's someone here in the bunker who can tell us whether we can trust them or not.

T: Who?

N: Fury.

T: Oh God! Fury, the rebel. What could he know about these guys who aren’t even from Earth?

Natasha and Hill sighed and stared at Tony, hoping that he himself would reason that Fury has contact with the UN and all the world powers, and if he got information about Asgard, he would have information about the Guardians of the Galaxy.

By the way, Guardians of the Galaxy is not a new name for Natasha and Hill who have already overheard about them.

H: So we all agree with the announcement of acceptance of the Guardians' help?
They all sighed when Steve said "But".

S: Yes. But...

S: I think there should be a vote.

T: God, Steve, why are you complicating things?

N: I don’t see need in have votes.

S: Well, I see. We can’t dictate to everyone that we will accept them and that we will face whatever comes. People have free will to decide what they want for themselves.

H: No use arguing with him, right? Steve will make a huge speech and in the end, we’ll do what he says. Not because we think you're right, Steve, but because no one can afford to listen to you anymore.

Steve wasn’t offended by it. Whenever she can, Hill likes to prick him.

S: Hill, announce to the bunker population to gather in our central auditorium.

N: I'm going to see James.

H: How will you do with the children? You know that the nursery staff will have to attend and children aren’t allowed downstairs.

Steve and Natasha looked at each other.

N: I already know what they will announce and you need to be there, you’re the leader, so...

S: There is no such thing of leader here inside, we are all leaders.

N: You know what I meant... I'll stay with Sarah.

T: Well the idea was of you two.

N: Am I required to go?

T: In my opinion yes, you are.

Natasha sighed, feeling irritated.

S: I've got an idea.

Steve asked Natasha to accompany him, but Natasha said she needed to take a look at James, she was practically an hour outside and he was alone in the room.

Steve and Natasha went to Natasha’s room and noticed that James was still asleep.

S: He slept in your bed?

N: Yes, he gave me a fright in the middle of the night. He got out of the crib by himself, do you believe?
S: Yes. I saw him leaving a few times.

Steve walked over to the crib and put Sarah inside.

N: What are you doing?

S: I know someone.

N: Who?

S: Her name is Juliana and she is good with children.

Steve and Natasha could hear Hill's announcement on the loudspeaker asking the citizens of the bunker to head to J Wing immediately.

N: A stranger?

S: I know her. You can trust.

Natasha sighed.

S: You know the cook, right?

Natasha nodded.

S: It's her niece. And she'll just keep an eye on them for us, if any of them wake up she'll let us know and one of us comes back here. I'll leave my W.T. with her.

Natasha nodded.

S: Let's talk to her, before she leaves to go to J Wing.

Natasha looked at James and then at Steve.

S: They're sleeping, c'mon.

N: All right.

Steve and Natasha went out and closed the bedroom door, but they didn’t lock it. They both ran to the kitchen and Juliana's aunt reported that Juliana had already gone to the stairwell to go to the auditorium.

Steve and Natasha ran up the stairs and started searching for Juliana and they found her only about fifteen minutes later.

...

Soon after Steve and Natasha left the room, Sarah began to move and woke up. She looked around the room and saw no one, nor heard a sound. Sarah immediately started crying and started to cry loudly, which woke James who was lying on the bed.

James was startled and opened his eyes, he looked around looking for his mother in bed, but she wasn’t, then James frowned at the strident cry of the baby in his crib.

James closed his eyes again because he was still sleepy. Why is there a baby in my crib? James
thought and opened his eyes again.

James yawned and slid off the bed, he approached the crib and looked at Sarah with a frown.

*My crib!* James thought and then remembered who was the baby.

**J: Sarah.**

James did not understand what she was doing there or why she was screaming so much.

**J: Mom?**

James called for Natasha and then he went to the bathroom, but the door was closed and he didn’t reach for the door handle.

Sarah seemed to have increased her crying as James stepped back, he came back running.

**J: Sarah.**

James put his hand through the bars of the crib and hold her hand.

**J: Where is mommy? I'm scared, are you scared?**

Sarah stopped crying and took James's hand to her mouth to suck. James felt ticklish and laughed.

**J: Mommy?**

James stared at the bathroom door, thinking his mother was there. James released Sarah’s hand again and went to the bathroom door.

James knocked on the door.

**J: Mommy! Mommy!**

Sarah started to cry again and James ran to her.

**J: Stop!**

James was annoyed at the whining and told Sarah to stop crying.

**J: Stooooop it!**

James screamed and Sarah stopped crying, then she smiled. James tried to go to the bathroom again,
but Sarah screamed, threatening to cry.

James sighed, very annoyed and took her hand again, he leaned his face between the bars of the crib and frowned.

Even angry with Sarah, he stood there beside her and holding her hand so she didn’t cry.

Sarah ended up going back to sleep after a few minutes. James released her hand and when Sarah threatened to wake up again, James climbed the crib and stepped in, laying down beside her.

**J: Shh... I’m here.**

James also closed his eyes and fell asleep again, without realizing it.

... 

Steve and Natasha talked to Juliana about the announcement that would be made so she would be aware and asked her to stay with the children and call them if they started crying.

Juliana agreed without hesitate. Steve had to teach her twice on how to use the W.T., Juliana nodded and rushed up to keep the children in the room, and when she arrived there, the two of them were sleeping in the crib.

Steve and Natasha went to the stage of the auditorium to join Tony, Thor, Professor Xavier, Logan and Maria Hill.

Tony had already taken care of the news and the first reaction from the population was panic.

They were all arguing with each other and some were shouting that they shouldn’t accept the help of the Guardians because it would mean that they were declaring war on Thanos.

Amid all the talk, a person in the crowd gave a loud whistle and lifted the only arm he had and moved forward to the stage, but he didn’t go up on the stage.

They all went silent and looked at the guy, who always lived in the shadows and keep himself quiet all the time.

**Bucky: I know what everyone here is thinking. Believe me, I know. I know you're scared. I'm scared too, and I don’t know about you all, but I hate to feel like this. Afraid! Coerced! Repressed! I've been through this several times in my life, until it got to the point that someone made me go back to being who I was and made me say: Enough!**

Bucky glanced briefly at Steve and Steve became extremely silly and smiled at Bucky's speech.

**B: I don’t know how to live with fear anymore. This is what we are doing and the worst part is that we are teaching our children to be afraid. I don’t have a son, I know… But I have a friend of 2 years old that I love very much as if he was my son...**

Natasha knew that Bucky was talking about James and she almost smiled, but she remained serious for being in public.

**B: And I don’t want him to live in fear.**

- **You want us all to die in this fight!**
- Yeah!
- You want us dead!

The screaming began among the citizens of the bunker again.

S: Guys! Guys! Please!

People have great respect for Steve and have silenced at his request.

S: Let him talk, everyone will have your turn to talk.

B: I don’t want anyone to die, I don’t want anyone else to die. But if we stand here with our arms crossed, that's what's going to happen and we won’t even have fought to try at least stop it.

Bucky looked at a young woman that he always sees with a child, so he knows she's a mother.

B: You... If Thanos were here now, with a gun or whatever way he fights, pointing it to you son. What would you do?

- I’d walk in front of him!

B: Yes! Yes! You would protect him! That’s right! That’s it, folks! We have to protect our children, our seniors... They only have us to secure for them some future.

- We're fine living here!

B: Are you? Are we? When the next epidemic that will lead to the death or isolation of 10 or 15% of our population begin? Until when will there be food? Medicines?

- He is right!

- I agree with you, man!

Some people were beginning to agree with Bucky.

- Yeah!

The crowd stepped back as Wolverine stretched out his metal claws and stood in a strike position, but he was only exalted with Bucky's speech.

Logan: That's what I've always said, we need to fight! Let's fight! Let's kill those bastards!

S: Logan, I understand you're excited, but we have women here...

Logan gathered his claws and stepped back.

As people applauded Bucky's speech and greeted him, Steve talked to Professor so he would keep Logan under control.

When Steve turned his attention to his friend Bucky to greet him for the beautiful speech as well, he broke his smile.
He broke the smile because Natasha had just gone to Bucky and hugged him tightly.

Natasha seemed happy to be with Bucky, and in fact, she was happy, but it was because Bucky’s speech about James, who made Natasha excited and she wanted to thank him, hugging him and saying how much she appreciates the friendship and affection that Bucky has for her son.

For Steve, this was just the confirmation that she and Bucky were in fact together.

Chapter End Notes

Is it weird that I'm very proud of Bucky, showing his voice and courage? He totally acted like a Captain America cough cough
Chapter 26

As Hill organized a line with the help of other SHIELD agents to start the voting... Tony, Thor, Logan, Steve, and Clint were gathered next to the exit of the auditorium.

Natasha was still with Bucky near the stage.

N: That thing you said about James...

Natasha didn’t know what words to use to describe how she was happy with Bucky's speech.

B: It was only the truth.

N: I know... Thank you, Barnes. For everything.

B: You don’t have to thank me. I love that boy.

Natasha sighed and looked in the direction of Steve.

B: How are you?

Natasha had already looked away from Steve, she frowned and shook her head, showing that she hadn’t understood Bucky's question.

B: You and Steve?

Natasha looked around and sighed again, as if thinking what to say.

N: It's complicated…

B: He likes you, I'm sure.

N: Sometimes the way he looks at me, I really believe he feels something, but it's not enough and I'm not a woman to be with only half person.

B: Either he comes complete, or...

N: Or nothing! But I'm fine now, I... I put it in my mind that this way it's better.

B: You put that in your mind, but... did you put in your heart?

Natasha smiled and she always avoids eye contact when it’s to talk about something she feels.

N: James is the only thing that occupies my heart now. God, James! Barnes, I forgot the kids, I need to get back.

B: Okay. I'll stay here until the result comes out.

Natasha nodded and ran to where Steve was.

Natasha leaned against Steve's arm so he could notice her presence and knew she wanted to talk to him.
As soon as he felt Natasha's touch on his arm, Steve looked at her next to him.

N: The children...

Natasha whispered.

S: That's right!

Steve tried to whisper too.

N: You can stay, I just came to tell you that I'm going up.

S: I'll go with you.

N: You can stay, you probably have a lot to solve here.

S: No, Sarah is more important. I'll go with you. Just a minute.

Steve looked at his colleagues.

S: Guys, I need to go, let me know by the W.T. of any problem.

The others nodded, Steve and Natasha headed for the elevator and as soon as they entered and the elevator began to go up, a great silence reigned.

The silence was so big that they could hear the sound of the the breath of each other.

First, the sound of the breath seemed to be soft, and you know when you are in a place and you start to hear a certain noise and then you only pay attention to that particularly noise and suddenly all other sounds become obsolete? That was exactly it.

As one listened to the other's breathing, the sound seemed to increase more and more, and it was like if they could feel their breath beating against their skin, which made them as if they were inebriated by the sound of the breathing… All of that made them crave for each other breath.

Natasha was so overwhelmed by the sensation that she was the first to close her eyes and open her lips to breathe better and feel more of Steve's air, but she could do nothing more. She was beside him, feeling an incomprehensible attraction, not knowing if he was feeling the same or not.

He was! Steve just didn’t close his eyes, but his nostrils were bigger because he wanted so much to feel Natasha's scent and breath. His breathing was much stronger and heavier than hers, it was even visible through the volume of his pectoral which filled and emptied of air, fully charged.

When they were between the floor of Wing D and C, the elevator stopped, suddenly, giving a break that made them both unbalanced.

Natasha didn’t try to hold on to anything, but the first thing Steve did was to reach out to her arm to hold her.

The Bunker had just run out of power, all the lights went out.

N: What was that?

S: I don’t know.
Shortly after they said this, an emergency light from the elevator was turned on, and then a mechanical voice was activated.

- *In case of power failure, try to use the stairs. If you are stuck in the elevator, do not panic, the elevator has safety devices that do not allow the movement without power. Stay calm and wait until the elevator generator is activated or the power be re-established.*

Steve and Natasha stared at the ceiling during Tony's safety speech at the elevators.

The doors of the elevator, looked more like gates, they are formed by a kind of fence, which allows the outside to visualize inside the elevator and also allows whoever is inside the elevator to see where it is going outside.

Natasha walked close to the door and could see the slab dividing Wing C of Wing D.

**N: We are trapped between Wing C and D. No sign of life here.**

Natasha said as she turned to get back to her place, but she didn’t realize that Steve had also walked after her and they both bumped into each other.

Steve pushed her a little, holding her waist, trying to ease the impact, but their bodies had already shocked on each other.

**N: I... I'm sorry.**

**S: No, I apologize.**

Their eyes remained connected, and Steve's hands were still on Natasha's waist and all they could hear now, again, was the sound of each other's breathing.

This time it sounded strident, and Natasha couldn’t help but stare at Steve's lips, which seemed extremely tense. Steve also couldn’t move his eyes from that half-opened lips of Natasha and he couldn’t help it, he couldn’t restrain himself in not approaching his face of hers.

It was a movement so fast that Natasha couldn’t get a reaction, in fact she just moved her head back a little and her arms and hands became loose, as if she were surrendered to Steve's arms, that was completely holding her body.

It was as if she couldn’t reason right, all she thought and felt was that strong, warm breath that was coming from Steve's mouth as he brought his mouth to hers.

She was the first one to close her eyes, even before the lips met, she had already closed her eyes and at that moment, everything she swore to herself about not giving him another chance, had gone
down. Natasha wanted him, she wanted him very much.

Steve's lips touched Natasha's, softly, and for a few seconds they barely exchanged their breaths and they started to press their lips against each other more and more, slowly, until they were completely unified.

Steve's tongue was that took the initiative to get inside Natasha's mouth, and with a lot of affection he moved his tongue inside her mouth and he received back all the caress he was giving to her.

Steve hugged Natasha's waist stronger, pressing her body against his even more and finally Natasha managed to have some reaction and placed her hands on his shoulders and then on Steve's neck.

It was all Steve needed to know that she was being reciprocal and automatically he pushed her back a bit, enough to press her back against the elevator door, but he didn’t interrupted the kiss for that.

Steve nearly choked her from pushing her against the door so hard, Natasha had to bit Steve's lips and push his face a little so she could breathe.

He didn’t stop, he immediately brought his mouth to her neck as his hands returned to Natasha's waist.

Steve's hands slid Natasha's body upward, making her feet stay away from the floor. Natasha still had her eyes closed, and she moaned softly as Steve concentrated on marking her neck with a hickey.

Natasha stuck her nails into Steve's shoulders, not knowing whether to pull him to herself or to pull him away, she was still trying to get to herself together, but it was difficult and before she knew it, her teeth were biting Steve's ear.

Steve was kissing, nibbling and sniffing Natasha's neck until reach her cleavage, but he didn’t crouch for that action, he lifted her body up, and to be able to use his hands, he leaned his knee on the door and then he slid her body down and placed her sitting on his thigh.

Steve's intention was to tear off her clothes in a single movement, but the elevator generator finally restored the energy, giving another bump, which brought them both to the floor.

- *Energy reestablished.*

Natasha had fallen with part of her body over Steve's, and the two automatically came out of the trance that they were.

After that fall, they looked at each other, not knowing what to say or how to act.

The elevator was already in operation and it reached Wing A.

- *You've reached your destination.*

S: Natasha...

N: Don’t.

Natasha got up and straightened her clothes.

S: But...
N: We don’t have to talk about it. I’m going to see the kids...

S: I'll go along.

N: No...

Steve frowned, confused.

N: You need a shower.

Steve still didn’t understand and Natasha looked at his pants. Steve looked too, and he was immediately embarrassed.

S: I'll get Sarah in half an hour... Do you mind?

N: Take the time you need.

The two of them left the elevator and Steve went down the hall.

Natasha waited for him to go, so she could start to walk to her room.

Natasha was happy inside for seeing Steve like that, it's good for her self-esteem, but Natasha didn’t want to be just an object of desire for him, but this time It wasn’t like this, it didn’t seem to be just desire, she could feel something different in the way he kissed her and held her.

Something is different, but I can’t allow myself to believe we can have something again. No way, I can’t go through all that pain. Natasha thought as she finally reached the room.

Natasha opened the door and she even forgot that the cook’s niece, Juliana, was there.

Natasha had a small smile on her face and she ran her hand over her neck that was sore from so much that Steve pushed her against that elevator.

Ju: Miss Romanoff.

Natasha looked at Juliana a little frightened, she didn’t want to be caught in a moment that she was so... How can I say? So in the clouds...

Ju: Are you okay?

Natasha smiled and frowned.

N: Why wouldn’t I be?

Ju: Your face and your neck are so red and your lips... Are you hurt?

Natasha opened her mouth to answer, but she had to think of an answer. Juliana was obviously too naive and didn’t notice that her condition clearly indicates that she was in snogging with someone.

N: It’s because I came running, I... I was worried about the children.

Ju: They're fine, they slept all the time, but it looks like that little boy just woke up.

Natasha looked at James yawning in the crib next to Sarah.
N: Did you put him in there?

Juliana shook her head.

Ju: When I arrived, he was already there.

N: Juliana, thank you for your help, you should go to the auditorium and vote.

Ju: I will. Anytime you need.

N: Thanks.

Juliana left the room and Natasha took James from the crib.

James scratched his eye several times, yawned and pointed at Sarah.

N: Did you take care of her?

James nodded.

N: You're a very good boy, James.

James waved to Sarah, saying goodbye to her.

J: Bye, bye, Sarah.

N: No, James, she's not leaving now.

J: Why?

N: Because her father hasn’t come to get her yet. You know, I explained to you that your father is her father too, it means that you are brothers and that you have to take care of her... You have to make sure that she doesn’t feel sad, you know... Being a big brother means that you have to be responsible. Do you like her?

James was still staring at Sarah, he looked at Natasha and made negative with his head.

N: Why not? Look at her. She is little, she’s cute, she smiles.

J: She cries too much.

N: Everyone cries. Even you.

Sarah woke up and the first thing she did was start crying. James put his hands to his ear.

N: Wait here.

Natasha put James on the floor and took Sarah in her lap.

N: Hello, Sarah. Sh... It's okay. You must be hungry.

At the sound of Natasha’s voice, Sarah stopped crying and stared at her. Natasha couldn’t help but smile at the sight of her, she was a very beautiful baby, and in her eyes anyone could see that she had a strong personality.
N: It's hungry, isn’t it?

James grabbed Natasha’s leg.

J: My mommy.

Natasha looked at him and smiled.

N: Don’t be silly, James. I’m your mother, but she's smaller than you, okay? Let's get her a bottle. Be a man and come walking by my side. Can you do it?

James sighed and looked at Natasha with a certain sadness, but she couldn’t do anything, he has to understand that there is a baby in his life now.

Natasha opened the door and noticed that James stood inside the room in the same place, his head lowered to the side.

N: James? Come… You can’t stay there alone. We'll go over to your dad to get her bottle.

James came to Natasha practically crawling and after walking two minutes he stopped and leaned against the wall.

J: Tired. Lap.

N: You’re not tired, we just started to walk.

Natasha looked at him and motioned for him to continue.

James turned his face to the wall. He opened his arms and leaned against the wall and dragged himself for a little more until he stopped again and lay on the floor.

J: Lap.

Natasha took a deep breath and crouched next to him.

N: Get up.

J: Lap.

N: James. Get! up!

His intention wasn’t to get up until Natasha picked him up, but she was too serious, so he stood up, but stood still as Natasha took a few steps forward.

Natasha paused again, took a deep breath, and looked at James.

N: James, I'm just going to talk to you one more time and you will obey, or I swear to God, you will be grounded and you won’t like it, believe me. Let's go right now.

James looked at Sarah and frowned, he was angry that she was in his mother’s lap and now his mother was fighting him because of her.

The anger and sadness that James was feeling made him walk with his head down.

Only two tears rolled down his face as he followed his mother down the hallway to Steve's room.
Natasha knocked on the door and waited. It didn’t take long and the door was opened.

Steve and Natasha exchanged brief glances and then Steve looked at Sarah.

S: She woke up?

N: Yes. She's hungry, I thought you'd still be in the shower.

S: I just finished my bath.

Their eyes met again and got stuck, but Sarah began to grumble.

S: Always hungry, little girl. I'm going to take her to feed, thank you.

N: You don’t have to thank.

Natasha handed Sarah over to Steve's lap.

S: What about James? Is he with Juliana?

N: No, he's here.

Natasha looked away and didn’t see him, then she saw him on the corner of the hall, leaning on the wall, hidden.

Natasha sighed impatiently, and Steve looked at James.

S: What happened to him?

N: Nothing, he's been silly.

S: James?

James looked at Steve.

S: Are you crying? Why are you crying?

N: Because I fought with him.

S: Why?

N: Because he deserved it! Do you think I'd fight without cause?

S: I'm not saying that.

Natasha looked at James.

N: James, come here.

James didn’t move and looked away.

Natasha ran her hand over her face and whispered.

N: He's dramatic.

_Exactly like the father. God dammit!_ Natasha thought.
S: James, do you want to help me to feed Sarah?

J: No!

James answered in anger.

Natasha looked at James, startled by his aggressive tone.

N: Excuse me????

James started to cry again.

N: I can’t handle it. I can’t.

S: Don’t worry.

Steve was looking at Natasha, he touched her arm and when she looked him in the eye, she already knew that he had some solution, he always makes her believe that everything will really be okay. Always.

S: Hold her for me, please.

Natasha took Sarah back in her lap.

S: The bottle is on the table, can you give it to her?

Natasha nodded and went to get the bottle, then she went to the kitchen with Sarah.

S: James, I want to talk to you. Come here inside a minute.

James entered his father’s room and Steve came in and closed the door.

Steve sat in a chair near a small table and pulled James to sit on his lap.

S: What’s wrong?

James doesn’t yet know how to put into words what he is feeling, which makes it more difficult for him to be understood and this creates some frustration on him.

J: Mommy.

S: Mommy? She fought with you, right?

James nodded.

S: You don’t like it when she fights with you. I don’t like it when she fights with me too.

Steve set James on the table facing him and wiped the tears from his face.

S: I got very scared when she’s mad. Did you get scare too?

James nodded and Steve smiled.

S: But then I remember that your mother is a really, really nice person. She’s cool, right?

James nodded.
S: She would never hit you, she's just calling your attention to something wrong you did. Don’t cry anymore, I want to show you something.

Steve picked up his sketch pad and turned the first page, James watched and smiled at the sketch.

J: Iron Man!

S: Yes, Iron Man. Did you like it?

James nodded.

S: It's yours. I made it for you.

Steve took the page from the block and handed it to James.

S: Do you like to draw?

James made negative with his head.

S: What do you like to do, then?

James punched the air, then stretched out his leg, kicking Steve's arm, but obviously he didn’t hurt.

Steve raised his eyebrows, but he smiled.

S: Do you like fighting?

James nodded.

S: So I'll teach you how to fight. Would you like that?

James smiled and nodded.

S: First lesson. Be prepared for an extra large dose of...

Steve held up his hands.

S: TICKLES!

Steve made tickles James until he gasped. Then Steve put him down and asked James to imitate him and stretch as he was doing and James did the same.

Steve knelt and raised his hand in the air at James' height.

S: Come on, show me what you got! Use all your strength, concentrate and hit my hand as hard as you can. Go!

James bit his mouth and clenched his fist, and on the first attempt the punch didn’t even hit his dad’s hand.

S: It's okay, it happens. Once again.

James managed to hit the punch and had a certain strength for a while.

Steve pretended to be in a lot of pain, he lay down on the floor with his belly up, saying that he was
hurting and all James did was laugh and throw himself at his father.

They both paused to hear a "tsc, tsc, tsc" coming from Natasha standing in the room door, Sarah in her arms and feeding from a bottle.

**N:** Look at this, Sarah. We go out for a few minutes and look what these men start to do.

Steve was still smiling and kept James up in the air with his arms.

**S:** Did she take it easy on the bottle?

**N:** Yeah, keep dreaming about that... Almost ten minutes to accept the bottle.

Steve’s W.T. started to ring and then the 3D camera was activated spontaneously. Slowly the image became clear.

- Captain America!

Steve frowned.

**S:** Mr. Quill?

**N:** Is he here?

**PQ:** Oh the lady of pretty voice. And please do not call me Mr. Quill, you may call me as Star Lord.

**Gamora:** Peter...

**S:** I'd rather call Quill. How did you get access to my W.T.?

**PQ:** Oooh that? It's just that we have access to everything that you have there. Do you know the peak of light? It was the moment we managed to access, my bad.

**N:** What?

**PQ:** Captain! I was bored and thinking... What is Captain America doing right now? Dancing? Eating? Saving the day inside the bunker? Then I thought, I'm going to call him, he's probably not busy.

**J:** Doggiie.

James pointed to Raccoon on the screen.

**PQ:** A CHILD! OH MY GOD, A TERREST CHILD. I NEVER SAW AN EARTHY CHILD! Hi Terrestrial child!!!

Peter waved madly at James, who smiled and waved back. Steve put James on the floor.

**S:** Wait here, son.

**PQ:** SON? Does Captain America have a son? This is the best day of my life! Does he flies? Can he throw lightning bolts or does he turn red and blue when he's angry?
S: Quill, listen, you can’t invade our system like that, we are voting justly whether we should trust you or not, imagine if they find this out.

PQ: Oh, it's true. Sorry, I didn’t think about that. Wait a minute. Is this your room?

Steve didn’t answer.

PQ: It is, right? What does the lady of beautiful voice do there in your room? OH MY GOD. SHE IS THE MOTHER OF YOUR SON?

S: Yes.

PQ: This is the best and the worst day of my life. I thought I would have a chance, but I don’t flirt with compromised woman, I mean, not if she belongs to Captain America. Ouch!

Peter screamed.

PQ: Dammit, Gams!

Peter looked back at Steve.

PQ: She’s so jealous... Ouch!

Peter looked at Gamora.

PQ: Why am I being beat now?

Gamora: Turn it off, you heard him.

PQ: But I want to talk to the Captain!

Gamora: Turn it off!

PQ: Please! Pretty please!

The call was ended, obviously by Gamora.

N: I like her...

S: It seems that you called his attention only with your voice.

N: It happens...

Natasha noticed a change in Steve's behavior, she could swear he was jealous.

Natasha’s W.T. rang. Natasha handed Sarah over to Steve's lap.
Natasha answered the call and put it on speakerphone.

N: Speak up, Tony.

T: We have a problem here.

S: What problem?

T: It’s tied.
In the auditorium, there were still many people waiting for the result of the tiebreaker, but many weren’t interested in knowing and returned to their daily tasks.

Juliana, who had been the last one to vote, was near the stage, holding her own arm, seeming to be displaced in the midst of all the people.

- Looks like your vote tied everything.

Juliana turned to see who was talking to her.

Juliana smiled.

**Ju:** Mr. Bucky... I mean, Mr. Barnes... I'm sorry.

Bucky laughed of the way Juliana fumbled and shook his head.

**B:** Just Bucky, please.

**Ju:** I didn’t want to cause any trouble for you, I'm so sorry for that.

**B:** Actually you helped me, without your vote, I would have lost, now I have a chance.

**Ju:** And how they gonna solve this?

**B:** We don’t know, it's the first time this happens.

**Ju:** I think that... Captain's vote should count for two because he's very kind and he knows a lot of things.

**B:** I know things too.

Juliana smiled.

**Ju:** I know, I didn’t mean that you don’t...

**B:** All right, I know. He inspires confidence and everyone would accept that he would solve this with only one vote. But there is Natasha's vote too.

**Ju:** Do you think she'd tie up again?

**B:** No, she'll vote for what Steve vote.

**Ju:** And your back?

**B:** Huh?

**Ju:** You were feeling pain the other day. Because of your arm.
B: Oh yes, it still bothers me.

Ju: I could do someth...

Juliana stopped talking, when Bucky looked away and stared at Natasha who was arriving in the auditorium now, carrying Sarah in her lap.

Juliana watched the intense form that Bucky looked at Natasha and then she lowered her head, feeling displaced again.

B: Excuse me, would you?

Juliana nodded, but Bucky didn’t even look at her and went straight to Natasha.

B: Hey. Did you vote?

N: Hm... No, I forgot.

Natasha looked back and then at Bucky.

B: Steve?

N: He's coming, he had to stop to tie James's shoe.

Natasha looked back once more, just to make sure Steve wasn’t around yet, she came closer to Bucky.

N: We just kissed.

B: Wh-What?

Although Bucky has encouraged Natasha to stay with Steve, claiming he likes her, he still has feelings for Natasha. He thought it would be okay to hear and see something about her relationship with Steve, but it's not like that, at all.

That twinge in his heart, made that clear, his mood that changed dramatically.

N: The power went off, we were stuck in the elevator and we felt, I mean... I felt... I don’t know, it was so intense. I think maybe you were right. He feels something...

B: Yeah...

Hill: Oh! There you are, will you please go there and vote?

Hill approached Natasha and Bucky.

N: I got distracted. Hold her to me.


N: Hill!

Hill rolled her eyes and snorted, but she picked Sarah in her arms.

H: But if she starts to cry, I will...
S: You won’t do anything.

Hill looked at Steve who was arriving now with James on his lap.

Steve put James on the floor.

S: Stay here with Auntie Hill.

H: Auntie Hill? Don’t you dare call me that, James.

Steve looked at Hill with scolding.

S: I'm going to vote and I'll be right back. Behave yourself, James.

H: Bucky is right here, he's a sweet and lovely guy, but still y’all says "Hill stays with Sarah, Hill stays with James, Hill stays with Torunn". I don’t work at the nursery, in case you didn’t notice.

Steve ignored and walked away with Natasha to vote.

B: That means they entrust their lives to you.

Hill looked at Bucky and frowned.

B: That's true. These children are their lives. If they didn’t let them with me, it’s because they think you'd be better for them.

H: Me?? Impossible! I'm a lousy, rude and cold person. I don’t care about any of them.

B: You're not. You're good at everything you do.

H: How could you know?

B: Because I watch you. And you care about them all.

H: Do you watch me?

Hill frowned even more and let out a short laugh.

H: Are you flirting with me?

Bucky laughed and said nothing, he stepped back to the stage to find out the new result.

Hill stayed in the same place and watched Bucky walk to the stage, she was smiling but she didn’t notice.

After five minutes, Thor picked up the microphone and the moment he tried to speak, the microphone had a feedback and a thin and shrill sound circled the auditorium.

Tony Stark's agent, Peter, took care of changing the microphone.

Thor picked up the microphone and smiled at Peter.

Thor: Thank you, Patrick, The Mortal!
Peter: It-it's... P-peter.

Tony: Peter... Patrick ... It's the same thing, boy. Come on, get down.

Thor: We have a winner!

N: Winner?

S: Thor?

Thor: THE WAS TEAM WON! YEAHHH!

Thor released the microphone in style as hip-hop singers do and stepped off the stage.

He gave a hi-five on Logan.

Thor: War! War! War!

Thor tried to make everyone scream together with him, but no one else followed.

Thor: We're going to war! I'm going to tell Jane to separate my battle uniform! JANEEE!

Natasha looked at Steve and when he looked back at her, she sighed and for a few seconds, she forgot what she had to say.

N: Let's open the gates?

S: Yes.

Steve noticed a certain concern on Natasha's face.

S: You're worried.

N: I have some fears...

Natasha shook her head and looked in the direction of James and Sarah.

N: I just hope we're making the right decision here.

S: Yes, we are.

N: I've fought for him so much already.

S: But now you won't be fighting alone. Never again. I'll be there with you. We will protect James and Sarah together.

Natasha looked at Steve and her anguish diminished considerably with Steve's words, he's a man of word. How could she not trust those eyes?

The two stared at each other silently, while some celebrated and others complained of the decision, thinking that this decision was the proclamation of the death of everybody.

- So we're going to open the doors now, like that? Without any precaution?

Natasha and Steve were taken from their moment by Tony Stark.
S: No, Tony, I believe we should beware.

T: Thank God you said that, I need at least one week to put together a defense scheme.

N: I think they’re not willing to wait all of that.

S: They can’t demand too much, we have to be careful. We can wait a week, and before that we pick two of them to get in and meet the Bunker. It will show that we are willing to trust them.

T: But let them come unarmed.

S: Sure.

T: I think that tree should come in.

S: Tony...

T: Oh, the raccoon seemed to be the wiser!

N: Gamora is the best option, she should be the one to come. And Peter Quill.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Mr. Quill?

N: Yes, he is human and idolizes you.

S: Not just me...

Natasha again felt that Steve is jealous.

T: The human and that hot lady with the color of broccoli.

S: Tony, I'd like you to respect them.

T: What do you mean?

Tony whistled in the direction of his agent.

T: Patrick!

Peter: Hi Mr. Stark.

S: Why is he following you around yet?

T: He is my trainee.

Steve shook his head.

...  

The next day, at the Command Center, Steve made the communication with the Guardian’s ship, he explained that they would accept their help, but that they needed some time to get used to the idea.
**Raccoon:** They don’t trust us!

S: We want to, but we don’t know each other and I think we should get to know each other first, so... We thought about a visit.

Peter was with his feet on the ship's control panel, and he abruptly removed them, sitting upright in his chair and clutching his face to the screen.

**PQ:** Visit? On my ship? Captain America on my ship?

Peter got up.

**PQ:** EVERYBODY! Start cleaning! C'mon, c'mon.

S: Mr. Quill? Mr. Quill?

**Raccoon:** He's too excited to hear anything now.

S: I meant that you should visit us.

H: But not the weird ones.

**Raccoon:** Who's weird?

H: You are.

**Raccoon:** This is extremely offensive! And I liked that! Do you have a boyfriend?

Hill looked disgusted and stepped away from the screen.

S: We think that Mr. Quill and Ms. Gamora should come.

**Rac:** PETER! You heard? You and Gamora are going to the Captain's bunker.

Peter came running back and stared at the screen, waiting for Steve to tell him if it was true.

S: Yes, we thought of receiving you and Ms. Gamora.

**PQ:** Gams, baby! Let's go! Yahoooo!

T: Hm, and no guns!

**Drax:** It's an ambush!

**Groot:** I'm Groot.

T: Oh this tree is so cute, please let that come in!

Groot smiled.

S: Where is Mr. Quill?

The guardians looked at the open door and Peter was running toward the Bunker. Gamora snorted and left the ship after Peter.
After a few minutes, they were at the bunker door.

The staff moved from the command center to the bunker entrance area.

Tony sent Peter, his trainee, to push the disinfestation button and a white smoke was sprayed on Peter and Gamora.

S: Tony!

T: What?

PQ: That was so cool! Is the Captain there? I want to see him.

S: Yes, Mr. Quill. I'm here waiting for you.

PQ: Oh my God! He spoke to me! He spoke to me!!!

Gamora: Why are you acting like an idiot?

PQ: Oh...

Peter started jumping and took a deep breath.

PQ: Captain?

S: Yes, Mr. Quill?

PQ: When I see you, can I hug you?

Tony laughed softly, as did Bucky and Natasha.

PQ: I mean… Actually I want to kiss you, but not in the mouth, Gamora wouldn’t let it, and it would be weird, but...

S: Hum...

Steve didn’t know what to say.

N: You can kiss him in the mouth, if you want...

PQ: Oh, the lady with pretty voice..

S: Her name is Natasha...

H: Oh God, open that shit!
Hill had her hands on the two weapons hanging on her holster.

T: Okay, Patrick, open the door.

Natasha and Hill looked at each other and they both nodded.

The door was opened and Peter and Gamora came in, being again sprayed with white smoke.

H: Okay! Easy and hands where I can see.

Hill was the first to approach with a gun in hand. Peter looked at her.

PQ: Are you the lady with pretty voice? I'm in love with you. You’re gorgeous.

Gamora punched Peter's belly.

PQ: Ouch!

H: On the wall, on the wall.

Peter put his hands on his head and walked to the wall. Gamora just walked calmly to the wall, despising everyone there.

Natasha approached with her weapon also in fist and when she approached Gamora, she put the gun back in the holster.

Hill checked Peter.

H: Secure, over here.

Natasha searched Gamora and found at least three knives, neatly hidden by her clothes.

When Natasha touched the first knife, she glanced at Gamora, who was raising her eyebrow, as if daring her to do something, but Natasha was only too proud to find someone as petulant as she was.

N: Secure, over here too.

PQ: It's you!

Peter turned to look at Natasha.

PQ: You're even better looking, in person.

This time, Peter was hit in the low parts.

Steve deliberately cleared his throat.

PQ: Captain! Iron Man! I'm so happy!

Peter ran toward Steve and Maria Hill took her gun. Natasha made her lower her weapon.

N: Relax.

Peter hugged Steve, who was totally embarrassed, while Tony was laughing at the situation.

PQ: Can I meet your son? Please, say I can!
S: I think some other day... He's at the nursery now.

PQ: What a shame!

S: Come on, we'll introduce you to the rest of the population.

Everyone walked to the elevator.

On the way, Natasha stood by Gamora, who wasn’t interested in making friends.

Natasha is not the type friendly either, but finding someone as cold as her, it made her excited.

N: So this was done in battle?

Gamora didn’t look at Natasha, but understood that she was talking about the cuts on her arm.

G: Yes. Do you have any?

N: Battle scar? Yes, many. That was against a group of 20 terrorists.

Gamora looked sideways and paid no attention.

G: Mine was made in a battle against 100 Gorgons.

N: You alone?

G: Terrible creatures of 100 inches, with sharp teeth.

Natasha frowned and sighed, feeling frustrated.

N: We fought aliens before.

G: I heard about that... You almost lost.

N: Almost.

... Although the two of them had initially been bewildered, they found things in common, and as they walked through the bunker, they talked about a lot of things. Gamora was finally showing some respect for Natasha.

H: Hey!

N: Hey.

H: Can I talk to you for a minute?

N: Of course.

Natasha walked away from the group for a bit to talk to Hill.

N: What?

H: I just used it as an excuse, so you could get rid of the green boring lady. I noticed that she
didn’t stop talking to you. What a boring chat she must have.

N: No, actually we... We're getting along, she's very interesting.

H: Is she?

N: Yes. You should talk to her, too.

H: Oh yeah. Maybe...

Natasha went back to where Gamora was, and Hill stared at the two of them with a frown.

...

Peter and Gamora clarified many doubts of the Avengers, X-men and SHIELD about Thanos, in a public hearing in the auditorium. Everybody were able to ask questions, as well as civilians in general.

**Bucky:** Our biggest concern right now is how we'll fight, if we can’t get out of the bunker?

**PQ:** I don’t understand, why you can’t?

**S:** Because of the creatures that Thanos sent here.

**PQ:** Creatures?

**N:** Yes. They devastated our population and drove us to these bunkers we live in.

**Gamora:** How are these creatures exactly?

**N:** They are… they look like an alien, no nose, and no ears, they don’t seem to have eyes, I mean I don’t remember, I never look into their faces for real and they have a goop around their bodies.

**PQ:** Are they like bright yellow?

**N:** Yes. And when they can make a person look at them, they can take the shape of that person and they kill the person at the time, the person just disappears, it’s crazy what they can do.

Gamora took one of her knives out of her body and craved it into the table. She is so strong that the knife went through almost half of the massive wood.

Everyone was astonished because no one expected her to be armed.

**G:** PYRONS!

**PQ:** Bloody hell, Pyrons!

**S:** What?

**PQ:** We've faced these creatures before, we call them Pyrons, we've had a vote and we think that's the best name for them...
S: Did you face them?

PQ: Oh, well, yes... We were good navigating around the space, hearing some good music, then I remember this planet that has some very valuable things... So I thought we should go there, get some things borrowed, you know...

S: Stole?

PQ: That’s a strong word... Anyway, when we got there they were there... The Pyrons. We could have left, but there were lots of women and children, so we stayed and beat them.

Scott Summers: You defeated them?

PQ: Very nice glasses, man! Red! So nice! And yes, we defeat them, it's easy.

S: Easy?

PQ: Yes... They are sensitive to salt and iodine, we just had to make a special bullet, wear special glasses to differentiate them from civilians and bang, bang, bang!

T: Salt and Iodine? Just that?

PQ: Yes! I mean, they would die with a bullet in the head too, but if you want to save the person that they are dominating, just shoot on a non-lethal area in their bodies and the Pyrons die and the body comes back to life.

S: W-ait, wait... Are you saying that we can still save the ones that the creatures killed? How? We saw their body being killed.

PQ: I know they look dead, but they’re not. They’re only dominated by the Pyron.

G: Why are you all so surprised? Everyone in space knows this.

N: We didn’t know, nobody warned us!

G: Yeah, you're the ones excluded from the galaxy, really.

PQ: Outside, they’re afraid of earth. They don’t know what you can do or not. Basically nothing, but they better let everyone think they can do a lot.

PQ: So, shall we go?

Peter got up and stretched.

S: Go where?

PQ: Kill those fucking Pyrons!
It seems easy. Too easy, actually.
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

S: Are you sure that only salt and iodine kill them? Is it true that people who survive are totally free from their domination?

PQ: Of course. But the bullet has to be able to pierce the body and release the content there.

Professor McCoy soon became interested.

Professor McCoy: Do you have any bullets of that kind so we can make replicas? Although it seems very easy to do.

PQ: And it's easy to do here, since y'all have salt in abundance on earth. It's not so easy out there. I've been thinking about one thing, people are living here isolated for quite a while, that means that there's a lot of Pyrons out there, and it means that we might not save all of them.

Clint: But what really matter is that we can save some and we'll be free of these Pyrons creatures or whatever the hell that is.

PQ: That's how you talk, I like you!

Clint: Thank you, I like you too!

Steve looked at Tony, expecting an opinion from him, basically waiting for a permit to agree to the attack on the Pyrons.

Tony sighed and raised his eyebrows.

T: Worth a try.

S: It's worth winning this battle. We will win with the help of the Guardians. They are already helping us a lot.

T: I just...

Steve watched Tony's expression.

S: What?

T: I'm just thinking about how long it will take to make the bullets. We have weapons, but I don't know if they are appropriate.

PQ: They're not, I checked, they need an upgrade, but you can let that with my friend Rocket, he will help you with that.

The mobilization to upgrade the weapons and to manufacture the special bullets took about a month. And it took another 3 months to train civilians to use the weapons and also train them for the hostile environment that has become the outside world.
The day of battle will be on the next day and a small group of avengers, mutants and civilians would remain at the base to protect the children, and those who are lock at the F Wing.

Natasha knocked on the door to Steve's room, although the door was already open, she only knocked to alert her presence.

Natasha looked at Steve sitting on the bed with Sarah in his lap, struggling to give her the bottle.

**N:** She's a fighter.

Steve looked at Natasha and then at Sarah.

Natasha entered the room, pulled out a chair, and sat down.

**S:** Is it a new adjective for stubborn?

**N:** It may just be a matter of perspective.

**S:** I thought she would get along with the lady I got to breastfeed her, but it was even worse. She didn’t want the breast and stays in that fight with the bottle.

**N:** She just wants attention.

Natasha stroked Sarah's foot.

**N:** I've been thinking, maybe she's not as young as we thought.

**S:** What do you mean?

**N:** She has grown very fast since we brought her here. I think she wasn’t actually a newborn when we caught her.

Steve frowned.

**N:** I think she was just malnourished. Look at her now, she's three times the size now, and she's too smart for a newborn.

**S:** How long do you think she has?

**N:** I don’t know, 5 months? Maybe 6. I really don’t know... But I think milk is not enough for her.

**S:** I don’t know what to do, then.

**N:** Maybe Cho can help.

**S:** I talked to her about Sarah not wanting to breastfeed, but she said it's phase, that I should insist.

Steve sighed.

**S:** I'm worried, very much indeed. I don’t know if anyone here will have the patience to feed
her when I leave for the mission, tomorrow.

N: It's normal to feel this way, Steve... We never think someone will take good care of someone, like how we do.

Natasha smiled and was still looking at Sarah, but then she looked at Steve and he was staring at her. Steve loves the simple smiles she gives to Sarah and their son.

Natasha felt uncomfortable with the way Steve stared at her.

N: What?

S: Hmm?

N: You’re looking at me.

S: Was I?

N: Yes. Is there something in my tooth?

S: No... No.

Steve laughed.

S: I was noticing your smile.

Natasha frowned.

N: My smile? I wasn’t smiling.

S: Yes, you were. You always smile at Sarah and James like that. You stay very...

N: What? Thin? Tall?

S: Beautiful.

Natasha looked down and smiled again.

S: I love it when you smile. It's so rare.

N: I don’t have many reasons to smile.

Natasha continued to play with Sarah's feet.

N: But that makes me smile.

S: Did you hear that, Sarah? You should stay with Auntie Nat, all the time, to make her smile.

N: I don’t want her to call me Auntie Nat.

S: Why not? It's cute.

N: No! I feel like I'm old.

Natasha smiled.
Steve and Natasha saw a group of civilians running down the hall, under Logan's command.

Steve and Natasha looked at each other.

**N:** Yeah... We're going to war.

**S:** We're going.

Natasha sighed and stood up.

**N:** I'm going to get James, because...

Natasha stopped talking because as soon as she got up, Steve hold on some of her fingers and she froze.

Natasha looked at Steve.

**S:** Nat?

**N:** Don’t...

**S:** I can’t anymore...

**N:** Yes, you can. Don’t screw it up.

Natasha sighed.

**S:** I just want to...

**N:** I don’t want to hear, Steve.

Natasha pulled her hand from Steve's and left the room.

Natasha stopped a few meters after and put her hand to her lips.

_We're fine the way we are, we don't have to ruin it._ Natasha thought and went on her way to the nursery.

Natasha took James at the nursery and took him to her dorm.

On arriving, James ran to get his father's drawing of the Iron Man, he made Natasha cut out the drawing to fit the contour of the Iron Man and he was using it as if it was a toy.

Natasha watched him and smiled as she sat on the bed.

**N:** James?

James was pretending that the Iron Man was flying and imitating the plane sound.

**N:** James?

Natasha had to hold James on her lap and place him next to her on the bed.

**N:** I want to talk to you.

James held out the Iron Man's arm in Natasha's direction.
J: Pew, pew, pew.

N: James...

J: No, Mom, you have to fall. I shoot you!

N: I'm sorry, son. It's just that tomorrow mommy will leave for a few days... Okay?

James looked at Natasha, but didn’t seem to understand what those words meant.

N: I'll try to get back as fast as I can. I'm sorry for breaking my promise one more time.

J: Are you sad, Mommy?

N: Just a little bit.

J: Why?

N: Because mommy doesn’t want to stay away from you.

J: James is here!

James pointed at himself.

Natasha smiled and stroked James' hair.

N: I know, baby...

Natasha kissed James's forehead.

N: I love you, James Rogers.

J: I love you too, Mommy.

Natasha smiled.

J: Let's play?

Natasha nodded.

... Meanwhile at F Wing, Bucky had just arrived to visit his friend.

As he entered Sharon's chamber, she looked up at him and smiled.

B: You seem to be in a good mood today.

Bucky looked at Sharon's baby, in this case the pillow she pretended to be her daughter. The pillow was on the floor, which was strange because she had the greatest care with the pillow, not even letting anyone approach it, not even to wash...

B: Is everything okay?

Sharon nodded.
B: Why is the baby on the floor?

Sharon looked at the pillow and her smile broke, she lowered her head and walked around in the chamber, avoiding eye contact with Bucky.

B: It’s not a baby anymore?

Sharon: Don’t talk about that.

B: Oh, okay.

Sharon: I'm ashamed.

B: You don’t have to feel that way

Sharon: I thought you wouldn’t come here any more.

B: We had some changes up there, it got a bit complicated, I'm sorry, I wish I had come sooner.

Sharon: He's still coming here.

B: Who? Steve?

Sharon nodded.

B: Do you recognize him now?

Sharon: Don’t tell him.

B: Why?

Sharon: Please. He came with a baby. I'm not sure if the baby is real. I cried because I thought it was our baby.

B: It's not your baby. But he has a baby now. Her name is Sarah.

Sharon: A girl? Why? How

B: He found her during a mission outside and he adopted her.

Sharon: Really?

B: Yeah... She was alone, she needed him and he needed her... They were both alone.

Bucky looked at Sharon, trying to figure out what Sharon was feeling. He had already seen her leave the normal state, to one of uncontrollable fury in a matter of seconds, but even so, he chose to tell her the truth.

Sharon sighed.

Sharon: At least he didn’t choose our daughter's name.

B: No. She already had a name when they found her.
Sharon: They?

Now Bucky was afraid, he was silent.

Sharon: Natasha…

Sharon took a deep breath and walked around the chamber again.

Sharon: Is she helping him?

B: Everybody is helping him.

Sharon: I don’t want her to wear Maggie's clothes! Or anything that belonged to my daughter! I don’t want!

Bucky noticed that Sharon's voice began to change to angry.

Sharon: Tell him I don’t want to! Tell him! Tell him that she's not Maggie. She's not Maggie!

B: I'll tell him. I'll tell, okay? Easy... Calm down, Sharon... Breathe, take a deep breath.

Sharon was already red and looking into Bucky's eyes, she managed to calm her breathing slowly.

B: I don’t want them to dope you again here.

Sharon: I think it's better this way. So I won’t disturb anyone. So everyone can be fine and happy.

B: But I wouldn’t be happy with that. I wouldn’t.

Sharon almost smiled at Bucky.

B: I want you to recover, I promise I'll get you out of here. And when you leave, it won’t be to be confined in the bunker with us, we'll be living out there.

Sharon: Outside?

B: Yes. Remember I talked about fighting to get free, it was all or nothing?

Sharon nodded, but she doesn’t remember for sure. Strong medication harms her reasoning.

B: We get new friends who will help us conquer Earth again. We're going to war tomorrow.

Sharon: Tomorrow? War?

B: Yes. We will win this time and I'll take you for a walk in the sun.

Sharon: Sun?

B: Yes. You will be able to run, to feel the ground, mud, grass... Rain... Everything.

Sharon soon imagined herself in a free place and smiled.

B: I need to go, I came to say goodbye before leaving, but just to say goodbye.
Sharon surprised Bucky because she walked up to him and hugged him. Bucky hugged her back and immediately the nurses entered the chamber.

- Without physical contact, please.

B: It's okay.

- Security matter, sir. She's done this before with one of our own and tried to kill him.

Sharon let go of Bucky and looked down, clearly feeling ashamed of her past actions, which was a good sign, it shows that she is slowly coming back to herself.

B: See you later, Carter.

Sharon: Bye, Barnes. Be safe.

...

Maria Hill knocked on Natasha's room door and then opened the door.

Natasha was lying next to James, who was sleeping in her bed.

H: I'm going to see Fury, I wanted to know if you wanna come with me.

N: Hm... Sure.

H: He slept now?

N: Yes. I don't want to wake him up.

Natasha got to her feet and picked up James.

N: I'll leave him with Steve. I'll meet you down there.

H: Okay.

Hill withdrew and Natasha took a blanket from the bed to cover James.

Natasha went to Steve's room and before entering, she could hear Steve talking to Sarah.

S: I wanted you to stay with Uncle Clint, but we'll need him, he has the best aim of all here, so he has to go with us, understand? But there's Aunt Laura, Clint's wife. She will take care of you. I know, I know you didn't spend much time together, and maybe you will strangely her a little, but she's cool and James likes her a lot...

Natasha cleared her throat at the door to alert her presence. Steve looked at her and then at James on Natasha's lap.

N: You know she's only a baby, right?

S: I just...

Steve didn’t want to explain himself, no matter the reason, he would come out as the weird in the story.
N: Can you stay with James for a bit? He's just asleep and I'm going to visit Fury.

S: Of course.

Steve walked over to Natasha and she did her best to pass James onto Steve's lap without waking him. The process took so long that by the time they completed this transfer of laps, their bodies were too close, and their arms were touching too much.

Natasha looked at Steve and he didn’t wait for her to say no, he leaned toward her and pressed his lips to hers. Natasha thought of retreating, but she didn’t have time… Feel those lips on hers, it was as if they had been glued, it was like a magnet that prevented her from moving away.

Natasha put a hand on the back of Steve's neck as Steve stroked her tongue, and the kiss didn’t last much because the children were there.

Natasha pushed Steve back and looked at him in shock and out of breath.

N: Why?

S: I won’t apologize for that.

Natasha ran her hands over her lips.

N: I... I have to go.

Natasha ran out of the room and down the stairs as if she were being chased by Steve.

In fact what was chasing her, it was the growth of that feeling that she had suppressed in herself and swore she wouldn’t let it come back to the surface again.

N: I can’t, I can’t!

Natasha finished down the stairs and stopped in the hallway, repeating to herself the same phrase.

Hill approached her.

H: You can’t what? Talk to Fury? He won’t shoot us if we only be for 10 seconds there.

N: It's Steve.

H: What is it, now?

N: I can’t...

H: What?

N: It's very difficult because I want him so much.

H: Huh?

Natasha was still trying to catch her breath, she shook her head and took a few steps, trying to recover.

H: You didn’t say more about that feeling for him, I thought you had overcome.
N: I thought that too, but...

H: Breathe... If you want to be with him, I'm not going to judge you, but it's your life...

N: I don't want to! No, I don't want to take any chances.

H: You have the courage to risk your life to save others like an avenger, but you don't have the courage to risk your heart to be happy?

N: How could I be happy here? No one can be happy in this place.

H: Okay, you've already hit your drama quota with me today. Let's go visit the old man.

...

H: Fury?

NF: What do you want?

Hill and Natasha entered the room.

NF: What do you two want?

N: We're going to war, Fury.

NF: It's about time. What u waiting for?

N: I wanted to say goodbye.

NF: Are you going to die out there? I won't take care of your son.

N: Don't worry about it.

NF: If that's all... Goodbye.

Nick looked at the two of them and turned the wheelchair to the back of the room.

H: Fury?

Nick looked at Maria.

Hill sighed and shook her head, hesitating about what she wanted to say.

NF: What? Are you getting emotional like her?

Fury indicated Natasha.

Hill shook her head and the three of them were in a strange silence.

Natasha touched Hill's arm, indicating that it was for them to leave, and Hill would follow Natasha, but Fury turned his chair toward them.

NF: I hope... That you come back alive... and in one piece.

Nick said, looking at Maria, she nodded.
The two of them left Fury's room and were silent until they started up the stairs.

N: He cares...

H: What?

N: He cares about you, but he's the hardest guy I know, he'd never admit, not even in the grave.

H: I don’t know what you're talking about.

Natasha looked at Hill.

N: I care about you too.

H: Did you smoke some weed, Natasha?

Natasha smiled.

N: No, I just want you to know, that I care about what happens to you, you don’t have only him. You have me, too.

Hill almost smiled, but then she frowned and shook her head.

H: I want to know where you got these herbs, because I want too. By the way, Fury is right, you're too emotional.

The two finished climbing the stairs and Hill walked away to the Command Center.

...

Juliana: Is that helping?

Bucky: You have no idea!

Juliana smiled as she massaged Bucky Barnes' shoulder. The two were in the gym wing, because Juliana refused to go to Bucky's room to do the massage and if she went to her room, which is actually her aunt's, her aunt would make her feel too embarrassed in front of him.

Bucky was shirtless, lying face down on a long bench, and Juliana was massaging Barnes's most tense points on his back and neck.

B: You have magical hands, Juliana.

Ju: Thank you. My mother used to say that I would be a physiotherapist or a cook.

Juliana smiled.

B: Do you miss her much?

Ju: I don’t think so. No... She was gone and I was too young. Most of the things I know about her, it was my aunt who told me.

B: And she had only you?
Ju: No, I had two younger brothers. Twins. They died too.

B: Oh. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked.

Ju: It's okay. And your family? Do you have any brothers?

B: I had a sister, named Becky. She was beautiful, I don’t what happened to her, but she must be dead too, just like my parents.

Bucky turned his face a little to stare at Juliana.

B: We have more in common than you think.

Juliana smiled.

...

The next morning, early, The Avengers, mutants, and civilians assigned to go to war were already in the aisles, properly uniformed and armed.

The rest of the population was a little behind, so they could say goodbye. There were many nervous wives, crying desperately to see their husbands about to go to war.

Steve ran through the ranks of his new soldiers, saying encouragement stuff, reminding them why they were going to war, and on the other side Logan, encouraged the soldiers to have claws and not pity of anyone out there.

Logan: It could be a little girl like that one over there.

Logan pointed at little Torunn, daughter of Thor, hidden between her mother's legs.

Logan: Shoot! If they are out there and you are without your special identification goggles… Shoot! If you do not shoot, you will be taken by these damn Pyrons and I will shoot you or crave my claws into your body!

Jane stroked Thor's arm.

Jane: Cheer up, dear.

Thor: I wanted to go to war!

Jane: But you were assigned to protect us here.
Thor: But I wanted to go to war!

Jane: I'm sure Steve made you stay for tactical reasons.

Thor: I just wanted to go to war!

Thor's head dropped to the side, a huge thud in his face.

...

S: Are you all ready?

- Yes sir!

The people answered.

S: I'm going to let your family say goodbye to you again, but actually it’s not to say goodbye, it's to say "See you soon", because we will come back.

Steve signaled for family members to approach and hug their relatives who are going to war.

Steve himself went to Laura, who was with Clint Barton and was holding Sarah in her lap.

Steve took Sarah and kissed her face.

S: I'll be back, Sarah.

- DADDY!!!

James was behind playing with Clint's son, Francis and ran to Steve.

Steve crouched and hugged James.

S: I'm going to miss you both very much.

N: No more than me.

Natasha had just approached the three of them. Steve looked at her, then looked back at James.

J: Are you going to the War, Daddy?

Steve nodded.

J: Can I go too?

Natasha also crouched and stroked James's back.

N: Remember what Mommy said? It's only for adults.

James sighed in frustration.

J: Take it, Daddy.

James pulled the iron man's picture from his pocket, which was already wrinkled, torn, from so much he plays with it.
S: But it's yours.

J: He will fight too and will protect you.

S: True. I'll take him. Thank you.

Steve grabbed the paper and put it in his uniform pocket.

N: Can I get a hug too?

James released Steve and hugged Natasha, who hugged him and stood with him on her lap, she sniffed him hard and kissed James's cheek.

N: Promise you will behave.

James nodded.

J: I don’t want you to go away, Mommy. Let's play with me?

N: James... I'm sorry. I can’t right now.

S: When we get back, we're all going to play.

James looked at Steve, but didn’t smile, he laid his head on Natasha's shoulder.

S: I need a favor, James. I can only ask this for very strong and brave boys. Are you one?

James nodded.

S: So Sarah will stay and you have a mission to keep her safe.

James frowned.

S: Can you do that?

James nodded.

Steve’s W.T beeped and it was a message from Maria Hill, warning that it was time to go.

Steve just looked at Natasha and she understood.

Natasha kissed James's face once more and put him on the floor.

Steve handed Sarah over to Laura's lap and returned with Natasha and Clint to the queue position.

As he passed by the soldiers, Steve was ordering them to return, and they all obeyed in ranks.

Steve, Natasha and Clint approached Tony and Maria Hill.

Tony: Ready?

Natasha and Clint nodded.

Tony asked his mascot Peter, to open the door of the bunker, and as soon as the door was opened, the daylight flooded the bunker aisles. Many of the people had already forgotten how strong and hot the sun was.
S: Fear nothing, soldiers! And Avengers?

The Avengers members who were around, stared at Steve.

S: Assemble!

Chapter End Notes

Someone is not coming back alive from this war. Can you guess who?
They all stood still, waiting for the bunker’s gate to be after Steve’s command, but it remained closed.

Tony who was in his Iron Man armor, looked around.

**T:** But... Where is Patrick?

Peter, Tony's assistant came running through the rows of soldiers.

**P:** I'm sorry, Mr. Stark, I was getting my uniform.

**T:** Uniform? Why do you need a uniform for?

**P:** T-To go to war.

**T:** Peter...

**P:** It's Patrick. Oops, it's Peter. You got it right this time. I got confused.

**T:** Kid, listen... You won’t come with us.

**P:** But I'm your assistant.

**T:** You're very young.

**P:** So are they.

Peter indicated the mutants Scott and Jean Gray.

**T:** They're trained and you're not.

**P:** But in the Civil War, you asked me to fight for you and you even said I did a good job.

**T:** Yes, you did, but placing you in the middle of our war was a big mistake. I shouldn’t have done it.

**P:** But I'm ready, Mr. Stark.

**T:** Steve? A little help here, please?
Steve approached Peter.

S: Mr. Parker, I have no doubt of your abilities, but you are a valuable member of the bunker, we can’t be completely unprotected here.

P: You're just saying this to convince me to not fight, you think I'm weak.

S: No, I'm being honest. I don’t think you’re weak, if only the weak remained here, I wouldn’t leave Thor here also. I need you to stay here to keep these people safe. That lady, your aunt...

P: Aunt May.

S: Yes. She needs your protection too. We are counting on your support here.

Steve touched Peter Parker's shoulder.

S: Do you think you can follow that order?

P: Yes, sir...

Peter said without much excitement.

S: Ok, so open the gate for us.

Peter opened the gate and Steve ran to the exit, he left along sided with Iron Man and then the rest of their army went out slowly and civilians crowded near the entrance to try to see how the outside world is now.

The gate was closed after the army left for the war.

Steve and Maria Hill had already determined groups and their leaders to each board a different plane. Of course that in Steve’s group were Natasha, Wanda and Clint Barton, and the civilians transformed into soldier.

On Tony's plane were Scott Lang, Hope Pym, Vision and the army of civilians.

Maria Hill had her own plane with SHIELD agents, her only extra guest was Bucky Barnes.

As they flew, the Guardians of the galaxy's ship made some dangerous and impossible maneuvers. It would be impossible for Earth's planes to do maneuvers like that without causing a disaster.

Peter Quill: Captain? Do you hear me? Over.

S: Yes, Mr. Quill.

PQ: I thought you’were going to say “over”. Over.

S: That’s not necessary, Mr. Quill. We no longer use this word to end communication.

PQ: Oh really? Too bad, I've always wanted to use this. Captain?

S: Yes, Mr. Quill?

PQ: Why are we going so slow?
Steve was clearly frustrated with this, he hates it when people don’t follow his plans, he always thinks everything will fall apart.

N: Maybe they'll know what they're doing.

S: I don’t know, Nat. If there's any trap or surprise, they'll be there by themselves.

N: But it was their choice.

S: I know, but...

N: Don’t worry, let's focus on controlling our people.

S: Do you have the maps?

N: Yes, everything here on tablets.

S: Tablet? Wouldn’t it be better in W.T.?

N: It didn’t fit everything. Patrick... I mean Peter, he created 3D models of the cities based on what I described for him.

Natasha activated the three-dimensional images of the tablet, which wasn’t an ordinary tablet, it was an ultramodern tablet.
N: See... Those buildings in red, is where there is a greater concentration of Pyrons. These streets in orange are where it has a greater traffic of Pyrons, hidden in the case, but generally who walks by these ones is attacked. These green buildings are the most favorable so that we can make rest stop or first aid calls and the blues are the most favorable to set up camp.

S: That's great, Nat. Good work!

N: I thought we would need to, since we are split in so many groups.

S: But not you and me.

Natasha looked at Steve and frowned.

S: You go where I can keep you safe.

N: I don’t need you for that.

S: I know, but I need you.

Natasha thought about answering, but she couldn’t find words that made sense, she didn’t expect Steve to respond so directly to her and even with Steve investing in her clearly now, she still doesn’t believe he can feel anything for her.

N: Why are you doing this?

S: Doing what?

C: Captain?

Steve and Natasha looked at Clint Barton.

C: Tony wants to talk to you.

Steve looked at Natasha and then walked away to Clint to find out what Tony wanted.

While Steve was talking to Tony, Natasha checked the plane and noticed that one of the civilians, who was now a soldier, was crying in the back seat, but in a measured way.

Natasha approached her and sat down beside her. Natasha noticed that there was a piece of paper in the woman's hand.

N: Did you leave someone special behind?

The woman wiped the tears and nodded.

N: Barbara, right?

Natasha read her name on the woman's uniform.

N: I'm Natasha.

Barb: I know who you are. Sorry for crying.

N: It's okay.
The woman handed the paper over to Natasha to see. It wasn’t a paper, it was a well-cracked and a little torn photo.

**Barb:** These are my children. The big one is Jeff, the little Michael and the baby, Gwen.

Natasha gave a small smile.

**N:** They’re beautiful.

**Barb:** Yes. They were beautiful.

Natasha smiled and looked away from the photo to look at the woman.

**Barb:** They’re all dead. I mean, I don’t know anymore. When those outsiders arrived and said there are chances to save those who were dominated by the Pyrons, I just thought... Maybe I can still have my kids back. Is it possible?

**N:** Anything is possible right now.

**Barb:** And even if I can’t have them back, I still want to avenge them. I just want to wipe out those Pyrons and Thanos from here.

Natasha didn’t know what to say, she didn’t expect a story like this and who is good with words is Steve, not her.

**N:** You said you left someone in the bunker...

**Barb:** Yes. My husband and my adopted son, Oliver. We adopted him when we came to the bunker. He helped ease the pain and is one of the reasons I'm here too, I want him to live the experience that my children and I live out here. This is still our world, right?

Natasha nodded.

**N:** Let's make it ours again.

**Barb:** And you? Did you leave anyone special in the bunker?

**N:** Yes.

Natasha sighed and she didn’t want to talk about James because it hurts her heart, but after the woman exposed herself so much, she would have to talk about him.

**N:** My son... He will be 3 years old soon and I won’t be there for his birthday again... I promised him that I would never leave him again, but here I am... fighting this war.

**Barb:** For him.

Natasha nodded.

**Barb:** I'm glad to be under the leadership of people like you, Black Widow.

Natasha frowned and got a little confused. In fact, Natasha was surprised, because even though she was part of the lead, no one ever remembers that. They usually remember Steve, because he is always the leader and generally people thank him and with her, people come to complain if
something went wrong in the process. The effect of Barbara's words was enormous on Natasha, she was feeling useful, as she hadn’t felt for a long time.

Natasha leaned against the woman's shoulder as she stood up.

**N:** Let's finish this soon so you can get back to Oliver.

**Barb:** And you to James.

Natasha gave a discreet smile and nodded, she returned to the front of the plane and noticed that Steve, Clint and Wanda were discussing some subject.

Natasha approached them.

**N:** What?

**C:** The government.

Steve looked at Natasha.

**S:** Tony said they decided to not attack the Pyrons.

**N:** What?! But they had agreed, we need them!

**Wanda:** Now they say they’re not confident that the Guardians are telling the truth, that maybe they work for Thanos and that they are leading us into a trap.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

**N:** Only now they have created this theory? How stupid! Even if it were true, they let us go into such an "ambush" and didn’t volunteer to help us?

Natasha looked at Steve, who was holding his hands on the table, looking at a large map of the city, pensive and worried.

Natasha approached Steve.

**N:** We'll still be able to win, right?

Steve shook his head.

**S:** I don’t know.

**N:** We still have help from the Guardians.

**S:** Yes. I planned the attack only with our bunker and the Guardians, but the government bunker would be our plan B, in case something went wrong.

**N:** They are cowards. We should get the Pyrons and play inside their bunkers.

**C:** I agree.

**S:** There are civilians in there too.

**N:** I know, I'm just joking. Look...
Natasha laid her hand on Steve's back, which made him look at her.

N: This will work. We can’t go back now.

S: I'm just thinking if something goes wrong... You and I are here. James and Sarah are there.

N: Yes. They are safe there and they’re not alone. No matter what happens to us.

W: What kind of speech is that? We will all come back, we will win! We're going to detonate with those Pyrons.

S: Do you know who would say what you just said?

W: Sam...

Steve smiled sadly.

Wanda nodded.

W: I was thinking about him. At this time here, he would be making jokes and betting on Bucky who would kill more Pyrons and he would count all that he knocked down.

Steve looked at Natasha, like someone who had just remembered something important.

S: I'm worried about Bucky.

N: By his arm?

S: I tried to persuade him to stay...

N: But this is his war, he asked for it.

S: Yeah... That's why I couldn’t push him too hard to stay in the bunker.

N: I tried it too.

Steve was surprised.

N: I trust James' life in his hand, I know he would fight like a lion for James, give his life for his.

S: I would do that too.

N: I know, you're his father, I know you love him. But...

S: But what?

N: I just...

C: Okay, okay. Steve is obviously a super jealous father, and we all know he loves his kids, but Natasha is just saying that in the absence of you two, she trusts Bucky to be with James. Don’t you feel the same?

Steve was embarrassed and nodded.
The journey was silent for the next few hours until they landed near the city. This time they had no need to land far, the intention was to be seen and attract all the Pyrons.

Natasha and Steve watched a battle going on in the city.

**N:** Don’t you hate when they start without us?

**S:** Let’s join them.

Steve went to the back of the plane, Natasha and the other Avengers followed, and the soldiers got up as Steve passed them.

**S:** Remember: We are the Group B! Keep our perimeter of action, they’re smart in a certain way, they will try to isolate us one by one, don’t let that happen.

**N:** Steve? Group A and Group C have already landed and are on their way to their point.

**S:** We are next. Let’s go.

The pilot opened the gate and everyone rushed out of the plane, and as expected, dozens of Pyrons began to climb out of the buildings and attack them.

Clint looked at Wanda.

**C:** Honey, help your daddy here, please.

Wanda nodded and levitated off the ground, bringing Clint along with her. The two of them levitated through some buildings.

**C:** That looks great.

**W:** I’ll do a sweep for you.

Wanda reached for the building Clint asked to stay, and a red wave flooded the place.

Wanda had all the Pyrons hidden in that building flung out through the windows, then she put Clint on the floor he asked for.

**C:** You always make daddy so proud!

**S:** Wanda, don’t forget to take it lightly when you can, we can still save some lives. Use the weapons and leave the powers as a last resort. The same goes for you, Vision.

**Vision:** Understood, Captain.

**W:** Sorry, Stev, I'll pay more attention.

Steve looked at Natasha who was shooting at the Pyrons.

**S:** There are many now.

**N:** They are less than I expected.

**S:** Is it working? Are they coming back to life?
N: I don’t know, everyone I shot, are still on the floor. And I had to shoot more than once against some who seem to be more resilient.

S: Let's try to move forward, I want to keep an eye on the Guardians.

Natasha nodded.

N: Clint?

C: Yes, baby?

N: We need you to cover us. We have to get to the center of the city.

C: Yes, ma'am.

Clint ran inside the building he was standing as he fired arrows at the Pyrons near Steve and Natasha, who started running toward the center of town.

C: You're on your own now.

N: Thank you, Barton.

C: Why do I have the impression that we will not have lunch today?

Clint was saying, returning to his starting position from where he could hit the Pyrons without being in their sight.

When Steve and Natasha arrived in the center of town, they saw the Guardians fighting the Pyrons and noticed that they had many over Gamora and Peter Quill.

Steve threw his shield against a pole, which hit in several places, until hit the Pyrons that surrounded Peter Quill.

Natasha had already run toward Gamora and fired at the Pyrons that were over her body on the floor.

N: You can open your eyes now.

Gamora opened her eyes.

G: I have everything under control.

N: I know that.

PQ: GAMS! Captain America saved my life! I was saved by the Captain!

S: QUILL!

Peter Quill looked at Steve and then at the Pyron who was already jumping on him. Peter drew his gun and shot at the Pyron's belly.

PQ: Wow! That was close.

S: Come on.

PQ: I know you said that would have many of them, but I didn’t imagine an infestation like
that.

S: And we have terrible news.

PQ: What is it?

S: Our reinforcement is not coming anymore.

PQ: What?

N: It means that we won’t have any reinforcement. We're on our own here.

PQ: Oh I always hated bad news!

Rocket: We don’t need them. Let's fight and win!

The battle ensued for hours, and it seemed that the more they defeated, the more appeared and unfortunately the training the civilians had wasn’t enough to keep them safe, many were being attacked and the others were becoming exhausted.

N: They're tired, Steve.

S: I know. We can’t go back now or we'll all die. We need more time.

Tony: You mean we need more people.

Hill: Are you deaf? We have no more people!

S: No, we need more time. Maybe the Pyrons get tired too.

H: How silly, they are not like us.

PQ: No, no, no. Steve is right, they are using human bodies and human bodies gets exhausted. I suggest you all stay in your positions.

H: So Steve, it's time for your encouraging speeches.

S: I will encourage them. Hill? Is Bucky with you?

B: I am, Steve. Stop worrying about me.

N: Stay alive, Barnes.

H: He's doing well.
S: Guys, check out the camp sites and try to get close to them. In about three hours, start sending the civilians to these posts. First let's ensure their safety. We will go last.

T: Understood.

H: Understood.

S: Scott Summers, did you hear us?

SS: Yes, Captain. We’re moving our mutants too.

Steve ran to a few civilians and gave encouragement speech, urging them to hold on and remain focused, that they would soon rest and that this war would make them victors.

After three hours Steve encouraged the civilians to go to the camps as agreed, but of course that before that he asked Wanda to scan the buildings and make them really safe so everyone could camp on them.

Steve checked who was still in the battle and he didn’t see Natasha around.

S: Romanoff? Natasha?

C: Where are you, Natasha?

S: I don’t see her anywhere.

H: Natasha?

S: Something is wrong, she is not responding.

C: Oh just now that the amount of Pyrons has dropped.

S: You go to the camp, Barton, I'll find her.

C: It's getting dark, you'll barely see.

S: That's why I want you to go to the camp soon.

C: Steve, maybe she...

S: No! She's somewhere!
C: I meant that she knows how to come back safe, Cap. You should come with us.

S: I'm not going without her. Now go. Move!

H: You all heard the man. Let's go!

The Avengers began to retreat, just as the Guardians, they all checked the map, which building, the group they belong, was located.

Natasha could hear on her electronic point that they were calling her, but she couldn’t answer now.

A few minutes earlier, as she was helping some civilians who were a little farther away from the camps sites, she was pulled by one of the Pyrons into a building through a window.

The Pyron hurled her to the ground, which stunned her for a moment and then he mounted her. He tried to make Natasha look at him, but Natasha kept her eyes closed to not be dominated.

When Natasha heard Steve calling her at the electronic point, she didn’t answer because she knew she was in a red debris building, infested with Pyrons, it was only one attacking her and if she spoke, she would attract much more and then she would have no chance to survive.

Unfortunately the sound of the Pyron fighting against her, caught the attention of the other Pyrons, who began to appear in the middle of that place where Natasha was.

Natasha knew that either the Pyrons would dominate her, or they would kill her, she tried to reach for her weapon, but the Pyron pressed her wrist to release the weapon and she could feel that there were more Pyrons around her and when one of them leaned against her forehead, she thought it would be the end of her life, they were trying to open her eyes.

Luckily, Steve found her and threw the shield at the Pyron, who was trying to make her open her eyes. It was enough to make the Pyrons distracted and Natasha was able to get rid of what was on her, she kicked him and retrieved the gun and fired at them.

S: Come on! Run! Run! Run!

Natasha ran to the window and Steve pulled her out, the two started running, not knowing exactly where, since it was already too dark to see something.

The Pyrons don’t have the same speed as theirs, but at night they usually wander around the city, as if the sunshine somehow harms them.

At every corner they turned, they were surprised by more Pyrons.

N: We can’t be running here. We have to go up!

S: Should we try to go back to where the others are?

N: No! Impossible now, we are far and we can hardly see.

S: That building!

Steve pointed to a building at the end of the street, it looked complete, but it was a very tall building, with many floors, which could be a solution for them, since the Pyron are not to make much physical effort, if they moved to the Top floors, they would be safe.
Natasha understood Steve's reasoning and nodded. They both ran and entered the building, and as they expected, they found Pyrons inside it in the first floors.

Steve and Natasha killed all the Pyrons they encountered as they went upstairs.

On the eighth floor, it didn’t seem to have any more to threaten them.

Natasha paused to catch her breath, she put her hands on her knee and closed her eyes.

S: You're tired.

Natasha shook her head.

N: I... I can... Continue.

Natasha said slowly as her breathing permitted.

S: We need to continue to be really safe.

Natasha nodded and when she went to look at Steve, she saw someone behind him, it was a Pyron and he had a broken piece of glass in his hand.

N: Steve!

Steve tried to turn around in time, but the Pyron had already stuck the glass in his back.

Steve made an expression of pain and Natasha managed to shoot the Pyron who fell backwards on the stairs.

Natasha ran to Steve.

N: Steve?

S: I'm fine.

N: You're not fine, this is stuck...

Natasha stared in horror at the huge piece of glass on Steve's back.

S: Let's go up.

N: No, I need to take it out.

S: No...

N: Steve, it can infect, I need to take it out. I'll try not to hurt you. Trust me.

S: I trust you.

They looked each other instantly.

Steve sat down with difficulty.

N: Avoid moving, all right? I'll remove it.

Steve just nodded and took a deep breath.
Natasha used a knife to cut out Steve's uniform around the wound.

_S: I have...

_N: Sh...

_S: I have a bandage. In the pocket of my pants.

Natasha opened the pocket of Steve's pants and he had a mini first aid kit.

_N: That will help. You always think of everything, right?

_S: I try.

Steve gave a small smile.

_N: Try not to bleed a lot when I pull, okay?

_S: I'll try.

Natasha pulled the glass out a little, just to make sure no major vein was cut, otherwise he would bleed to death. Natasha continued to pull the glass and Steve clenched his fist and groaned in pain.

_N: I'm sorry.

_S: It's okay. It wasn’t supposed to be hurting like that.

Natasha bit her lip and it was as if she was sharing that pain with Steve.

_N: It's almost out.

Natasha finally removed the glass and she used the hydrogen peroxide to clean the wound. She prepared to use the gauze to help clean it, but Steve caught her arm.

_S: We need to go up.

_N: But...

_S: When we're safe...

Natasha nodded and helped Steve to stand and up the stairs. Natasha tried to stop three floors above, but Steve made her go up six more to make sure they were safe.

_N: There's a bathroom there, maybe there's still water.

Natasha and Steve went to the bathroom and luckily had water on tap, she took the opportunity to wash Steve's wound.

_N: Incredible, the blood is already stagnating.

_S: Serum benefits.

Natasha nodded.

_N: I have to do a bandage anyway, let's go to the window, I can’t see anything here.
Natasha and Steve left the bathroom and went to the window. Steve sat on the floor and in the natural light of the moon, Natasha could see better the cut of Steve.

N: Let's get this part of the uniform off, okay?

Steve nodded.

Natasha pulled Steve's sleeve down as he made an expression of pain.

N: Don't make any effort, I'll help you.

Natasha walked over to the other side and took the other sleeve off Steve's arm.

When he finally got his upper body naked, Natasha glanced briefly at Steve's chest and positioned herself behind him to make the bandage.

Natasha knelt on the floor and as she put some gauze over the cut, Steve moved his head to the side.

S: Have you got hurt?

N: No.

S: Are you sure?

N: Why would I lie?

S: I don't know.

N: Stop worrying with everybody, Steve.

S: You're right.

Steve nodded and sighed.

Natasha pinned the gauze with tape.

N: Am I hurting you?

Steve made negative with his head.

Natasha added another piece of tape.

N: It's done. I'll check if...

Natasha didn't finish the sentence because Steve turned abruptly and took her hands. Natasha stood still at the same time and looked into Steve's eyes.

S: Thank you.

Natasha passed the tip of her tongue between her lips to moisten them a little and nodded.

N: It was nothing.

Natasha looked away, then looked sideways, then down, but Steve held his gaze on her eyes the whole time. Natasha closed her eyes tightly, as if Steve was one of the Pyrons trying to overpower her.
S: Why don’t you look at me?

N: I...

S: I want you to look at me.

Natasha made negative with her head.

S: Natasha?

Natasha sighed and shook her head again, she opened her eyes slightly and bit her lower lip lightly. She knew that as soon as she opened her eyes, she would be doomed to face that old feeling again.

N: Steve...

He could hardly hear what Natasha said, her voice faltered, and it faltered because she was going to tell him to stop, but she didn’t want him to stop and he didn’t stop. Steve's lips were coming closer and closer to hers...

Chapter End Notes

I hope you read this chapter twice to pay close attention to some details to understand better what is coming next, and I'm not talking about steve and natasha moment. I mean there's something to do with them, but not romantically.
Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first touch of Steve's lip on Natasha's, made her sigh involuntarily, he laid his lips over hers so lovingly that all the hairs on her body shivered at the same time.

*Does he want me, the way I want him? Or is it just attraction again?* Natasha thought, beginning to be reluctant to give herself to him.

**N:** Stev...

Natasha whispered again, as Steve placed a kiss on her lips, followed by another kiss on her lower lip.

**S:** Hmm?

Steve questioned, as he turned his body closer to hers and hugged Natasha's waist, making her feel completely at his mercy.

Steve bite lightly Natasha's lower lip.

**S:** What?

**N:** I...

Natasha could only sigh and run her nails lightly around Steve's neck.

**S:** I want you, Natasha. I want you so much.

Natasha opened her eyes and pushed Steve to look at him.

**S:** Don’t say no to me again, please.

**N:** We...

**S:** Don’t you want me anymore?

**N:** I don’t know.

**S:** Let me take this doubt out of your head, okay?

Natasha stood still and keeping her body away from Steve, she closed her eyes and when she reopened, Steve was already with his face on her neck.

*Dammit!* Natasha thought.

Natasha shrugged and craned her neck at least twice, not knowing if she should stop Steve's actions or surrender to him. She couldn’t fight what she longed for herself, she stretched her neck to Steve and slid her fingers through Steve's hair, and even being a short hair, she grabbed it tightly, directing him to kiss her neck where she wanted.
Steve put his arms around Natasha's body and lifted her a little from the floor, he placed her on his lap, but Natasha didn’t sit down, she remained on her knees, one knee on either side of Steve's body, leaning on him.

Steve slid his hand up on Natasha's back to reach the collar of her suit, he held Natasha's collar tightly, and started to give hickeys on her neck.

Natasha felt that the strength that Steve was using to hold her suit was too much and would eventually tear it down, she lowered her face to catch Steve's lips from her neck and then tried to kiss him in the mouth again. It was a quick kiss, the tongues barely touched and to finish, Natasha gave some pecks on his lips.

**N: I only have these clothes here.**

Steve looked into Natasha's eyes and didn’t seem to understand what she was talking about. Natasha let go of Steve's hair and took her hand up to the zipper of her suit, Steve stopped everything he was doing just to watch Natasha undress.

Natasha slowly slipped the zipper down and Steve seemed to lose a little of his breath at every inch of skin revealed. Natasha slipped the zipper to the end and then removed her utility belt.

Steve looked directly at Natasha's black bra and placed his face between her breasts, Steve bit the middle of her bra and Natasha smiled and pushed his head back.

**N: Wait!**

Natasha pulled her arms from the suit and shook her head slightly to remove the hair out of her face, then she put her hands behind her back and unbuttoned her bra.

As she place her bra on the floor, Steve hugged her body again and pulled her closer, making her body lean against his. Steve put his hands under each of Natasha's breasts, tightened them, and lifted a little.

Natasha bit her lip, seeing the look of desire in Steve's eyes, it was as if he was about to devour her for complete, and he would.

Steve squeezed her breasts harder, leaving them completely red, which made Natasha sigh.

Steve place his mouth over one of Natasha's nipples and sucked it vigorously, Natasha let out a small moan and rested her hands on Steve's shoulders.

Natasha moaned again as she felt Steve’s tongue run over her nipple up and down. Natasha threw her head back and tried to remember how to breathe normally, but it was difficult with Steve focused on running his tongue over her nipple with such eagerness.

Steve decided to suck on her other nipple harder until let it very well marked. Natasha bit her lip and ducked her head to look at Steve, she grabbed his hair and made him move away from her breast.

Steve looked at her and Natasha pressed her mouth to his and while Steve was still squeezing her breasts, Natasha caressed his tongue with hers fiercely. Natasha interrupted the kiss and pulled his head to her body again, directing him to suck her breast again. Steve this time was kinder and just slid his tongue around her nipple.

Natasha groaned again and she could feel a shiver run through her body.
While Steve played with her breasts, Natasha slipped her hands through Steve's chest, down to his abdomen, and finally down to Steve's pants, she grabbed his belt and opened it, then she unbuttoned the pants of his uniform...

When Natasha looked where her hands were touching, she noticed that Steve already had a certain volume in his pants, she slipped her hand through Steve's pants and held onto his cock, which made Steve bite Natasha's nipple hard. She pulled his body away immediately and looked at him.

S: No bites?

N: God, no!

S: Okay, I'm sorry.

N: My turn.

S: Huh?

Natasha forgot that Steve was injured on his back and pushed his shoulder back causing him to lie down on the floor, and that without removing her hand from inside his pants.

Steve felt a terrible pain and grunted.

Natasha watched the look of pain on his face and got scared, she moved her hands away and seemed to be in terrible remorse.

N: I'm sorry.

S: All right. It’s all right.

N: No... I forgot your bruise. So sorry.

Steve sat down again with difficulty and looked at Natasha's eyes.

S: Natasha, I'm fine.

N: No, you're not. We can't do it, I don’t know what I was thinking.

Natasha shook her head and moved to get up, but Steve held her.

Natasha looked at Steve.

N: Steve...

S: It's okay. I promise.

Natasha shook her head again and she was afraid to hurt him even more, so she couldn’t move anymore. Steve hugged her back and made her sit on his lap, he looked into her eyes for a long time and Natasha tried to look away from him, but Steve's eyes worked like a magnet and she had to keep looking at him.

Steve just wanted to show that everything was okay, so she wouldn’t feel so guilty over the pain that he felt.

Steve has this incredible ability to make Natasha feel all right just by the way he looks at her.
Are we okay?

Natasha nodded.

Steve brought his lips to hers again and placed his upper lip between her lips. Natasha sucked on Steve's lip, then Steve put his tongue inside her mouth. As soon as Steve's tongue found Natasha's, he caressed her intensely and affectionately, which again made Natasha shiver, even though all the action had slowed down, she was still completely horn for Steve and he was for her.

Natasha hugged Steve's neck and pressed her mouth against his even more, to allow him to explore her whole mouth and the two exchanged sighs as they kissed tenderly.

Slowly and almost without Natasha realizing it, Steve made her lie down on the floor, not taking off the lips of hers, and without letting his body weigh on hers.

While their lips were still connected, Steve slid his hand down Natasha's neck, to the middle of her breasts, then to her belly, which made Natasha contract her belly.

Steve didn't let the kiss be interrupted at any time, not even when he stuck his fingers inside Natasha's suit. Natasha wanted to pull away Steve's lips as soon as she felt his fingers approach her intimate part, but Steve wanted to continue to kiss her, he wanted to kiss her forever.

Natasha let her hands slip from the back of Steve's head to his shoulders and then to his arms, she craved her nails lightly on Steve's arm as he finally reached her intimate part.

As soon as Steve slid a few fingers down Natasha's clit, he stopped the kiss, just to see her reaction.

Natasha was already with her eyes closed and her lips parted, trying to contain the groans, in vain. She was already very wet and Steve's touches only increased the pleasure she was feeling.

There was only one little thing bothering Natasha, just as it bothered her when they made love for the first time: Steve's experience. He knew how to touch her, how to tease her, and it wasn't for him to know that, if he knows, he practiced and she knows with who he practiced and she hates him for that.

The thought that he was doing to Sharon what he's doing to her now, was about to overpower her and make her stop everything, but Steve found the right spot by fingering her clit, which made her cum right away. Natasha had to grab Steve's pulse and make him move his fingers into her, faster, until her body calms down again.

Natasha ended up forgetting what was bothering her head and let her body relax as Steve positioned himself between her legs and pulled her suit down.

For being a leather and tight suit, Steve started to pull it hard to slide it down, in fact he seemed a little desperate to make her completely naked.

Steve!

What?

You will rip it off!

That's the intention.

I said I just have this clothes, so please, slowly... I'll help you.
Steve looked at her and nodded. He stood and Natasha raised her feet in the air to help him take off her clothes. Steve watched her naked and while he was admiring her naked body, he took off the pants his uniform as well.

Natasha smirked at seeing Steve naked, he has a wonderful body.

Natasha still had her feet up in the air, she moved them to tease Steve.

Steve grabbed his cock and smoothed it quickly, just to increase his stiffness as he looked at Natasha's body.

Steve knelt down, between her legs and with his other hand, he made Natasha spread her legs.

Steve couldn’t stop to watch Natasha’s body, he was going to crouch over and provide some oral pleasure for her, but she grabbed his arm and pulled him lightly and Steve understood what she wanted.

She wanted to be closer to him, he moved his body over hers and before he move his cock into her, he gave Natasha another peck on the lips.

Natasha scratched Steve's arms and groaned all the time as Steve slid his cock into her opening.

Steve didn’t take his eyes off hers, which made her shiver all the time.

Before starting any movement, Steve ran his thumb over Natasha's face, stroking and then he pressed his lips to hers again.

It all happened without any hurry, Steve kissed her for a long time and he began the movements into Natasha's opening so slowly that it seemed more like a part of the kiss.

Every movement of Steve's cock inside her made her feel that he belonged to her. The way he was kissing her, made her feel that he was hers and that it was the best feeling she could ever feel.

Natasha let go of Steve's lips sometimes just to sigh and sometimes she would hug his back and run her nails through Steve's bruise, without noticing again. Steve only trembled slightly when she accidentally touched the bruise, but didn’t let that interrupt the kiss.

Steve ran his hands along the sides of Natasha's body, trying to feel more of her skin and he made himself penetrate deeper into her with every movement, he never felt what he is feeling now, that uncontrollable desire to want more and more of her and each time that he went deeper, Natasha was digging her nails into his back and pulling him to herself, wanting to achieve the same goal, as if they could somehow become just one body, just by making love.

When Steve's movements started to get a little faster and steadier, Natasha already knew he was going to cum and she was holding on as hard as she could to not break the moment they were having. When Steve finally came, Natasha came at the same time and she let out much louder moans as she felt Steve explode inside her.

That's all she wanted, to have that moment with him. Feeling that he loves her by the way he makes love to her, she could feel his feeling, now she could say it was love, but she really is not sure if he feels this love or if it's just her again, feeling all this, Alone...

She could ask him, tho, but she felt a cold in her belly, an inexplicable fear of him saying he didn’t feel or didn’t know what he felt and both answers would break her heart again and she swore to herself not to be broken by him ever again.
After they both experienced the ecstasy of each other's body, Steve left Natasha's body and lay beside her on the floor, again the pain of the bruise made him grunt and Natasha looked at him.

S: I forgot this bruise again.

Natasha took a deep breath because she was still deep in thought about what she feels about Steve and what Steve feels about her.

Steve lay on his side and put his arm on Natasha's belly, he watched her and could see that she was thoughtful. Steve put his lips to her ear and gave her a slow kiss.

Natasha turned her face to Steve and looked him in the eyes. That moment was perfect to ask what she wanted to know, he has that look, extremely sweet and understanding, but Natasha only opened her mouth a little, but no sound came out.

♫
If I never feel you in my arms again
If I never feel your tender kiss again
If I never hear I love you now and then
Will I never make love to you once again?
Please understand... If love ends
Then I promise you, I promise you that
That I shall never breathe again
Breathe again, breathe again
That I shall never breathe again
And I can't stop thinking about
About the way things used to be
And I can't stop thinking about
About the love that you made to me
And I can't get you out of my head
How in the world will I begin
To let you walk right out my life
And blow my heart away?
And I can't stop caring about
S: Do you want to tell me something?

Natasha shook her head.

S: What are you thinking?

Steve slid his nose across Natasha's cheek, she closed her eyes and sighed.

N: The war... James... You.

Natasha felt Steve stop the caresses, he didn’t expect her to talk about the war and it was a lie, she wasn’t thinking about the war now at all.

Steve took a deep breath and pushed his face away from hers.

S: Winning or not, we'll go back to James and Sarah.

Natasha kept looking at Steve and she had to bite her lip to stop her from saying anything she would regret later.

Natasha nodded and got up.

S: Where are you going?

N: Taking a shower, I saw a shower in the bathroom.

S: I'll go with you.

N: No...

Natasha gave a small smile.

N: We would start again and we need to rest.

Steve’s W.T. began to whistle, it was a call from Tony Stark.

T: Steve! Are you okay?
S: Yes, Tony.

T: Finally! I've been trying to contact you, but we were out of signal here.

H: Ask him if he found Natasha.

N: Yes, he found me, Hill.

T: Do you guys want me to send a team to rescue you?

Steve looked at Natasha and she shook her head.

S: Better not, we're safe here. Tomorrow we will meet our team at the right time.

T: But how will you do if all our provisions are here, food, blankets...

S: It's okay, Tony. We can wait until tomorrow to eat.

T: Are you sure?

S: Yes. Thank you, Tony.

T: Alright, I'll hang up.

S: Don't forget to leave no flashlight on. Don't call their attention, at night they walk around in greater numbers.

T: Yeah, yeah, I know that. See you two tomorrow, Dorito. Be safe.

S: You too, Tony.

Steve finished the call, Natasha had already picked up her clothes and gone to the bathroom.

Steve knows she asked him to not go after her, but he got up and went there anyway.

As soon as he reached the bathroom door, Steve watched Natasha in front of the sink, looking herself in the mirror, he couldn’t identify the look on her face, but she still looked worried.

Natasha looked at Steve through the reflection of the mirror and turned to face him. Steve walked over to her and hugged her waist.

Natasha rested her face on Steve's chest and he kissed her forehead.

S: We'll be fine, Natasha. Don’t worry about the war.

Natasha closed her eyes tight. This is not about war, you idiot! Natasha thought as she took a deep breath.

Natasha stepped out of Steve's arms and stood beside him.

N: I'm going to take a shower.

S: Let's do it together.

N: Steve...
Natasha pushed him away and Steve smiled.

S: Okay, Okay, I’m just kidding. I just wanted to stay with you a little longer.

N: We can’t get tired.

S: I know, we have a long day tomorrow.

N: Yes. Take your clothes and go to the men's bathroom, you should have a shower there too. If here has a shower, you will find on there too...

Steve nodded, and before he went, he leaned toward Natasha and waited for her to kiss him. Natasha placed both hands on Steve's face and gave a long kiss to his lips. Steve stole another quick kiss and left the bathroom.

Natasha smiled.

After bathing, Natasha got dressed again and when she left the bathroom, she checked to see if Steve was okay, he was finishing the shower now.

N: Are you okay?

S: Yes.

Natasha walked over to Steve and stood behind him, she touched his skin around the bruise.

N: Let me see that.

Natasha raised the bandage a little and the wound was a little different from before, but without any bleeding.

N: It's okay. Are you feeling any pain?

S: Yeah, but I can handle this.

Steve turned around and gave a peck on her lips.

S: Don’t worry.

Steve put on just his pants of the uniform, he preferred to keep the bruise free of clothing.

The two left the bathroom and Natasha suggested a corner near a table to sleep.

During the night, Steve tried to lie on his side to feel less pain and he was wondering how come this cut was bothering him so much, even more than before, and it wasn’t a big cut, but it was a deep cut.

As Steve fumbled for a position to lie on, Natasha woke up.

N: Steve?

S: Did I wake you? Sorry.

Natasha rubbed her eye and looked at Steve with a frown.

N: What's happening?
S: Nothing. I'm just out of sleep. You can go back to sleep, I'll try to move less.

Natasha sighed.

N: Are you in pain?

S: Hm...

Steve was trying to invent some excuse, but Natasha already knew he was about to lie and she sat down.

N: Let me see.

S: I'm fine.

N: Something is wrong, the blood was stagnant and you recover quickly... It wasn’t for you to be so bothered like this.

Natasha made Steve lie down with belly down and lifted the bandage again.

S: I just feel like it’s burning.

Natasha frowned and she was clearly shocked to see Steve's wound, it was as if the wound was really boiling, she could see the skin around the wound, being hit little by little.

Steve frowned at the silence and looked at her. Natasha changed the expression at the time so as not to worry Steve.

S: So?

N: I think I'll clean it up again.

S: Why?

N: Only with hydrogen peroxide, just to make sure you sleep better.

Steve believed Natasha and she doused the wound and at that time Steve screamed in pain, the hydrogen peroxide reacted by burning his skin even more.

Natasha tried not to despair.

S: Did you throw alcohol at it?

N: No... Steve?

Steve looked at Natasha.

Natasha looked at him and she was afraid to say the wound was getting worse. Maybe it was just a little reaction and maybe he'll recover until morning, she doesn’t have to worry him about it now.

Natasha shook her head.

N: Try to sleep.

S: You too. Come here with me.
Natasha lay down next to Steve, sideways, facing him.

**N:** Stay like this, don’t try to lie down.

**S:** Okay.

Steve put his hand under his cheek and closed his eyes. Natasha couldn’t close her eyes, she watched his face and the wound in the back.

**N:** Steve?

**S:** Hmm?

Steve kept his eyes closed and Natasha brought her face close to his, she kissed Steve’s lips and he returned her kiss. Natasha looked away and Steve looked at her.

**S:** Are you okay?

**N:** Yes. I just... I just felt like I should kiss you.

Steve smiled and closed his eyes again.

**S:** Sleep.

Natasha only took a few naps, between one wake and another, and when she finally fell into a sleep, Steve awoke abruptly and rested his hands on the floor raising his upper body.

Natasha woke up already alert and looked at him.

**N:** Steve?

Steve didn’t answer her, he was breathing heavily, completely red and sweaty.

**N:** Steve?

Natasha called again and Steve shook his head and gave a slight snort.

**N:** What’s happening? Steve?

Steve seemed to be having some strange seizure crisis, he held his breath for a long time, caught the air in the cheeks and the veins in his face began to jump. He looked like he was going to explode.

**N:** Steve!!!

Natasha sat up and put her hand on his shoulder. Steve looked at Natasha and his eyes were red and charged with some hatred-like feeling, which surprised Natasha most at the time.

**N:** Steve?

Natasha’s voice faltered, she didn’t know what was happening, but he didn’t seem to be her Steve anymore, he seemed to be something else.

Steve knelt and punched the ground with both hands, which made Natasha get to the side with the fright. Steve was breathing deeply and seemed to be struggling with something that was dominating him.
N: Steve?

Steve turned his face slowly towards Natasha and when he looked at her, for a brief moment she felt the look of the Steve that she knows, because it was a sweet and worried look.

S: Run, Natasha. You need to get out of here.

N: What???

S: Run! NOW!!!!!

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy!
Chapter 31

**N:** What's going on? Steve?

Natasha was on 4 and stretched a hand toward Steve to touch his arm. As soon as she tried to touch him, he turned abruptly and moved his arm to defend himself. Natasha wasn’t hit for having a good reflex, she managed to step away.

**S:** Go!!

Then Steve screamed loudly, and started to get up.

Natasha ran to stay a little further.

**N:** Steve, do you hear me? Stay calm, I can help you, but you have to control yourself. You are strong. Stronger than this.

Steve was standing, breathing heavily and head down.

Natasha frowned when she heard Steve laughing, a laugh that started to get low and then got loud and scary.

The sarcastic tone of his laugh made it clear that Steve was out of his mind and Natasha was trying to figure out how this could have happened.

She knew that, definitely, the cut provoked this new state of him, since no Pyron dominated him, he didn’t face any Pyron, but how could he have been altered only by a piece of glass? Was it contaminated? Was it on purpose?

**N:** Steve? It's me... Natasha. Remember? Please...

Steve lifted his head and for a few seconds he didn’t look at Natasha, then he turned his head slowly toward her, still with a macabre smile on his face.

**N:** Don’t you recognize me?

Steve didn’t respond, he just ran to Natasha and tried to attack her.

Natasha just deflected the attack.

**N:** Steve!

Natasha screamed and Steve stepped onto her again.

**N:** I won’t fight you! You need to fight this shit back! Listen to me, please!

Natasha used her arms, to prevent the continued blows that Steve applied against her, and he is much stronger than her, so with each defense, she felt the impact of his blows more and more.

**N:** Steve! STOP!

Natasha had to move away from him in order to control him some other way.
Steve took the opportunity to grab a table and throw against Natasha, who crouched and rolled onto the floor to protect herself. Before Natasha could get up, Steve grabbed his shield and threw at her, who again had to dodge, tumbling, and doing some acrobatics stuff to escape from the blow.

The force with which Steve threw the shield was such that when it hit the wall, it got stuck on it.

After Natasha stood up, she looked shocked at the shield on the wall, it would have cut off her head if it had hit her.

Soon after Natasha concluded that it was better to take Steve's shield, because he is good at body combat, but with the shield it’s almost impossible to stop him.

They both looked at the shield at the same time and Natasha was closer to where the shield had been trapped, she used the chair as a support to jump, climbed on it and took a big leap. Natasha collapsed on the floor, got up and ran to the shield, she tried to pull it from the wall, but it was stuck.

Natasha glanced briefly back and Steve was hurrying toward her and she gripped the shield harder and propped her feet against the wall to pull even harder.

**N: Come on!!!**

Natasha raged as she pulled the shield hard.

After a few seconds, the shield finally began to move and she managed to pull it out, and when she turned to see if Steve was nearby, she didn’t see him anywhere.

*Dammit!* Natasha thought, as she felt a hand grip the collar of her clothes from behind. Steve had already reached her, but she distracted herself with the shield.

Steve lifted Natasha from the floor by the collar of her clothes and threw her away, as if she were just a piece of paper.

Natasha's back fell against the wall near the staircase, and then she hit the floor. During the throw, Natasha ended up letting go of the shield.

This time she got injured, in her back. She couldn’t move and Steve approached her slowly.

The only move Natasha could make was to turn around and then put her hands on Steve's hand that had just grabbed her neck tightly.

Steve lifted her, grabbing her by the neck and Natasha tried to kick him, but he was already squeezing her throat so hard, that it was getting hard to breathe.

Natasha looked into Steve's eyes and they were kinda red and empty.

**N: Stev...**

Natasha coughed and choked on her own saliva as Steve pressed her neck more and more.

**N: I... need... I...**

Natasha began to feel dizzy from the breathlessness.

**N: J-James... I need to get back... For James...**

Steve tilted his head and practically growled at Natasha, then he frowned and Natasha felt his fingers
loosen around her neck.

Natasha continued to stare at Steve and for a few brief seconds he looked her straight in the eye.

**S:** They're coming.

**N:** Who?

**S:** I'm calling them. I can't help it.

Steve growled again, he grunted and shook his head, trying to fight this terrible evil that is dominating him.

**S:** You have to go, Natasha. You all must go. They are many, you have no chance.

**N:** What?

Steve loosened his grip on Natasha's neck.

**S:** I can feel them, they're coming.

Steve shook his head once again and squeezed Natasha's neck again, he approached the staircase with her and hurled her down the stairs.

Natasha rolled down the stairs and coughed hard as she ran her hands over her aching neck.

Natasha looked at Steve again and he was standing still and he looked like he was going to explode, he was struggling to not attack her and when he threw her down the stairs, it was clearly to save her life so she had a chance to get away.

Natasha didn't miss the opportunity, since Steve warned that there are more Pyrons coming right into the building they are in, but she wasn't going to give it up on him so easy, she needs to save him, she just doesn't know how yet, but the key could be a few floors below.

Natasha started down the stairs and heard Steve screaming.

**S:** NO!!

Natasha understood that she shouldn't go down, she was going to run into the Pyrons that Steve was calling, but she needed to take the glass that was stuck on his back, the glass has to be the key to explaining this change in Steve, maybe it's the only way out of it.

When Natasha arrived on the right floor, she saw the glass with Steve's blood on the floor and before she could reach the glass, she was held back by one of the Pyrons.

Natasha immediately closed her eyes and fired at him, and three more Pyrons appeared to surround her. Natasha kicked one of them hard, then used her elbow to punch the face of what was next to her, and on the one behind her she just put the gun back and fired.

Natasha managed to get her hands on the piece of glass and thought about going back to the stairs, she ran towards the stairs and saw many, many Pyrons coming up the stairs, she decided then to go up again, maybe Steve still had some control over himself and he would let her escape again, but as she give her first step, she saw Steve on the top of the stairs.

Steve was already completely changed, his skin was gray and the pupil in his eyes was totally red, he
jumped from where he was in the direction of Natasha, and she had to run to try to hide, because the whole floor was already being taken by Pyrons.

Natasha entered one of the rooms and tried to control her breath to not call their attention. Steve would look for her and somehow would ended up finding her there.

He has to come. Natasha thought as she held onto her non-lethal weapon. I need to shoot him. The only problem is that no one woke up after being shot today, maybe these guns aren't working as the Guardians of the Galaxy said. What if I kill him? Natasha was horrified to think about the possibility of shoot Steve and actually kill him.

I can’t kill him. Natasha thought again, as the door to the room she hid, was open abruptly.

Natasha was crouched beside the wall, there were tables lined up that kept her out of sight, she began to crawl to the corner of the room without making a sound.

S: You're here!

He can’t be one of them, he is communicating eloquently. How is this possible? Natasha paused for a moment and closed her eyes. He can’t see her, so he probably has the sense of smell with this transformation.

S: There is no place to run. You can join us, you can join me.

N: What if I don’t want to?

Natasha stood up and stared at Steve, the Pyrons stormed into the room and they were going to attack Natasha, but Steve just raised his hand in the air and they all stopped.

Natasha was shocked by the scene, he seemed to be their leader, the Pyrons were obeying Steve.

S: If you don’t want... You will die.

N: I won’t join you.

Natasha said as she took small steps back.

N: And I won’t die either.

Natasha noticed a sarcastic smile forming on Steve's lips.

S: Take her.

Steve ordered and all the Pyrons started running towards Natasha, but she was already close to a window, she didn’t hesitate, she threw herself against the window and jumped out of the building.

Steve ran to the window and looked down the street to see her body sprawled below, but he growled in anger at not seeing her there, but he saw her in the opposite building, hung by a steel rope in the facade.

Natasha looked into the building where Steve was, he was looking at her and she pointed the gun at him. For the first time, her hand was shaking for a shot, she was aiming at Steve, the laser indicating where she was pointing.

Do it, Natasha. That's what he'd like for you to do. You have to do this. Natasha thought and
Natasha screamed at herself.

**N:** I can’t!!!

*The Pyrons didn’t reason on their own, but they evolved in some way, the attack was planned, they wanted one of us humans to be their leader and help them evolve and organize themselves. They’re even more dangerous now, I should take their leader away now, because that leader is not anyone, that leader is the man I love and it's Captain America.* Natasha thought as she held her arm out, pointing the gun at Steve.

Natasha remembered James and remembered Sarah, Steve's children, that they weren’t going to have their father around anymore. *What could she do?* Natasha sighed and a tear trickled down her face.

*I'm so sorry, Steve.* Natasha thought as she finally pulled the trigger of the non-lethal weapon that fired a shot at Steve.

Natasha watched the moment Steve fell back and she closed her eyes, sighing once more. She pressed a button that made the rope automatically shrink and her body rose to the roof of the building.

As Natasha was pulled up, she kept looking at the Pyrons around Steve's body, wondering if he could survive and if he survived, whether it would be the normal Steve and if so, whether he would be attacked or whether he would still come back like this being transformed.

When Natasha arrived on the roof of the building, she used her W.T. to communicate with Maria Hill.

**H: Director Hill.**

Hill didn’t hear an answer, but she knew the call was from Natasha.

**H: Natasha?**

Natasha couldn’t answer, she had her hand on her mouth, trying to contain the cry that now seemed to have collapsed for good.

**H: Natasha?**

**N: Hill...**

Hill noticed Natasha's tearful voice and immediately stood up and walked away from her agents to not wake them.

**H: Natasha, what happened?**

**N: Something terrible. Steve...**

**H: Steve? What happened to Steve, Natasha?**

**N: We... I shot him.**

**H: WHAT?**

Natasha couldn’t explain herself, she just cried.
Natasha! Stay calm, explain to me.

I can’t!

Where are you?

On the roof.

Is Steve in the same building as you?

No... I had to run away.

Run away? Was Steve dominated?

Natasha just shook her head as she sobbed.

Do you want me to try to find you? Natasha?

You can’t… You can’t come here.

You know everything around here, come find me.

Natasha put her hands on her head.

Hill, if he's dead...

Natasha despaired again and wept uncontrollably.

Natasha, listen to me. Come to me! Can you get Steve's body?

Natasha ran her hand over her face to wipe away her tears.

No... He...

Okay, okay. Come just you then.

I can’t go now, I need to wait for the sun to rise.

All right, you want me to stay in line with you?

No... I can’t talk anymore.

I understand. I'll be here if you need me.

Natasha finished the call and dug her nails into her face and scratched herself hard, then she did the same in her arms, ripping the suit she wore.

She was having a rage’s crises and she kicked the walls of the roof and punched the access door to the building, she couldn’t stand for what she had to do with Steve.

All Natasha thought was that she might have had some other option to save Steve without having to shoot him. No one has any assurance that that non-lethal bullets work, in fact, everybody who have been shot didn’t come back to life, as promised by the Guardians.

Maybe she killed him, what is she going to tell everyone? What is she going to say to James? What
about Sarah? Did she made the girl orphan again? How could she do this?

Natasha sat on the floor near the wall and only stopped crying when she fell asleep from exhaustion.

...  

- Hill?

Maria Hill had just finished the call with Natasha, she turned around and saw Bucky Barnes.

H: I didn’t want to wake anyone. Sorry.

B: I wasn’t sleeping, it's hard to sleep in a war. Part of me is always alert.

H: It's the same with me.

B: I heard you talking on the W.T. with Natasha. It was her, wasn’t it?

Hill nodded.

B: Did you mention Steve's body? What happened?

H: I don’t know exactly, she was very nervous.

B: But Steve's body? Is he dead?

H: She said she shot him.

Bucky looked shocked.

H: I'm sure she had a reason for that.

Bucky nodded.

B: Some Pyron must have dominated him.

H: That's what I thought. She is...

Hill shook her head.

H: She's terrified, she couldn’t tell what happened.

B: Did she say where she is? I can go get her.

H: She didn’t say.

B: But is she safe?

H: I think so, otherwise she wouldn’t have called. Besides, we don’t know anything there, I would also look for her now if it was possible.

...  

As the day dawned, Natasha tried to move as fast as she could to get to the marked spots on the map, she had to go a long way to the building where Hill was.
As soon as Natasha arrived on the floor the staff was, everyone looked at her and Natasha felt like it was an accusatory look, but no one knew what had happened last night.

Hill appeared behind Natasha and leaned against her, but Natasha was still on the defensive mode and turned abruptly, ready to attack.

**H: Hey, it's me. It's okay.**

Natasha frowned and sighed.

**H: Come with me.**

Hill put her hands in Natasha's arms and led her upstairs where Bucky was waiting.

**H: So, what happened?**

**N: Did you tell him?**

**H: He overheard our conversation.**

**B: Are you sure he's dead?**

Natasha shook her head.

**H: Wait, tell me everything from the beginning.**

Natasha told Hill and Bucky everything that had happened and she even presented the glass with Steve's blood as proof of what had happened.

**H: We have to notify Tony and the Guardians. They must have gone through this before, right?**

Natasha shrugged her shoulders, indicating she didn’t know.

**B: I believe he is not dead. Those people out there have no serum in their bodies, but Steve... He has a super serum in his veins, a shot wouldn’t be enough to kill him. Where did you shoot him?**

**N: On his belly.**

**B: One more reason to believe he may be alive. I mean, I'm sure he's alive.**

**N: If he is, he is in the hands of the Pyrons and dominated by them. If you had seen what I saw... He had total control over those creatures, he could feel them and call them mentally. It was horrible. I can only think of James and Sarah. Could I have done something different? Could I have saved Steve?**

Natasha despaired again and shook her head. Bucky came over and caressed her face.

**B: Natasha, you did what you had to do.**

**H: We'll try to rescue him.**

**N: Hill, he said there are more Pyrons than we expected, that we won’t be enough.**
H: Bluffing?

B: Steve doesn’t bluff.

H: But that wasn’t Steve.

N: I got to talk to Steve a few times, he let me escape. Perhaps...

H: We can’t risk it. And we can only take him back to the bunker, if he is totally free of that domain, if what he said is true... He would move all the Pyrons to the only safe place we have.

Hill made a video conference with the other groups, including the Guardians, she explained the situation and everyone was puzzled by what happened to Steve.

The Beast asked Hill to keep the glass fragment protected and everyone agreed that they should continue with the plan of the attack, as they weren’t sure if they were in a smaller number.

The first day had been successful, I mean it was as expected and they believed the next day would be too.

When everyone was on the battlefield, they realized that the fighting pattern was basically the same, and the number of Pyrons seemed to be reduced.

T: I warned you, we have this in our hands.

C: Yeah, but it's a little harder without Cap’s instructions.

H: Natasha? You're extremely quiet.

N: I'm here.

H: Where? I don’t see you.

C: I don’t see her either.

T: Neither am I flying over here.

W: She’s inside that building.

H: What are you doing in there by yourself, Natasha?

N: If he's dead, I'll find his body.

H: Natasha, are you crazy?? Yesterday this place was infested by Pyrons.

N: It doesn’t matter, I need to know.

H: Dammit, I'm going to send a team to support you.

N: I don’t think the Pyrons are here anymore. I haven’t come across any so far.

Natasha continued up the stairs to where she left Steve, she ran to the window where Steve was hit and the only thing she found was a blood mark on the floor and a few drops forming a trail toward the stairs but ended before the stairs.
N: He's alive!

Natasha didn’t know if she should celebrate it or not.

H: We are seeing that he is alive.

N: What?

H: He’s right here.

T: Yes, he's here in the biggest CapZombie style.

C: I'm feeling inside Resident Evil now.

Natasha ran to the window and saw Steve with the shield and an army of Pyrons behind him.

N: Wanda?

W: Jump.

Natasha jumped out the window and a red wave caught her body and brought her to where the Avengers, Mutants, and Guardians were gathering.

T: Does anyone have any idea of how...

Tony didn’t finish the sentence, because Steve threw his shield against him, which made Tony do a quick maneuver and lose control of the armor, but seconds later he regained the control of the armor.

Bucky walked to the front of the group and looked at Steve.

B: Steve, do you know who I am? You know we won’t fight you!

S: Then you all die.

Steve raised his hand and pointed in the direction of the Avengers.

When the Avengers, Mutant, and Guardians looked around, the Pyrons were popping up on all sides, and they got completely surrounded.

Everyone took a fighting stance and looked around, trying to find the best way to face all of them.

Rocket: OH YEAH, BABY! That's what I'm talking about! C’mon come, you bastards!

Wolverine spread his arms and his adamantium claws went out as he snarled in Steve's direction.

Wolverine: I never really liked him. He is mine!

Natasha looked at Logan.

N: No!

Natasha took a few steps and stood in front of her group, she stared at Steve.

N: He is mine!
I never really liked him. He is mine!
Meanwhile, at the bunker...

**Laura**: My Goodness! Francis and James, please be quiet, I just made Sarah sleep.

**F**: Okay, mommy.

James looked at Francis and then at Laura.

**J**: Mommy?

**L**: Oh my little angel, he meant me, not your mother.

James lifted his hands in the air and looked around.

**J**: Where is my mommy?

**L**: James, she went on a trip but she will come back soon, we talked about it yesterday, remember?

**J**: I want my mommy.

**L**: I know, honey.

**F**: Let's play Avengers, James! I am Thor!

Francis took a shoe on the floor, held it by the shoelace, and began to spin it, pretending to be the hammer.

**F**: Come on, you're the Hulk!

James looked at Francis and for just being distracted, he didn’t insist on asking about Natasha.

**F**: I'll get yaaaa!

The two of them started running around the room and when Francis managed to catch James, the two began to kick, punch and shout at each other, but they have a tendency to turn play into real fight and when Laura saw them falling to the ground and one pulling the clothes of the other, she already walked to them to separate them.

**L**: Boys, boys, please! I don’t want to wake Sarah...

Too late, they all could hear Sarah crying in the next room.

**L**: I don’t believe it! It took me hours to get her to sleep!

Laura sighed.

**F**: It was James’ fault.
J: No! It was you.

F: You.

J: You.

F: Youuuu!

J: You!

L: Quiet! I don’t know what else I can do, the daycare is closed for lack of staff and Clint is not here to help me. I’m so tired!

- Mom?

Laura looked at her daughter Lila in the doorway of the adjoining room, rubbing her eye.

L: Oh, you woke up too, my love? So sorry.

Lila: When's dad coming back?

L: I hope soon. Can you keep an eye on the boys?

Lila: I’d rather play with baby Sarah.

L: She's not a doll, my love.

Lila: I can make her stop crying.

L: Can you?

Lila: Want to see?

Lila went back inside the adjoining room and approached Sarah's crib, she stood on tiptoe to put her hand inside the crib and hold Sarah's hand.


Sarah looked at Lila and for a few seconds she stopped crying. Lila looked back to see her mother.

Lila: See?

It was only Lila stop giving attention to Sarah, that she cried hysterically again. Laura walked into the adjoining room and approached the crib.

L: Shh... It's okay. Go back to sleep.

Laura patted Sarah's leg to try make her sleep again.

L: Sleep a little more, please, I beg you!

Sarah screamed even more and Laura sighed.

L: You always win, don’t you?
Laura grabbed Sarah in her lap and shook her lightly to try to calm her as she yawned.

Lila: Mom, you're sleepy.

L: I am, I am exhausted. I don’t know why I offer to take care of the kids, I already have you, Cooper and Francis.

Lila: I can stay with Sarah, Mom. Go rest.

L: Oh my love, you're very young and I couldn’t really sleep knowing you’re with her. I just didn’t know Sarah was going to give me so much work.

Laura looked at Sarah and was still trying to make her stop crying. Laura shook her head and went back to the master room where the boys were still playing.

L: Boys, let's take a walk.

F: Yes!

Lila: Are we going to play in the central square?

L: Actually, I'm going after your brother. He must be working with Thor, but I need him here.

Lila: What for?

L: So he can stay with Sarah so I can rest for a bit.

Lila: So, he can and I can’t?

L: Come on, Lila. You know he is older. Open the door.

Lila opened the door and James and Francis darted out into the hall.

L: Wait!

Laura was too weak to try to stop them.

Francis and James were pretending their hands were guns and they were making a noise of gunfire as they ran down the hall, but soon they stopped when Francis bumped into a wheelchair.

James and Francis became speechless and walked away from the man in the wheelchair.

NF: Are you James Rogers?

James didn’t answer, and Francis nodded.

A few seconds later, Laura and Lila managed to reach James and Francis.

L: Boys, don’t run like that, I've talked 500 times...

Laura looked at Nick Fury and frowned in surprise, she hadn’t seen him for a long time, she thought he was dead or hospitalized at F Wing.

L: Mr. Fury. Hello, how are you?
NF: This is Steve's new daughter?
L: Yes. Sarah.

NF: Why is she screaming like that?
L: I don’t know, I think she is missing Steve, I don’t know what to do anymore.

Nick looked back at James and then at Laura again.

NF: Is he eating right?

Laura frowned at the question.

NF: He looks fine.
L: He is.

NF: Okay.

Nick pushed the wheelchair button away from them, but stopped halfway.

NF: Maybe you should take her to her father's room. Not that I care about, but you should.

Laura nodded and Nick left for the elevators.

L: Should I?

- Laura? Are you talking to yourself?

Laura turned and stared at Pepper Potts and Jane Foster in the hallway.

Jane: What's going on with little Sarah?
L: She doesn’t stop crying, no matter what I do.

Pepper: Did you try a bottle?
L: Of course.

Jane: Nappy?
L: Ladies, please, I am a mother of three.

Pepper: True. You know how to take care of kids. Is she in some pain?

Jane: Is she sick?
L: I don’t know, I think she's just missing her father. Nick suggested I take her to Steve's room.

Pepper: It's a good idea, maybe see she was better acquainted with his room, there might be something with Steve’s scent there to calm her down.

L: Yeah, I'll try that.
Laura yawned and Pepper smiled.

P: You look very exhausted, darling.

L: I've been like that since our men went on a mission. Sarah doesn’t give me a break.

P: Oh, don’t worry. I can stay with her for you.

L: Oh that’s ok, no need.

P: I want it, she was almost mine... And I can train for when my babies be born.

L: Babies? Plural?

P: Yes. Twins. Stark doesn’t know yet.

Pepper said as she took Sarah in her arms.

P: You're going to get some rest now.

Jane: Yes and don’t worry about the boys, I'll take them to play with my Torunn.

L: Really?

Lila: Can I go too?

Jane: Of course! If your mother allows.

L: Yes, yes. Go. You’re the best. I promise not sleep too much.

Jane: Don’t worry, sleep as long as you want. I can stay with Sarah too. We can take turns to watch her.

L: That would be wonderful!

Pepper: Who knows, maybe she calms down with different people. Let's take turns to stay with her. She's just stopped crying.

L: No, she's just catching her breath, believe me, she cries a lot more than that. I'm going back to my room, thank you one more time.

...  

In the field of battle in the outside world.

Hill: Hm... Natasha, don’t get me wrong, but he's not yours anymore. He's something else, this is not Steve.

N: It doesn’t matter.

Natasha kept her eyes focused on Steve.

N: I won’t leave him to these Pyrons. He comes with me, dead or alive.
Hill and Tony looked at Natasha and saw that she meant it.

Clint: Okay, guys, how should we proceed? I'll go to a strategic position.

N: No, Clint. Don’t be alone now.

C: They won’t see me, they don’t even think for themselves.

N: Yes, they do. I had proof of that yesterday.

Bucky: Do you think Steve is aware of what is happening?

N: Not totally. He can understand us, I'm sure of that, but he can’t see us as friends of him.

Bucky looked at Steve and then at Natasha.

B: He's looking directly at you, that's weird.

N: Because he wants me...

B: What?

N: He wants me to join him. He said that to me, yesterday.

Natasha took a step toward Steve, but Bucky caught her arm.

B: What are you doing? You can’t face him.

N: I can.

Natasha looked at Bucky.

N: Do your part, Barnes. I'll do mine.

Natasha pulled her arm and ran toward Steve. Steve gestured with his hand and ordered his army of Pyrons to attack the Avengers and the others.

Natasha ran through the Pyrons, knowing that Steve wouldn’t let any of them attack her, he wanted her, he wanted to turn her into Pyron, himself, and if he couldn’t, he would want to kill her himself.

The Avengers, SHIELD, civilian soldiers, mutants, and guardians began their struggles against the advancing Pyrons. Those who had the ability to fly made more precise air strikes that knocked down dozens of Pyrons at once.

Natasha didn’t slow down in any moment and when she was a few feet away from Steve, she jumped up and made some acrobatic jumps in the air, and tried to mount on Steve's shoulders, but he grabbed her shins as if she weren’t nothing, he hurled her away against a pillar.

Natasha fell to the floor and looked at him angrily, she wasn’t going to give up, she shot him and Steve didn’t even move. Of course it was with the non-lethal weapon.

Natasha watched the bullet hole in Steve's body. The blood was dripping and he wasn’t making no pain’s expression, he turned and walked away from Natasha.

N: STOP!
Natasha screamed, ordering him to stop, but he didn’t listen.

**N: STOP!**

Natasha scrambled up and fired again at Steve. She shot him twice, the last shot was very close to his body. It was as if he were immune to pain.

Steve stopped and started to laugh, he jerked around and grabbed Natasha's neck with one hand, lifted her up and Natasha kicked his belly in the direction she'd shot him, but he was totally resistant to pain.

Natasha felt her breathing failing and she dropped her weapon to try to press Steve's wrist to loosen her neck, and she didn’t give up on kicking his wounds.

**N: Steve...**

Steve was staring at her, but he had no trace of compassion like he had the night before.

Steve lifted his other arm that held the shield and Natasha glanced briefly at the shield, he was ready to tear her head off with the shield, but before he could reach down with all his strength, he was grabbed from behind.

Bucky Barnes wrapped his arm around Steve neck from behind and pulled him away.

Steve let go of Natasha's neck and she had a short cough crisis.

Steve ran backward until he reached a wall and made Bucky's body hit hard against that wall.

The impact made Bucky drop Steve's neck and then Steve used his elbow to punch Barnes' belly repeatedly. Natasha crawled on the floor, trying to catch her breath and she could see Maria Hill pointing a gun at Steve. A deadly weapon.

**N: Hill!**

Hill heard Natasha, but she was thinking of saving Bucky and everyone else, no matter if it was Steve's body.

Natasha knows how cold Maria Hill is and she would shoot to kill Steve, so she ran as fast as she could and knocked Hill to the ground, making her miss the shot.

Hill pushed Natasha, who managed to make Hill drop the gun.

Hill looked at the gun on the floor and kicked Natasha's belly so she would let her go. Natasha remained over Hill's body, and used her the weight of her body to prevent Hill from retrieving the weapon.

**H: Natasha! Are you crazy?**

**N: I said he's mine.**

**H: You were going to let him kill you and he's trying to kill Barnes! Wake up, Natasha! We're at war, don’t make me shoot you! I will shoot you, I swear!**

**N: Just trust me.**
H: I trust you, but I don’t trust your fucking heart! Get out of my way!

Hill kicked Natasha's belly again and punched her face, getting rid of Natasha's hold. Hill held the gun again and looked at Steve who seemed to be stronger than before and he was punching Bucky Barnes non-stop.

When Maria shot, the shot took on Steve's heel and this time he felt pain. Maria knew that it would be enough to make him lose his balance.

Steve stopped and looked directly at Maria Hill, Natasha watched the way he looked at Maria, there was hatred in his eyes.

Steve grunted and waved his hand. A bunch of Pyrons began to surround Hill, Natasha, and Bucky.

Steve took the opportunity to leave without calling attention.

N: Hill, protect Barnes.

Bucky wasn’t able to fight at the moment.

Natasha covered Hill, so she could help Bucky get up and then go to a less troubled area.

Natasha escorted them to an area that she thought it was safer.

N: As soon as he can, move to the camp, so he can receive medical care.

Hill nodded.

Natasha left them there and returned to the battle, she looked around for Steve, but he was nowhere to be found.

... 

H: I didn’t know you were stupid like that!

Bucky: Thank you.

Bucky made an expression of pain. Hill skimmed Bucky's waist and he writhed even more in pain.

H: Your rib is fractured. You're so dumb! What are you doing here in a war without a fucking arm? It's the dumbest thing anyone can do.

B: I can handle it.
H: No, you can’t. You shouldn’t be here.
B: I can fight with what I have.
H: You’re an ass! What am I going to do with you, now?
B: Nothing, go back there.
H: What? I can’t leave you here!
B: Why not?

Hill looked at Bucky and frowned, she didn’t know what to say. It's not her way babysitting a man, if the person is hurt and can’t fight anymore, this person is useless, it's dead weight, so why did she say she can’t leave him behind?

H: Natasha would kill me.

Hill used it as an excuse, she was happy to have quick thoughts for unusual situations.

H: We’re not too far from my group camp. Can you walk up to that stairs?
B: Yes.
H: I'll keep you safe.

...

N: Tony?
T: Yes?

N: Do you have any views of Steve from above?
T: Just a second.

Tony stopped to look at the battle scene and he didn’t find Steve.

T: Nope.

N: Find him!
T: Find him? You're crazy, we have a battle going on here!
N: Tony!
T: What???

C: He's right, Natasha. Forget Steve, first let's try to get out of here alive.

Natasha sighed in frustration and continued the battle, which within about 6 hours, they managed to win. But it wasn’t the end, because the amount of Pyrons seemed to decrease considerably, but in an easy way.

When they finished defeating the last Pyrons, they all gathered back in the square.
The death of their people today, had been minimal, less than expected.

The civilians soldiers were sitting on the ruins of the square, they all seemed extremely exhausted and it was still missing one hour for the sun went down.

C: I don’t want to sound pessimistic, but it was too easy.

N: Clint is right. They just fled, they were many, and suddenly it was easy.

T: Do you think Capzombisicle had anything to do with it?

N: Maybe.

Wanda: Guys, we have to go to our camps now, our soldiers are very tired and there the furthest camps.

N: You're right, Wanda. Begin the mobilization.

W: Me?

N: Yes. Steve would entrust you with this mission.

C: There were a lot of casualties in group A, I'll join them.

N: So I guess I should join you, Clint. I'm just thinking that my group without Steve is weaker, I should be with them...

C: Don’t worry, Nat. I'll take care of it, just to have someone else to stand there too, plus I'll be with some of the mutants there.

N: Okay.

Natasha called the W.T. of Maria Hill.

N: Hill.

H: Yes?

N: Barnes?

H: He's safe.

N: Where are you guys?

H: At the camp of my group. We’re safe. Are my agents on the way back already?

N: Yes, they’re on the way.

H: By your voice, you couldn’t get Steve.

N: No... I'll try again, tomorrow.

H: I know you will.
N: Don’t try to kill him anymore.
H: You know I can’t make any promises.

Natasha finished the call and followed her group to the camp in one of the buildings marked as blue.

... 

Back to the bunker...

At night, after dinner, Laura put Lila in bed, having already put James and Francis to sleep, she switched off the light from the adjoining room where the children slept and went back to the master bedroom when she heard someone calling her.

J: Aunt Laura?

Laura turned and looked at James.

L: What is it, James?

J: Where's Sarah?

L: She's with Aunt Jane.

J: Are you going to bring her back?

L: Just tomorrow, she's going to sleep there tonight.

James yawned.

L: Go to sleep, James.

J: I...

L: What?

J: She cries at night.

L: Jane will be there with her. Don’t worry.

J: She stops when I hold her hand at night.

L: She always calms down with you, doesn’t she?

Laura sighed and scratched the back of her neck, all she wanted was to throw herself into bed, but James looked worried, so she led him into Thor and Jane's room.

Thor opened the door and looked at Laura and James.

L: Good night, Thor.

Jane: Laura?

Jane left the adjoining room, holding Sarah in her lap, who was crying non-stop.
L: See how she is...

Jane: I've been trying for over an hour, Torunn couldn’t even sleep, poor thing.

L: I brought her brother. At night, she calms down with him.

Jane: Come in, James.

James released Laura's hand and entered Thor's room. Jane sat on the chair in the bedroom, which allowed James to look at her sister.

J: Sarah?

James held Sarah's hand and she placed his hand on her mouth.

J: Ewww!

James pulled out his hand and Sarah started to scream, which made James reach out to her again.

J: Stop it. I’m here!

James yawned as Sarah finally settled down.

Jane: I think it's better if he sleeps here, he's full of sleep too.

L: But do you have space?

Jane: Of course, Thor will sleep on the floor.

Thor: What???

L: I feel that I am abusing too much of your goodwill.

Jane: Don’t worry about it. Tomorrow morning they will be all yours, so enjoy and rest.

Laura smiled.

L: Is everything okay, James?

James nodded.

L: Thank you, Jane and just one more thing, they move too much, so better put them on the floor than in bed.

Jane: All right.

Laura withdrew and Thor closed the door.

Jane got some blankets and lined the floor of the adjoining room, then laid Sarah down and James lay down next to her, after half an hour the two fell asleep and Jane returned to the master bedroom.

In the middle of the night, Sarah woke up hungry. James's heavy sleep didn’t wake him. Torunn even grumbled, but she was too sleepy too.

Jane: Thor?
Jane said with her eyes closed.

Thor only moaned.

Jane: Thor!

Thor: WHAT?!

Thor sat up abruptly on the bed.

Jane: She woke up.

Thor: Torunn? Torunn, go back to sleep, right now!

Thor exclaimed in the direction of the next room and lay down again.

Jane: It's not Torunn, it's Sarah!

Thor: Huh? Who?

Jane: She's hungry, go prepare a bottle for her.

Thor: Me?

Jane: Yes. I'm tired.

Thor: But she...

Jane: Go ahead, Thor.

Thor: But dammit!

Thor complained, getting up, went to the next room. Thor looked at Sarah and frowned.

Thor: Come on, Little mortal.

Thor caught Sarah in his lap and she didn’t stop crying.

Jane: Thor, sing her a song like you used to do for Torunn.

Thor: I'm going to sing a song about a soldier who left the best warrior of all times in the bunker!

Jane: Thor!

Thor: I'm just joking.

Thor left the room and went to the kitchen, he put the bottle to warm up in the microwave and sat down to wait.

Thor placed Sarah on the table and for a few seconds he began to doze off, he woke up when he heard the microwave whistle.

Thor took the bottle and was going to put it in Sarah's mouth, but he remembered how much Jane argued with him that he should feel the temperature of the milk before giving it to Torunn, so he
checked it and it was good.

Thor tried to make Sarah to take the bottle, but she cried every time he tried to give it to her.

- Can I?

Thor turned and looked at the woman in a white nightgown, disheveled blond hair with dark circles under her eyes, standing in the hallway in front of the kitchen.

Thor recognizes this woman.

**Thor: But you...**

Thor was confused.

**Thor: Uhhh how did you...?**

The woman approached Thor and stroked Sarah's head, she kissed Sarah's face and took her from Thor's lap, who was unresponsive, he didn't know whether to allow or not, but she seemed to be better with babies than he is.

It was Sharon Carter. She had a few tears on her face, but she smiled sweetly at Sarah.

- Hello, my angel, my Maggie.

**Thor: Her name is... Her name is Sarah.**

Sharon froze all her movements for a few seconds, then she smiled again and cradled Sarah in her lap.

**Thor: Do you want to try to give her bottle?**

**Sharon: She doesn’t need to, does she, Maggie?**

**Thor: She. She...**

**Sharon: She's fine now, don’t worry. We'll take a walk and she'll calm down.**

**Thor: A walk?**

**Sharon: Shhhh!**

Sharon frowned and Sarah was actually calmer. Sharon took a few steps and then a few more.

**Thor: Okay, she looks better, where are you going with her?**

**Thor asked yawning again.**

**Sharon: I'm just going to walk here in the hallway. She likes... She's fine. See?**

**Thor: Uh... All right, just don’t leave the kitchen, okay?**

Sharon ignored Thor and kept walking.

**Thor: I'm very sleepy but just stay around...**
Sharon: Okay, Okay...

Sharon held Sarah firmly and still cradled her as she walked.

**Sharon: Mommy's here, sweet Maggie.**

Sharon spoke so softly that Thor didn’t hear, sat at the table, still holding the bottle in his hand and he saw Sharon returning towards him and then going, and then coming, so he thought it was just to calm her down, it would be okay, so he rested his elbow on the table and then after a few seconds, he closed his eyes and finally dozed off again.

Since it had been more than 40 minutes that Thor had go out with Sarah, Jane was worried and decided to go after him.

When Jane arrived in the kitchen, she saw Thor crouched on the table, sleeping and without Sarah.

**Jane: THOR!**

**Thor: WHAT??**

Thor took a fright and sat up straight.

**Jane: Where's Sarah???**

**Thor: She's right here! R-right there... She..**

Thor pointed to the wall, then to the hall, but he didn’t see Sharon or Sarah.

**Jane: THOR!**

**Thor: She was here with that woman, the Captain’s ex, Sharon, I dozed and...**

**Jane: Sharon???**

**Thor: Yes.**

**Jane: She was hospitalized in F-Wing. How was she here?**

**Thor: She was here! I thought she had been released. She was fine and Sarah calmed down with her.**

Jane's heart raced.
Jane: Oh my God. It's not possible, how could she get out? Why did you leave Sarah with her???

Jane screamed with Thor.

Thor: I was so sleepy… Sarah had been calm with her, I was just going to wait for them to walk a little, she was just here, but I slept and...

Jane: My God, Thor! We have to find her!

The door to Laura's bedroom was nearly knocked over, as both Thor and Jane knocked on it.

Laura opened the door in alarm.

L: Jane! Thor! What happened?

Jane: Sarah disappeared!

...

Almost at the same time, during that night, Natasha opened her eyes, feeling extremely restless and distressed.

Natasha sighed and after a few minutes, she got up and walked around the room, counting the people in the group and checking if anyone was too hurt.

After finishing the round, Natasha went to one of the windows, just to see the sky, she was far from the conflict area, so there would be nothing to see.

Natasha first stared up at the sky and automatically reminded of James, she wanted to be able to show him a starry sky like that, she wanted him to feel that fine haze of dawn touch his skin and bring on those little chills that hit the body.

Natasha sighed and felt her heart tighten a little. It’s the nostalgia. Worst feeling she could have now.

Natasha was about to leave the window but she decided to take a brief look at the city, in the distance, she could see few Pyrons roaming the city and the most surprising was the only Pyron right in front of her building.

Natasha was slow to recognize him, and she was surprised at his behavior, standing for a long time, looking up, as if he were looking at her. Natasha frowned and finally recognized Steve, she stepped out of the window and felt her heart pound.

Natasha walked over to where her stuff was and grabbed her guns, she didn’t know what Steve was up to at that hour, but she knew something was about to happen.

Natasha nudged Nightcrawler to wake him up and then she woke up the Beast, Logan and some soldiers, she asked for all of them to be on alert. She left only the wounded, still sleeping.

They moved to the floor below.

Nightcrawler: I'm sorry, but why are we awake?

Beast growled and seemed to be sniffing something different.
Natasha looked up at him and saw Logan stand up and put his claws out.

Natasha walked toward the stairs.

**Logan: No! Not this time, Red.**

Natasha looked back at Logan and she realized that it would be pointless to argue with him, he would attack Steve if he showed up.

Steve took almost 20 minutes to finally appear on the same floor where everyone was.

Logan ran toward Steve, but Natasha threw the Widow's sting at him and the shock wave in him lasted longer than normal because of the metal in his body, he fell to the ground and Steve smiled, looking at Natasha.

**N: What do you want?**

**S: Revenge.**

**Beast: Revenge?**

**S: I have it now.**

**N: What do you have?**

**S: Revenge.**

**Beast: What is he talking about?**

Steve grinned wickedly again, watching Natasha, who seemed to be trying to get some meaning from Steve's words.

**S: You love too much.**

Natasha frowned.

**S: What you love, dies tonight.**

Natasha stood still, still trying to understand who he was talking about.

Steve made a single movement, and Nightcrawler attacked him, disappearing and appearing on Steve's back. Steve gave him a single blow with the shield hurling him down the stairs.

Beast was the next to try to attack Steve, but Steve ran to the window and threw himself from there.

Natasha ran to the window and saw Steve hanging from the window of the building in front of hers.

Steve looked at her again.

**S: Revenge.**

Steve glanced toward one of the buildings marked blue. Natasha followed his gaze and saw the building of group D. There were thousands of Pyrons scaling the walls outside the building. It looked like a bee swarm, taking over the whole building.

Natasha's lips quivered, before she could utter the name of who was in that building, then she
remembered the battle earlier when Steve looked at Hill after she'd shot him. Now she understands why Steve was saying about revenge.

**N: Hill...**

Natasha whispered to herself.

Chapter End Notes

Don't leave your kid with Thor and... pray for Maria
Natasha took a few seconds to get control over her body, for the first time she looked at Steve with hatred, she forgot that he is not in control of his actions, she only thought that he was getting revenge on Hill, with the most low and dirty attack as possible.

She could go after him now, it would be easier to get him now but she has to try to save Maria Hill, and despite her knowing that it’s impossible to do that in time, since the Pyrons will reach Maria before her, but she won’t let her go without fight. She will do whatever it takes to save Hill, Bucky and the others.

Natasha stepped out of the window and went to where the staff was still sleeping.

N: Wake up! Everybody wake up!

The Beast, Professor Hank McCoy, came to Natasha and understood what she was feeling and thinking.

Beast: Natasha, what are you doing?

N: We will defend our people, they need us.

F: There's no way to save anyone in that building. Look at that place. They’re many, Natasha.

Natasha took a deep breath and hearing that phrase was like feeling a knife being stuck in her chest, she hates this pain and all she can do now is ignore what Beast is saying and ignore any risk that she will put others to go through.

N: We're going to save them!

B: But Natasha...

N: I'm in charge here, right?

B: Yes, you are. I just want you to think well about what you're doing, you said yourself that at night, the streets are more dangerous, we can all die out there. Is it worth sacrificing one group for another? And if we fail, we will be 2 groups dead.

N: It doesn’t matter, we won’t leave anyone else behind. And we won’t go alone.

The Beast won’t understand Natasha’s motives for wanting so much to save people in that building, she can’t leave let them go in vain, and if she has to die trying to save Maria Hill and Bucky Barnes, then she will and who else that wants to join her.

N: Are you with me or not?

Beast nodded and Natasha sent an alert for the Tony Stark’s group building that was closest to Hill's. Tony didn’t hesitate to follow Natasha’s plans and began to wake his staff to go to the SHIELD building.
Natasha looked at the mutant Nightcrawler.

N: You. You can take me there. Now.

Nightcrawler: Me?

N: Yes! Are you afraid?

Nightcrawler: No, but I've never been there before, it's dangerous and we can end up lock in a wall...

N: It doesn’t matter, we go anyway. Take a good look at the window and pray that it works.

Beast: Natasha...

N: He just has to leave me there, he doesn’t have to stay.

Nightcrawler: It's okay, Professor.

Logan: I'll go along.

Natasha looked at Logan.

L: I want to start this party early.

Nightcrawler reached out for Natasha and Logan, they held onto Nightcrawler's hand and he disappeared with them and seconds later they were inside the building of Maria Hill.

Natasha looked around and frowned, seeing no one.

N: Where are we?

Nightcrawler: In the right building, but on the wrong floor. I think it's still 3 floors up.

Natasha looked at the Pyrons still climbing the building outside and she could hear the noise of Iron Man’s group attack on the outside.

N: Come back to our camp, Nightcrawler.

Nightcrawler: I won’t go back, I’ll fight with you.

Logan: Not tonight, kid.

N: Come back.

Nightcrawler: But I...

N: Come back now!

Nightcrawler obeyed Natasha's orders and disappeared. Logan ran to the windows to fight the Pyrons, but Natasha shouted at him.

N: Logan! I need you up there.

Logan: You're here because of your lover!
Logan said, implying that Natasha and Bucky still have something going on.

**N:** I'm here for Maria Hill and yes for Barnes too.

**Logan:** I knew it had nothing to do with saving everyone.

**N:** I don’t care what you think, you come with me now!

Natasha ran to the stairs and Logan stood, annoyed at her way of talking to him, but seconds later he started to go up the stairs behind Natasha.

Halfway through, Logan was surprised that no Pyron entered the building to attack them, and they could see them coming up the stairs.

**Logan:** Why aren’t we being attacked too?

**N:** I don’t know. I think they are with direct orders to Maria Hill, I’m not sure, they surprise me every day even more. Let’s go!

The two managed to reach Maria Hill's floor and saw many armed civilian officers and soldiers firing at the Pyrons, but none of the Pyrons were coming inside, they were not attacking or attempting to invade the building, they remained only on the facade.

There were so many Pyrons that whoever was inside the building couldn’t see what was happening outside the building, because they were blocking the windows.

**N:** HILL!

**H:** Natasha!

Natasha saw Hill down the hall and ran up to her.

**N:** You're okay.

**H:** Yeah, I am, but... How did you know?

**N:** Steve told me.

**H:** About the attack?

**N:** Yes.

**H:** This is the weirdest attack I've ever seen.

**N:** Why?

**H:** Look around you. They’re not really attacking anyone.

Natasha noted and it was true, they surrounded the SHIELD building, but they are not trying to kill or dominate anyone.

**H:** It's like... It's like they're just staging, acting like they’re gonna attack.

Natasha frowned.
Natasha looked at Maria Hill and stared wide-eyed.

Natasha's breathing quickened and she ran to the stairs. Hill followed her.

H: Natasha?

N: Steve! He tricked me. He was just distracting us.

Natasha shook her head.

H: Distracting for what?

N: He's not taking revenge on you, he's taking revenge on me. He's actually attacking somewhere else.

H: Where? How will we know?

N: He said that someone I love, dies tonight ...

Natasha thought first of all that it would be Maria Hill because she shot Steve earlier, but she was fine, after she thought about Bucky that attacked him too, but Bucky is also in the building and he is fine, but who else that Natasha loves that could be at risk now?

Natasha didn’t need to think too much, Hill’s W.T. rang and when she answered the call, she heard many screams and noise from shots and things falling.

H: Scott? Summers? Scott, calm down, I can’t underst...

Sc: We’re being attacked! HURRY! We need help!

H: Scott! We’re going!

Sc: There are many!

The call has ended.

N: Which group is Scott part of?

H: Group A

N: A???

Natasha's eyes widened and she looked incredulous.

H: Who's in this group, Natasha?

Natasha's lips quivered and she looked extremely puzzled and in shock.

H: Who, Natasha?

N: Barton!
At the bunker...

Laura: What?? How come Sarah disappeared? She's only 6 or 4 months old, she doesn’t even walk! What are you talking about? Is it a joke?

Jane was really desperate and shook her head, she started to cry with nervousness and guilt. Laura realized that the situation was real, she was also nervous.

Laura ran her hand over her head and took three deep breaths.

L: Easy... Come on. Okay... Focus... Someone took her. That is obvious.

Jane: Yes! Sharon!

L: Sharon? Wait, Sharon's in F Wing for a long time.

Jane: Yes, Thor explain to her.

Thor: I thought she had been released, she was walking around and asked to hold Sarah, she was crying so much and she calmed down with Sharon and I thought it would be okay, she's a woman after all.

L: How did she take her away without you seeing?

Thor: I... I slept...

L: What?!

Jane: I already cursed him, Laura! Please forgive me, it's all my fault!

L: No, Jane. I was responsible for her. I should never have passed the responsibility on to someone else.

Jane: Please don’t feel guilty about it. I don’t feel good, I think I'm going to faint. What if she hurts Sarah? Oh God.

L: Easy. First we go to F Wing, to find out if it was really Sharon.

Thor: I'm pretty sure it was. I mean, she was pretty weird, but it was her.

L: Anyway, we have to notify them that one of the inmates was able to go out or find out if she really was discharged.

Laura glanced at her children and then she went out with Jane and Thor, heading for the elevator.

L: Let's not rush now, maybe she's just delirious and maybe she's back in Wing F by herself. We'll find Sarah for sure. I’m sure!

Thor put his hand on Jane's shoulder, to comfort her, she hugged him and cried again.

As soon as they reached F-Wing and got out of the elevator, they noticed that in Sharon's room, there were two nurses apparently fainted on the floor.
Jane screamed and put her hand to her mouth.

**Jane:** Are they dead?

**L:** I hope not. Thor stay here with Jane.

Laura noticed that the door that was supposed to be locked, it was open, when she tried to open the door a little more, she noticed that it was stuck. It was stuck because of the doctor's body behind the door on the floor. Laura leaned her fingers against the doctor's neck and sighed with relief.

**L:** The doctor is here and he's alive, he just passed out. I'll check the others.

Laura entered the corridor that disinfects people, then went to the hallway to access the rooms, she checked the nurses' pulse and they weren’t dead.

- **Ma’am? What are you doing here?**

Laura turned and stared at a nurse with a pistol in her hand. Laura raised her arms in surrender.

**L:** Hello, calm down. My name is Laura Barton. I just came to warn you about one of yours patients, Sharon Carter.

- She escaped and attacked everyone, I had to run to get the gun. How will I know you're not lying? How will I know that you didn’t let her go?

**L:** Because I wasn’t here at the time, was I?

- No, but... You can be one of those mutants, right? We’ve been warned about them.

**L:** I'm not, I'm just a civilian. I'm with Thor, he's right there in the hall, you can see him by the window. Check it out.

The nurse approached and looked out the window, she lowered her gun and looked relieved.

**L:** Were you going to kill me?

- No! It's not a lethal weapon, it's just tranquillizers. That's what Sharon used to attack us. She managed to grab from the nurse who was here to take her dinner plate.

**L:** We have a problem. Sharon kidnapped Steve's daughter. She has only months. Do you know where she could have taken her?

- My God! That's why she hasn’t used the pillow as her daughter anymore. She must have been planning this for a while.

**L:** What?

- When that guy without an arm showed up to see her, she was calmer, she seemed normal. What should I do?

**L:** What do you mean? I was hoping you'd tell me that.

- I'm just a nurse! The people upstairs will have to solve this out. She needs to be medicated, keep my gun.
L: But what if she shows up here?

- We have more of that.

L: Then get me more of that.

Laura took the nurse's gun and got four more, she left the restricted area and returned to Jane and Thor.

Jane: So?

L: They're just doped, Sharon must be with her Agent instincts back to the active.

Jane: That's good, right?

L: I don't know. Let's go up and tell the command center to keep an eye on the bunker cameras, I'll hold a meeting and let them know what's going on...

Thor: Hey, but I'm Thor and Avenger, I'm in charge, so I should make the announcements!

L: You're absolutely right, Thor. I'm sorry. You should announce.

Thor: I know that and I also declare that the citizen Laura Barton should make the announcement, since I don't know what to say.

Laura looked at Jane, who was more in control now.

Jane: Don't mind him.

L: Let's go.

The three of them walked to the elevator.

Thor and Jane were the first to board, but Laura stopped for a few seconds, her expression was one of discomfort.

Jane: Laura?

L: Sorry.

Thor: Are you feeling all right?

L: Yes, yes, I just... I felt a chill and a tightness in my chest.

Jane: You must be worried about Sarah.

L: Yeah... Must be that.

Laura got into the elevator and put her hand on her chest in the direction of the heart, she closed her eyes tight and felt a terrible anguish and a great desire to cry.

When the elevator stopped at Wing A, Laura stepped down in a hurry.

L: Jane, Thor go to the command center, I'll catch up with you.
Jane: But Laura...

L: I need to see my children. I'll meet you there, I promise.

Laura ran down the hall, while Thor and Jane didn’t understand her behavior, but they went to the command center to warn about the baby’s disappearance.

Laura arrived in her room and she went to the kids room, she saw Francis, Lila and Cooper sleeping, she approached her face of each of their faces to make sure they were breathing and she was a little relieved that they were fine, but still the anguish in her chest didn’t go away.

...

At the outside world...

N: Tony, back off and go to group A. Repeat, go to group A.

T: Group A? Are you mad? Look at this building.

N: I'm inside, believe me. Take a look in the direction of the building of group A.

Tony looked in the direction of the building and saw several flashes of light.

T: Clint is having a party and didn’t even invite me!

N: Please go quickly there. I am on my way.

T: I got this!

N: Did you copy, Wanda? Vision?

They both nodded and flew toward the A-group building.

Natasha came down with Logan, Hill and her agents as quickly as possible, and as soon as they reached the ground, they rushed like never before and the Pyrons remained in the SHIELD building, following orders of Steve, they don’t think for themselves, so they didn’t try to stop Natasha and her group from escaping the building.

...

Wanda stopped a few feet from the building of group A and she made a large red cloud around her hands, then she stretched her arms toward the building and the cloud struck all the Pyrons that were on the floor of the camp, she paralyzed them and she killed all at once, then expelled them from inside the building through the windows.
Tony watched the Pyrons' rain fall from the building and he was impressed.

Wanda got weaker soon after using so much power.

Wanda's action also hit the Pyrons' leader Steve Rogers, but it didn’t have the same effect, it didn’t kill him, it only made him weaker.

Wanda looked directly at Steve inside the building and she had some strength to threw another cloud toward him, a much weaker one, since she used everything she could in the previous attack.

Wanda lifted Steve's body a little from the ground and she could still try to kill him, but she couldn’t. Wanda also has feelings for Steve. No, not that kind of feeling, she sees him as a friend, he’s always protecting her, like if she is her little sister, so she didn’t dare do hurt him.

Wanda had to release Steve’s body because she lost all her strength, including the ability to fly, her body started to fall free, when Vision took her in his arms.

**Vision: Mr. Stark?**

**T: Go, Vision. She's done enough, take her back to the camp.**

Vision nodded and Tony flew into the building.

Tony stared at Steve kneeling on the floor and he pointed his armor toward him.

**T: Steve?**

Tony called him, trying to see if any part of Steve had been recovered with this attack, since he seemed to be weak and ill.

**T: Are you okay, buddy?**
Tony came a little closer, Steve was crestfallen and looked very ill to try any counter attack.

Tony risked even more and disengaged the armor around his face and hands, he leaned against Steve's shoulder and had to leap back when Steve tried to punch him and grunted in Tony's direction.

Soon after, Steve ran to the window and threw himself. Tony was going to follow him, but Peter Quill interrupted him.

**PQ: Stark?**

**Tony looked at Peter.**

**PQ: I'm sorry.**

Tony was confused by Peter's words, then he glanced around and noticed Jean Gray sitting on the floor, with Clint Barton's head leaning on her legs, and his body on the floor, seeming to be fainted.

Tony disengaged his armor again and walked toward Jean Grey, than he took a better look at Clint, he didn’t look like he had just fainted.

Tony looked at Jean, who looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

**Jean: I couldn’t save him. I’m sorry.**

Chapter End Notes

I bet you didn't see that coming
T: How did this happen? Steve?

Jean opened her mouth to say something, but she felt the presence of Natasha in the building.

When Natasha entered the building, she saw a large number of Pyrons over another, and soon after, she saw Steve falling on the top of that amount of Pyrons.

Natasha stopped at the beginning of the stairs and noticed that Steve was very injured, she noticed the expression of pain on his face, she was worried with him, but he wasn’t dead.

H: Natasha!

Natasha looked at Maria Hill who was already going up the stairs.

H: Come on!

Natasha still took a few seconds to finally move, she wanted to go after Steve to find out if the wounds were serious or not.

H: What are you doing? Come on, Natasha!

Natasha took a deep breath and started going upstairs running.

As soon as Maria Hill arrived at the floor where everybody was, she had her guns in her hands, and saw everyone gathered around the body of Clint Barton.

Hill was surprised by everyone's attitude, then she understood what was really happening.

Maria Hill could not believe that scene, and she herself wanted to have a proper reaction to the loss of Clint Barton, she has known him for as long as she knows Natasha, but she knows who really is close to him.

Hill turned around to try some way to prevent Natasha from seeing that scene, but Natasha had just arrived on the floor and the look on her face, indicated that she had already seen his friend, dead.

Hill put her arm in front of Natasha's belly and tried to push her back. Natasha pulled Hill's arm.

N: No!

Hill again pushed Natasha and tried to pull her away from the scene, but Natasha pulled Maria Hill's
arm, and shoulders, as she screamed "No!" repeatedly. It was all she could say, she couldn’t believe what her eyes were seeing. It could only be a lie.

*It's not real, he's just seriously injured.* Natasha thought, feeling her heart tighten and her throat becoming dry. She wanted to believe this was a lie, but the people around her and their expressions contradict what she wants to believe.

Tony approached the two and leaned against Maria Hill's shoulder.

**T:** *Leave her, Maria.*

Hill finally stopped holding Natasha and she ran toward Clint Barton's body, she pushed Logan and Peter Quill who were still in the way.

Natasha knelt down on the side of Clint's body and bent over his body.

**Jean:** Natasha...

Natasha wasn’t listening or seeing anything, she put her hands on Clint's face.

**N:** Clint! Stop it. Wake up!

**Jean:** Nat...

**N:** Clint! Wake up! Don’t you dare do this to me! That's one of his jokes... He’s not… He’s jus kidding…

Natasha laughed nervously, through some tears were beginning to roll down her face.

**N:** It's a joke! Clint, you damn son of a bitch, that's not funny... Wake up! WAKE UP!

Natasha shrugged Clint's shoulders, and then Logan approached her and pulled her to try to calm her down.

Natasha struggled against Logan, who held her tightly in his arms and hugged her. Natasha slowly stopped fighting, she went silent, then wiped the tears and left Logan's arms, demonstrating that she was more calm and controlled.

In fact, she was surprisingly calm, it seemed that she had made some discovery, some way of reversing that.

**N:** Okay...

Natasha took a deep breath and looked around.

**N:** Where is Wanda?

**H:** Nat.

**N:** Tony! Where is Wanda?

**T:** I think I saw Vision taking her back to the camp.

**N:** Call her here.
Tony looked at Maria Hill.

N: She's a witch, she can solve this!

T: Natasha, I don’t think Wanda can do someth...

N: She has to try! And... And this mutant here...

Natasha looked at Jean Gray.

N: She can help, they acted together once. I saw that.

Jean got up, feeling a little awkward, and shook her head.

Jean: I'm sorry, but I don’t... I don’t resuscitate people. I...

N: Have you ever tried?

Jean: No, but...

N: You will try!

T: Nat...

N: SHE WILL TRY! SOMEBODY BRING WANDA HERE, NOW!

Hill shook her head and sighed.

H: I'm going to call her camp. All right?

Natasha looked at Maria Hill.

Hill walked away to make a call.

Natasha looked at Peter Quill.

N: How?

PQ: Are you asking how he died?

N: Steve? Did he do it himself?

... 

Meanwhile in the Bunker, all the citizens were worried about the disappearance of a baby and an intern from F Wing. The Parents redoubled their care of their children, it wasn’t known if anyone else would be abducted either.

Since most of their people went on a mission to fight the Pyrons, the population of the bunker is much more frightened. They are afraid that some new epidemic will arrive, or that someone else will freak out and will end up hurting somebody, even they having Thor, some mutants and some agents of SHIELD around.

Laura went into her room and went straight to the kid’s room. She looked at Cooper sleeping on his bed, then at Lila who slept on the bunk above Francis's bed.
Laura approached Cooper and covered him better, then stroked a few strands of Lila's hair and at last she looked at Francis who was sleeping with James in the same bed.

Laura sighed and she was relieved to see that her children were fine and safe, so this anguish she is feeling must be because of Sarah, she thought.

Laura, Jane and Pepper set up some teams to make searches around the bunker to find Sharon.

There was nowhere to go, after all they are all confined and to open the bunker’s door, she would have to go to the command center and having authorization.

They would search everything and every room, one hour she would have to appear.

Laura still made sure to reinforce the security of the command center, because if Sharon managed to escape from F Wing, she could try do the same there.

... 

N: Was it him? He killed Clint?

Peter Quill shook his head.

PQ: I'm sorry, I wasn’t even paying attention, the attack happened out of nowhere, it came from nowhere. Everything happened so fast. No one expected. When I looked at him, he was already down.

Jean: Actually, it wasn’t Steve. I couldn’t get into his mind when I tried... Natasha...

Jean walked over to Natasha and looked her in the eye so that Natasha could know that she was being honest.

Jean: Clint saved me.

Natasha paid attention to Jean Grey.

Jean: When I tried to get into Steve's mind, I felt a lot of pain and his mind was a mess and I had to focus more and only on him.

Rocket Raccoon: That was when I shot my bazooka, which was for the Pyrons, but one of them grabbed me at the time of the shot and I hit the ceiling above us and... It was all my fault.

Jean: No, Rocket. It wasn’t anyone's fault. It was an accident. The ceiling began to fall and I was going to get hit, if it wasn’t for Clint...

Natasha closed her eyes and took a deep breath. In a way, she was relieved that it wasn’t Steve, but that was his intention anyway.

Clint acted as himself, he would step in front of anyone, even a stranger to protect that person.

N: He's so stupid!

Natasha said in a low tone and bit her lip.

Jean: Natasha, I know what you're feeling.
N: Don’t try to get into my mind!

Jean: I’m not. Believe me. I understand your pain, but there is nothing I can do to undo what has happened.

N: You have to try.

Natasha changed the tone of her voice, from an authoritative way to one of supplication.

N: Please.

Scott Summers walked over to Jean Gray and laid a hand on her shoulder.

Sc: There are things that are out of our hands, we are mutants, not gods.

Hill returned to where everybody was assembled.

H: Vision said that Wanda is exhausted, she doesn’t wake up.

N: What does that mean?

H: She can’t even walk, she has used much of her powers for today, Natasha.

N: I don’t care, she needs to try. Now!

H: Natasha, stop! Ok? There is no solution for death! You know that, use your head! We need you here, not in the clouds. I know it hurts but get real...

Natasha looked at Maria Hill and then she looked down.

N: What am I going to tell Laura? Lila... Cooper... They’re only kids...

Natasha shook her head and put her hand to her mouth.

They all looked down because everyone started to think about his family. Everyone loved Clint Barton.

After long minutes of silence, Tony made a decision.

T: I think it's clear that this mission is not going as expected and that every day we lose more people.

Logan: Want to back off? This is for losers!

T: I don’t want everyone to die! We already have bodies enough to give back to those families. I don’t know what we're going to tell them.

Logan: I wouldn’t even know what to tell them, if we return, without having won this war.

H: I hate when you all start to act like dumb. This is a war, they know that everyone can die.

PQ: Guys, we have something.

Logan: No one here will hear you any more. You said it was going to work!
PQ: We think so too.

T: There are more things that can influence the result of the guns we made, it’s not so simple. They weren’t on Earth when they confronted the Pyrons, we can’t expect the chemical reaction to be the same here.

Beast: This is true. It’s different environments.

H: Quill, what is this that you have?

PQ: We have a Minitrix.

Hill looked confused, not understanding what it was.

Peter took a small metal object out of his pocket.

H: How does this work?

PQ: Well, we put that in that square and say a command.

H: And?

PQ: And then we have to get out of here.

N: Why? What happens?

PQ: KABUM!

Peter made a gesture and sound of an explosion.

N: Do you want to blow up the city?

PQ: Not just the city. This explodes the city and a great area around it.

H: Why didn’t you say you had something like this before?

PQ: Because you wanted to save people! You have to understand that no one would survive this bomb.

H: I think we have no option, if people don’t recover, then the least we have to do is kill them all. At least we would win this battle here for now.

T: But we have to evacuate anyway.

Beast: But this Minitrix is activated by command, so someone would have to stay.

PQ: No, not necessarily.

Gamora: It's programmable. We can command it to explode a few hours later...

H: Great!

Logan: How do we know if it really works or not?
PQ: If it doesn’t work, it will at least give us time to get out of here safely.

T: Great, as soon as we wake up, we begin to transport the wounded first, then we'll go with the groups we came. It gets more organized that way.

Gamora: We Guardians will be the last to leave.

PQ: Yah! We ...

Peter looked at Gamora and whispered into her ear.

PQ: Baby, why? Why should we be the last?

Gamora rolled her eyes.

G: They don’t know how to use the Minitrix.

PQ: Oh! Yeah, we're going last.

N: What are you talking about? Steve is among them!

T: We lost him, Nat. Sorry, but it's the truth, you have to accept.

N: No, he wasn’t dominated. He... It was different, he...

T: He's the worst of them all. He articulates and reasons, we can do nothing for him.

N: Not now, but we have to try.

T: How?

N: I brought the glass that hit him! The answer may be there. Something has to work. You can’t give it up on him!

T: We would need to take it to the lab, we need to do research and none of this guarantees that...

N: Then do it! We're not going to kill Steve!

H: How do you want to get out of here, then? There are many people injured, Natasha. We would resist more if we had help, but we are alone in this.

N: We will not kill Steve! I know what he wants.

H: What?

N: Me. He wants me to join him.

T: And you intend to go with him? Are you crazy?

H: Natasha, you have James. And Sarah is alone without Steve.

Natasha sighed and shook her head.
N: I don’t know what to do.

H: There's nothing you can do. We have to try to solve this situation with this thing… Minitrix. Everyone is suffering because they have lost someone important to these Pyrons.

N: I know that! Just... Just let me think! I need time.

H: We don’t have time!

Natasha crossed her arms and walked over to Clint Barton's body, she looked at him and was silent. Natasha bent over and touched Clint's hand.

N: My friend! I'm so sorry! Nothing will happen to your family, I promise you that. I'll keep them safe.

Natasha got up and looked at them all.

N: Let's do as Tony said.

H: Natasha...

N: But we'll take Steve with us.

Natasha could hear the whisperings of everyone around her, talking to each other, thinking she was going crazy.

N: I'll take him.

Natasha looked at Tony.

N: One of the jets has an anti-Hulk compartment, right?

Tony nodded.

N: I'll fly into one of them. Distribute my group among with the others.

H: I'll go with you.

N: Hill, no.

H: I'm going with you, it's decided.

N: But I need you alive.

H: I also need you alive!

N: You're the only one I can trust to take care of James, please.

H: You know the boy would be unhappy with me, I'll go with you. Especially since you wouldn’t shot Steve in the heart if necessary. I would.

N: But Hill...

Logan: If that's the problem, I'll go with her.
Natasha looked at Logan.

Logan: I wouldn’t mind shooting him, too. And besides, the boy needs someone he knows around.

Natasha looked at Maria Hill.

N: Please.

Hill sighed and rolled her eyes.

H: Okay.

As soon as the day dawned, everyone followed the plan to return to the bunker. The wounded were taken to the jets first, then the groups were moving one by one.

Natasha and Hill, were with the Guardians in one of the camps. They were the last ones in the city yet.

N: Hill, you should have already gone.

H: I know, but... How are you going to get Steve into the jet?

N: I think he can feel me in a way, if he feels like I'm leaving, he'll come. I asked Logan to wait for me on the jet. I need you to get out of here.

H: It's very risky, and if there's no time for you to get out of here before this Minitrix explodes?

N: Then you will be a mother.

H: God, Natasha.

N: Don’t worry, I planned this, it will work. Now go or I'll have to save you too.

Hill nodded and left the camp building.

PQ: Gee, I thought it was going to be a big hug, but... No? You both aren’t of hugs, right?

Natasha was not in the mood for jokes or pretend sympathy.

As if it weren’t enough to be taking back to Laura, her dead husband, she still has to deal with a transformed Steve.

PQ: I think we can go now.

N: No, let's wait. Hill hasn’t arrived at her jet yet.

PQ: Oh yeah! I had forgotten. Just one question, do you think Steve will come after you, but how exactly are you going to shove him in the jet and into the cage?

N: I'll shoot him.
PQ: But non-lethal bullets have no effect on him.

N: But the lethal ones does.

Peter frowned and then raised his eyebrows in confusion.

PQ: She reminds me a lot of you, Gams.

Peter looked at Gamora and then at Natasha.

PQ: She shot me sometimes, too.

They waited almost 2 hours for Rocket finally get down to the square and allocate the minitrix in the right place.

PQ: Natasha, you need to go now, we programmed this to explode in two hours.

N: I can’t.

PQ: WHY? WHAT?

N: If I go now, he'll come after me and bring the Pyrons along with him. I can’t let that happen!

PQ: Ham... Just now you thought about it? So you have to leave him here.

N: I'll stay in the square, I need to see him.

G: It's too risky, you won’t have time to escape.

PQ: And how are you going to carry his body?

N: I have this planned. Don’t worry. Go!

PQ: Oh God, I don’t know if I should go. If I stay, I'm going to die, but I can’t leave you here, because that wouldn’t be appropriate, so...

N: Go! It's been 30 minutes already.

PQ: You're going to die.

N: Maybe.

Rocket: Well, if she's suicidal, let her be, for Thanos’ sake!

PQ: We need to go, but I...

N: Don’t worry, Pete.

Gamora walked over to Natasha, looked her in the eyes and nodded once, as if to say she was proud of her attitude and confidence and it was a "good luck" too.

G: Come on, Peter.

The Guardians went up to the roof of the building and their ship was already there. They boarded
and a few minutes later took off.

From inside the ship, the Guardians watched Natasha leave the building and ran to the square. Then they could see the amount of Pyrons that began to crowd in the square around Natasha and no sign of Steve.

**Rocket: She's so dead!**

**Drax: I think after losing the archer, she went...**

Drax made a gesture with his finger, close to his head, indicating that Natasha was crazy.

**Rocket: Such a cute face, isn’t it? That’s a shame. Well, let’s go.**

The Guardians went on their way out of town.

Natasha stopped running when she reached the center of the square, she could see the Minitrix a few feet away and around her, she only saw Pyrons.

Natasha wasn’t afraid, she knew she wouldn’t be attacked right away and she knew he would come, that Steve would come.

A few minutes later, through the Pyrons, a path opened and from there, Natasha could see a shadow approaching, limping.

It was him. Natasha took a deep breath and stood firm as she finally saw Steve appear among the Pyrons. Steve was devastated, completely injured.

**N: They’re all gone.**

Natasha looked into his eyes.

**N: Now, it’s you and me.**
I'll kill you if necessary, but I won’t leave you to them. Natasha thought as Steve approached through the corridor formed by Pyrons.

Steve was badly hurt and he didn’t look well at all. He was sweating, as if he had a high fever, and he was limping, probably because he was throwing himself from the buildings all the time. He seemed like he was about to die at any time.

**N:** We're ending this here. Right now.

**S:** We just started.

Natasha gave her famous and sarcastic smirk.

**N:** I said I will not join you.

**S:** Well...

Steve started to cough and a lot of blood came out. He spit the blood.

**S:** You can’t get out of here now, you’re surrounded and I go wherever you go and I'll take all of them with me. If you try to escape, you are putting at risk those around you. So you have two options: you can be mine or you can die.

**N:** Who will kill me? You?

Steve laughed and spat more blood on the ground. He probably have internal bleeding. Natasha concluded.

Natasha was in possession of a new weapon, not so new... Tony had made it for her at the time of the Civil War. It's not like a bomb, but it has a great effect on a great number of opponents at once. Tony named it Widow Super Sting.

It’s an improved Widow’s stinger, made to hit more than one opponent at a time. She only has three shots of this weapon, so she would have to make very precise and fast attacks.

Of course she could only knock down the first rows of Pyrons with the weapon, then she would be attacked by the others, but she just need a few seconds to be able to distract the Pyrons and reach Steve.

Natasha was very relieved that Steve was injured, in fact, by being seriously injured, which would facilitate her work. On the other hand, the chances of her ending up killing him, were also great, since he already has internal hemorrhage and she’ll have to get him unconscious. This means that she will have to shoot at him as many times as necessary.

And when she thought about bringing him dead, she was being honest. No matter that he dies, she will take him with her. Even if as a dead body.

**S:** Look around... You have nowhere to go. They all fled. If you stayed, it's because you're
crazy or because you love me too much.

Natasha didn’t change her expression, she made negative with her head, kept starring him in the eye.

**N:** I don’t love you.

**S:** Are you sure?

**N:** I’m sure. You’re not him.

Steve started to laugh, and the laughter triggered an uncontrolled dry cough, then he spat more blood. Natasha was already worried about what he was going through, Steve's body wasn’t well and it also could be the result of his body trying to get rid of that virus that dominated him.

**S:** We're the same, me and you. Don’t you see? We can rule this world, But... Stop talking, let's go to action.

Steve took another step toward Natasha and she quickly pulled out her guns and pointed at Steve. The Pyrons all got agitated and tried to push Natasha forward, but Steve raised his arm in the air, ordering them to stop.

Steve laughed again.

**S:** You won’t shoot me. You love him so you wouldn’t hurt...

Steve couldn’t finish the sentence, as he was hit by a shot in his leg, another in his shoulder and another on his waist.

Steve looked at Natasha, somewhat surprised that she really did shoot him, he was so surprised that he didn’t try to make the Pyrons attack her.

Steve was already bad before, now he is kneeling on the floor and more blood was coming out of his mouth, but still, he didn’t lose his arrogance, he looked at her in an ironic way.

**S:** If I die...

Steve said with difficulty.

**S:** They will attack you. They will attack your hiding place, there will be nobody left and there is...

**N:** Shut up, Steve!
Natasha could hear the sound of turbines from a jet, it was the hint for Natasha to know that it was time for her to leave before the Minitrix exploded all around.

Logan approached, flying in the jet. Natasha ran to Steve and the moment he felt he would be killed, or seriously attacked, he allowed the Pyrons to attack Natasha.

Natasha shot at several Pyrons and used the body of some Pyrons to do maneuvers and pirouettes to get to Steve.

**Logan:** Natasha! We have to go! NOW!

**N:** Just a minute!

Natasha kept firing, and when she got close to Steve, there were Pyrons trying to get Steve away from there.

Logan was watching from the get and he himself felt nervous by the amount of Pyrons going up to Natasha.

Logan's metal claws came out and he groaned.

**Logan:** I'm going down!

**N:** No! I can do it!

**Logan:** No time for that, this shit is going to explode! Leave him there!

**N:** I can do it!

**Logan:** Natasha, you won’t be able to!

Logan threw the rescue rope for Natasha.

**Logan:** Come on, get it!

Natasha’s ammunition ran out, and she fought hand-to-hand with the Pyrons who kept coming forward.

Natasha took her Widow Super Sting and did her last shot, managing to hit a fair amount of Pyrons, which allowed her to reach Steve's body.

Natasha quickly locked Steve in the belt that was released along with the rescue rope.

Steve grabbed Natasha's arm and threatened to bite her. Natasha took his shield, since he was already very weak, and gave a very strong and accurate blow to his head, making him pass out at once.

Natasha could hear a thin and shrill sound.

**Logan:** But what is that?

Natasha looked at Minitrix and saw it opening. A violet light was emerging from there, within the gaps that were forming on the surface of it.

Natasha didn’t have time to hold herself in anything, she wouldn’t have time, that thing would explode.
**N**: Go, Logan!

**Logan**: What about you?

**N**: Just go! GO!

Logan just proceed to really leave because he saw Natasha throwing her own steel rope into the jet.

Steve and Natasha's bodies slammed into the air by the movement of the ropes as Logan flew higher with the jet. Natasha hooked her legs around Steve's body and placed the shield on his back, to protect him.

Logan hoisted them into the jet, through an automatic device.

As Natasha finally got inside the jet with Steve's body, she could hear the sound of the Minitrix getting louder and as she looked back, she saw the Pyrons running toward where the jet was going, and also saw a large beam of light Neon turned upwards and then opened slowly and started to explode everything around.

Natasha and Logan never saw anything like that, not even a nuclear bomb.

Natasha sat on the jet floor, beside Steve's body, while Logan set the maximum speed of the jet to try to escape in time.

...

At SHIELD’s jet, Maria Hill was using the ship's rear camera to visualize what was happening back there, she was nervous because she saw the time passing and no sign of Natasha's jet.

**H**: Come on, Natasha. Come on, get out of there.

Maria Hill was even more nervous when she saw the great light begin to blow up the city, but she also breathed a sigh of relief when she saw the jet of Natasha and Logan, coming out of the flames that seemed to rise more and more.

Bucky was watching Maria Hill and frowned.

**B**: What's happening?

Hill looked at Bucky and tried to disguise, as she had been doing since the previous night.

Hill only let Bucky know about Clint's death, but not that Natasha had intended to stay and rescue Steve, otherwise he would want to stay there with her, and she only did that to keep him safe, because he's already hurt enough.

**B**: Natasha stayed behind?

**H**: Yeah, but she managed to escape, she's coming a little further back.

**B**: You didn’t say she would stay! But what madness is that... You allowed her to stay? What were you thinking?

**H**: She asked me not to tell you.

**B**: Of course, because I would stop this!
H: Try to understand...

B: I don’t have to understand and you... You say she is your friend, but you allow her do something like that. She has James! How could you???

Hill frowned, not expecting this to turn against her.

H: I know that! She is an grown up woman! I do not control her!

B: Is that what you have to say?

H: What do you want, Barnes? She's safe and she did what she thought she should do.

Bucky was silent and looked very frustrated.

Hill folded her arms and stepped away from him, also annoyed, but she don’t take bullshit from anyone, so seconds later she returned to Bucky.

H: She did that because she loves him. Not you. Wake up.

It was all that Hill said and she knew it would hurt him and that's what she wanted.

She’s been taking care of him during this war and he talks to her like that. Uh uh, not with Maria Hill.

Hill moved away again and went to stand by the jet pilots.

...

Logan: That was close, but we escape...

Natasha took a deep breath to catch her breath and some strength in her legs, she stood up and walked over to Logan. She sat on the other pilot seat.

N: Leave it to me, I need you to put Steve in that cage.

Natasha couldn’t carry Steve's body now.

Logan passed the jet's control over to Natasha and carried Steve's body into the glazed cage.

Logan went back to Natasha.

L: Is that all? Are you sure?

Natasha typed a few commands on the panel.

N: Now yes. It's safe.

Logan sighed and sat down next to Natasha, he watched her for a while and tried to imagine what was going on in her head and what went through her head to have done such madness like that.

Logan remembered that he had been in love before, and he would do all that she did, maybe that's why he agreed to stay with her, he was also at risk as much as she was.

L: Love really makes us do anything.
Natasha looked forward, and her gaze was cold and focused.

**N:** Love has nothing to do with it.

**L:** No? Have you confronted all your friends, risked your life and say it wasn’t for love?

**N:** I owe him a debt. He saved me more than once. He gave me my son.

**L:** I understand...

Logan looked at Steve in the cage.

**L:** What do you intend to do with him?

**N:** I don’t know. I'm not a scientist.

**L:** They won’t accept him in this state inside the bunker.

**N:** I wouldn’t even accept him either. He'll be out, right in that cage, until we find the cure.

**L:** If there’s not a cure?

**N:** Then he will be eliminated.

**L:** He's bleeding too much. I don’t think he can survive till they find some solution.

Natasha finally moved some part of her body, she turned her face to look at Steve and then looked forward again.

**N:** We need to go further and then I will try to staunch his wounds.

A few hours later, Natasha was able to put the jet on autopilot. Logan watched as Natasha reached the cage.

Natasha approached Steve's body, with clean cloths, first aid kit and water.

Natasha wiped Steve's wounds with hydrogen peroxide and wiped the skin around his wounds, she started with the wounds on his legs, then his stomach area, arms and when she was going to wipe his face, she was startled to see that he was awake.

Natasha took a few seconds to react, she put her hand on her gun, located in her calf and if Steve tried anything, she would shoot him in the head.

Steve just stared at her for a few seconds and closed his eyes again. He was exhausted and still very hurt, but Natasha could see that his body was trying to recover. The process is taking longer because of this virus in his body.

Natasha finished cleaning and she left Steve looking more human again, although the gray skin remained.

...

At the bunker.

**Jane:** I can’t believe we haven’t found Sarah yet.
Pepper: This is very strange, where could she have gone?

L: I don’t know.

- Maybe the Avengers have a secret place in here. They are full of secrets.

Pepper: I would know. I designed this place. In fact, there is a place that we are not looking for, but...

L: Where? It must be there! Say it!

P: It's kind of unusual, but it's possible. The ducts for ventilation and cabling.

L: How can we access there?

P: This way, follow me.

Pepper led her search team to one of the corridors of Wing A, she showed an access door.

P: But this place is very dangerous, there are many high voltage cables, I don’t think she would come here with a baby.

L: I'm sure she's there. Where else would she go?

P: Let's get in, but be careful.

Pepper, Laura and Jane entered the duct.

P: Guys, please, be careful. Don’t touch anything.

The three of them began to walk down the duct, and as soon as they turned the first corner, they began to call for Sarah, they heard the noise of someone running and they ran too, to reach.

They confirmed Pepper’s theory, when they heard Sarah's cry.

L: It's her! It's Sarah! SARAH! I am going!

The three of them finally came across Sharon Carter, she was sitting on the floor, with Sarah in her arms.

L: My God, it's Sarah, she's safe.

Jane: Thank God!

P: Sharon? It's me, Pepper. Do you remember? Tony's wife...

Sharon looked at Pepper and hugged more Sarah.

P: We need to get Sarah back, okay?

Sharon's face changed from frightened to irritated.

Sharon: She's mine!!!

L: Sharon? Here it's a very dangerous place to take care of a baby. I have 3 kids... You love
her, I understand that, you love Sarah, right? And I understand that you know it would be best for Sarah if...

Sharon: MAGGIE!

L: Maggie? Oh okay, Maggie... it would be better for her if you took her to a room.

Sharon: I don’t have a room. They put me in a cage, she can’t go there.

L: Of course you have a room... Don’t you remember? It's close to mine. You live there with the Captain, remember? You even have a crib for her.

Sharon: Do I?

L: Yes! Yes! Maggie looks so tired, you should put her in the crib. Look at her... She's tired.

Sharon stared at Sarah. She nodded and stood up.

Sharon: Dad's waiting for us in our room, Maggie...

Sharon said, looking at Sarah.

Pepper and Laura looked at each other, both of them thought to shoot Sharon with the sedative as soon as she released Sarah, but for now they would have to let Sharon carry her, because it was too dangerous to hit her now, since they’re in a duct.

As soon as the four left the duct, it was a relief to see the baby well, the rest of the team celebrated, and Laura went to the command center to notify them that they found Sarah while Jane and Pepper led Sharon into Steve's room.

...

Laura was arriving at the command center to announce that they found Sarah, and Tony Stark's intern was agitated and speaking loudly.

Laura: Something wrong?

Peter Parker: Yeah. I mean, the Avengers are coming.

Laura: What?

PP: They're here, they're landing.

Laura: But I thought they were going to stay longer.

PP: Me too.

Laura: There's something wrong then...

PP: I don’t know. I really hope not.

L: Let's go to the entrance!

PP: I can’t, I have to stay here and observe if everything is in order and to open the gate also.
L: Okay! I’m going there!

Laura said, feeling excited, she smiled and all she thought about now was Clint Barton, she was finally going to see her husband, she was missing him so much!

Laura ran to the entrance of the bunker, while Peter announced to the population of the bunker that the ones that went to the war were returning now.

Laura released her hair, that was in a ponytail and straightened it, she hadn’t been taking care of her look since Clint left and she had to take care of the children, so the slightest thing she could do to receive her husband it was leave her hair free. Clint always said she looks more beautiful with her hair down.

Laura smiled excitedly in front of the door and sighed, anxious for the doors to open.

In a few minutes, more civilians were arriving, hoping to see their families and friends, and also to see if the mission was a success.

Peter Parker was seeing the outer images of the bunker, from inside the command center and watched Tony walking head down, along with Vision, Scott Lang and Summer, and Nightcrawler.

Everyone looked exhausted, but then Peter understood that it wasn’t because they were tired but because they were carrying a coffin.

PP: Oh my God, who's in there?

Peter asked quietly to himself.

...

- Attention! Attention! Doors opening.

Laura heard the announcement and she felt like her heart was going to come out of her chest, she just wants to run and hug Clint and receive thousands of kisses, as he always does when he returns home.

*I should have gone to get the kids, Lila would be so happy to see her daddy, should I go look for them?* Laura thought as the doors finally opened. She wasn’t going to get her kids now, she would surprise them and show up in the bedroom with their father.

As soon as the doors were fully opened, the first person Tony Stark saw was Laura. Laura smiled at Tony and at the others, she didn’t even notice the wooden box they carried, she stood on tiptoe and began to look for Clint among the Avengers, Mutants, and civilian soldiers entering.

Clint would surely pass the front of them, tell a joke to distract everybody and go forward to come in first and come running to kiss her, so Laura's smile turned a little down when she didn’t see Clint first, then she looked at Tony again, who had a strange expression on his face, then she looked at all the Avengers and looked at the wooden box they’re carrying.

Laura made negative with her head and her smile broke completely, she frowned and her heart still wanted to jump out of her chest, but not in a pleasant way.

*Please, do not come to me. Do not come to me! Is another person in that wood box. It can only be someone else! Don’t come to me!* Laura thought as Tony and the others walked with The coffin toward her.
The avengers put the coffin on the floor at Laura's feet. Laura looked at the box and then at Tony Stark.

T: I am so sorry, Laura.

Chapter End Notes

I do feel bad for Laura.
The confusion in Laura's mind was enormous. Her brain and her eyes waged a tremendous battle over the image she was seeing.

Though her eyes were seeing her husband’s coffin, her brain refused to accept that view.

Jean Gray: Laura? He died protecting me, I...

Laura looked at Jean Gray.

JG: I'm sorry.

Laura just fainted and Jean pointed her hand toward Laura’s body, causing her to levitate so she wouldn’t reach the floor.

Pepper was arriving now and she looked at the coffin, then at Tony and then at Laura’s body floating, fainting.

Pepper walked up to Tony and hugged him tight.

P: Is that Clint?

T: Yes.

Pepper closed her eyes tight and hugged Tony harder.

T: We should take Laura to our room, baby... Because of her children... She better stay there to calm down and be able to talk to them.

P: Yes... Sure.

Pepper let go of Tony and he noticed that she was crying out of empathy for Laura's pain.

P: Of course. Let's go. Please Jean.

Pepper, Tony, Scott Summer and Jean Gray escorted Laura to Tony Stark's room, to try to wake her up and make her feel better if possible.

Logan: Landing now...

Logan and Natasha's jet landed half an hour after the others. Natasha looked at Steve and he was still asleep on the floor of the glazed cage.

Logan: What are you going to do with him?

N: Nothing.

Natasha walked to the jet's exit door, and Logan followed her.

N: I need to see Laura first. I failed her.
Logan: You? How so?

N: I should have protected Clint, but I didn’t protect him.

Logan: There was nothing you could do. No one knew that this would happen. We got there too late, this is a war, Natasha. We take the risk of losing someone, we can’t control everything. Isn’t it enough to have to deal with this guy over here?

Logan pointed at Steve.

Logan: Don’t assume a tragedy that it was out of your hand. Believe me, it's not worth it...

Natasha only listened to Logan, but she chose not to answer, they entered the bunker and now there were few people around. Actually the people who was there, were the civilians who lost some relatives in this war and were there to say goodbye properly of their loved ones.

H: Natasha.

Natasha turned to look at Maria Hill and Bucky Barnes approaching her now.

N: Hill. Where is Laura?

H: She passed out when she saw Barton's coffin.

N: Damn! I'll see her immediately!

H: Tony and Pepper took her to their room.

- Oh... Widow... Errr, Romanoff. Agent Romanoff?

Natasha looked at the young Peter Parker who looked very nervous.

PP: I know you want to go to visit Mrs. Barton, but there's something you need to know.

Natasha, Bucky, and Hill kept looking at Peter, waiting for him to finish the sentence.

PP: Do you know that baby that you and Steve brought in from outside?

H: Sarah?

PP: Yeah. That’s right. There was a problem.

N: Did she get sick?

PP: No, we kinda lost her.

N: WHAT???

PP: I mean, we didn’t lose her but she was… kidnapped.

H: Kidnapped? By whom?

N: And how?

PP: One of the F Wing internals, she managed to escape and took the girl.
H: Who?

Bucky: Sharon?

H: Yes. Only she could escape from there.

N: But what does she want with Sarah? Nobody found her yet?

PP: It took a while, but yes, we found her, but Sharon is making the baby hostage.

N: Where is she??

PP: In Steve's room. Jane and Pepper took her there, but Pepper went to her room to stay with Laura.

N: So only Jane is with her?

PP: Jane called Thor to try to negotiate.

H: Oh my God, Thor could hit both of them with the hammer. We have to go there.

Natasha looked at Hill and nodded, Hill did the same, already knowing that the two of them would have to deal with this situation.

Bucky: I go along with you.

Natasha, Bucky, and Hill walked toward Steve's room, and as they reached the room, Jane was urging Thor to calm down, hugging his waist as Thor pointed the hammer toward Sharon, who was now in the corner of the room, with Sarah in her arms.

N: Thor!

Jane looked at the door and saw Natasha, Hill, and Bucky.

Thor was just listening, but remained focused on Sharon.

N: We'll take care of this, Thor. You can go now. Thank you.

Thor: She was my responsibility and she kidnapped her, she deceived me and now she will suffer the wrath of Odin.

Jane: Thor, dear, please!

N: Thor...

Natasha entered the room and stood beside Thor, who didn't take his eyes off Sharon.

Natasha leaned against Thor's arm and lowered her voice.

N: Clint is dead.

Thor and Jane turned their faces abruptly to look at Natasha.

Natasha nodded, confirming the information.
N: It was in battle... An accident.

Natasha nodded and sighed, having to manage her own pain at losing her friend and having her emotions controlled to deal with a raged Thor and Sharon in a psychotic outbreak.

N: Laura and the children... They need help.

Thor: Clint was my friend! My friend of beer and pizza! Thor is immensely sad...

N: Jane?

Natasha indicated the door with her head and Jane understood, nodding and pushing Thor out of the room.

Jane: We need to stay with Laura’s kids to help, Thor. Let's go.

Thor agreed to leave the room.

Natasha just waited for them to leave and turned to face Sharon.

N: Carter.

Sharon cringed and then looked at Natasha and then her gaze shifted to a more challenging look. In all likelihood she is regaining consciousness and remembering who Natasha is and probably remembering everything that has happened during all these months.

Natasha could see an animosity in Sharon's gaze.

N: I just want to know if she's okay... The baby?

Sharon: She's mine!

N: She's Steve's.

Sharon: Mine and him. We are a family!

N: I know… Ok. Is she well? Is she breathing?

Sharon: Yes!

Sharon seemed outraged.

N: She's just a baby, Sharon. She is scared, hungry and she needs care.

Sharon: I am taking care of her!

N: Ok... Don’t... Don’t be angry...

Natasha took a step toward Sharon. Sharon pulled a knife, that was hidden under her blouse and she let Natasha know that she was armed.

Natasha watched the knife and stopped moving.

Natasha sighed.
N: You... You love her, right?

Sharon didn’t answer.

N: You wouldn’t hurt her... I can see that. I understand you, Sharon. I do. I just want to see if she's ok... All right?

Natasha dared to take another step, but Sharon put the knife close to Sarah's face.

H: I've got her, Nat.

Hill was at the door, with a gun pointed at Sharon's head.

B: That's not necessary!

Bucky touched Hill’s arm.

H: Why? Just because you care about her?

B: No. Because we can negotiate, before taking more drastic action like putting a bullet in someone's head.

Natasha waved her hand, telling Hill to calm down and wait.

Sharon: Bucky?

Sharon recognized Bucky's voice and glanced toward the door. Bucky looked at Sharon and tried to hide the pain from the wounds he was in.

B: Hi, Sharon.

Natasha frowned a little as she noticed that Sharon was smiling at Bucky. It seems that Sharon was really enchanted by Bucky.

B: How are you?

Bucky entered the room.

Sharon: You... You gone.

B: I know, I'm sorry. I was out there, but I was thinking of you while I was there.

Hill looked away from the gun to stare at Bucky for a few seconds, then she put the gun down.

Sharon: Is it true?

B: Yeah. I wouldn’t lie to you...

Bucky took a few more steps, stopping beside Natasha.

B: I see you're out of your chamber, that's good.

Sharon: Is it?

B: Yes. That’s good, it means you're feeling better... Are you still taking your medicine?
Sharon was shaken and shook her head.

**Sharon: Those make me forget, I don’t like it.**

**B: So you stopped?**

**Sharon: I WILL NOT TAKE IT! I WILL NOT TAKE ANY MORE!**

Sharon screamed fiercely, which startled Sarah.

Sarah started to cry in fear and Natasha took one more step and almost stepped over Sharon to get Sarah, but it would be too risky.

**B: Okay! Okay! If you don’t want to take... It’s all right.**

**Sharon: You're lying! You're pretending that everything's fine!**

Sharon started to cry.

**B: No, I really think you're ready to stop the medication.**

Natasha looked at Bucky, completely surprised.

**B: But I don’t think you're ready to stay out of your chamber yet...**

Sharon shook her head again.

**B: Alone... You can’t be alone.**

**Sharon: Will you stay there with me?**

**B: Yes...**

**Sharon: Aren’t you lying?**

**B: No, I just need some time, because I am hurt.**

**Sharon: Are you?**

**B: Yes... I was in a war, remember? I told you before I leave.**

**Sharon: I'm sorry.**

**B: Me too.**

**H: Is this going to lead to some resolution or...?**

Natasha looked at Hill, brow furrowed, obviously telling her to shut up and not disturb.

Hill rolled her eyes and went quiet.

**B: Look, Sharon. This baby... You know she's not yours.**

**Sharon: But I love her!**
B: Maggie is dead.

Sharon started crying louder.

B: We talked about it. If you want people to believe that you are really fine and prepared to live in society again, you have to give up those fantasies. I know it's harder this way, but I want you to get well... I want you to come back to live with us.

Sharon was silent.

B: Holding a knife close to a baby is normal?

Sharon shook her head and dropped the knife to the floor.

Sharon: I'm so sorry! I wouldn't hurt her.

B: I know that, please give the baby to Natasha.

Sharon frowned and turned away.

Bucky walked over to Sharon.

B: Give her to me.

Bucky leaned against Sharon's back and Sharon sighed. She hadn't had human contact in a long time. The only contacts were to apply medication to her vein.

B: Do you trust me?

Sharon nodded and handed Sarah in Bucky's arms.

Sharon: Careful, be careful with her.

B: Okay... I'll be careful.

Bucky held Sarah and handed her to Natasha.

Sharon: Can I still see her?

Sharon looked at Natasha.
Natasha looked at Bucky uncertainly. Bucky nodded and Natasha looked back at Sharon.

**N: Y-yes... Bucky will take her to visit you.**

**B: Let's go...**

Bucky gripped Sharon's shoulder and hands, leading her out of the room and toward F Wing.

Hill watched the two of them pass by and looked down.

**N: All right, Sarah. It's all right... Calm down. I'm here now.**

Natasha shook Sarah lightly on her lap.

**N: Hill?**

**H: Hmm?**

**N: I need you to stay with her, I need to see Laura.**

**H: I'm sorry, I... I can't.**

Hill was vacant, she shook his head and just walked away, disappearing into the hallway, giving Natasha no chance to beg for her to stay with Sarah.

Natasha didn’t notice anything different on her behavior, she thought it was only because Hill don’t like children, so there was nothing wrong with that reaction.

As she left Steve's room with Sarah in her arms, Natasha stopped in the hallway and there was one more thing she needed to do before visiting Laura.

Natasha knocked on the door of the Barton's room, she could hear the screaming of the children inside.

Jane opened the door and almost cried when she saw Sarah with Natasha.

**Jane: Sarah!!! Oh my God. Is she okay?**

**N: Yes.**

Natasha handed Sarah in Jane's arms, even without her request. Natasha only had eyes now for the little and blue-eyed blonde boy.

**N: James!**

James was playing in the next room when he heard his mother's voice.

**J: Mom?**

James looked at the next room and gave a huge smile, he ran as fast as he could and as soon as Natasha crouched, he jumped on his mother.

**J: Mommy!**

**N: James!**
Natasha hugged James with all her strength, she kissed his face repeatedly, she was actually squeezing James, but it was just because she missed her son too much.

**N:** I missed you so much, James.

Natasha stroked James' hair and pulled him away to look at him, she was inspecting to see if he was complete, healthy and fed. He was perfect.

**N:** I love you, James. Forgive Mom for disappearing like that again, baby.

**J:** Love, Mom.

Natasha gave a small smile.

**N:** Do you love mommy?

**J:** I love mommy.

**N:** God, I love you even more, baby. So much more.

**J:** Daddy?

Natasha was smiling and suddenly her smile faded and she looked into James's eyes.

James reached for the door.

**J:** Daddy?

Natasha shook her head.

**N:** James... Your father... He...

**Thor:** FOR ODIN! STEVE DIED ALSO?

Natasha and James looked at Thor.

**Jane:** Thor!

**N:** No, he's not dead...

Natasha looked at James again.

**N:** James, your dad is a bit sick, but you'll see him when he's all right.

**Lila:** Hi, Auntie Nat!

Natasha looked in the direction of the other room and saw Lila Barton.

**Lila:** Did my father come back, too?

Lila said with a smile on her face.

**Cooper:** But of course our father came back, if he went along with Auntie Nat, he also came back, you moron.
Lila: I'll tell Daddy that you called me that!

Natasha looked at Lila and her heart stopped at that hour.

When Cooper appeared behind his sister and then the younger Francis Barton, Natasha lowered her head and revived the moment she discovered about Clint's death.

It pained her like that, imagine what it would do to Lila and Cooper, who are old enough to understand what death means...

N: Lila...

Lila: What?

Cooper watched Natasha's expression and he was concerned, he practically deduced that his father was dead or seriously injured.

Lila: Can you take us to our father? Take us? Take us? Please, Auntie Nat!

Cooper put his hand on Lila's shoulder.

C: She can’t right now, Lila.

Lila: Why not?

C: Because she... She just arrived and she's with her son. Let's wait for mom.

A golden-headed girl, passed between Lila and Francis and went to James, she leaned against James's arm.

T: It's up to you now.

Jane: Torunn, please, James is with his mother now. You'll play another time, okay?

N: Jane, can you stay with Sarah for a bit? I need...

Jane: Of course, of course...

Jane understood quickly.

Jane: You can leave James here too.

N: I’m sorry, I can’t.

Natasha stood up and James grabbed hold of her.

Jane: He missed you a lot!

N: Yeah... I guess I'll never leave him again.

Jane: So go... I'll stay here with them.

Natasha nodded and left the room with James on her lap.

In the corridor on the way to Tony's room, she still filled James with kisses and light bites.
Upon arriving in Tony's room, the door was open.

Natasha approached the bed and noticed that Laura was already awake.

Pepper was at the side of the bed, holding Laura's hand, but pulled away when she saw Natasha in the room.

Natasha looked at Laura and sat on the bed with James.

Natasha put her hand over Laura's and lowered her gaze.

**N:** *Forgive me, Laura.*

Natasha shook her head.

**N:** *I couldn’t protect him.*

Laura still had tears in her face.

**L:** *I’m sure you did what you could... I just can’t believe this is happening... It’s like a nightmare. Why is this happening to us? Why?*

**N:** *I don’t know...*

**L:** *My children... Oh my God, my children!*

Laura started to cry harder.

**L:** *What will I tell them? How will I tell them that their father is no longer alive?*

**Pepper:** *We can help you, Laura. Don’t worry now. You need to be well and stronger for them, they will need you.*

James watched Laura crying and left Natasha's lap, he climbed over Laura and laid his head on her shoulder.

James caressed Laura's arm, imitating what his mother used to do to make him stop crying.

Laura closed her eyes and stroked James' hair.

**L:** *Thank you, James... I'm sorry Aunt Laura's crying like that, I scared you.*

**N:** *He is not scared. He likes you and he wants you to be fine...*

**L:** *He's a good boy.*

Laura said as she sniffled her nose.

**L:** *Natasha?*

**N:** *Yes?*

**L:** *He died doing what he always did. Saving lives... Right?*

Natasha nodded.
L: Sometimes I hated him for being good. He was just so good.

N: He was. He saved me too. I could never pay my debt to him.

L: He hated when you used to say that you owed him. Oh God, I loved him so much...

Laura again burst into tears. Natasha came closer and hugged Laura.

N: He loved you too, Laura. More than anything. He loved you very much.

By the end of the day, everyone inside the bunker was only speculating about what had happened on the mission and to clear it all up, the Avengers held a meeting with the bunker population, putting them in touch with everything that had happened, including what happened with Steve and that he was trapped in one of the jets outside the bunker, which caused a lot of discussion among the bunker dwellers.

- You should have killed him!

- Yes! Yes! Kill him!

- What a hell to kill the Captain! Have you all got crazy?

- Crazy is you, who’s defending this alien!

- He's a threat to us all!

N: He's not a threat!

Natasha is never to speak at the reunions, the more discreet she is, the better, but she doesn’t want them to talk about Steve that way, she doesn’t think it fair, since he worked so hard to keep them all safe and fed.

N: I've made sure he doesn’t escape from that cage.

- But what if he escape?

N: He won’t.

- Who guarantees that?

N: I do! Either he leaves there, healed, or he leaves there, dead. I won’t let him come in here, my son lives here and I would do anything to protect him.

- Who's going to feed him? I won’t!

- Me neither!

N: I will.

- And I'll help you!
Natasha looked at the cook's niece, Juliana.

Ju: I'm not afraid of him and he helped me, that's what I can do.

N: Thank you, Juliana.

- Okay, but then you eliminated all the Pyrons? Is it safe to get out of here?

- Not with the captain overpowered.

Tony: We didn't defeat all the Pyrons. We defeated those of the nearest cities. Gradually we will advance the attack to the next cities and on, once we are recovered.

Peter Quill: Actually, we will begin this work, immediately. The Guardians... We go from town to town and we will install the Minitrix. We can’t stop now.

T: If you feel ready, then go.

PQ: We will, but first we will finish something for our friend Barnes. We leave in the morning.

After discussing some more matters everyone was able to withdraw.

Natasha went to A Wing and knocked on Jane's door.

Jane: Natasha, come in.

N: Are they sleeping?

Jane: James is, but Sarah is difficult to sleep...

Natasha peered into the room and saw Sarah mumbling on the bed and James sleeping next to Torunn.

N: I hate to ask you this, but could you stay just a little bit with them? I promise I won’t be long, but I need to feed Steve.

Jane: Of course... Don’t worry.

Natasha nodded, to thank Jane for the help, she went to the kitchen and Juliana had already prepared a kind of kettle.

Juliana handed it to Natasha.

N: Thank you.

Ju: Do you want me to go with you?

N: No, it's okay.

Natasha withdrew and went to the entrance area of the bunker, she called the W.T. of Peter Parker and asked him to open the door.

Natasha went to the jet and as soon as she came in, the jet lights were activated.

Steve was still lying on the floor, but awake, he rolled his eyes from side to side and sat up abruptly.
when the lights were on.

Steve looked at Natasha and his breathing was accelerating as if he had just run a marathon. Steve grunted in Natasha's direction, she could tell that he was still sweating a lot and that the bandages she had made to staunch the blood were soaked with blood again.

Natasha didn’t know how to proceed, he doesn’t stop bleeding and that is not normal for Steve’s body, but maybe the serum mixed with what was in the glass, is causing terrible side effects on Steve's body.

**N: I brought food for you.**

Steve grunted lower, looking weaker.

**N: Steve?**

Natasha approached the glass and looked at Steve.

Steve couldn’t look directly into Natasha's eyes as he stared at the floor of the cage.

**N: Sarah and James are fine. They miss you.**

Natasha watched closely to see if something in Steve's expression indicated any kind reaction, but nothing came.

Natasha put Steve's food inside the cage and left soon after, he didn’t even try any attack because he was still very hurt and weak.

Natasha waited for him to eat, which took him a long time, since he had to crawl into the food.

Steve ate and then vomited everything, it was as if his body couldn’t accept food, it was as if his body was trying to kill himself.

Natasha crossed her arms and watched Steve for a few more minutes, until she saw him fall asleep.

Natasha took the opportunity to clean the cage and come out again, she put her hand on the glass and sighed as she watched Steve struggling to survive.

**N: Good night, Steve.**

Natasha whispered and returned to the bunker.
Natasha returned to the bunker and went to Jane's room, she knocked lightly on the door and waited.

A few moments later, Jane opened the door, yawning and she apparently was asleep when Natasha arrived.

**N:** I'm late, I'm sorry.

**Jane:** It's all right... Let's just talk down because Sarah's finally fallen asleep.

Jane practically crawled over to the bed to pick up Sarah.

Natasha noticed Thor asleep in his chair. Any piece of furniture on Earth seems to be miniature next to him. Jane must have forced him to stay in the chair because of Sarah.

Jane handed Sarah over to Natasha's lap.

**Jane:** Oh James... I'll... I'll...

Jane yawned again.

**Jane:** I'll take him fer you.

Natasha shook her head.

**N:** All right, Jane. Just wake him, he can walk.

**Jane:** But he's tired.

**N:** And you too.

**Jane:** No, but...

**N:** Just wake him, Jane.

Jane went to James and woke him up, she tried to be gentle but James grunted in the same way, he walked with his eyes closed to Natasha.

Natasha held onto James's hand.

**Jane:** Are you sure?

**N:** Yes. Go to sleep. Thanks.

Jane yawned and nodded, she closed the door, lay down on bed and called Thor to sleep there with her.

In the corridor, James held out his arms to Natasha asking for her lap.

**N:** James, I'm holding Sarah, you have to walk a little bit.
James grunted and stepped in front of Natasha, trying to climb onto her lap.

N: James... Please, let's walk, I know you're tired, but I can't get you now.

J: Up, up. Mommy!

James looked at Natasha and then at Sarah, he got angry because it was as if Sarah was stealing his mother.

Natasha crouched as she noticed his eyes filling with tears.

N: Okay... You don't have to cry, James...

Natasha set Sarah in her lap so that she would stand with her head resting on her shoulder, and let her other arm free to take James in her lap.

N: There you go...

Natasha gave a push and got up with both on her lap and she walked into her dorm.

Natasha laid James on her bed first and then placed Sarah in James' crib.

Natasha looked at Sarah and then at James, they reminded her of Steve and her mind went straight to the jet.

Natasha couldn't help but wonder if his bleeding had stopped or intensified, whether he was going to die tonight, or whether he would wake up stronger tomorrow.

Natasha sighed and came to the conclusion that she couldn't do anything, she needs to stay with her son and she has to stay with Steve's daughter for him.

Natasha decided to take a quick shower and returned to the bedroom, she sat on the bed next to James.

Natasha watched her son asleep, she laid her hand on his leg and felt a little comfort. James is the reason she struggles everyday to be alive and to keep his dad alive, and the reason for she to move on and the reason that she still smiles, even in the middle of that chaotic world they're living in.

I wish you could have a normal life, James. Natasha thought as she stroked his leg. I wanted you to see and feel the cold rain touching your face, I wish you could roll on the grass, and that you could feel the texture of the sand on the beach at your feet, I wish you could see the heavy clouds, to see the lightning, and I even wish you to be frightened by the sound Of thunderstorms, so you could run to me and I would make you feel safe. I wish that to be the only fear you would have in your life.

Natasha looked at Sarah.

I wish that for you too. Natasha finished, as she lay down next to James to rest at last.

She rested a little, very little, because in an one hour Sarah woke up, already screaming.

Natasha opened her eyes and sighed, immediately she remembered James at this age, when he cried of hunger and she couldn’t breastfeed him and the milk made him feel sick, it was a hell that time.

Natasha took a few seconds to get up, she kissed James' face and walked to the crib.

Natasha put her hands on the bar of the crib and looked at Sarah.
Sarah looked at Natasha and stopped crying.

Natasha breathed in relief, maybe she was crying only because she thought she was alone, Natasha turned to go back to bed, but Sarah grunted, which made Natasha come back and stay close to the crib.

Natasha watched Sarah and Sarah watched her.

Natasha frowned and threatened to leave the crib, but Sarah threatened to cry again.

Natasha tried to get away from her three times, until she was sure that what she really wanted was company.

N: Really? It's 3 o'clock in the morning!

Sarah smiled and stretched her arms out to Natasha.

N: What?

Sarah stammered something in her baby tongue.

N: Do you want to talk? Okay...

Natasha took Sarah in her lap and picked up the bottle from James, she went to the kitchen with Sarah and heated the bottle.

Natasha was already preparing herself emotionally and mentally for the battle in making Sarah take the bottle, but surprisingly, Sarah took it easy.

N: Oh, that's new! Laura made you get used to the bottle? This is great, your father will be very happy with that.

Sarah smiled again, even with the bottle in her mouth.

Natasha raised one eyebrow.

N: So you learned how to smile, huh... You should do this more often and less of all that crying, you know?

Sarah smiled even more and let out a small baby laugh.

Natasha frowned more.

N: Why are you laughing? Are you crazy?
Sarah laughed again and Natasha shook her head.

**N**: You really are crazy.

Natasha smiled and watched Sarah's features.

**N**: I don't even remember your mother... I can never tell if you look like her. I hope your father can tell you, because you're going to want to know that. I wanted, but...

Natasha looked around, she wasn’t sure if she was really alone with Sarah and she couldn’t be seen talking to a baby.

As soon as she was sure, she looked back at Sarah.

**N**: I wanted to know, but my parents were also taken from me, very early. When I had the chance to review them, they had already died, so...

Natasha stared into space as she spoke.

Natasha looked at Sarah again.

**N**: Well I guess you and I are not so different. But you will grow up surrounded by love, because you have an incredible man as a father now. And I hope he can come back to you soon... For us, right?

Natasha sighed.

Sarah said something else in her baby talking and kept smiling.

**N**: You look good! I think Sharon really did take care of you, you seem fine.

Natasha smiled.

**N**: Let's go back. James is waiting for us.

Natasha went back to her dorm with Sarah and put her in the crib. As soon as Natasha threatened to go back to bed, Sarah began to cry.

**N**: My God! You already eaten, what else do you want?

Sarah grunted and held out her arms again.

**N**: No... It's bedtime, Sarah.

Natasha turned and went to bed, lay down next to James and Sarah continued to cry in the crib.

**N**: You've eaten. You’re clean. I won’t get you!

Natasha frowned and laid her head on the pillow.

Sarah continued to cry and she had a very powerful throat.

James began to wake up with the screaming in the room.

**N**: Sh... James, go back to sleep...
Natasha shook James's body lightly as he rubbed his eyes and yawned.

N: Shhh...

James turned to the other side and went back to sleep.

Natasha had to get up again.

N: Okay, what is it now, Sarah? Is it the diaper?

Natasha took Sarah from the crib.

N: Let's check this out again.

Natasha checked her diaper and only had pee, she changed Sarah and put her back in the crib.

Sarah started to cry again.

N: What? Are you feeling something?

Natasha took her in her lap again.

N: Colic?

Natasha shook Sarah lightly on her lap, and she stopped crying.

N: Let's go to sleep, I'm so tired, okay?

Natasha laid Sarah on her lap and cradled her, trying to make her sleep, but Sarah wasn’t yawning and didn’t even seem to be sleepy.

Sarah reached out her little hand toward Natasha's hair and began to move it, trying to figure out what it is that long red wires coming out of Natasha's head.

N: Do you like my hair?

Natasha was annoyed before, but now she's already smiling at Sarah again.

N: You hardly have any, but I think you're going to be blonde like your father. Well, at least that I remember. Your mom was blonde.

Sarah smiled.

N: Yeah... You will be blonde.

Natasha yawned.

N: Aren’t you sleepy? Not even a little?

Natasha sat on the carpet with Sarah.

N: This belongs to James, but you can play with it.

Natasha took James’ toy in the crib and gave it to Sarah.

N: You bite, like that.
Natasha put the toy into Sarah's mouth and handed it to her.

Natasha put Sarah sitting on the carpet and she lay on the floor, with her elbow resting on the floor and her head in her hand as she watched Sarah drool over the whole toy.

Natasha yawned once more and closed her eyes for a second, then she opened her eyes and smiled, blinked a few times and without realizing she fell asleep right there on the floor.

...

The next morning, Maria Hill went to the Command Center.

H: Patrick, what is that?

PP: It... It's Peter...

H: What? Speak loud, I can’t understand you.

PP: I said it's the image controller.

H: It wasn’t like that before.

PP: I know, I just thought about upgrading the system while you, guys, were out. It made it simpler and more automated. To control the images, we can simply use these arrows and giving two clicks or touches on the image, you can enlarge the image of this camera, and two more clicks enlarge even more and one click closes the image.

Hill frowned and watched his explanation.

PP: You didn’t like it? You didn’t like it. I know, it was a bad idea. I'll put it back as it was before. Do you think Mr. Stark will be angry? Should I leave as it was before?

H: No, Peter. It’s very good this way. Good job.

Hill touched his shoulder, congratulating him.

PP: Can I still work here?

Hill looked at Peter, and frowned.

PP: It's that I really enjoyed staying here and helping out. And I...

H: Okay.

PP: Okay?

H: Didn’t you hear what I just said?

PP: Oh Yes!!! This is incredible! Thank you very much, Miss., I mean Ma’am! I promise you won’t regret it and I promise that...

H: Ok, I'm already regretting my decision. Let's make this deal... You work here and just talk to me when is strictly necessary. Understood?
In one of the infirmary boxes, screams could be heard.

As soon as Juliana, the cook’s niece, arrived at the infirmary to work, in fact, to practice, she heard the screams and frowned.

Juliana looked at the chief nurse.

**Ju:** What's going on?

- Oh, that's the guy who came back from the Pyrons' war, the one that has lost an arm.

**Ju:** James Barnes?

The nurse checked the name on the clipboard.

- Yeah. That's it.

Juliana heard the screams and looked toward the curtain of the box where Bucky was.

**Ju:** Is he hurt?

- Well, yes, I guess we can say that. He was operated during the night by those weird foreigners. The Guardians. They should have waited for him to get stronger, but it looks like they had an urgent mission this morning, so they did anyway, under Dr. Cho's supervision.

**Ju:** But he's in pain, don’t you hear?

- Yes. He was operated with local anesthesia only.

**Ju:** He needs more then.

Juliana seemed extremely concerned about the screams.

- Dr. Cho has banned more anesthesia for the state he is in.

**Ju:** But you might give him some painkiller.

- I gave it to him a few hours ago, I think.

**Ju:** Do you think?

- Yes, and it didn’t do much good.

Juliana was worried and irritated by the nurse's calm, she took the clipboard from the table and checked the schedule of the last dose of analgesic.

**Ju:** He can take another dose already.

- I know that.

**Ju:** Why didn’t you give it to him then?
- Because my shift will end on 3... 2... 1...

The nurse got up and smiled.

- See you tomorrow.

Ju: B-but... He's in pain.

- It's not my problem anymore...

Ju: And the other nurse hasn’t come yet, you can’t go and leave the patients alone.

- You are here.

Ju: But I'm just an apprentice!

- Yes, enjoy and learn to ignore the patients who aren’t really near death.

Juliana frowned and took a deep breath. The nurse withdrew and Juliana went to the box where Bucky was.

Juliana opened the curtain and looked at Bucky.

Ju: Mr. Barnes.

Bucky looked at Juliana and recognized her, he was sweaty and gritted his teeth, moaning in pain.

Juliana approached Bucky's stretcher and watched his shoulder, wrapped in a bandage, and noticed that his arm was back, all bandaged.

Ju: Did they give you a new arm?

B: Do you have something for pain?

Ju: I'm sorry, I'm just an apprentice here, I'm not allowed to apply medication yet, but... Soon the nurse arrives and she will apply.

Bucky nodded and threw his head back against the pillow repeatedly.

Juliana raised her hands in Bucky's direction, but she didn’t touch him, it was only fear that he hurt himself by doing it.

Ju: Please, be quiet. You can get hurt.

B: It hurts too much.
Ju: I know...

Juliana raised one hand toward Bucky's head, but stopped when Bucky looked at her and at her hand. She was frozen, not knowing whether she should do it or not, but now she was caught trying to touch him, she would look silly anyway, so she took more courage and touched her fingers on Barnes's forehead.

Bucky remained still, not understanding what Juliana was doing, he looked at Juliana, then closed his eyes when he felt she was just caressing his face.

Of course it was comforting to feel any kindness in the midst of so much pain.

Ju: You're all sweaty, Mr. Barnes.

B: Bucky... Just Bucky, please.

Ju: Bucky ...

Juliana gave a small smile.

Ju: Did you sleep? Your eyes are tired.

Bucky opened his eyes and looked at Juliana.

B: I can’t sleep in such pain.

Ju: Maybe if...

Juliana coughed to be able to speak louder and clearer, since the last sentence came out almost choked from her mouth.

Ju: If I sang, you could sleep.

Sing? Bucky thought, looking at Juliana, not understanding.

Juliana was already feeling extremely stupid before, now that she offered to sing, she wanted to bury her head on the floor.

Juliana took a deep breath and began to sing and as she sang, she slid her fingers through Bucky’s hair, which made him close his eyes again and take a deep and slow breath.

The singing didn’t make the pain go away, but Juliana had this innocent and sweet way, which made Bucky very calm.

- So...

Juliana stopped singing, and removed her hand from Bucky's hair and she jumped back abruptly when someone else came in the box with them. Juliana ended up knocking over some things from the shelf behind her.

- Is that a new treatment for the infirmary? Music Therapy?

Juliana was so embarrassed that her voice was gone, she just picked up the things that fell on the floor, put it back on the shelf and ran out of the box.
Bucky watched Maria Hill standing in the doorway, her arms crossed, watching Juliana come out of the box, and pleased in some way for scaring Juliana.

**B:** You didn’t need to scare the girl.

Hill looked at Bucky and smirked.

**H:** Girl...

Hill nodded.

**H:** She's really young... Too young for you, don’t you think?

**B:** Wh-What? Juliana? No, she's... It's nothing like that...

Hill raised her eyebrow.

**H:** I've never seen nurses touch their patients like that.

**B:** She was just helping me.

Bucky made a pained expression and bit his lip.

**H:** Are you in a lot of pain?

**B:** Yes.

**H:** Good!

Hill nodded, turned, and left the box.

Bucky watched as Hill walked away, completely confused by her attitude.

The way that Hill acts, reminds him of someone he knows very well... Natasha.

...

**H:** Natasha?

Hill knocked on Natasha's door for the third time.

**H:** Natasha?

Inside the room, James woke up with the beats.

**J:** Mommy?

James looked at Natasha lying on the floor, with Sarah lying next to her.

James got out of bed and climbed on top of Natasha, waking her up.

**James:** Mommy. Bread.

Natasha moaned, frowning and listening to the knock on the door.

Natasha scratched her head and opened her eyes.
James started bouncing over Natasha's belly.

J: Bread! Bread! Bread!

N: James...

H: Natasha? Are you there? Are you sleeping?

Now Sarah woke up with the beats and began to cry.

Natasha looked at Sarah and then at James, who was still jumping on top of her.

N: I was sleeping!

Natasha pushed James out of her and stood up.

Natasha walked to the door.

N: Hill! What's it?

H: You're awake, great.

Hill entered Natasha's room.

N: You woke me up and woke the kids up.

J: I want bread, Mom, bread.

N: Wait a minute, James, I just woke up, give me some time.

Hill looked at Sarah on the floor.

H: Why is she screaming like that?

N: Because a fucking cunt came knocking on our door and woke her up!

Natasha walked over to Sarah, took her in her lap and placed her on Hill's lap.

H: Wait, I don’t want her.

N: You woke her, now you're going to hold her, because I have to give breakfast to James, Sarah and Steve and...

Natasha stopped and looked at Hill.

N: Why do you have that face?

H: What face?

N: Hill.

H: Nothing.

N: Did something happen?
H: No. But Bucky is fine after the surgery.


H: Yes.

N: And you went to the infirmary to see him?

H: Yes... Because I thought you'd want to know about him.

N: Hum.

Natasha frowned a little, nodded, and bent to pick up James.

H: Can you believe that that girl was there taking care of him? Like stroking his hair and singing to him…

N: Who? What girl?

H: That girl who was from the kitchen.

N: Juliana?

H: I think that's her name.

N: Was she stroking Bucky’s hair?

Natasha frowned.

H: Yes. Isn’t that strange? They barely know each other…

N: Well... Yeah, that's weird… I didn’t know there was something going on there, I thought he was having something with Sharon, actually.

H: Yeah... Yeah, apparently he has something with a lot of woman, you know…

Natasha shrugged, not paying attention. She doesn’t feel any more jealous of Bucky, so it doesn’t matter who he is dating, good for him, actually.

Natasha walked with James to the door and Hill followed her, bringing Sarah.

As she reached the corridor, Natasha frowned and stopped abruptly. Natasha turned and looked at Hill, who raised her eyebrows.

H: What???

N: You...

Natasha blinked her eyes a few times and then half closed her eyes, staring directly into Maria Hill's eyes.

N: Are you jealous of Barnes???

H: WH-WHAT???
Hill practically screamed, which made Natasha confirm the question she asked and she was completely shocked.

**N:** Oh my God Hill!

**H:** I... I am not jealous, I hardly know him! Imagine if I... Huh, you’re crazy!

**N:** I can’t believe you're liking Barnes!!!

**H:** I'm not liking Barnes, shut up, Natasha. I would never.

Hill shook her head several times, she placed Sarah on Natasha's arm.

**H:** You're insane.

Hill smiled nervously and walked away, leaving Natasha, still shocked, behind, with James and Sarah on her lap.

Natasha straightened Sarah and James on her lap and walked toward the refectory, but before she could get in line, she was intercepted by Tony Stark.

Tony looked at the children.

**T:** How are they?

**N:** Well. What happened?

Tony looked back at Natasha.

**T:** Me and Professor Hank, we spent all the night analyzing that glass sample that hit Steve.

**N:** Really? So?

**T:** It was badly damaged, but you were right, it had a substance in the glass unknown and that triggered his reaction.

**N:** But did you find a way to reverse this? Is there a cure for that?

Tony looked at Natasha and sighed.

**T:** Well...

Chapter End Notes

Tell me if you want the next chapter ASAP
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


Tony looked at Sarah and James, then at Natasha again.

T: We don’t have a cure, yet, but it’s possible that we create one. At least I believe that.

N: God! Great! Why aren’t you working on it?

T: Because Hank, Cho and I need to do some testing and I need to check Steve's status now, but you know everyone is scared of Steve.

N: Are you saying you're scared of Steve?

T: N-no.

N: What do you need?

T: Blood.

N: I'm not a nurse, Tony. I'll need help.

T: We'll get someone.

N: No civilian will agree to enter that cage with Steve.

T: But we'll have to try. I'm going to the infirmary, I'll make a speech and it would be good if you and his children were there to touch someone's heart.

Natasha frowned.

N: I will not expose them to that kind of coercion, Tony.

T: I knew that, but it was worth to try.

N: I need to give them breakfast first.

T: Of course. I'm going to eat too.

Tony and Natasha went to the refectory and remained at the line, but they basically were the first to arrive to eat.

Tony offered to take Natasha's tray.

N: You can get a slice of bread for James and the porridge for Sarah.

- So, you are back!

N: Yes, Mrs. Johnson.
Natasha looked at the cook, Mrs. Johnson, Juliana's aunt.

- I'm sorry, but there's no bread today.

J: Jamie want bread.

N: James...

T: You don’t have any bread? How so?

- There is no bread because our stock of yeast is gone, and the flour is almost at the end, we are doing what we can to keep everybody fed here.

J: Mommy, bread!

N: James, there's no bread.

Natasha looked at the cook.

N: Okay, so do you have any fruit?

J: Fruit not. Not fruit.

T: Natasha, how many shells of porridge?

N: Just one, she only takes the bottle, but I want to try to give her something more consistent this time.

Natasha looked at James.

N: James, you can’t choose, you will have to eat the fruit.

- Sorry. No fruit, either.

T: It's just harvesting from the artificial stove. There were lots of fruit there.

- Mr. Stark, if it were just that, the fruits would already be here, but something happened to the stove, everything was rotten.

N: All the fruits?

- All.

N: That’s impossible.

T: Yes, it’s possible because we planted only one species at a time, it was in the apple season, but I don’t know what happened.

- And you should check the temperature of the dorms too, the kitchen has been an oven. Don’t blame me if the food starts getting too salty. We can’t contain the sweat.

Natasha and Tony looked disgusted.

T: I'll send a team right now to check these things. We can’t be without our stove. Don’t
worry, I’ll be taking care of everything now.

- That’s good.

James looked at the porridge.

J: Mine?

Natasha looked at the tray and shook her head.

N: I’m sorry James, you can’t eat porridge, there’s milk in it.

- Why not? He ate it all these days.

Natasha shook her head.

N: You must have mistaken him for another child.

- No, I’m sure. It’s hard to forget the worst children in the bunker.

Natasha frowned, startled by the cook’s words.

- Don’t get me wrong, but James alone is very sweet, but when he joins with the archer’s son and Thor’s daughter, it’s a hell of a thing. They fight each other, throw food on the ground and on the face of each other. But I confess that the mini archer is the worse.

N: But James didn’t eat the porridge, he certainly didn’t eat it, he would have gone sick and vomit and have fever.

- I saw it with my own eyes, even when he dropped it on the floor, I changed his plate and he ate everything, he even licked the plate.

Natasha stared at the cook, confused. It couldn’t be, she knows that James goes sick immediately after ingesting any food with milk.

- Well, there's this cracker of salt and water here.

Natasha accepted the crackers, but deep down she was worried about this meal of James. He’s in the growth phase, he needed something more consistent.

Even though Natasha still has a supply of milk in her room, she can’t go there and bring it to the kitchen in broad daylight, even more at the time of the collective meal.

T: And for you, Natasha?

N: I'm not going to eat anything, thank you.

Tony took the tray for Natasha to the table, but he decided not to eat breakfast and to go straight to fix the stove and the central air conditioning. These were very urgent matters to postpone.

N: James?

Natasha looked at James, who was sitting beside her.

N: Eat the crackers.
J: Jamie want bread.

N: I said there's no bread, James.

J: Bread!

James shook his head and stood with his arms folded.

N: Look, I promise I'll make porridge later for you.

James pointed to Sarah's plate.

N: That you can’t eat.

J: Mine!

N: No, it's Sarah's. I'll do yours later.

Jane: Why, Natasha? Give the porridge to the boy.

Jane and Thor were approaching with their trays and their daughter, Torunn.

Jane: Thor, get another plate of porridge for Natasha, please.

N: No...

Jane looked at Natasha.

N: He can’t eat this porridge.

Jane smiled.

Jane: What do you mean? He has eaten this porridge several times along these days.

N: No...

Jane: Yes. I gave it to him and for my Torunn.

Natasha looked at Jane and she looked confused and shocked.

Jane: What?

N: He has intolerance... He would be sick... It can’t be.

Natasha shook her head.

Jane: I didn’t know that. But he didn’t feel bad in any day. I swear.

N: It's impossible. He gets all flushed, he has fever and sometimes even shortness of breath... I don’t understand.

Jane: Are you sure it was because of the milk?

N: The south bunker doctors said it was. And I saw how bad he feels when he eats something with milk.
Jane: Maybe you should let Cho examine him, it could have been for another reason.

N: I will.

Jane looked at Sarah and smiled.

Jane: Good morning, little Sarah. Have you taken your bottle already?

N: Actually, I'll give the porridge for her.

Jane: But she has what? Three months? Four? She's too young.

N: She's big.

Jane: I told Laura that she seems to be older than that, she's very smart, she already knows how to reach for things.

N: Yeah... So I decided to give it a try. We will see...

Natasha took some porridge with the spoon and directed it into Sarah's mouth.

N: Hey, Sarah, do you want to prove something new? Open your mouth... Like this...

Sarah tasted the porridge, frowned, and spat.

J: Bad Sarah! Bad!

N: She's little, James. She doesn't know.

Natasha looked back at Sarah.

N: It's good, it's good, see?

Natasha ate some of the porridge.

N: See? Tasty. Now you...

Natasha gave the porridge again to Sarah, she grimaced, but kept the porridge in her mouth.

N: That's it... That's right. Good girl!

Natasha gave a small smile and took another spoonful of porridge.

N: Aaaah...

Natasha opened her mouth, for Sarah to see and imitate her. Sarah pointed to Natasha's mouth and then touched her finger to her lip. Natasha pretended to bite Sarah's finger, which made her laugh.

N: A little bit more, take it.

Natasha gave more porridge to Sarah and James grabbed Natasha's arm.

Natasha looked at James and she smiled, because James was open-mouthed, wanting porridge too on his mouth also.

Well, it wasn't exactly the porridge he wanted, but the same attention given to Sarah.
N: Mommy's gonna give crackers in your mouth, okay?

Natasha broke the crackers and put it in the mouth of James, who was satisfied by that. He just wanted to be fed by his mother too.

Natasha fed Sarah again and looked at Jane.

N: Jane, can you spend the morning with James?

Jane: Of course. But not Sarah?

N: I'll leave her with Pepper.

Jane: Oh yes... I understand

Jane lowered her head a little blandly, she blinked her eyes a few times and ate her porridge. Natasha noticed how much Jane was embarrassed.

N: Jane, it's just because you're already with Torunn. I'm just not going to leave Sarah with you because she give so much work, but if you really want to stay with her...

Jane: No, that's fine. I wouldn’t trust myself any more either.

N: Jane, that's not what I meant.

Jane: It's alright, Natasha.

Natasha won’t be apologizing, much less trying to make her feel better, after all she should have taken better care of Sarah, she's just a baby and Thor is basically a baby too. Leaving Sarah with him was a lot of irresponsibility.

Natasha finished Sarah and James's breakfast. She left James with Jane, so he could play with Torunn and then she went to leave Sarah in Pepper's room.

Tony and Natasha talked to the nursing team about collecting Steve's blood.

So far no one has volunteered to collect his blood.

Natasha sighed, a little frustrated.

- I...

Natasha and Tony watched Juliana, who stepped forward.

- I could do it...

- You're just an apprentice.

Ju: But I know how to do it... I've seen you do it several times. It's just that... if there is no one to do it, I can do it.

Natasha watched Juliana and wondered why she would volunteer for something like that, knowing it was dangerous.

Ju: Steve was always kind to me, I'm not afraid of him, I want to help.
Natasha nodded, looking at Juliana. It was her way of thanking.

- But she has no qualification or authorization for this task.

T: She has it from now on.

- Under whose orders?

T: Mine. I paid for it all, so I can be the judge and I decide she's enabled to do it. Someone against it?

The nurses shook their heads.

T: Okay, then. Come on, Juliana.

Ju: I'll prepare things for the collection.

Juliana went to the bookshelf to pick up syringes, gloves, alcohol and rubber.

While they waited, Natasha took the opportunity to go to the box where Bucky was to check how he was.

N: New arm, huh...

Bucky looked at Natasha.

N: So... How are you feeling?

B: Bored.

N: Seems good.

Natasha walked to his stretcher, she still can’t smile for real, except for James and Sarah, and it’s good that with Bucky she doesn’t have to pretend to be fine.

Natasha put her hand on Bucky's hand and looked down.

B: Hey...

N: I'm fine.

B: Natasha...

N: I am.

Natasha nodded a few times and looked around.

N: It's just hard to believe he's gone, you know?

Natasha took a deep breath and looked up, trying to take the image of her friend Clint Barton dead off her head.

N: I feel like we're just away from each other, but when I need him, I'd call and he'd come back to me. I could see him again when I needed to.
B: If it's easier that way, keep thinking like that.

N: And to make things worse... Steve...

Natasha closed her eyes and sighed.

B: How is he?

N: Bad... Tony will try a cure, but he needs a blood sample from him.

- Bucky, I...

Juliana appeared in the box entrance and looked at Natasha's hand over Bucky's.

Ju: Oh... I'm sorry.

Juliana ran out of the box. Natasha frowned and looked at Bucky.

N: You have a fan here.

B: She's a good girl.

N: I know, she volunteered to take Steve's blood.

B: What? It's very dangerous, she's just an apprentice, if you're not careful, she can...

N: Hey, relax. I'll be there with her. I won't let anything bad happen to her.

Natasha was analyzing Bucky for a few seconds.

N: You care about her.

B: Of course I do.

N: Tell me, do you have feelings for her?

B: What??? No. She's a child.

N: No, she’s not a child.

B: You and Maria with these things, that's what she put in your head, right? She's the one who talked about Juliana, wasn’t she? Look, Natasha, I'll tell you something... This friend of yours, Maria, she is very...

Natasha frowned, waiting for Bucky to finish the sentence, but Bucky shook his head.

N: Very?

B: I don’t know. She confuses me.

N: Do you hate her?

Bucky looked confused.

B: No... No, but I don’t know if she hates me, it seems that she hates me and I don’t know
why. Do you think she hates me?

Natasha smiled almost imperceptibly.

N: Hill is... She’s a very complicated person.

B: Yes. Exactly. That’s my point;

N: But she's unique... There's no one in this world like her.

Bucky looked at Natasha and frowned a little, reflecting on the phrase.

N: Well... I need to go. Get better soon, I don’t trust anyone to be with James and Sarah for me.

Bucky nodded.

...

Natasha, Tony, Juliana, Nightcrawler and Kitty went to the jet, where Steve was.

Nightcrawler and Kitty were called at Natasha's request, in case they needed a speedy extradition plan in case something went wrong during the blood collection process.

Once inside the jet, as soon as they spotted Steve's condition in the cage, everyone was certain he wasn’t in a position to attack anyone, because if he was only pretending all this weakness, he deserved the Oscar for acting. He seemed to be on the last seconds of his life.

N: Steve...

Natasha whispered softly to herself as she leaned against the glass of the cage.

Kitty took Juliana's hand and crossed the cage with her.

Natasha looked at Nightcrawler.

N: Take me inside.

T: It's too many people inside, we think better of here.

N: I can help.

Nightcrawler nodded, he hold Natasha’s hand, and brought her her into the cage.

N: You and Kitty wait outside.

Nightcrawler and Kitty obeyed and left the cage.

Ju: Mrs. Natasha, he looks really bad.

N: You can call me Natasha, Juliana.

Natasha just looked at Steve, she crouched close to his head. Steve was paler than before, his eyes half-open and distant, his body covered with sweat and wounds.

When Juliana snapped Steve's arm with the syringe needle, he jerked his head and growled, causing
Juliana to panic and fall backwards.

Kitty and Nightcrawler prepared to act, but Natasha gestured them to calm down.

**N: It’s okay here! Are you alright, Juliana?**

Juliana looked at Natasha with a gasping breath. Her eyes conveyed fear, but also determination, she nodded and ended up inserting the needle correctly.

While Juliana filled the tubes with blood, Natasha dared to touch her hand on Steve's face, which made him roll his eyes and move his face from side to side, trying to react.

**N: Sh...**

Natasha stroked Steve's face and he still tried to have some strength to react, but he couldn’t, so he just stopped resisting and closed his eyes.

**N: You'll be fine.**

**Ju: I'm done here.**

**N: Go...**

**Ju: What about you?**

**N: I... I'll stay a little longer.**

**T: Natasha, it's dangerous.**

**N: Not for me.**

**T: Alright. Let’s go.**

Tony looked at Nightcrawler and nodded for him to get Juliana. Nightcrawler came in, took Juliana and took her out of the cage.

Tony, Juliana, Kitty and Nightcrawler got out of the jet and returned to the bunker.

Natasha sat on the floor and heard Steve moaning in pain, she kept her hand on Steve's face and she didn’t know how to make him feel more comfortable.

**N: You know, Sarah today... She took porridge for the first time.**

Natasha watched to see if Steve would demonstrate some reaction, but so far nothing.

**N: You needed to see the expression on her face when she tasted the porridge. It was so funny. You would love it, you would smile and you would be all silly...**

Natasha gave a small smile again.

**N: I'm sorry for taking this moment from you. I watched James try on each new flavor and I remember each of them...**

Natasha sighed, and even though she had no results, she decided to persist.
N: And James he... He was filled with jealousy. I even gave food in his mouth as well. He was imitating Sarah's way, trying to be a baby again. I think this is normal between siblings, right? I wanted you to be there with me to tell me how to deal with them both... You are so more kind with the kids than I am.

Natasha smiled again, remembering the moment sooner, but soon she broke the smile.

N: You need to get back, Steve. You need to come back. I need you. Did you hear that? I need you! It's good of you to be listening to that, because I won’t say it again, you know me.

Natasha sighed in frustration.

Steve fell asleep and Natasha spent the whole morning with him, she only left at lunchtime, and still had to undergo a cleansing and disinfestation process before she could meet go to the refectory.

The truth is that many people are still scared and angry at the number of people who died in the Pyron War and especially for having brought back Steve in that state.

There are small groups that talk to each other, and are convinced that Steve will bring death to all of them. Natasha and Tony know this by the way they're looked at by these groups, they just walk in and they start whispering over them.

Natasha came to the refectory and noticed that Sarah was already with Pepper, Natasha went to them to know the reason for Sarah's sobbing, but when she approached, she saw why.

P: Natasha! Thank God!

N: You don’t have to give her the bottle.

P: But she needs to feed.

N: She doesn’t want the bottle anymore, maybe she'll take it at bedtime. Stay here and I'll get food for her.

P: I didn’t know she could eat food already.

N: Ham...

Natasha sighed and she was feeling bored to explain, but she was already determined to introduce real food for Sarah to eat.

N: Did she look good in the morning?

P: Actually, she was great, only now that we got here that the fight started.

N: I believe it's because she ate enough to be satisfied. James was like that too, and I discovered that it was just too much hunger he felt. I'll be right back.

Natasha returned to the line and James was now coming to the line walking hand in hand with Torunn, but both were irritated.

Natasha looked at Jane.

N: What happened?
Jane: It turned out they fought, they literally fought with kicks and slaps.

Natasha frowned, and she was surprised.

N: Did Torunn hit James?

Jane: And James hit her.

Natasha made a confused look, practically doubting of Jane. Imagine if her son would do such a thing.

Jane: But it's childish, so I gave them two options, they'd could be hand by hand to make peace for an hour or they would get grounded without playing.

Natasha looked at James.

N: James, did you hit her?

James looked down and didn’t answer.

Natasha frowned even more and crouched, she held onto James's waist and stared at him.

N: James? Look at me.

James just kept looking down.

N: I can’t believe you hit someone.

Jane: Even more being a girl!

N: It has nothing to do with being a girl.

Jane: Why not?

N: Because he can’t hit anyone, not girls, not boys. James, I don’t want this to happen anymore. You understand?

James nodded.

N: Let's eat and hold hands is a good punishment since you’re not liking it.

Natasha got up and after getting food for her, James and Sarah, she went to sit at the table with the others.

N: Ready for your first pasta, Sarah?

Sarah was already with her mouth wide-open, Natasha smiled at her.

Sarah now understands that being in the refectory is to eat porridge and she loved to feel that taste in the morning, so when Natasha gave the first spoonful of spaghetti, she spat because she expected a sweet taste.

N: Oh, you didn’t like it?

J: Me, Mommy, meee.
Natasha gave James some pasta.

N: See? James likes it, it's yummy.

Natasha gave it to Sarah again, and she accepted, swallowed it quickly and opened her mouth again to eat more.

Pepper: Someone was really very hungry.

J: Me, Mom.

James imitated everything Sarah did to get attention.

N: How to deal with this situation?

P: Oh, it's just a phase, I'm sure.

N: The problem is that I don't have much patience for that, I've dealt with his baby stage, he can't go back to that stage now.

Natasha had to give food in the mouth of Sarah and James, to not create any more conflicts during the meal.

P: Tony didn't come to lunch because he's researching Steve's blood sample, maybe he won't even go to the Barton's funeral.

Natasha changed her expression to a more serious one, she had forgotten that she would still have to go to Clint's funeral and she would like to be able to disappear to not witness this, but she couldn't do that with Laura and her kids.

N: I forgot... I spent the whole morning with Steve.

Natasha sighed.

N: I should have stayed with her and the kids. I didn’t even see them here to eat.

P: I took breakfast for them at their dormitory, but Laura refuses to eat. She's been really sad, I don’t know if she will be able to go to the ceremony, poor thing.

N: She doesn’t have to go if she doesn’t want to.

P: No, not at all. The ceremony is collective for all who are gone, but the burial is individual, each family will have its moment. And now they'll have the chance to just bury. Before we had to cremate everyone.

N: What did Laura decide to do?

P: I asked, but she didn’t answer. I thought you could decide for her.

N: Now?

P: Not now, it may be after the collective ceremony.

Natasha nodded.
After they all had eaten, they were getting ready for the burial ceremony.

The ceremony would be in the main auditorium on the last level of the base.

When Natasha arrived, she went straight to Laura and her children.

**N:** Laura.

Laura hadn’t been crying before, but when she saw Natasha, she began to cry, because she remembers her of Clint. Lila, who was close to her mother, became nervous and began to cry along.

Natasha hugged Laura for a few seconds.

**N:** If you don’t want to stay here, Laura, we'll understand.

Laura nodded.

**L:** Thank you, but I want. They need to say goodbye to their father...

Natasha nodded.

**N:** I'll be here for you.

**L:** Thank you. I... I didn’t even ask how Sarah and James are, are they okay?

Natasha nodded.

**N:** Don’t worry, they're with Juliana up there.

Natasha stayed with Laura and her children throughout the ceremony. Many citizens of the bunker were present to participate.

At the end of the ceremony, Natasha asked Laura what should be done with Clint's body.

**L:** I think... They can cremate...

Laura sighed.

**N:** Okay. Let's say the last goodbye...

Laura nodded and called her children to go to Clint Barton's coffin to say goodbye.

**N:** Are you sure you want them to see it?

**L:** Yes. They have to say goodbye to their father.

Laura took a deep breath and went to Clint's coffin, accompanied by her children, Natasha and all Clint's closest friends.

Each coffin had a keeper during the ceremony, which is responsible for the cremation or burial of it.

Natasha approached the keeper of Clint's coffin and asked him to open Clint's coffin so everyone could say good-bye.

The keeper obeyed and opened the coffin.
They all stared at the coffin, not understanding what was happening.

L: B-but... Where is he?

The keeper was confused and looked at the coffin. There were only rocks inside.

N: Where's Clint Barton's body?

Chapter End Notes

I bet you didn't see that coming. Where is Clint Barton's body? Some theory?
T: Is that some kind of joke?

N: I don’t think anyone would joke about something like that, Tony. Not even you.

Tony, Natasha and Maria Hill were talking at the Command Center, an hour after the discovery of Clint Barton's empty coffin.

Laura fainted briefly after seeing the coffin without her husband's body, her children were taken by Pepper to her dorm.

T: How is that possible? Who took his body from there?

H: That's what we're trying to figure out.

T: Isn’t even in the morgue?

Natasha shook her head.

T: Who was not at the funeral, but should be?

N: You?

Tony looked at Natasha, angrily.

T: I was researching the blood sampler of your beloved capzombie.

H: Who can guarantee that?

Tony now turned to face Maria Hill and he was even more annoyed.

T: McCoy can confirm this, just like the bunker cameras...

H: You handle the cameras directly all the time, you could have changed the images.

T: But what? Why on earth would I take his body from there? What would I do to his body? Are you crazy?

N: We know it wasn’t you, Tony.

H: We'll just have to interview everyone here, without distinction.

T: You weren’t there either.

H: No. I was here at the Command Center and I wouldn’t have anything to do with Clint's body either.

T: Even more that you didn’t even like him.
Hill stood with her arms crossed and she looked at Tony with a frown.

**H:** Who said that?

**T:** I didn’t see you sad, not even for one day. You and Clint barely spoke to each other.

**H:** Don’t talk about what you don’t know.

**N:** Okay, people. Let's start with who wasn’t there, but should be because we know they’re very close to Clint.

**T:** Start the list.

**N:** I don’t remember them all, but I missed Wanda there, she really liked Clint. Actually, I didn’t see her again after we got back from this last mission.

**T:** Okay, that's a good suspect!

**H:** Most likely it was her, but what would she do with his body?

**N:** She's a witch, I have no idea.

**T:** Anyway, everyone is suspicious. Let's see the camera pictures from there to see who was and who wasn’t.

Tony activated the screen and they watched the images of the cameras from the bunker.

After watching, Hill picked up a notepad and wrote down the name of who wasn’t at the funeral, but should be.

**H:** So, three names: Thor, Wanda and Vision.

**T:** Vision? Interesting. I'm going to make a video call to his room.

Tony dialed to Vision’s W.T., and no one answered, he tried three times.

**N:** Try Wanda. They’re always together.

Tony called Wanda, and also no one answered.

**H:** Nothing?

Tony shook his head.

**H:** Agent Mack.

The SHIELD agent at the command center looked at Principal Hill.

**H:** Gather Agent Simmons and Coulson, have them call Thor, Wanda and Vision for an interrogation. I want teams scouring the entire bunker until we find them all and call Laura Barton as well.

Natasha and Tony looked at Maria Hill, who saw their reaction, but chose to ignore it.
H: Everyone closer to him is a suspect.

N: She was there!

H: At the time of the funeral, yes, but she could have made the robbery sooner.

N: Hill, you can’t put her through it...

H: I'll put another "gentler" agent to interrogate her, it'll be like a conversation, she won’t even notice that she's being interrogated. Better that way?

Natasha was silent, agreeing with Maria Hill.

H: I'll accompany the interrogation at E Wing. Will you come with me?

T: Actually, I need to get back to the research center.

Natasha remembered Steve and looked at Tony.

N: Any news?

T: All I can say is that Steve's body is struggling to get rid of the poison.

N: That's good, right?

T: That's great! I think we can balance his body with a cocktail of antibiotics to get rid of the toxins that left him like that.

N: If you need more blood...

T: First, let's try with what we have, we get a good amount and he's already too weak to get stuck all the time.

Natasha nodded.

T: Cho is hopeful that we will succeed.

Natasha looked down and nodded, as if she were losing her hopes. In fact, she was tired of everything. The whole world seemed to weigh on her back and she doesn’t know exactly how to act to help everyone, especially who she loves.

Tony watched Natasha’s expression.

T: I also believe he will get better.

Tony touched Natasha's arm, which made her look at him.

H: Are you coming, Natasha?

Natasha looked at Hill and shook her head.

N: I have to free Juliana who’s taking care the children for me.

H: I'll keep you posted.
Hill nodded and walked out the door, as did Tony and the agents she'd given orders.

Natasha left and went to her room, but when she got there she didn’t see Juliana or the children. Natasha frowned and wondered where Juliana had gone with James and Sarah.

Natasha didn’t need to make any effort, she soon thought of Bucky, although infirmary wasn’t a suitable place for children, she found it more likely to find them there.

...

**Bucky:** I loved seeing this boy, he's too big now, he barely fits in my lap... I can’t believe I saw him born.

Said Bucky, who was at the infirmary stretcher with James sitting on his lap.

The stretcher was in a sitting position so he would make no effort.

**B: But you shouldn’t bring children here, Juliana.**

**Ju:** I know, but it's that everyone was at the funeral and you're here alone. I didn’t know if you were sad and I wanted to stop by.

**B:** Juliana?

Juliana was with Sarah in her arms, beside Bucky's stretcher, but she only stared at the floor, or the ceiling, when she talked to him.

Juliana glanced briefly at Bucky and looked at the floor again.

**B:** Juliana?

Juliana looked at James and then looked at Bucky. Bucky looked at her and nodded.

**B:** Thank you.

**Ju:** For what?

**B:** For caring about me.

Juliana smiled and lowered her head again.

Bucky for the first time stopped to analyze Juliana. Of so much that Natasha and Hill spoke in his
head that she has an interest in him and that she’s not a child, he decided to stop to see if he had the wrong impression of her.

Juliana is a simple girl, a very pale white skin and very thin. Any man wouldn’t look twice at her, if any would look once, since she is so shy that she always goes unnoticed by the places she goes.

Bucky always thought she should be around 14 or 15 years old because he didn’t look much at her, but now he realizes that despite her slim body, she has a definite silhouette of a woman, he could tell by the volume at the height of her breasts, below the Nurse uniform she wore. Besides, her skin is so white and delicate that looks like baby skin, maybe that made him see her as a child yet.

Her face is always with red marks, even though she doesn’t even get expose to the sun, maybe it's just because she's always so shy and embarrassed. Any kind of effort already results in her skin getting redder.

Bucky tilted his face a little to look at Juliana's face again, it was a round face, with a small and slightly retracted chin, giant blue eyes, with discreet but still appealing lips. The forehead was larger than it should be, but by looking at her whole face, he concluded that her forehead is exactly as it should be.

Yes, she is beautiful, she is very beautiful, very much! A man who doesn’t look at her twice, must be blind as he was, but anyone who pays attention to Juliana's doll traits knows that she is extremely beautiful.

Ju: You...

Bucky just stopped looking at Juliana, when she let out a word, which made him straighten up on the stretcher and be embarrassed by the way he watched her.

If before she was a little red, now she looked like a strawberry of so red that she is and for Bucky, it only makes her prettier.

B: I’m sorry.

Bucky apologized for looking at her too much and he wonders if she has any idea of how beautiful she is. Does she see herself how he used to saw her? Just a girl who doesn’t call much attention and who is not beautiful, I mean... Not beautiful like Natasha, who has a very obvious and easy beauty to see... Bucky made negative with his head, lamenting because she seems to have no self-esteem, for being extremely reserved.

She doesn’t wear any makeup, no fancy hairstyles, or necklines, she practically hides herself in the uniforms, making it even harder for someone to find out how beautiful she is.

- There you are!

Juliana and Bucky looked at Natasha at the door of Bucky's box.

Ju: Natasha, I just came to get something I forgot and brought them with me and then I thought I'd let James see Bucky and...

J: Mommy. Buck!

James pointed his finger at Bucky.

B: I asked her to see him...
N: You don’t have to lie, it's okay. I don’t see problem in a visit, it just can’t become a habit, here is not an ideal place for children. Right?

Natasha approached the stretcher and looked at Bucky.

N: James came to visit you before me, that's embarrassing. I didn’t forget you, but...

B: It’s all right, Natasha. I know you’ve been through a lot.

Natasha gave a small smile, grateful that Bucky was ever so sympathetic to her.

N: How are you feeling?

B: So much better. I hope to be discharged today...

Bucky said in amusement and staring at Juliana.

Ju: Tomorrow morning, from what I heard.

N: The siren will ring for the dinner, I need to bathe the kids first, but I'll come back to visit you.

B: Don’t worry about that. How was the funeral? Are you alright?

N: Somebody stole the body of Clint Barton...

B: What?

N: We're investigating to find out who it was.

B: His wife.

Bucky said the first thing that came into his head.

N: I can’t believe it was her. It’s just not her style.

B: Sorry, neither do I, but it seems to be the most logical, she who suffered the most... It would make more sense.

N: I know that, but we have good suspects for it and I hope it really was that person.

B: What do you mean?

N: I don’t know what she's capable of, but...

Natasha shook her head, trying to remove from her mind the absurd idea that Wanda would be able to do something for Clint Barton. Dead people doesn’t come back. He is dead. Get over it. Natasha told herself in thought.

N: Forget it, it's just something I've been thinking.

Natasha took James in her lap.

N: Say goodbye to Uncle Bucky, James.
J: Bye, bye.

James waved his hand. Bucky smiled at him and waved back. Natasha kissed James' face and set him on the floor so she could take Sarah from Juliana's lap.

As she took Sarah in her lap, Natasha looked at Juliana.

N: How did she behave?

Ju: She was great.

Natasha raised her eyebrows in surprise.

Ju: She looks happier now. She played with me all the time, took a bottle and slept.

N: That's good. I think the introduction of new foods made her stronger and less grumpy.

Bucky watched Sarah and Natasha.

B: And her father?

N: Tony believes he's close to finding a cure.

B: But is he okay?

Natasha looked at James and then at Bucky.

N: Yes...

Bucky realized by Natasha's way that she didn’t want to talk about Steve in front of James, he just nodded, demonstrating that he understands the lack of better information.

N: Thank you, Juliana. I'll see you later, Barnes.

Natasha said goodbye to both of them and left the infirmary with Sarah in her arms and James running around her legs.

...

At the end of the day Hill reported that she didn’t find three suspects in the bunker: Wanda, Vision and Thor. Although it didn’t make much sense for Thor to be missing either, they thought the explanation for the disappearance of the three was the same... The disappearance of Clint Barton's body.

...

The next morning, still early in the morning, Natasha was asleep in her room. Natasha slept in the bed while James and Sarah were sleeping together in the crib.

Sarah was the first to wake up, she looked to one side and saw Natasha in bed, she thought of crying to have someone's company, but as she moved her arms, she felt the presence of James, she looked at him and smiled.

Sarah made any illegible sound, looking at James, hoping he would open his eyes and talk to her, but James continued to sleep. Sarah tried again and had to shout to make James open his eyes.
James looked at Sarah and frowned, Sarah turned sideways with difficulty and put her mouth on James's arm, leaving his arm all drool.

James looked disgusted.

**J: Mommy!**

James called Natasha in a tearful voice. Natasha moaned and moved on the bed, starting to wake up.

James looked at Sarah who remained with her mouth on his arm.

**J: She is biting me, mom!**

James complained in a tearful voice again.

Natasha sighed and looked at the two.

**N: She doesn’t have teeth, James.**

**J: It hurts!!!**

Sarah lifted her face and smiled at James. For her, they’re just playing.

**J: Mommy...**

James sat up and raised his arm slowly as if was broken or as if Sarah had taken his arm off.

**N: James, you are not hurt, she can’t hurt you, she's too little.**

James's eyes were already full of tears.

James frowned and noticing that Natasha did nothing about it, he looked angrily at Sarah, who was still smiling.

**J: Get out of here!**

Sarah laughed and made some sound, as if answering to James, but with good humor, she still thought it was all joke.

**J: Stop laughing! Get out! My bed!**

Natasha was still on the stage between waking and sleeping, then remained on the bed.

Sarah rested her hands on the mattress and forced herself to crawl over him to try to reach James, who cringed in the corner of the crib, as if he was afraid of her.

**J: Ouuut! Mom! Mooooom, look at her.**

Natasha looked at Sarah, trying to crawl and gave a small smile.

**N: She's trying to crawl! Look, James!**

Natasha got up immediately and went to the crib to witness Sarah's first time crawling.

Sarah couldn’t get her belly off the mattress, she had already gained a lot of weight, so only her arms and legs did the action of propelling her forward.
James stood and asked for Natasha's lap.

N: No, James, she's trying to get to you.

J: I don’t want to!

N: Oh James, don’t be like that, help her, call her to you.

J: No...

James grabbed Natasha's blouse and made his way into her lap. Natasha was forced to take him out of the crib, otherwise he would end up hurting himself on the floor.

Sarah saw that her effort to reach James was in vain and soon she began to cry.

N: See? Now, she is sad because you didn’t want to be with her... Poor thing, James...

James was still angry, looking at Sarah in the crib.

N: She's your sister, James... She loves you. She wasn’t biting you, she was giving you a kiss and you were a very naughty boy with her. That’s too bad, son.

James didn’t answer, he was silent, still looking at Sarah, but not in an angry way anymore.

N: She is so little, she could be your friend... Like Torunn is... You can always play with her, because she is your sister. Forever.

Natasha argued to try to change James's behavior.

N: She's still sad... Can you see how she's crying and looking at you?

Natasha stroked Sarah's back.

N: Sh... Don’t cry... It's okay... James is not angry with you. Right, James?

Natasha looked at James, who just stared.

N: Maybe she'll get better with a kiss...

Natasha tipped James toward the crib.

N: Can you be a good boy and kiss your sister so she won’t be sad anymore?

Natasha looked at James and he seemed to be thinking about what he should do. Natasha was relieved to see James kissing Sarah's forehead, he made the right decision.

Natasha smiled and kissed his cheek, long enough to demonstrate that he did a good job and that she was proud of him.

N: Good boy, James.

J: She don’t stop, mama.

N: No, she didn’t, right? I think she really wants is a lap and a bottle... What do you think?
James raised his hands in the air, indicating he didn’t know. Natasha kissed him once more and set him down.

Natasha took Sarah in her lap and cradled her to stop crying.

**N: Has your brother been mean to you? Was he?**

Natasha asked quietly, looking at Sarah.

**J: No! James good boy!**

Natasha sat on the bed with Sarah and laid her on her legs, but belly up to see her.

**N: It's alright... Sh...**

Sarah looked at Natasha and calmed down a bit.

Natasha continued to stare at Sarah for a few seconds and smiled to notice that Sarah is already used to her and to James, she stopped crying quickly.

She is getting used to her, a woman that is so cold and doesn’t know how to deal with children, but that seems to be enough for Sarah.

The last time Natasha felt her heart heat up that way, it was when James was still a baby, a little younger than Sarah and he used to cry, like just cry. What kind of mother doesn’t know how to calm her son? She was that kind of mother.

Natasha used to just look at Bucky, terrified, and he would promptly come to her rescue, he would pick up James and take him for a walk until he calms down, until that one day that Bucky was gone for some job at the South bunker and James was crying for over an hour, literally. Natasha's despair was so great that she herself cried along with him for not knowing what to do, then she hugged him, apologized and said that she didn’t know what to do but that she felt sorry for him being that way.

At that moment, James stopped crying and he was cowering in her arms, for a long time. Natasha thought he had fallen asleep, and when she pulled him away a little to see him, she saw that he was awake. The way he looked at her made Natasha feel the most loved person in the world and it was the only moment she knew she was complete and truly happy.

That look from Sarah reminded Natasha of this moment with James, not on the same scale, of course, but it was close to that.

**N: You're very special, aren’t you, Sarah?**

Sarah made some sound to Natasha that she couldn’t understand.

... 

The days went by, with no news of Thor, Wanda and Vision, much less of Clint Barton's body. Natasha got even more attached to Sarah for being with her every day, just as James got more attached to his sister too, although he didn’t like to demonstrate that, but he loved the power to make Sarah stop crying in seconds.

There was some news in Steve's treatment. The antibiotics returned much of his strength, the internal bleeds were finally under control, but he showed no sign of improvement further.
Dr. McCoy had developed a kind of tranquilizer that kept Steve under control for the treatments. Natasha hoped to have Steve again, she was feeling much better and still visited him every day and every day she reported how their children were, what they did, what they said, what they learned... Everything! Even without being sure if he’s understanding anything she is talking about.

In one of these return from the visits to Steve, Natasha was approached by Dr. Cho and Tony Stark at the Bunker's entrance.

Natasha looked at them in dismay. Every time they are together it’s to give bad news.

**Cho: So, did you visit Steve?**

Natasha didn’t answer, because the answer was obvious and she hates answering stupid questions.

**Cho: Notice any difference?**

**N: What do you mean?**

**T: Do you think his case is evolving?**

**N: Of course. His skin is almost in the normal tone, he has become calmer, the wounds are healing...**

**Cho: Are they?**

Natasha frowned, hoping that Cho and Tony would stop joking and tell her what they had to say.

**T: Show her.**

Cho handed Natasha a kind of bound book. Natasha took the book and started to see the pages, it was only about Steve's state, everything that was observed all that time.

There was nothing out of the ordinary in the pictures and she turned the pages, and then noticed a sequence of images that seemed to be repeated.

**Cho: It sounds repetitive, but it's not.**

All Natasha’s good humor disappeared, she closed the book and sighed.

**T: Do you know where we're trying to say?**

**N: He stagnated again. There’s no more evolution of the treatment. He is not improving anymore.**

**T: And neither getting worse, which is good. It's as if he just needed an impulse to keep improving and get rid of it.**

**N: Well, do you have a solution or did you just came to ruin my day?**

**T: We have a solution.**

**Cho: Possible solution!**

Cho decided to make it clear so there would be no later complaints.
N: How would that be?
T: Renew his blood.
N: Transfusion?
T: Yes.
N: Do you need donors? Nobody offered? I can give my blood.
T: That would be good. There were donors, yes, but we need someone with a serum.
N: Well, I have some serum, and also Bucky, so it won’t be a problem. When do we start?

Cho: Tony...

Tony put his hand on Cho's arm, indicating that she should be quiet. Natasha noticed, but she didn’t give attention to that.

T: We'll start tomorrow.

N: Alright. I'll see you tomorrow, then.

Tony nodded. He and Dr. Cho turned to look at Natasha walking away. As soon as Natasha disappeared from sight, Cho looked at Tony.

Cho: Why didn’t you say that their son's blood is more likely to be more compatible with Steve?

T: Because I have love for my life, and maybe her blood works.

Cho: I’m not sure if will...

T: If it doesn’t work, we'll have to find a way to use her son.

Cho: If she doesn’t accept it?

Tony looked down the empty hallway, shrugged and sighed. Tony made negative with his head.

T: Then I don’t know what happens to Steve Rogers...

Chapter End Notes

Well, I guess it's a love square now. Although, the readers of my language had already picked one for pairing with Bucky, I want to know... Who do you want Bucky to be with?
Chapter 40

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

On the first day of Natasha's blood transfusion to Steve, he had not made any significant changes. There was a 72-hour break for a second blood transfusion, and this time there was a slight change in Steve Rogers' medical picture. And so the transfusions were occurring, according to Steve's changes. Dr. Cho was reducing the amount of antibiotics in his body.

... Cho and Tony were watching the transfusion from the hallway, through a large glass window at F Wing. The procedure is being performed for the eighth time now.

Steve had been transferred from the jet cage into the bunker in secret, straight to F Wing, after being found that wasn’t transmitting any disease.

There were two donor chairs in the room, side by side with a little distance between them. In one of the chairs was Natasha Romanoff and on the other was Steve Rogers with arms and legs tied on the chair.

Natasha was watching the nurse plug a tube into her vein and then she turned on a device that does the transfusion simultaneously to Steve's body.

The nurse sat in a corner of the room to wait for the procedure to take place. Natasha turned her face toward Steve and watched him.

Steve eyes were deep and dark around, because he hadn’t been sleeping very well in the last few days, it’s the effect of the medication he was taking.

Steve stared at the ceiling, he always avoided eye contact. When someone insisted on making eye contact with him, and most of the time it was Natasha, he became extremely aggressive. And it was only for that reason that he still had to be tied, since he was already much calmer than before. Not only because he was gaining self-control, but also because of the tranquilizer cocktail he was taking.

Every time Steve decided to look around, Natasha disguised and looked anywhere but for him.

Today, he blinked a few times and sighed, as if bored, or perhaps even frustrated at being idle for so long.

Natasha wondered if her Steve is still conscious and understanding everything that is happening now, if he understands everything that happened and what he did. She sincerely hopes not. She doesn’t want him to live with guilty. And about guilty, she understands very well.

Steve looked at the large framed mirror on the wall in front of him.

Cho and Tony were alert as he seemed to be looking at them, but then they remembered that for Steve the window just looked like a mirror. Only they can see what is happening inside the room.

Natasha glanced toward the mirror with her forehead a little furrowed, because Steve was looking at himself in the mirror for good time, and he didn’t do that before. It’s not known if he will react badly even with himself looking at him, maybe he’s not aware that that figure is himself.
Everyone just observed Steve for long minutes as Steve continued to stare at himself. No one knew for sure what was going on in Steve's mind, not even Natasha. His look was half empty, but he seemed to know that it was him on the mirror.

Steve looked in the direction of Natasha's reflection, she took a fright and looked down. It was so quick, that she didn’t expect him to look at anything else.

_I think he saw me looking at him. Shit!_ Natasha thought as she stood looking down and she wasn’t ready to defend herself now. Due to the transfusions, her body walks heavier and slower than before, but she wasn’t there alone. There were big and strong nurses at the door of the room to help in any emergency.

These nurses, who were watching by the door, immediately came to restrain Steve, when they noticed that he made eye contact, but Cho pressed a button near the wall that allows what she says to be heard in the room.

**Cho: No! Hold on!**

Natasha heard Cho's orders and she was surprised. Usually someone would be throwing a tranquilizer dart at Steve right now.

The nurses stood down and Natasha was curious to know what Steve was doing or about to do. Was he close to attacking her? Is he getting loose from the chair? What he is doing? She needs to know.

Slowly and as discreetly as possible, Natasha lifted her head and looked sideways at Steve.

*Cho: Natasha, no! Don’t try anything now.*

Natasha ignored Cho, she knows that Steve saw her looking at him and if he really wanted to, he would have gotten out of the moorings and attacked her, as he had done last week.

Natasha finally made eye contact with Steve.

*Steve?* Natasha thought. *Is that you? Is that really you?* She asked in thought again. Steve stared at her wide-eyed, as if he'd discovered something new for the first time in his life.

*Please be you.* Natasha sighed. *It's time for you to come back.* Natasha was so nervous that her breathing quickened without her noticing. How difficult it was to read Steve's eyes. What is he thinking? What is he feeling? What is he doing?

Natasha held her gaze on Steve's, he seemed curious and moved his head, which made the nurses threaten to walk toward his chair. Even Tony watching from the other side threatened to act too, but Cho stopped him.

Natasha's heart beat fast, perhaps of happiness, hope or fear, she doesn’t know for sure and now it doesn’t matter. Steve is watching her and not attacking her and that is a great evolution.

After a few minutes, Cho pressed the button to speak into the room again.

*Cho: Okay, Natasha. I need you to try to communicate with him. We are here and we will stop him if necessary.*

Natasha nodded once, not looking away from Steve.

*N: H-hi...
Natasha’s voice came out a little flustered and she stuttered. Steve didn’t change his expression.

**N:** Steve?

Steve frowned slightly.

Natasha looked in the direction of the mirror, to talk to Cho and Tony.

**N:** Did you see that?

*Cho:* Yeah, that's great, Natasha. Go on...

**N:** Do you know who I am?

Steve didn’t answer.

**N:** I'm Natasha. I... We have a son. James... That's his name.

Still no reaction.

*Cho:* Try something from his past.

*T:* Talk about his boyfriend.

Tony said, making a face of disdain.

**N:** Do you remember Bucky? He is your friend...

Steve opened his mouth and looked at Natasha as if to say something. Natasha turned toward him in the chair and almost got up to get closer and encourage him to speak.

- Please, Miss Romanoff, the tubes.

The nurse warned, which made Natasha sit still.

**S:** Ba... Barnes.

Natasha smiled and looked back at the mirror.

Tony and Cho were smiling equally as they finally saw significant developments.

**N:** Barnes... Yes. Bucky... He's here.

**S:** Who are you?

Natasha broke her smile and frowned.

*Cho:* It's okay, Natasha. It may be medicine effect.

Steve started to breathe deeper and quickier, he closed his eyes tight and bowed his head, seemed to be having some kind of attack. Natasha scrambled up and the tube on her arm was pulled back.

- Miss Romanoff!

**N:** What's happening to him?
Cho ran and entered the room, she walked over to Steve and opened his eyes, lighting a little lamp to check him.

**Cho: The pupils are not reacting!**

Cho also noticed Steve's mouth, his teeth clenched. Cho ordered a medication and when the nurse brought it, she applied it herself into Steve's vein.

The transfusion device began beeping, warning that one of the tubes had been disconnected. When Cho stared at Natasha she saw that she had removed the tub from her arm.

**Cho: Natasha!**

The nurse rushed to place a bandage on Natasha's arm, from which a lot of blood dripped.

**N: What does he have?**

**Cho: I don't know.**

Cho motioned for the nurses to take Steve out of the room and put him into another room.

**Cho: I'll be back.**

Natasha nodded.

...

After waiting a period of almost one hour, Cho came over to Tony and Natasha giving a position on Steve's condition.

**N: How is he?**

**Cho: Stable. It was a little collapse he had but he's fine.**

Natasha took a deep breath.

**N: Can I see him?**

**Cho: Of course.**

Natasha walked toward Steve's chamber.

**Cho: Natasha?**

Natasha stopped and looked at Cho.

**Cho: Your blood... It's no good for Steve anymore.**

**N: What do you mean? He's getting better, he talked to me.**

**Cho: Yes, there was an improvement, but it stagnated again and now it did even make him sick. In the first transfusions had worked, but as I expected there is not great compatibility, after all your blood types are not the same.**

**N: Did my blood collapse him?**
Cho: That's the only explanation I can find.

N: But... What will we do? I'm the only one who can give the blood to him because of the serum.

T: Actually, you're not the only one.


Cho: James.

N: Barnes?? When you tested Barnes, his blood wasn't good to the transfusion.

Natasha didn't even considered her son, she frowned, confused.

T: She's talking about your son.

Natasha blinked a few times and shook her head, trying to absorb the information.

N: What are you talking about? James has no serum in his blood.

Cho: He has.

N: No. He does not!

Cho: He has, Natasha.

N: He doesn’t have it, he's my son, I know him, I would know. He gets sick, he has lactose intolerance. Who has serum, doesn’t have these things and...

Cho: He has no intolerance, Natasha.

Natasha frowned, thinking Cho was going crazy or confusing James with another child.

Cho: I've tested his blood, he's perfectly healthy.

N: I saw him go very sick with milk and derivatives of, I saw it with my own eyes...

Cho: I know what you saw and I know you believe that.

N: The doctors of the South bunker, they told me...

Cho: They were wrong. Or maybe not. Listen, maybe the serum hadn’t yet manifested in his body yet because he was still so young, so he used to get sick. Do you remember the epidemic of children?

N: Of course.

Cho: James didn’t get sick.

N: He was the first to get sick.

Cho: He was the first to get healed and that without a vaccine... Is it normal?
N: You're the doctor here, not me.

Cho: It's not normal, Natasha, he was very young. Believe me, I tested his blood.

N: When?

T: Does it matter when?

Tony was already nervous, imagining that this talking would lead to the period when James was isolated.

T: What matters is that James can save Steve.

N: He's just a baby!

T: He's almost 4…

Cho: We know that, but I guarantee that everything will be done safely and...

N: No!

T: Natasha...

Tony touched Natasha's arm, but she ducked abruptly and looked at Cho and Tony with a frown and she was extremely irritated.

N: No. You will find another way!

T: Natasha we've been trying for months!

N: You'll find another way!

T: There's no other way!

Natasha snorted and shook her head. She was silent.

Natasha took a deep breath and looked at Cho.

N: Are you sure this would work? Like 100% sure he would be cured?

Cho: No, of course not. Everything we're doing is experimental.

N: So, no.

Cho: But Natasha...

N: I said no! I won't put my son under this stress of needles, he is too young!

Cho: I'm assuring you that James's health won't be affected.

N: I'm not a doctor, but I'm not stupid. If I get exhausted with each transfusion session, imagine my three-year-old son!

Natasha shook her head.
N: Sorry, but I can’t do that to him.

Cho: So you can start saying goodbye to Steve.

Natasha shifted her expression of anger to one of shock. Cho's words hit her like a boxing bag.

Cho: You know there's no way we can save him, all that fight on his body will come back, one hour his body will collapse and it will be fatal.

N: But the antibiotics...

Cho: The problem with using antibiotics is that the body gets used to it, and when it does, it ends up strengthening what is damaging the body.

Natasha closed her eyes and sighed. It was true, she knows this, super bacteria were generated from the constant use of antibiotics, which eventually made the organisms immune to the action of antibiotics.

N: Dammit!

Natasha said quietly, she was so happy an hour ago when Steve was talking to her and her happiness was torn away from her with such force again. Why does this kind of thing keep happening to her? Why?

Cho: I'm not saying this to pressure you, I'm just giving you the overview of the situation. We won’t do anything without your consent.

N: Yeah, now I decide whether he dies or not. Big help.

Natasha looked at Tony, showing disappointment and Tony didn’t know what to say, he looked down and shook his head.

N: I won’t say my answer now, I need some time.

Natasha turned her back to the two and headed for Steve's isolation chamber.

Upon arriving at the door, the guard nurse said she could enter that he was stuck on the stretcher.

Natasha stepped inside the chamber and approached Steve's stretcher.

N: Hey...

Steve was staring at the ceiling, just as before, but he looked at Natasha at the sound of her voice.

S: Who are you?

N: I'm Natasha.

S: Natasha... Why am I stuck?

N: So you don’t get hurt.

S: Am I in jail?

N: No... You’re not.
Steve looked at the ceiling and was silent.

N: Steve?

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Who are you?

Natasha frowned and closed her eyes in frustration. She just introduced herself to him, how can he not keep those recent memories? Was his brain harmed forever in the course of this virus in his body? Would him get worse from there?

Probably he will, if I don’t make a decision. What can I do? Natasha thought as she stepped away from Steve's stretcher, who was looking at the ceiling again.

...

Meanwhile, Bucky was in at the Square, sitting on one of the benches next to Sharon Carter, who was holding Sarah in her lap.

Soon after Bucky's discharge from the infirmary, he fulfilled his promise to take Sarah to visit her in F-Wing. Natasha didn’t object, as Bucky had promised to take care of her security, Natasha only complained that Sarah shouldn’t be going to F-wing, it wasn’t a place for baby.

Natasha then asked permission from the new F-wing chief so Sharon could leave for a few hours of isolation so she could stay with Sarah for a while. The chief authorized it, she had been showing good behavior, all thanks to Bucky's visits.

Sarah was sitting on Sharon's legs and watching her big brother James and other children playing in a sandbox, she stretched her little hand toward the children and screamed. It was her way of calling James and communicating with the other children.

Sharon: She wants to play.

Bucky looked at Sarah and smiled, he nodded.

B: Yes, but she still doesn’t know how to walk, but she now crawls and she is fast, very fast.

Sharon: Is she?

B: Yes. I can hardly reach her when she runs away.

Sharon: I wish I could see.

B: Some other day. It's not cool for her to be on the floor here. You understand?

Sharon sighed and nodded.

Bucky noticed that she always gets very nervous when she is with people around, she can’t keep her legs still and she looks everywhere, as if she was very afraid of what could happen. Unlike when she's in F-wing with him, she stays calm and looks totally normal.

Sharon: Bucky?

B: Yes?
Sharon: Do you think we can go now?

B: Do you want to go? You don’t have to stay here if you want.

Sharon: I...

Sharon looked indecisive.

Sharon: I want, but… People are staring.

Bucky looked around and there were some people looking at her indeed, it wasn’t known whether due to her nervous state or to the kidnapping she did, or the fact that she had lost a daughter and now she’s holding Steve’s baby.

Bucky put his hand on Sharon’s back and moved closer so that only she could hear what he had to say.

B: People like to look.

Sharon looked at Bucky.

B: You have a baby on your lap, everyone likes babies...

Sharon: Do you think that's why?

B: Yes. And maybe because you're very nervous.

Sharon: Me?

Sharon tucked a lock of hair behind her ear, but her hand shook a lot.

B: I know you're normal, Sharon. You just went through a lot of stress, but I believe that if you lose this fear of coming back here, people won’t look at you any more.

Sharon: I want to.

B: I want you to come back, too.

Sharon finally stopped shaking her legs and gave a small smile.

B: Is that a smile? I don’t believe!

Sharon frowned and lowered her head.

B: Did you see that, Sarah? She smiled!

Bucky looked at Sarah who looked back at him, not understanding what he was talking about.

B: I haven’t seen you smile for months, Sharon.

Sharon: I had no reason for that before.
B: I hope you have more reason to smile now.

The children decided to play hide and seek and it was Torunn's turn to count. All the other children rushed to hide and as soon as James hid behind one of the benches, Sarah became desperate and began to cry and point in the direction of the bench.

James peeked at Sarah and put his finger in his mouth indicating for her to be quiet, but it only made Sarah call out even more for him.

Torunn: 8... 9... 10... Here I go!

Torunn noticed Sarah and noticed the bench she was pointing at, she saw James and ran up there.

T: I found you, James! It’s your turn now.

J: It's not!

T: Yes, it is.

J: It's not. Sarah said where I was.

T: She's a baby, she doesn’t talk!

J: But she did it.

Francis Barton: It's with James!

J: It's not!

F: Yes, it is!

T: It is, James!

J: It's nooooot!

T: Yes, that's how we play, James!

J: So, I won’t play anymore then!

James folded his arms, frowned, and walked toward Bucky.

T: James? James?
James slowed as Torunn called him. Francis grabbed Torunn's wrist.

**F:** Leave him.

James looked at Torunn.

**T:** Come on, James.

**F:** He doesn’t want to! Let’s play something else.

Francis touched Torunn’s shoulder.

**F:** It's up to you now, come get me!!!

Francis ran and Torunn began chasing him and the other children across the square.

James looked at the children and kept his face frowned, he walked over to Bucky.

**B:** What is it, buddy?

James uncrossed his arms, pointed at the children, and folded his arms again.

**B:** What happened? Go play.

**J:** It was Sarah's fault.

James looked at Sarah who had already stopped crying because James had approached her.

Sarah smiled at him.

**J:** Stop!

**B:** She doesn’t understand, James.

**J:** Stoooop it!

**B:** Why are you yelling at her, James? She's a girl and she's just a baby, you can’t yell at her. Your mother already told you this, I don’t want to tell her what you did, so you have to behave and not do it anymore. Now, go play...

James only went to play, because it is better to take Bucky's sermon than Natasha's.

James still doesn’t understand why he started to take so much sermon, but he knows that it was after Sarah began to live with them.

For example, when James is eating something and Sarah wants it, he is obliged to share, but when she took one of his crackers and he took it back from her hand, Sarah started to cry, and his mother instead of fighting her for being a thief, she fought with him. He thought that was an absurd.

In James' head, that's not fair. That’s the same when Sarah tried to go to his lap and ran her nails on his leg and because her nails were big, it ended up hurting James and he fought back pushing her hard and causing her to fall on the floor. All that James thought was, she can hurt him, but he can’t hurt her and in the end who his mother fought? With him!

Just Sarah begins to cry and James knows he is the one taking the blame, but he doesn’t understand
that his actions are what generates the sermons that Natasha gives on him, it will still be necessary a conversation to explain it better for him.

- It's time.

Sharon's nurse announced, indicating that Sharon should return to her chamber in F-Wing.

Sharon nodded and handed Sarah over to Bucky's lap.

Sharon: See you tomorrow?

B: Tomorrow not because I will help in the production of Christmas. Since Barton's gone, I'm assuming the things he used to do.

Sharon: Shall we have a tree this year?

B: Yes, I'll go get one myself and if I don’t find it, I'll make one.

Sharon: I hope you do. I like the lights.

B: I promise I'll find a way to put a tree here.

Sharon: Do you think they'll let me come to the Christmas’ party?

B: But of course, I'll bring you.

Sharon gave another smile, nodded and waved to say goodbye a, then she was taken away by the nurse.

...

By the end of the day, Natasha was with Maria Hill in her dormitory.

H: I think you should give a try.

N: What if it doesn’t work?

H: Then we’ll have another funeral.

N: Don’t make jokes about it.

H: It wasn’t a joke. He's going to die.

N: Stop saying that!

They both heard knocks on the door.

N: Who is it?

- Me.

N: It's open. Come in.

As Natasha stood by the bathroom door, Hill was sitting on her bed and stared at the door and at seeing who it was, Hill frowned and looked at Natasha, completely disgusted.
H: What is he doing here?

Bucky was even smiling, he hadn’t seen Maria Hill in a while, but he broke the smile with her reaction.

Hill looked at Bucky.

H: I'm sorry, but we're having a private conversation now, so if you want to come back another time...

N: Hill... Actually I called him here.

H: Why? You said you wanted to talk to me.

N: Yes. With both of you.

H: Why?

Bucky looked confused.

B: Wait... What's happening?

Hill rolled his eyes and sighed.

N: Guys, not now.

Bucky looked at Maria Hill.

B: Just a minute! First, I want to understand what is your problem?

H: My problem?

B: You're a little crazy. I don’t when this happened, but suddenly, I'm a torment to you.

H: You? You're nothing to me.

Bucky looked more confused and looked at Natasha, pointing at Hill.

B: See, what did I tell you?

N: Guys, hold on, I need to talk to you something important.

H: Wait, were you talking about me to her? Who gave you the right?

N: Hill!

B: The right?

N: Barnes!

B: Look, Natasha... I didn’t do anything to this crazy woman and she now keeps attacking me and acting like... Like I did something very wrong to her. I can’t understand why she acts this way...

N: Because she's in love with you, Barnes! What the fuck! Are you blind, by any chance?
Chapter End Notes

I think Natasha will be murdered by Maria Hill.
After Natasha's words, a great silence took place in the room.

Soon after this moment of silence there was only a loud and exaggerated laugh from Maria Hill, who was shaking her head repeatedly.

**H: Oh, Natasha!**

Hill laughed even more hysterically, only reinforcing how much she was nervous about all of that.

**H: She's crazy, she's just kidding.**

**B: I'm sure she's kidding. After all, no one in love acts like you.**

**H: See? That would be impossible. It was a joke, a bad taste joke indeed.**

Hill was already serious and looking at Natasha now.

**N: I just wanted you two to stop and listen to me!**

**H: See? It was just for that. There is nothing...**

Hill looked at Natasha and gestured some death threat to her with her lips.

**N: It's about Steve.**

**H: He died?**

**N: No!**

Natasha frowned, glaring at Hill.

**B: What happened? Is he getting worse?**

**N: No, no. He has shown an improvement, but in recent days, with these transfusions his state has stagnated.**

**B: What does it mean?**

**N: It means that with the treatment given to him now, his health will no longer evolve and is likely to regress.**

**H: What should be done now?**

**N: So that's what I want to talk to you about. To know what you think. They say that James's blood would be more compatible because he's Steve's son. Cho says he has serum in his blood.**

**B: But James already got sick, we know that. How would he have Steve's serum?**
N: Yes, but Cho thinks his serum has only manifested after a certain age.

H: So the transfusion would be enough?

Natasha nodded.

H: Are you already doing it? What are we doing here?

Bucky looked at Maria Hill.

B: Natasha wants us to help her decide if she should authorize James to make the blood transfusion.

H: Is there any other choice?

N: Not that they have discovered yet.

H: Then do it!

N: I can’t, James is only 3 years old.

H: Is not safe?

N: They say it is, but...

H: But what, Natasha?

B: Natasha is right.

Hill looked at Bucky.

H: Should she let Steve die?

B: I didn’t say that. I said she's right to worry. James is just a kid. It’s not common to transfuse blood from someone of his age.

N: I feel weaker after this long period of transfusion and I'm an adult, imagine him being a child.

H: If so, then I don’t know what to say.

B: Are they sure this would work?

Natasha shook her head.

H: That's a problem, then.

N: Exactly.

Natasha walked around the room and then sat on the bed.

B: I think you should try.

N: Let my son be stuck with a needle several times and his blood drained?
B: Make a test, see how he reacts with one transfusion session. Any sign that he’s feeling bad, you interrupt. Let's follow everything closely. This will be done by professionals, I believe it will be safe.

Natasha was looking at Bucky and her heart was less anxious now. Bucky had made the perfect suggestion, she herself had made up her mind, but she needed someone else's support.

B: But you should talk to James first. He can already understand some things, explain to him why he will undergo this procedure. I can talk to him if you want.

Natasha shook her head.

N: No, I'll tell him myself.

B: No problem.

N: I'll tell Tony about my decision now. Can you do me a favor? Get James and Sarah in Jane's room and bring them for me here, please?

Bucky nodded.

N: Thank you.

Natasha left the room.

Hill got up and walked to the door, but Bucky grabbed her arm, making her stop and look at him.

Hill looked at Bucky's hand on her arm and then looked at him. Bucky felt as if he were about to be murdered by her.

B: I'm sorry.

H: For what?

B: For all this, I...

H: Wait... You didn't take seriously what Natasha said, did you?

Bucky kept looking at Hill, trying to analyze her, but when Hill doesn’t want to show what she is feeling, she doesn’t fail.

H: I'm not in love with you.

Bucky kept looking at her, he nodded and let go of Hill's arm.

Bucky hoped Hill would turn and walk away of the room, but he was surprised when she actually turned her body fully in front of him and took two steps to be closer to him.

Hill Inclined her face a little and brought her face close to Bucky's, and as she did this, she kept her eyes open, staring at him to observe his reaction.

When her lips were very close to Bucky's, Hill watched him close his eyes and a slightly malicious grin formed on her lips.

Hill left her lips a few millimeters away from Bucky's, she just wanted to prove a point to Bucky and
leave him there like a fool, desiring her.

Maria Hill is not a woman to compete for the attention of a man, even more Bucky, who has Sharon and Juliana on his list and he still seems to have some kind of a crush on Natasha.

Hill was telling herself in thought to retreat now and leave Bucky as he is now, with lips parted, eager to feel her lips. She had to step back, that was only to teach Bucky a lesson, but some command in her brain failed, and for Hill's misfortune, her mouth was already touching Bucky's.

Bucky still tried to make the kiss slow to get to know her kiss better, but she seemed to be in a hurry, so he just tried to keep up with her.

As Hill curled her tongue over Bucky's, she put her hands on Bucky's wrists and made him wrap his arms around her waist. And Bucky, slid one of his arms lower and grabbed Maria Hill's butt with some strength.

Hill could feel that it was the metal arm, because it was cold, she quickly moved her lips away from Bucky's and placed her hand over Bucky's hand and made him squeeze her buttocks even harder.

**H: Harder!**

Bucky bit his lower lip as he squeezed harder and Hill threw her head back and still squeezed his hand on her.

**H: More.**

Bucky placed his mouth on Maria Hill's neck, then he started to nibble her skin while he spoke.

**B: I can hurt you, if I go stronger than that.**

Hill moved her head down to stare into his eyes.

**H: That's exactly what I want!**

Hill said, already breathing heavily.

Bucky froze for a few seconds and watched Maria Hill to see if she was being serious and she was.

Bucky let go of Maria Hill's body and stepped back.

Hill thought she had scared him and that he would give up now and walk away of the room, but she smiled when she saw Bucky taking off the shirt he was wearing.

Bucky held on the cleavage of her jumpsuit and pulled her in a single movement, making her body bump into his. Hill gave a short laugh and pressed her lips to his again.

...Meanwhile, Natasha was talking to Tony and Cho about accepting the proposal on her terms. Tony agreed immediately and said that she was making a good decision and that he is confident of Steve's recovery with James' blood.

**N: I need to go now. The children are waiting for me.**

**T: Do you need some help with the little girl? Pepper loves kids and we have to train for our**
own, you know... So...

N: It's okay. I already have help and Pepper occasionally helps me too, but thanks for the offer, Tony. I appreciate that.

T: All right, good night then.

N: Good night.

Natasha stepped out of the wing where Tony was and headed for the elevator, she went to Wing A and walked back to her dormitory, already hoping to find James and Sarah there and sleeping.

I hope they are already sleeping. Natasha wished in her thought as she walked down the hall toward the dorm.

When Natasha arrived at the door of her dorm, she heard the noise of things falling in there and her first reaction was of fright.

Natasha opened the door sharply and widened her eyes when she saw Bucky and Hill, naked and in full activity.

They both stopped and looked at Natasha.

N: What? But...

Natasha was open-mouthed and couldn’t form a sentence.

B: Natasha, I'm sorry, I...

Bucky pulled the sheet over to cover himself.

H: She's seen us both naked before, it's not news for her.

N: In my room?? Really? I sleep here with my kids

Natasha looked around.

N: What about James and Sarah?

B: God, I forgot about them. I'll get them now.

N: No! There's no way you're going to touch those kids now. And...

Natasha shook her head.

N: And you can stay here, I'm going to sleep in Steve's room, tonight. And please clean it up or burn those sheets and that rug and whatever you two do or have already done this thing... Just burn it.

Natasha closed the door and left the room, she went to get James and Sarah in Jane's room and apologized for the delay.

... The next morning, when Bucky woke up, he was alone in the room, he searched for Hill, but she
had already left.

Bucky cleared Natasha's room, then took a shower and headed straight for the breakfast line.

When Bucky got in line, Natasha and Hill were already in line and they were the last ones.

Bucky approached the two.

**N: Good morning, Barnes. Sleep well?**

Natasha smirked.

Bucky looked at Natasha and then at Hill, he nodded.

**N: I go to the other queue because James is starving. See you both later.**

Natasha walked away from them with the kids.

Hill turned to stand with her back to Bucky and he looked at her.

**B: Good morning?**

Hill just nodded to respond, but avoided eye contact.

**B: I didn’t see you when I woke up.**

**H: Why would you see me?**

Bucky frowned.

**B: I don’t know, maybe because we made love and you...**

**H: Love?**

Hill laughed.

**H: We had sex, Barnes. It was good and that's all.**

**B: That's it?**

**H: Yes, I said I'm not in love, you believed in Natasha because you wanted to.**

Bucky was looking at Maria Hill with confusion in his eyes.

**H: If I'm attracted to you? Yes! Very much! But love? Nay.**

**B: So it didn’t mean anything last night?**

**H: Was it supposed to meant something?**

**B: It's expected that.**

**H: Oh please, we’re adults and we both know this is not true. And you still have that sparkle in your eyes every time you see Natasha. And I probably remember you, of her. I'm not that kind of woman who is to replace the woman you have a fetish for, but I can be to have what I
B: So you just wanted to go to bed with me?

H: Yes. Be relieved, you are still free to flirt with the little girl and the crazy one.

B: But...

H: No grudges, Barnes.

Hill smiled and glanced briefly at Bucky. It was her turn already in line, so she just took an apple from the basket and left the refectory.

After the breakfast, Natasha asked for Bucky's help to talk to James about the blood transfusion.

Natasha entered her room, looking at everything with a certain disgust.

B: I cleaned everything up, Natasha, and we didn’t use that much space. I apologize for what happened. You know I’m not like that, I respect you and the kids, it’s just… I didn’t expect to feel attracted that much for her.

N: Well, I guess it's fair, after all we did the same in her room, once. Remember?

B: Yeah, I do.

Bucky smiled a little uneasily.

N: I think it's safe to put her here.

Natasha approached the crib and put Sarah inside.

Natasha tickled Sarah's belly and she gave a short laugh and when Natasha walked away, she grunted.

N: James.

James rolled his eyes and grabbed his toy and handed it to Sarah.

J: Do not drool on it!

Sarah took the toy and stopped grunting.

B: Come here, James. I want to talk to you.

Bucky held out his arms to James, who came to him and hugged him. Bucky placed James on his lap and sat with him on Natasha's bed.

J: I didn’t do anything.

B: Who said you did something?

Bucky laughed.
B: We just want to talk to you.

Bucky looked at Natasha.

Natasha shook her head.

N: I can’t do that. I can’t.

B: Okay, leave it to me.

Bucky looked at James.

B: James, the truth is we have a request to make for you. But this request requires you to be very brave and strong. Are you brave enough?

James nodded.

B: You know that your father Steve is sick.

J: Where’s Daddy?

B: Daddy is being treated and he needs your help. There’s something that can help your father to get better and involves a needle.

James frowned.

J: James don’t like needle.

B: I don’t like it either, but that's why I said we need someone strong and brave.

J: James is strong!

James lifted his arm, showing the muscle in his arm.

B: Yes, you are very strong, buddy. Stronger than me.

J: And brave!

B: Yes. So much more brave. That's why I think you can help your father.

Natasha came over and crouched next to them.

Natasha looked at James and stroked his hair.

N: James, if you don’t want to, nobody will get upset.

B: But it will just be a slight sting in your arm, you won’t even feel it and this will help your dad to get better.

N: But if you’re scared, you don’t have to. No need, okay?

Bucky looked at Natasha.

B: Let him decide, Natasha.
B: I know, but I explained it to him and now he can decide. Do you want to see your father, James?

James nodded.

B: So we can count on your strength and your courage?

James nodded again.

Bucky and Natasha looked at each other, breathing in relief.

N: I'm leaving Sarah with Laura, she usually feels better with her around. You go down with James and I'll meet you there in ten minutes.

Bucky nodded.

As soon as Bucky arrived at F Wing and passed the pit hall, he heard beats on the glass from one of the chambers.

Bucky was with James on his shoulders and looked at Sharon in the chamber. Bucky smiled and Sharon smiled back.

Sharon's smile faded as Bucky stepped to another sector than hers. Bucky stopped at the entrance of the antechamber and waved at Sharon, meaning for her to wait that later he would return to visit her.

When Natasha arrived at F Wing, she walked into the room where Bucky and Tony were.

N: Where's James?

B: They are preparing him for the transfusion.

T: It won't be like yours, it's too risky if Steve has an outbreak.

N: How will it be done?

T: Let's collect and store his blood and then transfer to Steve. But since he is a baby, we have to respect the limits of his body, so each blood collection will take longer than yours and smaller quantities will be withdrawn. I think it will take almost a month for us to actually have our first transfusion.

N: But today is just a test, I didn’t approve of it being done several times. I want to see how he'll react and if he'll be okay.

T: Of course, but if we continue, it will be that way.

Natasha nodded.

A nurse announced that the person in charge of James could enter to follow the procedure. Natasha volunteered and upon entering the room that James was, she noted that he was nervous but trying to
disguise that he was fine.

Natasha smiled inside, she is very proud of her boy. So brave! Natasha thought. And this attempt to control what he is feeling is totally her characteristic, but mother is mother and she knows what his child is feeling.

**N: Hey.**

James looked at his mother.

**J: Strong!**

Natasha nodded.

**N: Very strong, James. Good boy. I'll be here all the time. Whatever you feel, just let me know that I'll make everything stop.**

James just looked at her.

The nurse approached with the syringe. Cho was also nearby.

James looked at the needle and Natasha took his hand.

**N: Look at me, James. It will be done sooner than you think.**

James looked at Natasha, and when his arm was stuck by the needle, he held tight in Natasha's hand.

Natasha saw his eyes get wet, but James took a deep breath and didn’t let a tear fall.

**J: Is that it? Is it over?**

**Cho: Yes. You were very brave.**

Dr. Cho smiled at him.

- **Congratulations, James.**

The nurse helped to encourage James as well.

...  

The procedure proceeded well, James was fine and agitated as always after the 1st collection, so Natasha authorized the continuity of the procedure.

The first transfusion with James's blood to Steve’s body, only occurred after three blood-collection sessions of James to have a considerable volume to be transferred to Steve’s body.

Cho asked Natasha to wait until the next day to visit Steve and for her have a full report of his evolution and whether the transfusion was successful or not.

Natasha had agreed to Cho's terms, but she couldn’t sleep of such anxiety she was feeling, she'd already showered twice that night and stood by the crib, watching Sarah and James sleeping in the crib.

*He's getting too big for this crib.* Natasha thought. It wasn’t really him that was big for the crib, after all Clint built a large crib for him, but it was because James was dividing that space with Sarah and
she has grown a lot in the last months.

Natasha heard knocks on the door and walked to answer.

H: This is not time for that shit.

N: I'm sorry, I'll be quick. They're sleeping, you just have to stay here looking at them.

H: Why do I agree to do these things? Tell me.

N: Because you're a good person.

H: We know this is not true.

Natasha left the room.

H: Good luck.

Natasha nodded and headed for the elevator.

... 

Upon arriving at F Wing, Natasha said she was authorized to see Steve. The guard nurse said he was going to call someone to lock Steve in his bed so she could get into his chamber safely.

Natasha said she would wait and as the nurse came out for help, she broke the access code to Steve's chamber and opened the door slowly. She didn’t know if he was awake or not and when she saw the chamber, she saw that he was lying down, but there was no sight of his face.

Natasha came in quietly, she closed the door behind her and saw Steve move his head toward her.

Natasha leaned against the door and put her hand on the doorknob, ready to evacuate if necessary.

Steve turned his face and looked directly into Natasha's eyes and he was silent for a few seconds.

All Natasha could hear was the sound of her own breath, a little heavier from the fear to be there with him and fear for facing him, she knows how he reacts badly to it.

S: Natasha?

Steve said in a low voice. Natasha took a deep breath and took a step away from the door.

Those eyes gave a look that is familiar to her. The gleam in his eyes was back, she could see some kind of emotion in his eyes. Finally! Natasha celebrated in her mind.

Natasha took another step toward Steve's bed, but she was still a considerable distance away from him.

Ok, wait! Maybe it's my head wanting him to be fine but I already thought once he'd come back to be himself on other occasions and he tried to attack me anyway. I won't create false hopes again. Natasha thought.

S: Why do you...

Steve's brow furrowed, showing confusion.
N: Do you know who I am?

Steve nodded and then sat on the bed, which made Natasha walk back to protect herself, she thought he would stand up and try to attack her.

Steve stopped moving, immediately and watched her attitude. Steve gestured for her to calm down.

S: I... I'm sorry. It's all right. I just...

Natasha looked at him, still frightened, but now she was already relieved. He's apologizing, he felt bad for scaring her, he knows who she is and he understands where he is. All of that meant just what she wanted most: Steve is back!

Chapter End Notes

Steve is back! Yay! And about BuckyHill it's not his choice yet, they just surrender to the loneliness and needs of each other, so buckarter and julicky can still happen.
Chapter 42

N: God... It's really you.
S: I think so.

Natasha was still in the same place, she had a half smile on her face, not knowing what to do or say. Steve looked around the chamber he was in and then at the bed, he still looked lost and confused.

N: What are you feeling?
S: Besides this headache? I feel as if there are missing pieces of my memory.
N: That must be normal.
S: Why were you scared of me?
N: Not of you, but of what was dominating you.
S: I...

Steve frowned and seemed to be struggling to try to remember how he ended up in isolation at F Wing.

N: Do you remember anything?
S: Some things are coming into my mind right now. You and me, out there... I remember being attacked and we got together and then I can’t remember anything else right. What did I do?

Natasha shook her head, she walked over to Steve.

N: It doesn’t matter now. You're here, you're back.

Natasha reached for Steve's face and slid a few fingers down his face.

Steve looked at Natasha and he was about to say something, but the chamber door was open by the nurses.

- Miss Romanoff!!
- Get away from him! Now!
- It's not safe!

N: Calm down, please, he's aware, he's not attacking me. He is fine.

The nurses had their calming guns pointed at Steve.

N: You need to call Dr. Cho.

The nurses stood, not knowing how to proceed.
N: Now!!

Natasha spoke in a more forceful way to make them react, and the two left the chamber again to get Dr. Cho.

S: Wow... That was...

N: You're a very strong man, you know that.

Natasha sat on the stretcher beside Steve and she couldn’t stop staring at him.

S: Are you sure it's safe for you to stay close to me?

Natasha nodded.

S: I see fear in your eyes.

N: You saw precaution. I always have an escape plan. You should know that by now.

Steve lowered his head and closed his eyes.

Natasha sat up facing him and put her hand on his back.

N: What? Feeling something?

S: My head hurts a lot. Looks like there's a ton of weight on my neck.

Steve put a hand on the back of his neck and Natasha placed a hand over his, pushing it a little to the side, so she could massage for him.

Steve took a deep breath, as if it was a relief to be having human contact again. Automatically the pain subsided with Natasha's touch.

S: What did I do?

N: Nothing.

S: Natasha.

Steve looked at her and he looked worried.

N: I don’t want you to think about it now, you need to recover completely.

Steve lowered his head again and looked at the floor.

If Natasha doesn’t want to comment about what he had done, it is because it’s more serious than he imagines.

S: Do we at least win? Did we get people back to life?

N: All you need to know is that we won on one side and lost on the other.

Steve closed his eyes and clenched his fists, demonstrating that he was angry. Natasha watched and tried to cheer him up.
N: It's like this in all battles, remember? When we win, we always lose some people.

S: How many?

N: Steve...

S: How many??

N: I won’t tell you! I don’t want you to be stressed. Please just focus on getting better and getting out of here. James misses you. Sarah misses you too.

Steve tilted his head to look at Natasha's eyes.

N: I miss you.

S: Are they okay?

Natasha nodded.

N: James... he's getting smarter, he made lots of friends, he's not a super shy boy anymore. He asks for you always.

Steve didn’t smile, but those words made him relax the features on his face.

N: And Sarah... She's so big, she's learned to crawl, she barely cries any more, you'd be surprised.

S: Is she taking the bottle?

N: At night, yes. But I took the liberty of giving food to her... Light things, like fruit, porridge, beans, pasta... She improved a lot with food.

S: It's good to hear about them. What about the others? Clint, Bucky... Wanda... Are they okay?

Natasha broke the smile when Steve mentioned Clint, but she soon tried to disguise it.

N: They...

S: Something happened.

N: Yes.

S: Bucky?

Natasha shook her head.

N: Clint.

S: Is he hurt?

Natasha looked away and sighed.

Steve understood what had happened.
S: God!

Steve rubbed his face and looked more worried.

S: Was that me? Did I kill Clint? If I killed him, I...

N: No. It wasn’t you.

S: You’re lying.

N: It wasn’t by your hands, it was an accident.

S: I want to know everything that happened.

Natasha opened her mouth to speak, but the door was opened again.

Cho: Natasha!

Natasha removed her hand from Steve’s neck and looked at Cho.

Cho looked at Steve.

Cho: Rogers, do you know who I am?

Steve nodded and after a few seconds he looked at Cho, who stepped back, afraid of how he would react.

N: He's fine. He is himself.

Cho: Fascinating.

Cho wrote some information on her clipboard.

Cho: I need to check him.

Natasha nodded and stood up.

Cho: Lie down, please.

Steve sighed and lay down on the bed.

Cho approached and checked Steve's breathing and heart beatings, then she tested Steve's reflexes and pupils.

Cho: Your pressure is a bit low.

S: My head hurts and I feel weak.

Cho: It's normal and expected.

N: He needs to eat something if the pressure is low.

Cho: He was fed normally today, but I don’t see any problem feeding him again if he's hungry.
S: I am hungry.

Cho: I'll ask the nurse to bring a soup with toast. Just a little bit. In the morning we will do more tests.

S: Am I under arrest?

Cho: No. You're only here to be healed, Captain.

N: When will he be able to get out of here?

Cho: You know it's not that simple, Natasha. Let's watch him and see the results of the exams. We have to check if he won’t need transfusions any more.

Natasha nodded.

Cho: You need to go now, Natasha.

N: I'm not going anywhere.

Cho: I need him to rest and sleep. He won’t do any of that with you around here.

N: I'll only stay until he eats, then I'll leave.

Cho: All right.

Cho retired to get the soup for Steve and then she returned to her dormitory.

When the nurse brought the soup, she left it on a small table with wheels.

N: I'll help him to eat, you can go. Thanks.

S: Thank you.

The nurse looked at Steve, amazed that he was communicating and then she left.

S: Everyone was really scared of me.

N: Yes.

Natasha pushed the table to Steve's bed and he sat down again. He stop for good minutes, standing still, staring at the soup plate.

N: What's the problem?

S: Nothing, my mind... I don’t know.

Steve picked up the spoon and poured some soup. Steve's hand shook a lot and it took him a long time to get the spoon to his mouth.

Steve took a deep breath, feeling frustrated.

N: It’s all right, I'll do it.

S: No.
N: Steve.

Natasha took the spoon from his hand.

N: **It must be normal, you just finally wake up from what you had become. You’re gonna be all right.**

Natasha sat down next to him, took some soup and lifted it to Steve's lips, he took the first spoonful and looked at Natasha.

S: Tell me.

N: Steve...

S: I must know.

Natasha sighed as she took some more soup with the spoon.

N: **It all started with that Pyron that attacked you from behind. You woke up different, transformed into something else, but you had the strength and time to tell me to get away. I didn’t want to, but you made me leave and alert the others.**

S: And?

N: The next day you changed completely, your skin was thick and gray, you were leading the Pyrons.

S: What?? How is that possible?

N: I don’t know, something on the glass craved on your back.

S: So I attacked all of you?

N: Yes. You could control them, they obeyed you. You organized surprise attacks, caught us off guard, and in one of those attacks happened the accident with Clint.

Steve sighed and refused the spoon Natasha was trying to give him now.

S: Was it really an accident or did I kill him?

N: No. During the attack, a concrete block struck him, but it wasn’t triggered by you. It wasn’t your fault.

S: It was. I organized the attack.

N: It wasn’t you, Steve.

S: Who was it then?

N: I don’t know. That virus that dominated you made you do it.

S: I should have been arrested!

N: In a way, you are. No one's blaming you, Steve. We didn’t know what was going to
happen.

S: It's not just my head that hurts.

N: I shot you. Several times. I didn’t want to kill you, but it was the only way to rescue you. Beside that, you jumped from some buildings during the battle.

S: How did it all end?

N: The Guardians had a bomb, they call it Minitrix. They blew up the city and everything around it. Right now, they’re doing a mission out there, blowing up more cities all around the world, trying to win our world back.

S: But what about the cure?

N: It didn’t work, we had no choice.

S: So many lives.

N: I know.

S: I will not eat any more, Natasha. You can go now.

N: I don’t want to.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: I'll still be here, tomorrow.

N: I know, but... You've been gone for so long. I just... I don’t want to be away from you.

Steve stared into her eyes.

S: You know I need to rest, I'll try to sleep, at least.

Natasha nodded and got up, she pushed the little table into the corner of the room.

N: You can sleep... I'll stay here.

S: You know I'm the one who does that...

N: Yeah, I know... You need someone to do it for you, too.

Steve gave a small smile.

N: Lie down.

Steve nodded and went to bed. Natasha came back to him and sat on the edge of the bed.

Steve stared at her and Natasha placed a hand on his arm.

N: Close your eyes and sleep.

S: I can’t sleep with you awake, waiting for me to sleep, I'm worried.
What Natasha did next, made Steve surprised, not to say shocked. She lay down next to him and watched him.

**S: You can’t sleep here.**

**N: Who said that?**

**S: Cho...**

**N: She won’t know if you don’t tell.**

Natasha touched Steve's face and slid her thumb across his cheekbones. Steve knew that there was no point, insisting with Natasha.

They stared at each other for almost an hour, saying absolutely nothing.

Steve was the first to give way to sleep and closed his eyes. Natasha still watched him for another ten minutes, she didn’t want to get away from him or go to sleep, she was afraid that he wouldn’t be himself anymore when she came back next morning.

It was an irrational fear and she knew it, but she couldn’t help it.

As Steve slept, Natasha stroked a few strands of his hair, then gently touched his arm and sill, she was recognizing that territory again, she was remembering the last time she made love to him and how it was good to feel his skin against hers. If she could, she would stroke him with more vigor now, but she didn’t want to wake him or look weird.

Natasha laid her head on the pillow, closer to Steve's face, she let her forehead rest against Steve's and watched him closely, she could feel his breath hitting her cheek and felt great comfort with that.

Natasha sighed and held that position until she also fell asleep.

...  

After two months, Steve was being discharged from F Wing. It took another transfusion session so that his body would begin to react and defend his body alone again.

When Steve learned that the blood he was receiving was from James, he refused to continue the treatment, but fortunately, he was already strong enough to have his own serum working back.

There was no longer any trace of the virus in Steve's body, but even so, this time that his body was exposed left him with small sequels such as temporary lack of memory and some involuntary tremors in his body.

The memory loss wasn’t that bad because in minutes he could remember what he needed and it was simple things, like forgetting someone's name or how to put on a shirt. He was very frustrated at first, but Cho taught him breathing techniques to calm him down, and this helped him to have patience and wait for his memory to return to normal.

Cho had promised to keep investigating the reason of his memory loss and she believed that he would be recovered from that too.

**N: Are you ready to go back?**

**S: More than ready.**
Natasha smiled and waited for Steve to adjust with the walking stick, that Cho gave to him. Not that he needs it all the time, but as stated earlier, his body is subject to involuntary tremors and when it hits one of his legs, he needs some support to lean on.

**N:** Now you're finally looking like someone of your age. A beret and a suspender and you're ready to go to our asylum.

Natasha raised her eyebrow and smirked.

**S:** Funny.

Natasha called the elevator and boarded on it with Steve.

**S:** I thought Bucky would be here to greet me.

**N:** He's been busy with the preparation for Christmas.

**S:** That was a function led by Clint.

Steve sighed.

**N:** Yeah, I heard about it. Bucky is doing well.

**S:** Bucky's always been better with delicate things like women, not sure about woods and tools.

Natasha smiled.

**N:** He still has game with the ladies, for sure.

Steve looked at Natasha and then looked ahead, uncomfortable with Natasha's phrase.

**N:** He has three... I mean two possible dates, at the moment.

Natasha gave up saying three, she wouldn’t say the third was Sharon Carter, it would be strange and could create enmity between them.

**N:** Hill and Juliana.

**S:** Hill?

Steve looked startled.

**N:** Why so surprised?

**S:** I don’t know, I just didn’t expect it.

As they went up, Steve noticed that the wings were a little empty.

**S:** Where is everyone?

Steve asked as he landed on Wing A.

**N:** I don’t know.
Natasha frowned.

N: Come on. I just have to stop by the refectory to pick up the kids, I left them there with Laura.

S: Okay. Let's just be quick, I don’t want to see anyone yet, I look horrible with this stupid beard and this pallor.

N: Okay.

Natasha and Steve walked down the hall and upon arriving in the refectory, they saw a lot of people there, waiting for Steve.

N: Surprise...

Steve looked at Natasha and then at the assembled friends, along with a few other members of the bunker, he smiled and felt awkward to be there.

Tony was the first to reach out and shake his hand.

T: Welcome back, Dorito.

S: Thank you, Tony.

Pepper was right behind Tony and hugged Steve next.

P: I’m so glad you're back, Steve. We miss you.

S: Thank you, Pepper.

James: DAAAADDY!

Steve released Pepper and looked at his son coming running with his arms outstretched toward him.

Steve crouched and James jumped on him, hugging him tight.

Steve kissed James's forehead and pressed him tighter in his arms.

S: Your mother said that you grew up, but I didn’t know it was that much. I missed you. Have you behaved?

James nodded.

J: I have two friends.

James did the number two with his fingers.

J: Torunn and Francis.

S: Really?

J: Do you want to meet them?

S: Of course, son.
N: You introduce them to him later, James.

Although Steve already knew the kids, but he was going to let his son introduce him anyway.

Steve remained with James on his lap and got up to greet Bucky, who was approaching now. The two of them hugged each other and patted each other back's.

B: Welcome back, Steve.

S: Thank you, Buck.

Steve smiled and he could feel his arm start to weaken and shake. Steve tried to place James on the floor, but James grabbed him.

J: Daddy. Don't.

N: James.

Bucky took James to his lap.

B: Your father just got back from the hospital, James, he can’t be with you on his lap.

- Do not forget about me, Daddy.

Steve looked at Laura, sitting on one of the benches and speaking for Sarah, who was on her lap.

Steve approached the two and looked at Sarah. Steve smiled.

S: She doubled in size. She must not even remember me anymore.

Sarah looked at Steve and smiled.

S: I missed that smile.

Laura got up to hand Sarah over to Steve's lap.

L: Of course she remembers and she missed you, she must be missing your lap.

Steve put his hand on Sarah's head and Laura could see how shaking he was, Steve just kissed her forehead and watched her.

S: How many months is she now?

N: No one knows for sure, but we decided she should be with 10 months old by now. She's very smart and watch that...

Natasha took Sarah from Laura's lap and set her down on the floor.

Sarah stood, holding Natasha's hand. Natasha waited for her to get a bit more steady and released her hand.

Steve was surprised.

S: Is she walking already?
Sarah stood still for few seconds and fell on all fours. Natasha took her in her lap.

N: No, she has learned to stand by herself, but she can walk if she has something to hold onto.

S: That's incredible. I lost so much.

Steve looked at Laura and she smiled.

S: I'm so sorry for your loss, Laura.

Laura sighed.

L: I'm starting to feel better now.

Laura looked up, as if trying to hold back the tears.

Laura looked at Steve and smiled.

L: He loved this time of year. Do you remember our first Christmas here?

S: No one wanted to celebrate Christmas.

L: Yes and he insisted. He made a tree for the kids, he convinced everyone to participate.

Laura's eyes began to gleam as tears welled up in her eyes.

S: If it hurts you, we can cancel the parties this year.

L: Oh no. No way, the kids deserve it, at least that. And it's a way to keep Clint here with me. I just wish I'd buried him, properly.

Steve touched Laura's shoulder and looked at her.

S: I promise we'll find his body. It will be my priority.

L: They think his body is not even here in the bunker anymore.

S: It doesn’t matter, I'll bring his body back. You have my word.

Laura hugged Steve and he hugged her back.

N: Let's eat?

All who were present sat down to eat. Steve felt much better about this surprise thing, he wasn’t willing to socialize for fear of being harassed, but everyone seemed genuinely happy with his return. The only one blaming himself for everything that had happened was himself.

Steve was sitting at the table with James on his lap again and he looked at Natasha giving Sarah food in front of him and it made him happier.

- Steve?

Steve looked at the young Juliana behind him.

S: Juliana.
Ju: I'm so happy to see you well and back.
Steve smiled.

Ju: Welcome.

S: I heard you've been helping with my kids, thank you.

Ju: It was nothing. I wish I had come sooner, but I got stuck in the infirmary.

S: I heard you were promoted to a nurse already. Congratulations. I always believed in your ability.

Ju: Thank you.

Juliana smiled.

Ju: Excuse me.

Juliana walked away and went to sit next to Bucky, who was at the same table as Steve, but in a seat farther away.

Ju: About what you asked me...

Juliana handed a box to Bucky.

Bucky took the box and opened it.

B: That's great, Juliana. Thank you.

Ju: Do you need more? Do you think that will be enough?

B: I think that for now is enough. If I need more, I'll let you know.

Ju: I have some free time tomorrow, I would like to help you. I mean, help with the Christmas decorations.

Juliana smiled.

B: Do you want to work on your day off?

Ju: I don’t have anything more interesting to do anyway.

B: If so, I accept your help. In the morning. Then we'll do something after that.

Ju: Something? Like what?

B: I still don’t know, but I'll think of something fun. You deserve more than work on your day off.

Ju smiled and nodded.

B: Sit down and eat.

Ju: I can’t, I have to get back to work.
B: Thank you again.

... 

After this little fellowship with Steve, Natasha led him to his room.

Natasha was with Sarah in her arms and James came in the room running and when he got there, he ran to the bed and started jumping on it.

S: He's a little agitated today.

N: He is happy to see his father.

Steve smiled.

N: Do you want to hold her?

Steve looked at Sarah.

S: I don’t know if I should.

N: Get her, I'll be here.

S: Okay...

The shaking had already passed, so Natasha found it safe to put Sarah in Steve's lap.

Steve caught her and kissed her cheek.

S: She's heavy now.

N: Yes. She's been eating a lot.

Natasha stroked Sarah's back.

Sarah looked at Steve closely and she frowned, not recognizing him, she made a pout and began to cry hysterically.

S: Take her!

N: Sarah, it's okay, it's your dad. Calm down.

Natasha took Sarah back.

J: She's silly, dad! She stole my toy and she steals my food! And my cookies!

James pointed at Sarah, denouncing her to Steve. His mother doesn’t understand him, but Steve...

Steve has to understand, it's his hero, he'll defend him for sure.

S: I think you're a little old for that kind of toy, don’t you think James?

N: And she does not steal your food.

J: Steals yes. She eats my food!
N: No, James, she does that because...

S: Because she wants to have the same thing as you, James. She has you as her hero, she wants to be like you.

N: Just like you want to be like your father.

J: I want to be Iron Man!

James frowned.

J: My food!

S: You don’t want her to eat more of your food, right?

J: No!

S: Okay.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: She can not eat his food anymore, Natasha. Nor even the cookies. It's his and no one else's.

Steve pretended to be ordering Natasha.

Natasha nodded.

S: She can’t have anything that is James's. What is his is his, he doesn’t share. That's how it is.

N: I'll let her cry from now.

S: That's right. Let her be sad with James. She's going to want another brother, and James doesn’t care about that.

James stopped jumping and stared at his parents, then he looked at Sarah.

J: Daddy?

Steve looked at James.

J: She can keep my toy.

S: Can she?

J: Yes. I share it with her.
Steve smiled and ran his hand over James's head.

N: And the cookies?

J: Not food!

S: All right, I think it's fair.

Steve walked toward the bathroom.

S: I'm going to take a shower, can you wait a little bit?

N: Yes.

Steve went into the bathroom.

N: James, don’t stand on the bed with shoes.

James kicked the air, making the shoes come off his feet and one of them almost hit Natasha.

N: JAMES!

J: Sorry, Mamma!

James made a face of desperation and regret. A fake one, because he was already jumping again.

Natasha shook her head and she was smiling without realizing it, she loves it when James pretends to be sorry for something that he is clearly not. He does very well in pretending.

After half an hour, Steve opened the bathroom door.

S: Nat?

Natasha looked at Steve.

S: I need your help with my beard. Do you mind?

N: Of course, I'll help you.

Natasha nodded and got up off the floor, she was playing with Sarah and James on the carpet.

N: James, keep an eye on her for me please, I'll be right back.

James nodded and Natasha entered the bathroom.

Steve closed the door behind Natasha.

S: I don’t want them to see these scars.

Steve was only with a towel wrapped around his waist. His body still a bit wet from the shower. Natasha watched his body, then she cleared her throat.

N: It's healing, Steve.

S: I know, but it also has these bruises, James will be asking questions about that. I don’t want
N: Okay. No problem.

S: I left everything separate in the sink. I would do it myself, but I'm afraid to start shaking and...

N: You're right to call me. I'll get you a chair.

Natasha hurried out of the bathroom and picked up a chair, she put the chair into the bathroom and Steve sat down.

Natasha put the shaving foam on his face and picked up a razor, she carefully slid the razor across his face and put the foam back into the sink.

S: Thank you.

N: You don’t have to thank me, Steve.

S: The kids are great.

N: They are.

Natasha said as she concentrated on removing the foam from Steve's face with the razor.

N: I've had enough help.

S: Who's going to dress like Santa this year, since Thor is missing?

N: I don’t know. I have no idea. It should be you. Good old man.

Steve laughed.

N: I should have left you with a beard and painted it white.

S: James would recognize me.

N: Yes. And he would be proud to have his father as Santa Claus.

S: And he would report to all the children that I am the Santa.

Natasha finished removing the last part of his beard.

N: Ready. No scratches.

Steve got up and looked at himself in the mirror as he ran his hand over his face and studied himself.

S: How am I without a beard?

N: I confess I was getting used to it, I'm going to miss the beard.

Steve looked at Natasha and smiled.

N: Here.
Natasha dampened the towel, grabbed Steve's chin and wiped the towel over his face to remove the traces of foam that remained on his skin.

Steve stood and stared at her as she watched where the towel touched his face. Natasha knew that Steve was looking at her, but she wanted to avoid looking him in the eye directly, but she didn’t have much choice.

Natasha looked into his eyes and took a deep breath. Steve took the towel from her hand and then laid his mouth on her lips.

Natasha closed her eyes and wrapped her arms around Steve's neck as he hugged her back and intensified the kiss.
Predictably, that kiss was full of emotions.

Ever since Steve's accident they had no more intimate contact, not even a peck on the lips. Under Steve's conditions, it wasn't appropriate and several times, Natasha felt like kissing him when she spent the night watching him sleep in the F-wing's isolation chambers, but she knew it wasn't wise.

In addition to the mix of the longing for be at each other arms, there was still a level of appreciation from Steve, for the care and love that Natasha had gave to him every day that he was hospitalized and sick in F Wing, and also for her persistence in bringing him back home when it was extremely risky and nobody wanted to do that.

No one else fought so hard for him, no one risked everything for him as much as Natasha did. After all that, he didn’t need to hear an "I love you" from her, she tasted the "I love you" in all the attitudes she had with him.

Natasha was the first to take her lips off his lips, but for a very short time, because Steve put his mouth back to hers and while Natasha moved her head back to try to slow down the pace of the kiss, he stretched his head toward her and give her repeated pecks on the lips, until he grabbed her lower lip with his teeth and bit it hard, which made Natasha kiss him again.

Steve grabbed Natasha's waist and hugged her completely, he lifted her a little from the floor so it would be easier to keep his mouth on hers.

Steve squeezed her so tightly that Natasha placed her hands on his arms and pushed him to lighten the pressure on her body a little. It didn’t help, so she let her body loosen up and then put her legs around Steve's legs and tried to climb higher to get her legs around his waist.

That way it worked, because he moved one of his arms from her waist and lowered it to Natasha's thigh, squeezing and lifting her upward.

Steve twisted his body, bringing Natasha's with him and he took short steps to the bathroom door. Steve threw Natasha's back against the door, brutally, which made their lips be parted.

Natasha looked at Steve and her neck was completely red, the volume of her breasts coming up and down, fast, because she was out of breath.

Natasha looked at Steve's face and closed her eyes. The way he stared at her neckline, it had already make her horny, he didn’t have to make much effort to get her ready for him, if he wanted to, she was ready for him, right now.

Steve thought of biting Natasha's nipple, he loves her body so much that just touching, or licking it's not enough for him, but he knows that she doesn’t like it, and what he could do then was to put his
lips on her breast and suck it hard.

Natasha let out a groan as she felt Steve's hickey in her boob, she gripped his hair tightly and shoved his head back.

**N: Stop...**

**S: I didn’t bite.**

The two spoke slowly.

Natasha shook her head and needed another few seconds to justify herself.

**N: The children... We... We can’t.**

Steve's just remembered about the kids now. After the kiss, his mind was erased and all he could think about was having Natasha’s body.

Steve was still overwhelmed by the desire to have her and he couldn’t move, he stood looking at her, hoping that by a miracle the children would disappear from the room and they could continue what they were doing.

Natasha grabbed his face and gave a long kiss, then she shoved Steve's chest, making him move away from her. Just like that, he released Natasha's body and set her down.

**N: Sorry.**

**S: All right...**

**N: We can do it another day... Some other time.**

Natasha nodded and Steve nodded as well.

**S: I'm just going to need some time here, you know... To calm down.**

**N: I understand... I'll stay outside with them.**

**S: Right.**

Steve gave Natasha one more peck on the lips and stepped back.

Natasha straightened her clothes, which were crumpled and a little suspended, then she straightened her hair and left the bathroom.

**N: Hey...**

**J: Mama, can we have a cookie? Sarah wants to.**

**N: Does she?**

Natasha asked suspiciously, she raised her eyebrows, because Sarah can’t speak yet, she only emits random sounds.

**J: She do, Mama.**
Sarah: Ma-ma.

Natasha looked at Sarah and frowned.

_N: She... She just said? Did she call me mama?

James looked at Sarah.

_J: She's my mama, not yours.

Sarah: Mama.

Natasha was gaping, looking at Sarah.

It was a big, big problem. It was a huge problem for Sarah to call her mother. She must have heard James call her like that so many times, that she ended up repeating it.

**Sarah: Mama.**

Natasha sighed and her expression of shock gave way to a smile, a small and silly smile.

Okay, that's wrong, because she's not her mother, but it's so heartening to hear Sarah calling her mama, Natasha was bursting with happiness inside, she wanted to knead that round little face of Sarah and fill her with kisses for that, but she can’t, she has to fix it.

Natasha crouched on the carpet next to Sarah, she stroked her cheek and smiled.

_N: Sarah, honey... I'm not your...

Natasha sighed and she was having difficulty to explain to her, since Sarah is very small. It was only her first word, she doesn’t understand the meaning of it and wouldn’t understand Natasha's explanation of not being her mother.

Steve left the bathroom and looked at the three of them.

_J: Daddy, Sarah called my mama of mama!

James pointed at Sarah, complaining.

Steve raised his eyebrows in surprise.

Natasha turned to look at Steve and shook her head.

_N: I'm sorry, Steve. She must have thought that I am her mother, because James calls me Mama all the time, she's just imitating him.

_S: All right.

Steve smiled and was amused.

_S: She is small to understand and I've been thinking that she will miss having a mother. I think for a child to be without the father, it’s difficult, but they can be well. But without a mother... How can a child live without a mother? I think about it all the time, actually.

_N: Steve, you don’t have to worry, because you're a wonderful father. And Sarah... She'll
have me around, Laura, Pepper and Hill... A lot of women around to have a female figure in her life.

Steve approached them and sat down on the carpet with them.

James quickly got up and sat on his father's lap.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: I know, but I'm afraid she'll be too masculine, having only me.

N: God, Steve. No, she won’t be masculine, unless it's her way, and it has nothing to do with having a mother or not.

S: Do you really think that?

N: Of course.

Natasha put her hand on Steve's leg and smiled.

N: Well, I think we have to go, it's late. Let’s go, James?

J: No. I want to stay here with daddy.

N: We have to go, James. You have class tomorrow morning.

S: I thought you were staying with us.

Natasha looked at Steve in surprise.

S: Because... Because of Sarah.

Natasha didn’t seem to understand.

S: She's used to you and... There’s my trembling problem... If she wakes up in the middle of the night. I'm afraid to let her fall.

N: Oh yes. It’s true.

S: If you don’t want to stay, at least you should take her with you. If you don’t mind, you must be tired of being with her.

N: No. I love taking care of her.

Natasha smiled and looked at James.

N: It looks like we're going to sleep with dad today.

J: Yes! Yayyy!

James celebrated.

J: Come, Sarah.

James got up and took Sarah's hands to help her to her feet.
N: Where are you going?

J: Sleep.

N: Oh.

Natasha and Steve laughed at James, helping Sarah walk, holding her hands.

S: I'm going to put her inside the crib for you, okay, buddy?

J: Okay. And me too.

S: You too, champ.

Steve got up and felt his leg hook and tremble. Natasha looked at him and was worried.

James also stared at his father, not understanding what was going on.

N: I do it, Steve. Sit down.

Natasha pushed Steve back to the floor, he sat up and looked down. He was disappointed in himself for not being able to do simple things, to be dependent on being able to take care of his own children. This situation was frustrating.

Natasha got up and went to the children.

N: Ladies first.

Natasha took Sarah and tickled her to make her laugh, then Natasha picked up James and placed him next to Sarah.

J: And me, Mommy?

Natasha looked at James and smiled, she tickled him too and kissed his forehead.

N: Are you really going to sleep?

J: Yeah, she doesn’t know how to play anything!

N: But the other day, you were joking playing of imitating each other.

J: True. But she could play something that is funny, like superheroes.

N: She'll know someday. She will grow even more.

James sighed.

J: Then she can be nice.

N: Yes.

Natasha smiled.

N: Sleep well. I love you.
J: I love you, mama.

Natasha looked at the two of them and then sat down next to Steve.

N: Remember that this situation is temporary, Steve.

S: They don’t know that.

N: They are doctors and scientists, if they are optimistic, you should be too.

S: I know. I am trying.

N: I know you are and I know it’s difficult.

Steve looked at James and Sarah in the crib. James was trying to make her play something and he was getting angry because she doesn’t do what he wants.

S: Do they fight a lot?

N: No. I mean, she loves him. He... He likes her, when no one's watching. He doesn’t have much patience with her and jealousy makes him get a bit aggressive at times.

S: Has he hit her yet?

N: No, he pushed her once and she cried so much that he got scared and he never did it again. He doesn’t like it when she cries, he always comes to calm her.

S: That's cool. I like it. I want them to be good friends.

N: I think they will be.

Natasha and Steve spent hours talking on the carpet. The children slept without even noticing.

N: We should sleep too.

Natasha said as she got up, she tried to help Steve get up, but he turned down the help, already feeling better.

S: Ladies first.

Steve pointed to his bed.

Natasha looked at Steve.

N: I don’t think that's a good idea.

S: I think it's a great idea.

N: Steve...

S: Come on. Lay down.

N: Are you going to behave? The children are here.

S: Don’t worry about me, worry about you.
N: Are you calling me a pervert?

S: We both know you are.

Steve teased and Natasha pretended to be offended, she took a pillow and hit Steve with it.

Steve laughed, grabbed the pillow and pulled it to bring Natasha's body into his.

Steve kissed her lips.

S: Just sleep.

N: Just sleep.

Natasha smiled and Steve gave another kiss on her lips, but as she agreed, he spun her around and pushed her toward the bed.

S: Go.

N: Right, Soldier.

Natasha climbed onto the bed and crawled into the corner to give Steve space. Steve lay down next to her, belly up and stretched his arm to the side, inviting Natasha to lay her head on his chest.

Of course Natasha accepted the offer, she laid her head on Steve's chest and laid her hand on his chest as well, to feel his heartbeat.

S: Is that good for you? Need a blanket?

N: I have everything I need here.

Natasha said as she yawned and closed her eyes.

Steve hugged her and stroked her back.

N: Are you going to sleep?

S: I don't know.

N: Are you still having this insomnia? You could have taken the pills, Steve.

S: I feel like I've been taking poison.

N: But you need to sleep.

S: I will improve. Is not that what you keep telling me?

Natasha just sighed.

S: I have to confess something.

Natasha opened her eyes to hear Steve.

S: I always imagined what it would be like to have such a moment with you. Way before the Civil War, right back when we found Bucky. If you would allow me to hold you like this.
What would be the texture of your skin, what would be the weight of your body on mine.

N: Are you talking about sex?

Natasha smirked. Steve was a little embarrassed.

S: No... I don’t know how to explain. I just...

N: You thought about how it would be to be with me.

S: Yes.

Natasha lifted her head to look into Steve's eyes, her chin resting against his chest.

N: I hope I haven't disappointed you.

Steve smiled.

S: You have only surpassed expectations, as in everything you do.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

N: Now you're just being a silly man.

S: You know it's true.

N: Only you see me like this.

S: You're mistaken. I think most people see you that way. If not, I need to talk to them and show the truth about Natasha Romanoff.

N: Oh. Truth about me? That does not sound good.

S: Not really, not talking like that. But you should let everyone see the real Romanoff.

N: How do you know this is the real me?

Natasha slid her body a little higher, and gave Steve a peck on the lips.

Steve looked at her closely, after the kiss, smiled sweetly at her and stroked her hair.

S: Go to sleep, or you'll be like me.

N: I can keep you company.

S: No. It's my turn to watch over your sleep.

N: Did you know I was watching you there in F Wing?

S: Yes. I remember every moment.

N: Don’t feel special, I would do that for everyone.

S: Right.
Steve smiled and Natasha smiled back, she laid her head back on his chest and after a few minutes, she fell asleep.

...

Early the next morning, Bucky was all up and feeling excited to keep working in the central square with the setting of the Christmas’ party.

Bucky finished brushing his teeth and looked at himself in the mirror, he ran the comb through his still wet hair and went to the dorm’s door to go out.

Bucky opened the door and he was surprised to see Maria Hill, standing in front of his room.

Bucky frowned.

B: Hm... Good morning?

Hill was leaning against the wall of the corridor with her arms folded.

H: Are you busy?

B: No, I mean, yes, I'm going to have breakfast and...

Bucky interrupted the speech because Hill walked toward him and simply walked inside his dorm and Bucky stood in the doorway, looking at her.

B: …I have to work on the scenario...

Bucky glanced at Hill's hands, which were now sliding down the zipper of her overalls.

B: I ...

Bucky swallowed hard and shook his head.

B: Juliana is waiting for me ...

H: Is she?

Hill asked as he lowered his sleeve down.

H: So you should go, right?

Bucky was paying attention to Maria Hill's body, he nodded in agreement with Hill, but he was already walking back into the room and just kicked the door with his foot for her to close.

...

An hour later, in the refectory, when Steve and Natasha arrived to have breakfast with the children, they noticed that Laura was very upset.

Laura was at the table, along with Jane and Pepper. Jane seemed to be feeling bad to be around Laura, because her husband is missing just when Clint’s body went missing too.

Pepper seemed to be an intermediary between them.

Steve and Natasha approached the table.
S: Good morning.

Pepper: Good morning, Steve. Good morning, James, good morning baby Sarah. Come here with Aunt Pepper.

Pepper reached out to get Sarah and Steve let her go to Pepper’s lap.

Steve and Natasha sat on opposite sides of the table. Natasha looked at Laura, who was still shaken with the death and disappearance of Clint Barton. It’s been months and she’s not recovering from that.

Natasha felt bad for being fine now, the last few days beside Steve made her feel good and happy, but she shouldn’t be, because she lost a part of her. It’s a betrayal she is not still in mourning like Laura is.

N: Laura?

Laura looked at Natasha, then at Jane, who lowered her head. Steve noted the behavior of all of them.

S: Is everything okay here?

Laura looked down at the table and a silence followed for a long time, until Laura decided to speak.

L: How can you not require her to tell you where Clint is?

Steve and Natasha looked at Laura.

L: He... I mean Thor, he is missing! Obviously he has something to do with the disappearance of my husband's body.

S: It's not just Thor that disappeared.

L: Exactly! The three of them must have planned it! And she...

Laura pointed at Jane.

L: She has to know, it's her husband! Why aren’t you asking?

S: Laura, we did. We asked everyone.

Jane: I already said that I don’t know where he is.

L: Stop lying! There are only a few days left until Christmas, don’t you feel bad for your daughter to be without her father? Don’t you feel for my children who didn’t bury their father?

Jane: Laura, I understand your pain, I would never hide something like that from you, you must believe me. I’m worried about Thor too.

N: She's telling the truth, Laura. She doesn’t know.

L: Someone has to do something to find him!
S: We will! I promised and I will fulfill that.

Laura expected to hear a speech of conformism, but she was relieved to hear that Steve has not given up yet.

L: Thank you.

Steve nodded.

Laura looked at Jane.

L: I'm sorry, Jane.

Jane: It's all right.

L: I'm going to the nursery, we're preparing a Christmas presentation with the kids.

S: That's a very good idea.

L: Sarah will be our baby Jesus of our living nativity scene.

N: Will she?

Natasha thought it was weird that kind of stuff, and felt weirder for asking.

L: If you don’t mind.

S: Not me, I'm happy with that.

L: Thank you. I'll wait for the kids there.

Laura left.

Torunn sat beside her mom and looked at Steve.

T: I'll be Maria.

Steve raised his eyebrows and smiled.

S: That's great.

Torunn pointed at James.

T: He will be Joseph, my husband!

James laid his forehead on the table.

N: Are you getting married, James?

J: No.

James grunted without lifting his head from the table.

T: Yes, he's going to marry me!
J: I don’t want to.

T: Yes, you do.

Torunn spoke more firmly and frowned. James just grunted something, feeling defeated.

... 

As they finished breakfast, Juliana approached Steve's table.

Ju: Good morning.

S: Good morning, Juliana.

Ju: Did you see Bucky?

Steve looked at Natasha, waiting for her to respond. Natasha shook her head and shrugged.

N: Not today.

S: Me neither. Is there anything we can help?

Ju: Oh no, nothing, really. It's just that he told me to meet him here...

Juliana frowned.

Ju: I mean, I was going to help him with the Christmas decoration today, but... He must have forgot.

S: Well, he's not here. Maybe he came early and he's already there in Central Square.

Ju: Oh, that's true! I was being stupid.

Juliana smiled.

Ju: I'm going there, then. Do you want me to drop the kids off at day care for you?

N: Would you do that?

Ju: Of course.

N: James, go with Juliana.

Natasha helped James moved off the bench. Juliana took Sarah in her arms and retired with them.

Natasha and Steve looked at each other and Natasha rested her elbow on the table and her chin in her hand.

N: Looks like we'll have all the morning without the kids.

S: Yes.

Natasha frowned, because Steve didn’t understand the hint.

N: Both of us will have time to solve that matter.
S: That matter?

Pepper, who was still at the table, contained her laugh.

Natasha kicked Steve's foot, which made him loosen the bread he was about to bite.

Steve looked shocked at Natasha, but at last he understood what she meant, since she was pointing the corridor with her head.

S: Oh! Yes. Yes. That matter. We must go, immediately.

Steve got up from his chair and was already red, after he understood what Natasha meant.

S: We need to go. Excuse us, Pepper.

P: Right.

Pepper smiled.

Natasha got up too and left the refectory, along with Steve.

S: My room or your room?

N: Yours. It's bigger.

The two continued to walk down the corridor and crossed with Peter Parker on the way.

PP: Captain!

S: Mr. Parker. Good Morning.

Steve said, still walking beside Natasha. Peter had to walk back into the hallway, to keep up with them and began to walk side by side with Steve and Natasha.

PP: Did you see Mr. Stark?

N: No, we didn't see your father.

PP: He's not my...

S: Mr. Parker, what do you need?

Steve stopped walking, seeing that he wasn’t going to get rid of Peter Parker so easily.

PP: Mr. Stark said he had a task for you and me to do this morning. But I don’t find him anywhere, so I thought you would know what task is.

S: Well, I don’t know.

PP: But should we then look for him, together? Are you busy now?

Steve looked quickly at Natasha, then at Peter again.

S: I am and if you find Tony, tell him I'll be busy all morning.
PP: What are you going to do, is it urgent?

S: Yes.

PP: Can I help you? Maybe it would go faster.

Natasha and Steve looked at each other again.

N: No need, I'll help the Captain. You can go now.

PP: Oh okay then, people. I'll tell Mr. Stark.

Peter Parker walked away in the opposite direction where Steve and Natasha were going.

A few more minutes and they were able to get into Steve's room.

In the minute that they got inside the room, Steve closed the door, and Natasha immediately started to get undressed. She removed the leather jumpsuit she was wearing, and as she turned to look at Steve, he'd only removed the top of his uniform. Steve had lost a good time, just admiring Natasha undressing herself.

Steve moved his leg to walk toward Natasha, but she took a step back and gestured for him to stop.

N: Finish what you started.

S: What do you mean?

N: Your clothes.

Steve was a little annoyed, but began to unbutton his pants, he really wanted run to her, and possess her anyway, he is in a hurry, very hurry.

When Steve was totally naked, he walked towards Natasha, he stopped with his body close to hers and looked at her from above, since he is much taller than her. Natasha looked into his eyes and let her body touch Steve's.

Steve lowered his head a little to kiss Natasha, and she lifted her face to reach his lips. Steve's mouth could only brush against Natasha's lips for a few seconds, as she placed her hands on Steve's chest and shoved him hard, causing him to fall suddenly on the bed.

Looks like someone else is in a hurry too.

Natasha rested her hands on the bed, then leaned her knee beside Steve's leg. Natasha looked at him as if he were her prey, there wasn’t a trace of pity in the pair of that piercing green eyes.

Steve already knew that it would be pointless for him to try anything now, she wants to dominate him, he has no choice but to allow.

Natasha began to crawl slowly over the bed, and as she approached Steve's face, Steve looked down at the very beautiful and attractive volumes of Natasha's breasts, which swayed as she moved, sneaking over his body.

Natasha paused for a minute and brought her hand to her mouth, she slid her palm down her tongue slowly.
Steve had no idea what she was doing, but he found the scene extremely provocative, but soon he understood why. Natasha placed that same hand on his cock, she gripped it firmly and slid her hand on Steve's cock from the base to the top, wanting to feel all of his texture, she did that repeatedly.

Steve was overwhelmed by the scene, he stopped breathing. Natasha opened her mouth at the same time as Steve did, just imitating the look of pleasure on his face. He seemed to be in heaven now, he couldn’t take his eyes off her, he couldn’t speak, but his eyes didn’t deny the pleasure he was feeling with the intense caress that Natasha was giving him.

Natasha continued to massage Steve's cock, and as she felt his cock completely rigid, she lifted her body a little and sat on Steve's cock.

Steve threw back his head and grunted, then he grabbed Natasha's waist and moved her body up and down.

Natasha tossed her hair back as she felt Steve's cock come in and out of her opening, she began to let out some moans, one after the other, until she felt Steve's cock completely immersed in her.

Steve placed his hands on Natasha's thighs and lifted his head to look at her and at her body. He memorized that scene. Her red curly hair, tossed all the way to the side where her head was tilted, her lips contracted trying to control her moans, her nostrils slightly dilated by the need for more air to breathe... That red neck, perfect breasts, that belly with the scars of past battles that only make her more desirable... Those thighs of her that restrained his body, that position and all that femininity that exalts from her... Everything deserved to be registered, it could spend a month, two Years or ten that he would still remember perfectly of how to draw her that way.

Natasha still stood over Steve, not moving for a long time. She just wanted to feel him inside her and he wanted to feel her, so he didn’t rush her, he did not interfere.

Natasha looked at Steve, and it was as if she were saying that she would start now and Steve just nodded, already predicting what she meant by that look.

Natasha rested her hands on Steve's chest and used it as support to move her body back and forth, causing her opening to devour and loosen Steve's cock, slowly and repeatedly.

As the pleasure increased, Natasha's thigh muscles contracted and made her pause in a few moments to return to her movements. She continued for a long time until she reached her first orgasm, which made her thigh tight against Steve's body and shrink until she felt the heat of the orgasm pass away.

After the first orgasm, Natasha began to accelerate the movements, in the same position, now she was only interested in her pleasure and pleasure for Steve and after Natasha's second orgasm, she was already feeling her body weakening and allowed Steve to do whatever he wanted to do with her, until she was recovered again.

...

Bucky ended up napping after the intense activities with Maria Hill in bed, he woke up from the nap and when he opened his eyes, he blinked a few times until he actually woke up.

Bucky heard the faucet in the bathroom sink shut, and as he looked into the bathroom, he saw Maria Hill walking out of there, fully clothed and practically tidy, her hair in order, and her usual cold stare.

Bucky sat on the bed, looked into her eyes and smiled.

Hill ignored him completely and walked to the door.
B: Hey!

Hill stopped with her hand on the knob, but didn’t look back.

B: You came here without saying anything and now you walk away without saying anything too?

H: What is there to be said?

B: I don’t know...

H: See?

Hill turned the knob.

B: You could have said good morning and asked how I am.

H: I have no interest in knowing how you are.

Bucky observed Hill, he still tries to understand her personality.

It's true that he was used to Natasha, but Hill can be even colder, she doesn’t care about him, she doesn’t talk and she does not show any interest in him. Hill came to take pleasure and walk away, as if it were nothing.

Hill opened the door.

B: But I have an interest in knowing how you are.

Hill had already put one foot out, but she stopped when she heard Bucky speak.

B: I’m interested in learning more about you. Meet you.

H: Why?

B: I don’t know, but I think we should get to know each other better.

H: You’re safer without knowing anything. Believe me.

Hill walked out the door.

B: I can’t go on with this, Hill, if you don’t let me get close to you.

Hill stopped once more before closing the door.

H: Do as you please.

B: You really do not care.

H: No.

Hill closed the door and, before walking to leave, she sighed. She took a deep breath and shook her head, as if giving a warning to herself for allowing herself to be reached by a speech like this, which she has heard before and thinks super childlike.
Bucky took a shower, he got ready and went to the central square to continue his work and only there he realized that he had scheduled with Juliana to help in the preparation of the Christmas party earlier.

Bucky spotted Juliana, wearing a uniform like the workmen who were acting as stage painters. Bucky also noticed that she changed her hairstyle, it wasn’t a big change, she was just in a ponytail, which before she wrapped it in a bun.

Bucky noticed that Juliana was already working, she had a brush in her hand and was receiving instructions from another worker, he didn’t know what they were talking about, obviously something about the painting on that table, but it didn’t matter, it was important to see that she was smiling sweetly and seemed pleased to be helping.

It was a smile so pure and true that it made Bucky smile without realizing it. Bucky noticed now that she has a discreet furrow on her chin, which only appears when she is smiling for real. Bucky was delighted and he could swear she was the most beautiful person he has ever seen.

And he is thinking that of the girl who seemed to be the most dull of the world for him.

Bucky stood for a few minutes just watching her, which finally caught the attention of Juliana, who as soon as she saw him smiled even more and nodded at Bucky.

Bucky walked over to her.

B: Sorry, I’m late.

Ju: No problem, I came in and Jonas said I could start painting the tables.

B: And how are you doing?

Ju laughed.

Ju: Terrible! Jonas said it was fine, but he was just being kind.

B: Let's take a look.

Bucky looked at the table and he was silent. Juliana was looking at him, eager to know what Bucky was thinking.

B: I guess… it's right, that's fine. But it could look better. Show me how you're doing.

Juliana brushed the brush on the table, covering some more of the wood.

Bucky put his hand over Juliana's and she let the brush fall, for the shock that his touch had caused on her body. She turned her face sharply to look at Bucky, who was right behind her.

B: Sorry. I’m sorry.

Ju: No, I just got scared. I'm... There is no problem.

B: I just want to show you how to paint better. Can I?

Juliana was still looking into Bucky's eyes, she nodded, but didn’t move a muscle to get the brush back.
B: The brush.

Ju: What?

B: The brush.

Juliana nodded and picked up the brush, she was blushing as usual. Bucky took her hand again and came back to help her paint the table.

... Someone was watching them at certain distance, and quite discreetly… That person was Maria Hill. The moment Bucky laid his hand over Juliana's, she averted her gaze and left the place.

...

In Steve’s dorm, Natasha’s body was half over Steve's. Both were naked, and it isn’t about just the nude of clothes, it was the nude of feelings. Both unarmed, both without masks. Just the two of them and that silence that is the refuge of them both.

Steve slid his fingers down the centerline of Natasha's back as she passed her finger around the lines that defined the musculature of Steve's chest.

After almost an hour in this exchange of caresses and silence, they were just trying not to be the one who would break the silence and the moment, but Natasha was thinking about James and that it must be already at lunchtime.

N: James and Sarah need to eat.

Natasha broke the silence, already saying the reason she was interrupting their moment. Steve looked at her and laid his hand on the top of Natasha's butt.

S: You know the nursery feeds them.

N: But they always have lunch with us.

Natasha lifted her head to look into his eyes.

N: They already stay all day in the school, I like to have lunch with them.

S: You already talk, including Sarah, she seems to be yours.

Natasha looked down and looked back at Steve. She raised an eyebrow.

N: Is that bad?

Steve ran his hand over Natasha's hair, putting it back her ear.

S: No, that's good. That's great.

N: Do you really think that or are you just saying it out of kindness?

S: You already know me enough to know that I'm being honest.
Natasha smiled and lifted her body up to kiss Steve's lips.

Natasha got up from the bed and Steve looked at her in confusion.

**S:** Where are you going?

**N:** Take a shower.

Steve sighed, frustrated, he wanted to stay in bed with her. Not every time in the world would be enough for him to feel satisfied with her body.

Natasha stood at the bathroom door and looked at Steve.

**N:** Are not you coming?

Steve looked at her in surprise.

**S:** If I go in there, this bath will last for hours.

Natasha inclined her head slightly, smiling and raising her eyebrows, confirming that this was the idea.

**S:** But you told the children... Lunch...

**N:** I changed my mind. We can have dinner with them later.

Steve smiled and got up from the bed.

...

Bucky was on a platform, along with some workers, they were putting up an electronic panel, which would act as a giant screen. The idea was that on the big screen it would show images of snow falling with a natural landscape, to leave the bunker with more Christmas feelings.

Juliana was a little more distant, on top of a staircase, placing ornaments made by the children of the bunker, on the Christmas tree.

- Hey, Barnes! Lunch arrived. Are you going to eat here?

Bucky looked at his co-worker and then at Juliana. Juliana nodded.

**B:** Yes. Save a meal for Juliana too.

Bucky came down from the platform, jumping from it, which made Juliana's eyes widen, afraid he might get hurt, but she smiled to see that he was all right.

Bucky walked over to her.

**B:** Let's go?

Juliana nodded and handed the basket with the decorative items to another worker who was nearby.

**B:** Jump.

**Ju:** Jump? From here? Are you crazy?
B: You saw me jump out of there. I'm fine, you'll be fine.

Ju: Yeah, I'm not an avenger. Just a nurse.

B: Take the risk. Let's go.

Ju: My role is to take care of the wounded, not to become one.

Bucky smiled.

B: If you say so...

Juliana frowned, not understanding why Bucky was coming so close to the stairs.

Ju: Are you going to knock me over? Do not do it. Do not. I'm serious!

Juliana reached out to protect herself and closed her eyes, but was surprised to feel Bucky's hands on her waist.

Bucky lifted her up and Juliana put her hands on his shoulders.

Bucky set her down.

B: Safe and sound.

Juliana smiled and lowered her head.

Ju: Let's eat.

The two of them went to the table and the other workers were there. Bucky looked around.

B: There are no chairs, I'd better take you to the refectory, to make you more comfortable.

Ju: I can sit on the floor like everybody here.

B: It's dirty.

Ju: We're filthy!

Juliana reminded Bucky and she was happy with his zeal to care about her. She never had anyone caring for her that way.

They sat down with the other workers and while she ate, Juliana watched Bucky talk to the his colleagues, she even forgot to chew to admire him.

...

A few days later, Christmas Eve arrived.

Natasha was in her room, finishing dressing up James' costume.

N: James, you have to promise me to behave until the time of the performance. You can’t ruin the costume, everybody worked so hard.

J: I will, mama.
N: I'm serious. You say you will behave and then when I see you, you are filthy. Laura, Pepper and the other teachers worked hard to do this presentation with you.

J: Are you going to watch it?

N: Of course I will, James. We all will, your father, your Uncle Bucky too. Everyone will be there.

J: Mama?

N: Hmm?

J: I don’t want to go.

N: What are you talking about? You should have said it earlier, you have an important part in the play, James. Why don’t you want to go? Are you ashamed?

J: No, but Torunn said she's going to kiss me.

Natasha frowned.

N: And that's too bad?

J: She's a girl!

N: Would you rather it was a boy?

J: No!!!

N: So?

J: I don’t want to kiss anyone.

N: I'm sure it's a kiss on the cheek.

J: She said that husband and wife kisses in the mouth, like her parents.

N: Well, you don’t have to kiss her if you don’t want to. I'm sure Francis Barton would want to kiss her instead.

James frowned. Natasha put the fake beard on James' face, and then the fancy hat.

Natasha looked at James and felt like laughing.

N: You're done and you look good.

Natasha kissed his cheek.

N: Let's get your sister. God knows how she should be with her father getting her ready.

Natasha reached for James and they left the room, heading for Steve's room.

Natasha knocked on the door and then opened it and walked in with James.
N: Ready?

Natasha looked at Steve with Sarah on his lap and Sarah was wearing a white dress and a white crown on her head. She was looking like an angel. Natasha smiled and walked over to Steve.

N: Oh my God, she looks beautiful, Steve.

S: I know. She is beautiful.

Natasha stretched her face toward Steve and he kissed her lips.

S: Come on. We are late.

...

Bucky: So, Sharon. Do you understand what you'll see there tonight?

Sharon nodded.

B: No one will be looking at you, I mean, they will look, because you look beautiful.

Sharon smiled.

B: I loved the idea of dresses for the women of the bunker. We men don't care about clothing, but we know that it affects the woman's vanity.

Sharon: But my hair...

B: It just needs to be brushed. I will help you.

Bucky picked up the brush and brushed Sharon's hair, he picked up a mirror and showed Sharon.

Sharon looked at herself in the mirror and she looked surprised, maybe she just recognized herself now, she touched her hair and smiled.

B: See? That's right, that’s how I like it. Smiling.

Sharon: Can we go now?

B: Yes.

Bucky led Sharon to Central Square. Sharon was dazzled by the decoration, the huge Christmas tree with the stage, which had the giant screen that looked like a window in the background, overlooking the outside world.

Sharon: Snow.

B: Yes. And Tony took it seriously, this air conditioning is very strong. Let's sit down.

Bucky took Sharon to a table, he introduced her to his working friends, who welcomed Sharon.

- There’s your friend Captain, Barnes.

Sharon and Bucky looked at Steve coming into the square with Sarah in his arms.
Bucky laid a hand on Sharon's shoulder.

**Sharon:** I know, she's not mine. I'm fine, really.

Bucky nodded.

Sharon turned her attention back to the party decor.

Jane approaches Steve.

**Jane:** Oh my God, Sarah! What a cute thing! She looks so beautiful!

**Torunn:** James Rogers!

Torunn came running to James and still dragged Francis with her.

James tried to hide behind Natasha's leg.

**T:** I see you! Come on, Auntie Laura's calling us.

Torunn grabbed James's hand and led him and Francis into the backstage of the event.

**S:** I think I have to leave Sarah there too.

**Jane:** I'll take her there. Come with Aunt Jane, Sarah!

Steve passed Sarah onto Jane's lap.

**N:** Let's find a place near the stage to sit.

Natasha walked with Steve to the table where Maria Hill was sat with Coulson.

**S:** Good evening.

**Coulson:** Captain! Merry Christmas!

**S:** Can we sit with you?

**Coulson:** Of course. Please.

Natasha and Steve sat at the table. Natasha was next to Maria Hill.

Natasha looked at Hill.

**N:** Why aren't you wearing the dress?

**H:** For what?

**N:** For the party.

**H:** I don’t see the point in getting ready for this.

Natasha stared at Hill and then where she was looking. Natasha spotted Bucky beside Sharon.

**N:** Oh ...
H: What?
N: You and Barnes.
H: There's no me and Barnes.
N: Why not?
H: Because there is not. We just like sex with each other. No feelings involved.
N: Hill...
H: Seriously, he doesn’t even know what he wants. Poor Juliana, she's in a trap, that little saint. Look at him... Sharon, Juliana, he doesn’t know who he wants.
S: Sharon?
Steve was surprised for Hill saying that Bucky has interest on Sharon. Natasha looked at Steve.
Steve looked in the direction where Bucky was and saw Sharon. He hadn’t seen her there before. He still visits her once in a while, but he never talked to her again.
Natasha was reading Steve's expression. The way he looked down, briefly, after noticing Bucky near Sharon, made Natasha wonder. Is that jealous? Natasha thought, and her countenance also changed.
The stage lights were on and the sound was on. Everyone stilled and turned their attention to the stage.
N: Fury?
Natasha whispered.
H: He didn’t want to come. Later, I'll bring him something to eat.
The Christmas performance began after Laura and Pepper announced the play.
The children entered the stage, each in turn.
Sarah was placed in the manger, but began to cry the moment she saw James beside the other children, she reached out to James and threatened to leave the manger that she was placed.
N: God...
S: Should I get her?
N: Of course not, Steve.
James looked at Sarah and put his finger in his mouth, motioning her to stop crying, which only made her scream even more.
James left his position and looked at the audience, he smiled awkwardly and ran to Sarah.
J: Stop!
Sarah just grunted.
J: Stop right now!

Sarah stopped crying and smiled, she always finds it funny when he fights with her and James started using it as a device to make her stop crying.

James took her hand and looked at Laura.

J: She's okay.

Pepper: He has to go to his place.

L: She's going to cry, so leave it alone. Continue, children...

Laura clapped her hands and the crowd applauded for the play to continue.

As the kids were performing, Hill yawned and stared around to try to hold on to the presentation until the end, and she eventually spotted Juliana arriving at the party.

Hill had to look twice to make sure that that woman was really Juliana, she was very different in that dress and her hair was down. She was a lot better than the other days.

H: Okay, she's here, the circus is armed.

Natasha looked at Juliana and saw her walking to Bucky.

Bucky was talking to Sharon and his colleagues.

Ju: Good evening, I'm late, but...

Bucky turned to stare at Juliana and he couldn’t help staring her from her feet to her head, he was puzzled and delighted by her look.

Bucky stood up abruptly.

Ju: May I sit with you? I don’t want to be with my aunt.

B: Of course.

Bucky and Juliana stood staring at each other.
To break the silence, Sharon held out a hand to Juliana.

**Sharon:** Hi, I'm Sharon Carter.

Juliana looked at Sharon and smiled.

**Ju:** I know. I'm Juliana.

**Sharon:** Nice to meet you, Juliana. Sit down with us.

**Ju:** Thank you.

Sharon stepped aside on the bench, allowing Juliana to sit beside Bucky.

Bucky looked at Sharon and she smiled, nodding, encouraging him to pay attention to Juliana, he was obviously dazzled by her.

...  

**H:** It's going to be the three little friends now.

**N:** Stop. You should be enjoying yourself.

**H:** Well, I'm not. Actually, I'm going to my room now.

**N:** No, you won't. My son is performing. You stay for him.

Hill frowned.

**H:** Your son sucks acting.

Natasha laughed and turned her attention back to the stage.

At the end of the presentation, everyone got up and applauded the children. The children thanked and were released to join their families.
Steve went to get Sarah and brought her to the table with him.

Laura climbed onto the stage with the microphone.

*L: Good night and merry Christmas everyone! I just wanted to thank everybody who worked hard for our party today. It's very important for me. I also wanted to thank all of our “school” teachers, and all those who came to attend. As you know, we don’t have much to give to our children, but I heard from Tony Stark that we will have a Santa Claus this year too. And I want to know... Who wants to see Santa?*

All the kids screamed they wanted to. James climbed onto the chair and raised his arm.

Natasha looked at Steve.

*N: Who is the Santa Claus, anyway?*

*S: I have no idea."

*H: It will probably be Stark himself, he still has not showed up here."

*N: It's really his thing. He should arrive in an armor, all full of blinkers."

*L: Looks like Santa's going to be here after midnight, but for him to come, all the kids should eat all of their meal and..."

Laura stopped talking because she saw Santa arriving at the party that moment.

Laura frowned and she was angry because Tony said he would come only after midnight and he is already here, where the children can see him.

*L: It looks like there was a change of plans and..."

Laura lost her voice again, she looked better at Santa and found out it wasn’t Tony.

*L: No..."

Laura dropped the microphone on the floor and everyone looked at her, confused.

Natasha looked in the direction where Laura was looking.

*N: Oh it's Santa Claus! Look, James!"

James and the other kids started yelling and ran to Santa.

Santa clapped his hands on the heads of the children who came to him. He picked up one of the children in his lap.

Laura put her hand on her chest and jumped off the stage, she ran to Santa.

Santa put the kid Francis Barton on the floor and then stood up, he looked at Laura and Laura broke down in tears. She hugged him and shivered as she cried.

*Francis: Mommy?"

Natasha saw Laura's reaction and got up abruptly.
N: It can’t be...

Natasha whispered to herself.

No one was understanding anything.

**Torunn: Daddy!!!**

Torunn saw Thor enter the Square and ran to him.

Steve noticed Wanda and Vision, coming in shortly after Thor.

Everyone understood better what was happening when Laura pulled Santa's beard down and they could see who it was: Clint Barton.

**Clint: Merry Christmas, babe.**

Chapter End Notes

Surprise!
Laura pulled Clint's body away a little to look at him again, and to make sure it was really him, she waited for the tears to stop blurring her vision to analyze him better. Maybe it was somebody that looks like him and she got confused.

Laura's heart was beating so fast that it looked like it was going to come out of her chest, she sighed and shook her head.

L: Is that you?

C: Who else could it be, woman?

Laura laughed and cried at the same time. That kind of answer, only Clint could give her. If it's a double, he studied her husband's way a lot.

L: God, I missed you so much! I thought I would never see you again.

C: I know, babe. But I'm here now, I won't leave you anymore.

Laura hugged Clint and pressed her lips to his, in a long and wet kiss with tears.

N: Clint?

Clint looked at Natasha and Laura released him a little.

Natasha stood a few feet away from Clint, her brow furrowed, not believing what she was seeing.

N: I saw you dead.

C: I know.

Clint took a step toward Natasha to hug her, but Natasha stepped back and gestured for him to stop.

N: I saw you dead! You were dead! You were dead! I felt your pulse, you were not breathing, you were dead!

Natasha's face was shaking, she couldn’t accept the fact that Clint was standing in front of her.

C: I know, Tasha. I... I don’t remember much after that... You know... But I woke up in Asgard. Thor, Wanda and Vision were there. They tried to explain to me, but I didn’t understand anything. It was something to do with witchcraft and a stone, I guess.

Natasha lowered her head, staring into the void, and a tear rolled down her face.

N: You were dead...

Natasha whispered again. Clint went to her and hugged her, he also kissed the side of her forehead and stroked her back to comfort her.

Natasha took a few seconds to finally hug Clint back, she was in shock.

N: Do not do this again to me. Please.
C: I don’t intend to, don’t worry.

N: I want to shoot you, you have no idea of my pain.

C: I'm sorry.

- Dad?

Clint released Natasha and turned to see his eldest son, Cooper.

Cooper: Dad!

C: Cooper!

Clint hugged his son and now he was crying.

Laura: Lila, go and hug your father.

Lila was behind Laura and she shook her head, she seemed to be afraid of him, or maybe she was also in shock, after all this time thinking that her father was dead, it’s a shock to deal with reality now.

Clint kissed Cooper's forehead and ruffled his hair, he turned to look at Lila.

C: Hey, Little pig!

Clint let go of Cooper and knelt on the floor, he opened his arms to Lila.

C: I missed you, baby. It's Daddy. You don’t have to be afraid of me. C’mon. Come here.

Laura tried to push Lila to encourage her to hug her father, but Lila ran out of the party.

L: She'll be fine. I'll talk to her...

C: No. I'll talk to her. Stay here.

Clint got up and walked to go after Lila.

Torunn: Hey, Santa Claus! What about our presents?

C: Oh!

Clint looked at Thor.

C: I knew that would happen.

Wanda: That's not the real Santa Claus, Torunn. The real one will come later. Meanwhile, do you want to see something?

Wanda wiggled her fingers and a red cloud formed around her hands, causing small explosions in the air, which looked like fireworks. The kids went crazy and went after Wanda to see the lights.

Jane: So that's what you were doing?

Thor: Yes.
Jane: Why didn’t you tell me anything?

Thor: Because you would stop me, you wouldn’t let me go back to Asgard.

Jane: Of course I would not! You remember why we came here, you know what Thanos did in Asgard. Your mother, your father... They are gone and I don’t want to lose my husband too!

Thor: I'm here now.

Jane: It was very dangerous, Thor.

Thor: I think that army that Thanos sent to Asgard is gone. We stayed there all this time and faced no threat. Maybe it's time to go back and try to find survivors... Restore Asgard, again.

Jane: No! I will not risk our daughter's life! And they need us here. The threat is not over until we defeat Thanos.

Thor: You're right.

Jane: Let's sit down.

Thor: I can’t sit down, I have to get dressed.

Jane: Dress to what?

Thor: I'll be Santa!

Laura: I thought it would be Tony.

Thor smiled.

Thor: There is no better Santa Claus than an Asgardian, I have a beard, I'm big and I like to eat!

Natasha was already recovered, she turned to go back to the table and she didn’t see Steve there. Natasha looked around the place looking for him and saw him near Sharon, talking to her.

Natasha frowned and her heart ached a little, she cant deny that it bothers her, but it's Christmas and he has to talk to her. Natasha took a deep breath and went to her table.

Hill was finishing packing one plate with food and another with some candy.

N: Are you leading to Fury’s dorm?

H: Yes.

N: I'll go with you.

While Natasha was getting up to go visit Nick Fury, Steve was putting Sarah in Sharon's lap.

Sarah looked at Sharon and smiled.
S: She likes you.

Steve crouched next to them.

Sharon: She's my friend.

Sharon smiled.

Sharon: I'm glad you adopted her.

S: Are you? I wasn't sure if you would be offended in any way.

Sharon: No...

Sharon shook her head, then looked thoughtful.

Sharon: I mean, it was very painful to lose Maggie.

Steve looked away and sighed, agreeing with Sharon.

Sharon: This time I'm isolated, I... I've learned to accept what happened and I believe Aunt Peggy is taking care of her for me.

Sharon put her hand on her mouth.

Sharon: I mean in the religious sense, not that I think Peggy is alive, or Maggie.

S: I understand. Stay calm.

Sharon: If they hear me say something like that, they will think...

S: Shh... It's okay, I won’t say anything.

Sharon: I missed you, Steve.

S: I missed you too.

Sharon: I don’t know why I couldn’t see you without feeling all that rage... You made me nervous, you made me remember everything that I have lost, but talking to Bucky... It made me realize that I was acting crazy.

S: He has been helping you, right?

Sharon: Yes. A lot.

Sharon turned and looked in the direction of Bucky, who was standing by the table of cheeses with Juliana, setting the plates to eat.

Sharon: I'm very grateful to him.

S: I should have done the same for you. Sharon, I know it’s late, I wish I could come earlier, some stuff happened to me, but I wanted to say... I’m sorry for everything. I think you were right. My life has changed with my son and I let that change your life too and I feel guilty every day for all of your pain.
Sharon: You didn’t take Maggie away from me, Steve. You just broke my heart.

S: I'm sorry for that, too.

Sharon: Thanks for apologizing. It means a lot to me.

S: I'm going to sit down there now.

Sharon: Okay.

Sharon handed Sarah over to Steve's lap again.

Steve came back to the table and saw Natasha, retiring with Hill.

S: Nat?

Natasha looked at Steve coldly, she raised her eyebrow, waiting for him to say what he wanted.

S: Where are you going? Have you fed James yet?

N: I don’t have to say where I'm going and no, I didn’t give him food.

S: Sorry, I didn’t want to disturb you. You mad?

Steve frowned, surprised at her aggressiveness.

S: Why you mad?

N: I'll put James to eat dinner when I get back.

Steve just nodded his head and observed her going away.

...

Ju: You want this one here?

B: What is it?

Ju: It's Salami. It has a strong flavor and fits well with this cheese you have chosen.

B: I'll try it, then.

Juliana put the salami on Bucky's plate and took a slice of minas cheese for her.
Ju: I've never seen so much food like this before. They did a good job this year.

Bucky watched Juliana for a few seconds, he touched a strand of her hair, and Juliana looked at him.

B: Juliana, I need to say that you look very beautiful tonight.

Juliana smiled and lowered her head, feeling a little ashamed.

B: I like your hair like that...

Ju: Thank you. I also liked your new haircut.

Bucky smiled.

B: They said all this New Year parties represents a change of life. I believe that and I decided to start the change for myself.

Ju: Bucky, I'd like to... I mean, I want to tell you something.

B: What is it?

Ju: I don’t want to say here, maybe we could go somewhere else like... Like a little more...

B: Reserved?

Juliana agreed with her head.

B: I promise I'll make time to talk to you later, but I'm responsible for Sharon tonight.

Bucky looked in the direction of the table and spotted Sharon. She seemed to be feeling out of place.

Ju: Okay.

B: We should go back now, I don’t want her to be alone.

Ju: Go ahead, I go to my aunt's table, make at least one meal with them.

Bucky nodded and walked over to Sharon, he handed Sharon a plate with some cheese.

B: I brought this to you.

Sharon: Thank you.

Sharon looked at the plate and she couldn’t smile.

B: Did I take long to come back? I’m so sorry..

Sharon: No... It’s fine.

Bucky noticed where Sharon was looking before he arrived and she was staring at Steve's table.

Sharon: He apologized, you know?

B: Steve?
Sharon nodded.

Sharon: If I hadn’t lost my mind, he and I could be taking care of Sarah and being a family now.

B: Do you still have feelings for him, Sharon?

Sharon: Maybe. I'm not sure. I’m… I guess I’m confused.

B: I don’t want you to be sad, specially today. It’s Christmas Eve, I want you to have a beautiful night. I want you to have fun.

Sharon looked at Bucky and smiled, she touched Bucky's face and watched him.

Sharon: I had a beautiful night. Thanks to you. Thanks, Buck.

Bucky shook his head.

B: It was nothing.

Sharon: Do you like that girl?

B: I don’t know.

Sharon: She seems to be nice. She seems to really like you too.

Bucky glanced toward the table Juliana was in.

B: I don’t know, she's very young. And… very naive. I've never dated anyone so pure like her, I bet she's a virgin.

Sharon: Maybe it's time to try something new. You deserve someone who takes good care of you, because you deserve it, Bucky Barnes.

Sharon kissed Bucky's face in thankfulness. Bucky smiled.

Sharon: I'm going to retire now.

B: But Sharon...

Sharon: I had a great night. Believe me, but I feel tired. Thank you again.

Sharon stood up.

Sharon: I'll just have to ask you to escort me there.

B: Of course. Let's go.

... 

Natasha and Hill were greeted by Nick Fury.

N: I thought you wouldn’t want to see us.

NF: I don’t want to. But I'm hungry.
Nick said as he ate the plate Hill had brought.

N: It's about time you got back into society, Nick.

NF: I decide when the time is right.

Nick took another bite and looked at Maria Hill, who was sitting with her arms crossed and staring at the wall in silence.

NF: Natasha, I need a moment with Maria. Could you?

Natasha looked at Hill and then at Fury, she nodded and left the room.

NF: So...

Hill looked at Fury and frowned, pretending not to understand his question.

NF: Look, I don’t have time for that kind of games that talk/don’t talk, if there's anything bothering you, just say it!

Hill frowned and lifted her head a bit, showing more magnificence.

H: There's nothing to be said.

Nick put his fork down on his plate and looked thoughtful.

NF: Maria, I know you like the back of my hand. What's bothering you so much?

H: Nothing important.

NF: If it's not important, why are you letting that upset you? I didn’t teach you that.

H: You're right. I won’t let that bother me any more.

Nick nodded, agreeing with her.

NF: You and I lead a difficult life. I've tried to have people in my life, but it never worked out.

Hill nodded her head.

NF: But that doesn’t mean that we have to be completely alone.

H: You said that people like us will always be alone.

NF: Yes, but not completely.

Hill looked confused.

NF: We can have company, once in a while. Someone to warm the body and the heart in cold times. We just can’t have it all the time. I wish I could tell you why, but there’s no why.

H: I thought it was a rule.

NF: No... Of course not. It just happens to people like you and me.
H: Why? Why you and me?

NF: Someone has to make sure the job is done. There are people who were born just to watch the happiness of others.

H: Do you think I'm one of those people?

Nick nodded.

H: But Natasha did it. She has a son, a bond forever.

NF: Yeah, but you're not Natasha.

H: Everyone says we're the same. Natasha and I.

NF: You're nothing like her. Natasha always seemed to be the type that can’t live without feelings. She disguises well, it's true, don’t get me wrong, she's one of my best agents, but I understand she has needs, she needs to be loved, she needs to be taken care of. She won’t say she needs it, she would never admit that and maybe she can live without anyone forever, but deep down I know what she likes. And I know how you are too.

H: My job is to be alone.

NF: Your job is to make sure people do their jobs. Even if you had someone in your life, you would still have that job and you would run it perfectly.

H: My job is resumed down to this... And keeping secrets.

NF: This is not a job. I tell you secrets, because you are trustworthy and I don’t trust anyone, but I trust you.

Hill looked at Fury and sighed.

H: Thank you, Fury.

Nick nodded and went back to eating.

NF: Merry Christmas.

H: Merry Christmas.

...
As the conversation was taking so much time, Natasha decided to return to the party.

In the hallway to the Central Square, Natasha came face to face with Steve, carrying Sarah in his lap.

S: There you are.

Natasha stared at him, no emotion in her eyes.

S: I was looking for you.

Natasha continued in silence, she looked away and breathed heavily, indicating that she was impatient.

S: I noticed you're upset, maybe with me...

N: Did you do anything?

Steve shook his head.

N: So there's nothing to worry about.

Natasha tried to walk to the party, but Steve grabbed her arm.

S: I'm worried about you, Nat. I'm worried about what you're feeling, not from the possibility that I'm the reason of it. It's Christmas, Nat. I want everything to be okay with you.

Natasha looked into Steve's eyes and sighed, then she looked away to say why she had been upset and she feels ashamed of the reason, so she didn’t want to face him.

N: What were you talking to her about?

Steve frowned, confused by the question and kept trying to remember which women he spoke with that night and there was only one that could have shaken Natasha... Sharon.

S: Nothing much.

N: You don’t want to tell me?

S: Do I have to?

Natasha looked at him again.

S: I have nothing to hide. I went to talk to her when you were in the same environment as me. You know she's my ex. You know about Maggie, about her condition and our history...

N: Okay.

Natasha closed her eyes and shook her head.

N: I know. You’re right, I just...

S: What?

_Fear. I was afraid._ Natasha thought, but she didn’t say it aloud.
N: I trust you.

S: I trust you too. I was talking about Maggie and I apologized for...

N: No.

Natasha put a hand to Steve's lips and then grabbed the back of his neck and made him lower his head to kiss him.

Natasha kissed Steve's lips and looked at him closely.

N: You don’t have to tell me. I was stupid and I'm sorry for that.

S: All right.

Steve gave another peck on Natasha’s lips.

N: I want to have a good night with you, James, Sarah and no one else.

S: Do you want to leave the party? James is having fun with his friends, he won’t want to leave.

N: No, I... I want to be with you, just you. Even here.

Steve looked at her with understanding and nodded.

S: It will be our Christmas.

Natasha smiled.

- Ho, ho, ho! Santa Claus has arrived!

Natasha and Steve heard the ad being made into the microphone.

N: Come on, it's James' first Christmas, I want to watch it.

... 

When Natasha and Steve arrived at the party, they noticed that Clint was back, with Lila in his lap. Lila was attached to him like nothing would make her drop her dad. Not even when the Santa called all the children to receive their gifts, she wanted to leave her father.

James was the first in the children's queue to receive a gift, he sat on Thor's lap.

Thor: Little Rogers, have you been a good boy?

James nodded.

J: I mean... Not much. I made Sarah cry sometimes, but she was boring.

Thor: Oh! Your sister, right?

J: Yeah. I'm not going to gain anything, right? Aunt Laura said children who are naughty, don’t get a gift from Santa.
Thor: Are you a naughty boy?

James shook his head.

Thor: I believe you're good too. Just be sure to treat your sister better. Here is your gift.

Thor handed James a small package, he picked it up, and as he stepped down from his lap, he looked at him again.

Thor: What?

J: Did you bring something for Sara?

Thor: Yes! Do you want to deliver it to her?

J: Yes!

Thor handed James another package. The gifts were the same for all children, they were like wooden toys, just to keep Santa's symbolism for the kids over Christmas.

James came running to his parents with the gifts.

J: Mama!

James threw himself into Natasha's lap.

J: This is Sarah's.

James handed Sarah's gift to her.

N: Did you enjoy meeting Santa, James?

J: Yes. He gave me this!

S: That's good, son.

In the stage, Torunn was the last one on the line, after half an hour, it was her turn, she looked at Thor and made negative with her head.

Thor put her on his lap.

Thor: So… ho, ho, ho…

Torunn: Stop it, father. I know it’s you!
Thor: Nooo, it's Santa!

Torunn: Well, if Santa is my father, then I should get two gifts!

Thor: Why is that?

Torunn: Because my father, the mightiest Thor would give to his princess a gift and Santa would not forget the mighty mightiest princess of Asgard.

Thor: Well, you are a very smart lady, but I have only one gift left.

Torunn sighed.

Torunn: All right, at least I tried!

After all the gifts delivered, Laura took the stage, next to Clint, hand in hand with him. She doesn’t want to stay another second away from her husband too.

Laura announced that it was only five minutes to midnight.

L: We’re all family here in the bunker. We all care about each other. We fought with each other and reconciled with each other. So this is the time to be with those who we love... And those who we care about

Laura paused for a moment, she glanced at Clint, and her eyes were wet again. Clint smiled and tightened her hand, encouraging her to continue the speech.

L: Just forget the fights, the war, let's just fraternize. Stay close to those you love. Merry Christmas everyone!

...

N: She's making an inspirational speech, she reminded me of you.

Natasha told Steve.

Steve grinned.

S: She's doing great, I think I can retire now.

N: Let's sit at that table.
Steve looked where Natasha was walking. It was one of the more distant tables, but from there, they also have a panoramic view of the whole party.

Natasha sat down with James on her lap. Steve sat down next to her with Sarah on his lap.

**S: Why so distant?**

**N: I want just us. Remember?**

Steve nodded.

...

Bucky was sitting at the table with his workmates, but shortly after Laura's speech, they went to sit down with their respective families.

Bucky got up to look for Steve and Natasha, and saw them sitting far away with their kids and he understood that they were wanting more privacy for themselves.

Bucky felt awkward then he turned to look at the stage and a young lady handed over champagne glasses to the toast after midnight.

Bucky held the glass and lifted it to his mouth. It was strange being alone at a time like this. He had seen Laura and her family on stage, super happy to have Clint back, Wanda and Vision singled out in a corner as usual. Jane, Thor, and little Torunn, who had already taken the fake beard from her father and put it on herself, along with Santa's hat.

*Less than a minute to midnight.*

Bucky thought it was better drink the champagne at once so he wouldn’t feel so misplaced, but as the glass reached his lips, he felt someone hold his metal hand.

Bucky turned to see who it was. He found that pair of blue eyes that he’d learned to admire.

Bucky was surprised and smiled.

**B: I thought you would stay with your family.**

Juliana smiled.

**Ju: They don’t need me.**

**B: And I need?**

**Ju: I hope so. I need you.**

*Midnight, people. Merry Christmas!*

Juliana decided to take Bucky's advice the other day, to take the risk. She turned to Bucky and he made the same move, she stood on tiptoe and as she held his hand, she closed her eyes and touched her lips to Bucky’s.

Juliana was not sure what she should do, of how kiss someone, it is the first kiss of her life, she hadn’t even been holding hands with people of the opposite sex before.
Juliana knew that Bucky, for being so handsome, was an experienced man and this was making her even more afraid of what she feels for him. She’s silly and she knows it, but she doesn’t want him to see her that way anymore, like a child.

Juliana kept her lips pressed against Bucky’s mouth, she stayed like this for a long time and didn’t hint or wondered whether to add the tongue on the process of kissing.

Bucky also made no move, as well as closing his eyes and receiving the kiss. He still sees her as a very pure angel for him, he is afraid of disrespecting her, of spoiling what she is.

As she brushed her lips away, Juliana was red, but her eyes were a little more confident now. Everything was better, because he didn’t reject her.

Ju: Merry Christmas.

B: Merry Christmas.

Bucky smiled and toasted her.

...

Natasha and Steve also waited until midnight to give the Christmas kiss, and it was nothing like Juliana’s and Bucky’s kiss. They have already passed this stage, and by speaking in phases, their kiss always starts with a peck on the lips, then the tongues begin to touch each other, from there the tongues begin to provoke and stir, then the breath of each other enters in the kiss and all of that together, always intensifies things.

They heard James or Sarah say something, and immediately the kiss stopped.

Steve still had his lips on Natasha’s when he opened his eyes.

S: Merry Christmas.

Steve whispered straight to her lips. Natasha kissed his bottom lip.

N: Merry Christmas, my soldier.

Natasha finally released her lips to hug James and kiss his forehead.

N: Merry Christmas, James.
J: Sh... Mom.

James pointed to Sarah, who had fallen asleep, without them noticing.

S: Merry Christmas, princess.

Steve whispered looking at Sarah.

Natasha looked at Sarah and smiled.

S: Merry Christmas, champion.

James yawned and scratched his eye.

N: Say "Merry Christmas, Daddy."

J: Merry Christmas, Daddy.

Steve smiled and looked at Natasha. Natasha looked back at him and they were silent, with an imperceptible smile on her lips.
Natasha heard knocks on the door, she opened the Steve’s dorm door and looked down, she frowned at the little visit she was receiving.

- Hi!

N: Hi, Torunn.

T: Is James here?

N: Yes.

T: Can he come out and play with me?

N: Ham... Where?

T: Hmm… I don’t know… Around, maybe in the central square.

N: Are you alone in the corridors?

T: Yes. It's safe and I'm Thor's daughter.

Torunn smiled proudly.

Natasha watched her and studied her for a few seconds.

N: James?

James didn’t hear, he was playing on the carpet with Sarah.

Natasha turned to look at him and gestured for Torunn to come in.

N: Come in, he's there with his sister.

Torunn entered the room and Steve looked at her.

S: Torunn, hi.

T: Hello, Uncle Steve.

James stood up from the floor, seeing Torunn.

J: Toto.

T: Sarah!

Torunn grinned and approached Sarah, she knelt beside her and took Sarah's hand.

J: She can stand now. Give her the other hand.
Torunn held out her other hand and James grabbed Sarah to stand and then let her standing by herself.

T: How cool! She's so cute.

J: Do you want to play with me and her?

Torunn looked at James.

T: Actually, I want to play outside.

J: I don’t know if my mom will take me now.

T: We can go alone, we are big.

N: You're 4 years old.

J: I have almost five!

T: I'm 6 years old!

N: It’s still 4, James.

T: I always play outside without my parents. Me and Francis also.

James frowned and looked at Steve.

J: Dad, can I go?

Steve looked at Natasha and waited for her to give some sort of response, but Natasha left the decision in his hands.

S: Where are you going to play?

T: In the square, or in the refectory, or in the corridors. We play everywhere!

S: I need to know where James is going to be, so if you tell me a place, I'll let him go.

T: Hm... Okay, in the square!

S: Okay.

T: Can we take Sarah with us? Pleeeeaaseee.

N: Not a good idea, but I'll take her there later to play a little too.

S: James, come here.

James walked over to Steve.

S: Everyone knows you here, but still you have to be careful. I don’t want you running in the hallways or getting into some trouble. Be there in the square as it was agreed. You understand?
James nodded.
Steve smiled.

S: Now, go play! Go! Go!
Steve shoved James and tapped his ass.

James and Torunn ran out of the room feeling very excited.

Sarah crawled to the door in hurry to try to follow her brother and she cried when Natasha closed the door, preventing her from leaving.

N: Sorry, young lady.
Natasha took Sarah off the floor and walked with her to Steve.
Natasha leaned her body to Steve, wanting a peck on the lips. , Steve was sitting at the table, arranging some papers.
Steve kissed Natasha's lips.

S: Do you want me to hold her?
N: No, you're busy. Finish your job.

S: Actually, I am really busy, all this bunker bureaucracy.
N: We'll be fine here.

Natasha walked over to the bed and sat down, she placed Sarah sitting on her legs.

N: We're going to watch dad work at the weekend.
Steve looked at Natasha.

S: I wish I could stop, but...
N: I'm just joking.
Steve smiled and continued to write.

N: I'll take you out later, Sarah. I promise. Stop crying.
Natasha put her hand on Sarah's face and rested her head on her chest, Sarah calmed down automatically.
Natasha kissed the top of Sarah's head and then laid the chin on her head.

T: There's Francis. Let's go, James.

Torunn ran towards a fake tree, which has branches very easy to climb on, purposely made for children to climb and not get hurt if they fall.
James followed Torunn till the tree, but just watched her climb the tree.

T: Francis! We're here.

Francis Barton was on the top branch of the tree.

F: You can’t get me!

T: I can, but I don’t want to.

F: What do you want, then?

T: To play! Let's go down.

F: Why? Here is cool.

T: James is afraid to go up.

Francis looked down and saw James standing near the tree, looking at both of them.

F: What a chicken!!

J: I'm not a chicken!

T: Francis! Stop it! Let's go down.

F: No!

T: Yes.

F: No!

T: Yes!

J: Leave him there alone, Torunn!

T: No.

F: No!

Torunn took a deep breath and looked at Francis.

T: Come on, Francis! Be nice.

F: I'm going down, if James comes up!

Torunn looked at James.

F: If he's not a chicken, he'll come up.

- Well, if he's afraid, he shouldn’t go up the tree.

Said another child, hanging from the branch of the tree.

J: I'm not afraid!
F: Then come up!

James took a deep breath and frowned. He looked at Torunn, who nodded encouragingly.

J: I will!

- Go, James!

T: Come on, James, you can do it!

James rested his hands on the tree branch and then mounted on the branch, he stood and tried to keep his balance.

T: Come up crawling, James.

F: This is for babies!

James continued to walk on the inclination of the branch and his legs trembled greatly, he lost his balance and fell to his knees on the branch and grabbed hard to not fall.

T: It's okay, James. You're doing great. You can do it.

James paused for a few seconds, he took a deep breath and continued up the branch until he reached Torunn.

T: You did it, James!!!

James smiled and Torunn celebrated, hugging him.

Francis jumped from the branch that he was to the one where Torunn and James were.

F: Okay. You're not a chicken.

J: I told you!

T: Come on.

F: Where do you want to go?

T: It's a secret! You'll see when we get there.

Torunn jumped from the branch to the ground, in fact, she floated to the ground, she inherited this ability from her ancestors, short flights, but she’s not aware of this yet.

F: Come on, James.

James looked at Francis and for him to go up on the tree, it was even easy, but go down... James stood in the same place.

F: I'll help you. Do like me.

Francis went down the path James had made to get to the branch, but with his back to the ground. James repeated the same action of Francis and managed to get down, but near reaching the ground, James slipped to the side and to try to stop the fall, Francis grabbed James' shirt.
C: HEYYY! FRANCIS!

Clint just saw the moment James was already down on the floor, with Francis holding his shirt.

Clint came running.

C: Son, what did you do??? Not nice hold your friend by his clothes!

Clint looked at James and got him to his feet.

C: Is everything okay, buddy?

J: Yes.

C: Francis, apologize.

F: For what?

James put his hand on Francis's shoulder.

J: He helped me.

C: Oh... Really?

J: Yes. Francis is my friend.

C: Sorry, I thought... It was a mistake.

T: Boys! Come on!

C: Where are you three going?

T: Take my gift that Santa gave me at Christmas to play.

C: Oh, okay. Then come back here.

T: Yeah.

Torunn, Francis, and James ran into the hall, but James stopped at the edge of the square.

T: James!

J: My dad said I can’t leave here...

T: We're going to come back!
F: Come on, James.

T: We have to be fast or we won’t have time!

F: Time for what?

T: You will see. Come on!

James looked at the square and then at his friends, he sighed and ran along with Francis and Torunn.

...

Ju: Just relax.

B: I am relaxed.

Ju: No, you’re not.

B: Why do you always say that I’m not relaxed? I feel calm.

Ju: But I can feel you're tense. All these knots here...

Juliana pressed her fingers against the back of Bucky's neck, who was lying on a stretcher, receiving therapeutic massage from Juliana so that his body fit better with the new arm.

B: Well, maybe I'm tense...

Bucky lifted his head from the stretcher and peered at Juliana, he took her arm and pulled her, making Juliana smile and blush a little.

Ju: I'm working.

B: Really? I thought you were taking the opportunity to put your hands on my body.

Ju: This is a therapy massage, I have to touch you.

Bucky didn’t let go of her arm, which made Juliana continue to smile. Bucky sat on the bed and pulled Juliana to stand between his legs.

Juliana looked into his eyes and her eyes, unintentional, moved to his chest and then to Bucky's belly.

Juliana glanced up quickly into his eyes and now she can stare into his eyes without feeling like she's going to faint.

Bucky noticed her gaze and he thinks that she is very adorable, for not allowing herself to look too much for him.

Bucky hugged Juliana's waist and made her body stick to his.

Juliana was red, but it wasn’t shame, it was something else, she put her arms over Bucky's shoulder and stared into his eyes.

Bucky brought his lips to hers and took a long kiss. Juliana closed her eyes and only with the light kiss, her breath changed.
Bucky squeezed her waist lightly and slid his hands a little to Juliana's back, which made her lips parted and let out a sigh.

Bucky could feel how turned on and attracted to him she was by his touches, but he still finds her too pure for any kind of... Of more intense flirtations, other than a French kiss, he brushed his lips away and loosened his hands on her body.

Juliana opened her eyes and looked away.

Ju: Sorry.

B: Why are you apologizing?

Juliana shook her head.

Ju: I don’t know how to do these things.

Juliana smiled awkwardly.

B: What do you mean?

Juliana left Bucky's arms and walked to the side.

Ju: I saw you with Hill the other day and you two probably did... That thing...

Bucky raised his eyebrows in surprise.

B: Well...

Ju: Are you guys dating?

B: No, no, no. No way.

Ju: But you did...

B: Yes. We are adults and...

Ju: I'm an adult too.

B: I know, I just... I meant we're adults and singles, so... It happened.

Ju: One time?

B: Hm... No.

Ju: How many times?

B: Juliana, why are you asking this? Do you really want to know?

Juliana shook her head.

Ju: No, I jus ... I want you to do it with me too.

Bucky was even more surprised.
Ju: I think it's time and I think it should be you.

B: Juliana...

Bucky shook his head and ran his hand around his neck, feeling nervous.

B: I'm sorry. I can't.

Juliana looked at him in disappointment.

B: It's not that I don't want to, it's just...

Ju: What?

B: I... I can't do this to you, you're young.

Ju: I'm not a child!

Juliana raised her voice a little and walked across the room, finally managing to express some anger and protest.

B: I know. But you're a family girl, I don't know if I'm the right guy for you, probably not.

Juliana looked at Bucky again.

Ju: Hill is not a family girl?

B: That's not what I meant. Hill... She's complicated, but I like you and I think you might regret doing it to me the first time.

Ju: Who said it would be my first time?

B: Have you done this before by chance?

Juliana made negative with her head.

B: Look... You've never dated anyone, so...

Ju: Are we dating?

Bucky made negative with his head.

B: We kissed on Christmas and all these days, but to date, I would have to ask, I would have to enter into a relationship with you, but we are going to war soon. I'm not sure if I should make you wait for me. It wouldn't be fair to ask you to date me. I could not come back after the war.

Ju: Don't say that!

B: That's the truth.

Ju: Do you like Hill?

Bucky looked at her and shook his head.
B: I don’t know. I can’t say I’m indifferent to her. You see, I don’t want to hurt you, but there are certain things that are too complicated to be affirmed or not about what I feel for her.

Ju: Are you going to stay with her again?

B: No. I put an end to it. But I can’t date you yet.

Ju: I need to think. Excuse me.

B: Ju... Please, let’s talk.

Ju: I’m sorry.

Juliana left the room.

...

F: Where are we?

T: This is where Uncle Tony works.

J: Co-command?


F: Command center?

T: James's father and Maria also work here.

F: Where is everyone?

T: They left. Change turn.

J: Why are we here?

T: To play!

F: They will come soon and my father will beat me.

T: No, we're leaving before they come back. I've done this before.

J: What's so funny about being here?

T: Do you want to see something that I discovered?

Torunn climbed into the chair and pressed one of the buttons.

Nothing happened.

T: What's the button anyway? Let me see...

J: Torunn, we shouldn’t.

T: Wait! It's that!
- Doors locking process initialized.

Torunn, James, and Francis looked at each other.

T: It’s all right, body. Just press the same button again that undoes. It's logic.

F: Don’t press anything more!

J: I'm going to call my dad.

James ran to the door and when he tried to open, he couldn’t.

J: It's locked!

F: Oh God, you're so weak. Excuse me.

Francis ran to the door and pushed it hard.

Francis couldn’t open the door either.

Torunn rolled her eyes.

T: You two are such babies. You're only four, I'm six! I got it!

Torunn also tried to open the door and she couldn’t.

F: You locked us in here, Torunn!

T: I did not!

F: Yes, you did.

J: Let's try to open it!

T: How?

J: Pressing the buttons. Some of those have to work!

Francis and Torunn were silent, watching James. They both nodded and each one got into a chair and began to press the buttons and every time they press a button, they activated or deactivated something.

...

N: Steve?

S: Hmm?

N: Are you still busy?

S: No, I'm just drawing now.

N: Sarah slept...

S: That's good, so that’s why the silence...
Steve still hadn’t looked at Natasha, he was paying attention to the drawing.

Natasha approached him and laid a hand on his shoulder.

**N:** And James is playing outside...

Steve only lifted his head as he felt Natasha's fingers sliding down the back of his neck.

**N:** That means that we...

**S:** Oh...

**N:** We have five minutes.

**S:** Bathroom?

**N:** Bathroom.

Steve got up quickly and hugged Natasha's waist, they started the kiss there in the room and Natasha started to lift Steve's shirt as he walked backwards to the bathroom.

Steve hit his back on the bathroom door and moved his lips away from Natasha's mouth so he could remove his shirt over his head. At that moment all the room lights were off.

Steve and Natasha paused and frowned, surprised at the suddenly electric power outage.

**N:** Steve, James is afraid of the dark. Did the energy went down throughout the base?

**S:** We'd better go out and check if the hallway is also out of power.

Steve walked to the door and tried to open the door, then he realized that the door was locked.

**S:** It's locked!

Steve frowned, confused.

**N:** What do you mean? Locked?

Natasha walked to the door and also tried to open it.

**N:** But if the bunker doesn’t have energy, how is that possible?

**S:** The doors work with solar energy, if the locking was triggered from the command center, they will remain locked.

**N:** Who would lock the doors like that?

**S:** And without any warning? This is unusual.

**N:** James must be terrified! We need to get out of here.

...

**J:** I want my mommy!
T: James, calm down! Don’t be a baby now!

F: What are we going to do?

T: I don’t know!

J: Mooooom! Mommy! Mommy”

James went to the door and called Natasha in a tearful voice.

Torunn covered James's mouth.

T: Hush, James! If they get us here, we'll be screwed.

F: We're screwed! Trapped and in the dark!

T: We can still try!

J: No!

F: Yes. No more pushing buttons!

T: But we'll stay here forever! I'll just press another, if it doesn’t work, we just wait for someone to come and rescue us. Right?

...  

James and Francis didn’t respond, but a few minutes later, Hill bumped into Tony Stark in the hallway.

Tony: Did you turn off the power?

H: Of course not! Did you lock the doors?

Tony: Of course not! Who's in the command center now?

H: No one, it's time for shift turn.

Tony: It was supposed to have people there!

H: I know! But the previous teams never waits the next team to arrive, it looks like they will starve to death if they wait five minutes.

Tony: Someone is there!

H: I tried to communicate with W.T., but it’s disabled.

Tony: Mine too.

- Climate change activated for Rigorous Winter Mode. Temperature decreasing to -59°C.

H: My God! Who would do that? We all gonna freeze!

Tony: Let's find out!
Hill and Tony managed to get to the command center a few minutes later, they tried to get in, but the door was locked.

Hill punched the door.

**H: Who's in there?**

James, Francis, and Torunn looked at each other in shock.

*Torunn: We are.*

**H: We? Who is we?**

*Torunn: Me, Torunn! Francis and James.*

Tony: The children?

**H: Open that door, right away!**

*F: We can’t.*

**H: What do you mean?**

*Torunn: We don’t know how.*

*J: We're stuck!*

*F: Help us, please!*

Hill and Tony looked at each other.

**Tony: Jesus Christ!**

Chapter End Notes

*These kids, tho!*
T: Listen, children... Don’t worry, we'll get you out of there.

H: Will we? I don’t know, shall we?

Tony looked at Hill, with disapproval for her not being demonstrating positive thinking for the kids to stay calm.

H: How are we going to do this? All the commands are inside this room, Tony.

T: We just need to think.

H: If the ammunition room is open, we could pick up a grenade and blow up a door.

T: And hurt the kids? Besides it wouldn’t work, this one is made of Vibranium.

H: What???

T: Yeah, for security reasons. It's the best metal we have.

H: Tony, honestly... God!

T: Look, we'd better find a way to guide them to unlock the doors.

H: Torunn is older and she is smart, if we guide her, she can press the right buttons.

T: Yes. You're right.

H: You're the one who build all this place, you’re the best to guide her.

Tony nodded.

T: Torunn?

Torunn: Yes?

T: We need you to do what we ask, okay?

Torunn: James is crying.

H: Is he? Great! He should! You all should cry.

T: James?

James didn’t answer.

T: James? Look, it's going to be all right. I am here.

F: He wants his mother!
T: Your mother is waiting for you, but she's probably locked in her dorm. But it's okay, I'm here and I'll get you out of there. Now, Torunn...

Tony talked to Torunn.

T: Do you know the big red chair?

Torunn: Yes.

T: Go to it and go up.

Torunn went to the chair and warned that she was on it.

T: What do you see?

Torunn: There's a sort of half-transparent table.

T: Table? And what else?

Torunn: Well, it's not a table, but now it looks like one, it was light up when we came in here first and now it's all black. It seems off.

Tony put his hand on his forehead.

T: You shut down the computer... Okay. Okay. No problem. Let's turn it on. You can see that in front of the computer, I mean the table as you said, there is an area underneath it. Get off the chair and get under there.

Torunn: Okay.

T: Do you see a small white switch?

Torunn: Yes.

Torunn didn’t hesitate, she pressed the switch.

Torunn: I pressed it, it made a beep.

T: Yes, the system will restart. Let's wait.

While waiting for the system to restart, Tony and Hill could hear people knocking on the doors, trying to get out and asking what's going on.

Hill put her hands in her arms to warm up.

H: It's getting too cold, Tony.

T: I know.

Tony checked his watch.

T: Three minutes to go.

F: I'm cold.
H: Really? Good!

T: Hill!

H: They shouldn’t have messed with anything! But leave it alone, because when they get out of there, they will...

T: No-thing. Nothing will happen.

Hill looked at Tony and he put the index finger on his mouth for Hill be quiet and stop threaten the children.

T: We don’t want make them scared, so they won’t even open the door.

...

S: Natasha, it's no use.

N: I can do it. It's just pretty well programmed, but every system has a flaw and I'll find it.

Steve stared at Natasha, who was crouched down and trying to shove a piece of metal in the doorway.

S: Tony remodeled all the doors, several times, in search of one that didn’t fail. And he had help.

N: My son is out there, Rogers. I won’t give up, don’t ask me to give up.

Sarah woke up and started to cry, she was shaking and when Steve caught her in his arms, he felt her skin was icy.

S: She's very cold.

N: Of course, it's very cold. There's something wrong going on outside. Wrap her on the duvet.

Steve obeyed and wrapped Sarah in the duvet.

N: Keep her close to your chest.

Sarah sneezed and her cheeks were already red.

N: That will make her warm.

Natasha concentrated on opening the door again.

...

- System restarted.

Torunn: Maria! Maria!

H: I heard that.

T: Okay, now, pay close attention...
Tony crossed his arms, then put his hand on his forehead and closed his eyes.

Hill looked at Tony, frowning.

**H:** So???

**T:** Sh...

**H:** Tony!

**T:** I'm trying to remember.

**H:** What?

**T:** Calm down, I already know. It's because there are many buttons.

**H:** I can’t believe it!

**T:** Torunn?

**Torunn:** It's too cold here!

**T:** I know, let's reverse this. Did you see those lights on the table again?

**Torunn:** Yes.

**T:** It has a big red square, full of buttons.

**Torunn:** Yes.

**T:** And next to that, an orange square... You will touch the third button in the second row.

**Torunn:** Okay.

Torunn pressed the button.

- *Decontaminating all environments.*

**H:** Tony!

**T:** Torunn? Did you pressed what I said?

**Torunn:** Yes!

Tony tapped his forehead and looked at Hill.

**Torunn:** You just didn’t say if it was to count the second row from bottom to top or from top to bottom.

**T:** You could have asked!

**Torunn:** You're the adult here!

Tony sighed.
T: Okay, okay. Do as I said, considering the second row from top to bottom. Torunn did.

- **Starting automatic mode at optimum ambient temperature.**

H: Finally! Now let's open that door.

T: Torunn now go to the end of the table, where there is another square of blue color.

*Torunn: There's no blue square.*

T: Of course there is.

*Torunn: I only see blue rectangle.*

T: **JESUS!!!**

Tony snapped.

*Torunn: You said square. I know the difference between square and rectangle!*

H: Tony, if you don’t open that door in 1 minute, I'm going to knock this door down with a bomb. At most they will lose some piece of their body.

T: I doubt if you can break into the room with a simple bomb.

*Torunn: Which button?*

T: The biggest of all of that blue rectangle. You will notice that it is not a push button, but to slide to the side.

*Torunn: Is this going to open the doors?*

T: Yes.

Tony looked at Hill.

T: It will even open up the bunker entrance gate.

Tony informed Maria Hill in a lower tone.

H: What??

T: It's the only way. Teaching her to open only the doors of the rooms would be more complicated and she could end up activating worse things. I just have to be quick. As soon as they open, I'll close the bunker gate immediately.

H: **Hurry up, Torunn!**

Torunn put her finger on the button and stared at it without sliding to the side, she seemed to have come to a conclusion now.

Francis: What are you waiting for? Do it!
Torunn looked at Francis.

_H: Come on!_

_T: Torunn?_

Torunn: Come here you two.

Torunn whispered to James and Francis, who approached the table.

_J: What are you doing?_

Torunn: If I open the door, we will be punished.

_F: We can’t stay here, we'll starve to death._

Torunn: They're going to put us at F Wing.

_F: F Wing? What is F Wing?_

Torunn: That's where they put the bad and mad people.

_J: But I'm a good boy._

Torunn: No, you're not. None of us are.

_J: Yes, I am._

_F: We're all bad because we did something bad._

_J: Torunn did it, not me._

_F: That's true. Me and James didn’t do anything. We just followed you._

Torunn frowned and looked at them both in disgust.

Torunn: Are you going to blame me?

_F: It's your fault!_

Torunn: If you say anything, I won’t be friends with you any more!

Francis and James stared at Torunn thoughtfully.

Francis shrugged.

_F: Okay._

Torunn gaped.

_Torunn: I hate you, Francis Barton!_

Torunn pointed a finger at Francis.

_Torunn: I'm 6 years old, they'll believe me and not you._
J: I don’t want Toto to be punished alone. We both follow her here because we wanted to.

F: I just got off my punishment. My father is going to fight with me again.

The three of them heard loud knocks on the door. It was Maria Hill slamming the door to get their attention.

H: Listen here, open it, right now! I swear I will...

Torunn: We're going to open it! With a condition!

H: Condition? You will see the condition when I get you.

F: Let's not open then!

T: What's happening? What do you want?

Torunn: We won't be punished when we leave here.

J: And we won't be locked at F Wing.

Tony frowned and looked at Hill.

H: The three of you!

Tony told Hill to be quiet.

T: We promise you won’t be grounded.

Tony nodded to Hill to say something.

H: Yeah... You won’t be punished...

Torunn: Do you swear with a little finger?

H: Yes.

Torunn: Okay.

...

S: She's getting hungry.

N: Uses the bottle.

S: She doesn’t want to, at this time she usually has dinner.

N: Wait ... I'm almost...

Steve sighed, Natasha wasn’t about to give up opening the door, though he assured her it would be impossible for her to do it, she was still crouching on the floor, trying to open it.

In a few seconds the door made a noise as if it were releasing a gas, unlocked and opened.

N: I GOT IT!!! I said I could do it!
Natasha celebrated, she got up and went down the hall, followed by Steve. But all the other doors had been opened too, and people were coming out of their rooms, complaining that they had been trapped and almost frozen.

S: Well, it looks like you've magically opened all the other doors too.

Steve said wryly, looking at Natasha, who frowned irritably.

N: Shut up. I need to find James.

The first thing Steve did was call Tony by W.T. to know if he has news of the children.

T: He was here with me, but they were taken by Hill.

S: Taken to where?

T: I don’t know exactly, but she went in the direction of the elevator.

S: Thank you.

Steve and Natasha ran up the elevator corridor and found Hill holding Francis, James, and Torunn by the ears while the three of them complained of pain.

T: Ouchh! We had a deal! I’m telling daddy!

H: That's my deal!

J: Mommy!

Natasha looked horrified at the children and then at Hill.

N: Hill!

H: Don’t you dare, Natasha!

S: Release him. Drop them all.

H: Your son and his friends, locked us out of the command center, almost froze us to death and still left us unprotected from the system for five minutes! Five minutes!

N: James?

James looked down.

N: He would never do that.

Hill released the three of them and looked at James.

James kept looking down.

N: Is that true, James Grant Romanoff Rogers?

J: Yeah.

Natasha gaped at him.
Laura Barton appeared in the hallway and hugged her son.

L: Are you okay, baby? I was so worried! What happened?

F: It was Torunn's fault!

Torunn opened her mouth, shocked by the accusation.

Francis pointed at her.

F: She told us to go there in the command center and she kept pressing the buttons! And James was crying!

Clint: And I suppose then that you are completely innocent in all of that?

H: I think they should all be hospitalized in F-Wing.

Clint, Laura, Steve and Natasha looked at Maria Hill.

H: They deserve it! Not for several days, but a few hours, at least...

Torunn: I'm sorry, Maria.

H: Don’t come with that excuse, no!

Natasha stared at James and only when everyone started arguing with each other about the F Wing, he dare to look in Natasha's eyes.

Natasha just shook her head a single time, indicating how disappointed she was with him. James lowered his head again.

H: Well, the children aren’t mine. If they were, that would never happen and if it happened, they would have the right punishment. But since I can’t do anything now, you guys decide what to do with them.

S: I don’t see Thor around here.

H: No one ever sees Thor when we need him. I'll take Torunn to her parents' dorm.

Hill just walked away. Torunn looked at James and Francis and she was upset with them, she followed Hill.

Clint and Laura also left with Francis to go to the refectory, because it was already dinner time.

Steve looked at James.

S: James, I asked you to stay in the central square. Why didn’t you obey?

James was still with his head down.

S: James? I made you a question.

N: Let's eat.
Natasha turned around and started to walk, Steve looked at her and then at James who was standing in the hallway.

S: Come on, James.

As James continued unmoving, Steve took his hand and led him into the refectory.

Natasha didn’t get in line, she took Sarah from Steve's lap and went to sit down.

S: Aren’t you going to eat?

N: I've lost my hunger.

S: But won’t you get James's food?

Natasha didn’t answer, she just moved to the table.

Steve was confused, but he prepared three plates and put them on the same tray. James held Steve's pants all the time in line and going to the table, too, like asking for his protection.

Steve handed Sarah's plate to Natasha to give her.

S: Here, James.

Steve put James's plate in front of him.

J: I don’t want to.

S: You have to eat.

J: Dad, I don’t want to.

James looked at Natasha, who was ignoring him completely. She kept giving Sarah food.

S: James, you can’t sleep on an empty stomach, you are no longer a baby, if you feel hungry at night, you will be hungry till the morning. Eat, please.

N: Stop insisting.

Steve looked at Natasha.

N: Look at her...

Natasha smiled and gave Sarah more food.

N: What a good girl! Well done, Sarah...

James looked at Natasha, being loving to Sarah more than the usual, clearly to hit him and hit him successfully, he just kept stirring the food without carrying anything in his mouth.

Steve sighed, worried about James and also worried to follow the punishment Natasha was applying to James, ignoring him, but Steve can’t be cold like that with his son.

S: Do you want Dad to give it to you?
James nodded.

Natasha looked sideways at Steve, reproving him, but Steve ignored her and fed James.

After dinner, Steve and Natasha went to Steve's dorm with the kids.

**J: Should I take a shower, mom?**

Natasha was still giving the silent treatment to James. She didn’t look at him, she sat on Steve's bed and picked up the Bunker’s Informative, to read some news that everyone already knew, but it came out in the publications anyway.

Steve put his hand on James's head.

**S: Yes, son. Go take a shower.**

James entered the bathroom and Steve put Sarah inside the crib and handed over the toy she had won over Christmas so she could be distracted.

Steve sat down next to Natasha and looked at her, wondering what better way to say she was getting too cold with James.

**N: I know what you're thinking and I won’t talk to him. Not today.**

Natasha didn’t take her eyes off the papers.

**S: I understand he did a naughty thing today.**

**N: They could have stayed there forever, they could have opened the bunker doors, they could...**

**S: Calm down, you know that there are no more threats around here, the Guardians went to scan the cities.**

**N: But you never know the risks and you understood what I meant.**

**S: Yes. I'm upset too, I asked him to not leave the square and he disobeyed.**

**N: He won’t go there anymore.**

**S: For a while... Right?**

Steve kept looking at Natasha, waiting for her to respond, but all she did was turn the page on the news.

**S: He looks sad.**

Natasha finally looked at Steve.

**N: I'm sad too, Steve. I don’t like to fight and be hard on him. It's hard for me too, but somebody has to fix it and you need to learn to be that way too. He has to respect us and follow the orders. Sarah will also grow up and you will have to know how to deal with her at one time or another, you will have to be firm with them.**

Steve looked at Sarah, who was lying down and biting down the toy, completely entertained by the
toy. Steve smiled.

*She's an angel. She would never give me any work.* Steve kept that in his head, not wanting to hear Natasha’s sermon.

Steve put his hand on Natasha’s back and slid down a little. Natasha straightened her posture and inclined her head a little. It was just a stroke to make her feel better.

**N:** Steve...

**S:** What?

**N:** The children.

**S:** What?

Steve raised his eyebrows in confusion.

**S:** I just touched your back.

**N:** But I’m... sensitive to touches.

Steve shifted his confused expression to one of satisfaction and in his smile, Natasha could detect a tone of naughtiness.

**S:** So, if I touch you here and here... This way...

Steve left his fingertips on Natasha’s back and slid up the middle of her back, making Natasha sigh and tilt her head back as his fingers reached the nape of her neck.

**N:** I'm serious. Stop it!

**S:** I don’t want to stop.

Steve smiled and touched the back of her neck, he hold on the back of her neck firmly and made her lay down on bed, he put his body over her and pressed his lips to her neck.

Natasha slapped Steve on the arm.

**N:** Stop! Steve!

**S:** I will stop if I get a kiss.

**N:** You won’t have a kiss now. Are you crazy?

**S:** Yes...

Steve brought his face to hers and looked at her closely as he smiled.

**N:** No...

**S:** Yes.

**N:** No.
S: Okay.

Steve released Natasha's body and threatened to get up from the bed.

Natasha grabbed his clothes and pulled him onto her again.

N: You're an idiot!

Steve smiled and Natasha pressed her lips to his.

Steve gave her a few kisses on Natasha's lips and let the last one be a lot longer, neither of them wanting to start a tongue kiss now, but to be with each other's breath, the face so close and the desire so strong they felt... that there was no way, the mouths began to stick again and their tongues found a way to meet.

Steve put his hand on Natasha's neck and turned her face to be in the best position so he could explore her mouth at his will. And yet, all he could feel from her tongue was still little, the more he caressed, the more he wanted to be inside her, he forced his body higher and he could run his tongue even deeper through Natasha's tongue.

J: Mom?

Natasha had to push Steve hard to detach him from her mouth.

Natasha looked at James and sat down, she ran her hand through her red neck and then on her face.

J: Why are you red? Are you feeling ill?

Natasha shook her head.

James is still in the silent treatment mode, so she won’t speak to him.

S: She's fine.

J: Why were you on top of her? Did you hurt my mom?

James looked annoyed. Steve raised his eyebrows and opened his mouth, trying to find an answer.

S: Hmmm... No, James, I wasn’t hurting your mom, we were... We were just...

Steve frowned and sighed.

S: I was...

N: We were kissing.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: Yeah...

Steve looked at James.

S: When you like someone very much, you kiss her.

J: I don’t want to.
S: You don’t want me to like your mother?

J: No. I don’t want you to kiss her that way.

S: Well... It's difficult, James. Because I like her very, very, very much. The truth is I love your mother.

Natasha looked at Steve and he looked at her briefly.

J: Do you love Uncle Bucky?

S: Y-yes...

J: Are you going to kiss him like that?

S: Hm...

Natasha had to turn her face to control her laughter.

S: It's different, James.

J: Why? Because he is a boy?

N: God! Pay attention to what you're going to answer, Steve.

S: It's different because the love I feel for your mother is not the same as I feel for Uncle Bucky. Bucky is my friend, like Uncle Tony, Uncle Clint... We can hug our friends to demonstrate that we like them.

J: But not kissing?

S: Hm... Is that... Like if I date your mother, I can’t kiss anyone else in the mouth, only her.

J: Oh!

James looked thoughtful.

J: Okay.

James went into the attached bedroom to get dressed, he was still wrapped in the towel.

N: Steve, you said you were going to take a shower...
Natasha put the pillow on Steve's lap and then he could feel what she was talking about.

**S:** Oh yes! It's true, it's very hot, I'll take a shower.

Steve went into the bathroom and locked the door.

...  

Later that night, Maria Hill was leaving the room, in a black tank top and boxer-type shorts, she walked up the stairs and started down the stairs, she was repeating this to exercise.

Between Wing C and D, she came across Bucky Barnes, she slowed down, then went back downstairs, intending to ignore Bucky.

**B:** Isn't it forbidden to be out of the dorm at this hour?

Bucky took Hill's arm, making her stop.

Hill rolled her eyes.

**H:** Looks like we're both committing an infraction here.

Bucky smiled.

**B:** Night exercises?

**H:** I can't sleep.

**B:** Can I join you?

Hill frowned.

**H:** I'm not going to the gym.

**B:** I know. You will be coming down and up the stairs of all the wings. And before you ask, yes, I've seen you doing it before, but you used to do it later in the night.

Hill frowned and then sighed.

**B:** Don't get me wrong, but...

**H:** Stop right there, Barnes. What do you want?

**B:** I want to be on good terms with you.

**H:** What do you mean?

**B:** You've been cold with me.

**H:** I'm cold with everyone. You don't have anything special for me to treat you differently. Where's the lovely Juliana?

**B:** Still jealous?
H: If you think this is jealous then you really don’t know anything about me.

B: I know you're a good person, who uses that scowl on your face all the time, just to hide how much you care about everyone in here. Perhaps more than anyone, you care much more about everybody.

Hill rolled her eyes again.

H: That doesn’t touch me, Barnes. I don’t need this cheap psychology, but if you really want some of my company, you better start getting warm...

Hill said as she started to go down the stairs again.

B: I'm already warm.

H: Then stop talking and start acting!

Bucky smiled and started down the stairs quickly beside Hill.

The two of them went downstairs, then up and down again, like four times.

H: Will you give up?

B: Never!

Bucky started up the stairs again, leaving Hill behind, she had stopped to catch her breath, she smiled and ran up the stairs again.

Bucky slowed down near Wing D, and Hill was slowing too.

B: Come on! Let's do it. We’re almost there.

Bucky encouraged Hill and continued to climb.

As they reached the stairway between Wing B and C, the two of them stopped and sat on the steps of the stairs.

Hill stretched out her legs and practically lay down on the stairs.

Bucky's head was down, dripping with sweat.

B: I could have a hamburger now.

H: With fries and a milkshake...

Hill bit her lip and closed her eyes.

B: With a lot of barbecue sauce and lots of salt on the fries

H: Oh my God!!! So much salt that when you touch the potato, the salt stays on the fingers and then you lick and taste the salt, the fries and even over all the oil that was used to fry it... Jesus! I miss junk food.

Hill opened her eyes and saw Bucky looking at her, laughing at her delirium with food.
H: What? Don’t say you don’t like it.
B: I love it.
H: I miss eating those bullshit.
B: Me too.
H: It's so rare to have meat here... Tony once made an expedition just to get meat. It was the best day of my life in here.

Hill laughed, remembering, and Bucky smiled.
B: I hope it doesn’t take too long for we have all of that again.

Hill sighed and fell silent, staring at the ceiling.
B: I wanted to apologize to you.
H: For what?
B: I don’t know, but I seem to owe it to you.
H: We're both grown, Bucky. I made a decision for you.
B: You didn’t know what I was going to decide.
H: I knew it wouldn’t be me.

Hill looked at Bucky and he was silent for a few seconds.
B: You're wrong.
H: No, I’m not. Even if you had decided for me, you would give up with time. One month at the most.
B: You don’t know that, Hill. You have no way of knowing something that I hadn’t even defined in me... Why do you do this to yourself?
H: I'm fine with the way I am.
B: I like Juliana.

Hill looked down the stairs.
B: But I liked her after liking you, I was totally into you. We could have been something.
H: It wasn’t to be me. She's a good girl, tho. Be kind when you have the first time with her, you fuck like a horse in heat.
B: I'll take it as a compliment.
H: And it is.
Bucky shook his head.

B: I can’t really touch her that way.

H: Why?

B: I don’t know. I was afraid to commit to her and have feelings for other people.

H: Me?

Hill began to laugh in a tone of debauchery.

B: I don’t want to disappoint her. I don’t want to be the first guy to break her heart.

H: I understand she's young. But everyone gets their hear broke at some point in life.

B: Yeah, but I don’t want to be the guy doing this to her.

Hill looked at Bucky again.

H: I'm pretty sure it's not me.

Hill sighed.

B: Or you don’t want it to be you.

H: No... Maybe we are very much alike, you and I. Too much alike. We're both fighters. We both do stuff at adrenaline, with the heat of the moment, I'm sure our sex is the best. You remember?

Bucky laughed and nodded.

B: How could I forget?

H: She is your opposite and they say opposites attract each other, but if you need a lover someday, tho...

Hill leaned into Bucky's body and pressed her lips to his lightly.

H: You know where to find me...

Hill smiled and got up.

H: Good night, Barnes.

B: Good night, Hill.
Hey, to the romanogers shippers reading this, I decided to translate another fanfic, it's called Memories. When I post, I'll share the link here.

Here's the synopsis:
"Natasha Romanoff and Steve Rogers are married and have two children: Sarah and James. They lived happily, until a serious accident changed the life of this family. Today, Steve waits anxiously and patiently for his wife to wake up from a coma. One year later, she wakes up, but she doesn't remember Steve or her children"
If you like some pain, you gonna love it!
Chapter 47

Chapter Notes

As I said about my new fanfic to be translated, it's already here. Here's the link: http://archiveofourown.org/works/10415496/chapters/23000352

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bucky remained sat on the stairs for a long time, he needed to think and reflect on what he feels. Not that he doubts who he really likes. He likes Juliana, he fell in love with her, by her way of being, by all the care she takes with him, but at the same time he is terrified of the idea of hurting her in some way and he knows that the day he refused to go to bed with her, he ended up doing it anyway.

Bucky wondered why he was doing this. Why does he take away the idea of going to bed with her? If she doesn’t make sex with him, at some point she will do with another guy, but who would be if he wants to be the only man in her life?

Bucky got up and started down the stair, he went to the door of Juliana's family dormitory, he knocked on the door and waited.

Minutes later, Juliana's uncle appeared at the door, his hair all gray it made him more like a grandfather than uncle. Juliana's aunt was pretty old too, but she seemed to be much younger than her husband.

- What's going on? Any emergency?

B: No, sir. I'm sorry for the hour, but I just need to talk to Juliana for a minute.

- Juliana? It is too late.

The old man frowned.

- JULIANA! Juliana! The Captain's friend wants to talk to you!

Juliana's aunt was near the door that connects with the adjoining room, she heard Bucky and jumped up from the bed and started to call her niece to come greet Bucky.

- It's very late, Violet. What does he have to talk to her?

- Whoa, old man! It must be important! He's an Avenger too, let her talk to him and do not interfere!

Juliana's aunt argued with her husband and shoved her husband into the room.

Juliana was already in her white nightgown, all the nightgowns were the same for the women of the bunker.

Juliana’s aunt approached her and pushed her out of the adjoining room and made her go to the main room.
Ju: Auntie, please, I need to get dressed!

- Stop being stupid, Juliana. You walk up and down looking like a downed soul, at least like that, you’re showing some skin. Hurry up, don’t let him waiting.

Bucky could hear what her aunt was saying to her. Juliana appeared at the door a few minutes later, her arms crossed, as if she could hide some part of her body like that.

Bucky watched as Juliana's cheekbones turned red as a tomato and she went back to the phase of not being able to look in his eyes, just to the floor.

Ju: You wanted to see me?

Bucky smiled discreetly and nodded.

Bucky held Juliana's arm and pulled her out of the door, he closed it, because he knew her aunt would try to listen to the conversation.

Ju: I can’t go out dressed like that.

B: Sh... Don’t worry. No one is hanging around here at this time.

Ju: You can’t know that.

B: I know. Other than that, I wouldn’t risk letting anyone see you dressed like that.

Juliana let out a muffled laugh and she was calmer to face Bucky now.

The two of them walked a little farther from the room.

Ju: What do you want?

B: Sorry for what I said the other day. I was trying to preserve you, for your own good, but it's your body and you decide what it’s best for you.

Ju: But if you don’t wish me, it's no use.

Bucky put his hands on Juliana's face, but more toward her hair, he laid his lips against hers and let his hands slide down a little, to be between the line of her chin and her neck.
Bucky pushed his mouth away and waited for her to open her eyes, and when she finally looked into his eyes, he spoke in a lower tone.

B: Don’t think that. It has nothing to do with desire. I want it more than you know.

Juliana looked into Bucky's eyes, but she looked away, which made Bucky lift her face closer to make her look at him again.

B: I want to be your first and only, but before that, I wonder if you'd like to be my girlfriend.

Juliana frowned a little, but the most silly smile in the world formed on her lips and there was nothing she could do to contain that smile. And she was trying so hard to not look so silly.

Juliana nodded and stretched her arms over Bucky's shoulders to hug him. Bucky hugged Juliana's waist and lifted her off the floor, giving her a peck on the lips.

B: Even I felt stupid in making that request. I don’t think people ask others to date like that anymore.

Ju: Why did you do it, then?

B: Because you deserve it. Should I ask permission from your uncle to date you?

Juliana shook her head.

Ju: Please don’t! Auntie will think you're asking me to marry you, or she'll end up begging you to ask this and I'd die of shame.

B: So we'll hide it?

Ju: If you don’t mind... At least for now.

B: All right.
Ju: But about that thing... I can’t do it today, I mean, it's late and my uncle...

B: Oh no, no, don’t worry, I just wanted to see you. We have time.

Juliana smiled.

Ju: I need to get back.

B: Right. Good night.

Ju: Night.

Ju gave Bucky a quick kiss and ran back to her dorm.

As soon as Juliana closed the door, her aunt was watching her.

- You were kissing.

Ju: What?

- I saw it, and your mouth is red. It's finally happening! Oh my dear, you will be so happy! An Avenger!

Juliana's aunt took her hands and Juliana looked at her in amazement and fear.

Ju: It was just a kiss, auntie.

- But it was the first of many, I hope! It’s just the beginning! My niece with an Avenger! Now we all will have some luck!

Ju: Auntie, what are you talking about? We won’t have any perks for it. Bucky lives on the same terms as all of us.

- That’s what you think! You’re so fool and naive, you don’t know nothing about life, but you will know. We'll all be fine now!

Ju: I don’t like it when you talk like that, auntie. I feel bad.

- Don’t feel, my dear.

Juliana's aunt kissed her hands and then Juliana's forehead, she guided her to the adjoining room and made her lie down.

- Rest, my dear. You're a lucky girl.

Juliana's aunt switched off the light and went back to the main room.

Juliana sighed and was wondering what kind of trouble her aunt might put her in, now that she knows she's lovingly involved with Bucky Barnes.

...

A week later, the children were gathered in the bunker school...

Francis and James became the inseparable duo of the children in the school, and the two became the
leader of the children, and Francis was still very upset with Torunn, and excluded her from all play and he asked no one else to talk to her ever again.

Torunn is very proud, and at the beginning, she pretended not to care, she went to sit alone in class, she played alone and eat alone, too. And since she had no kids to play with, she was closer to the teacher Pepper Potts and also Maria Hill when she’s not in the school, even though Maria didn’t pay any attention to her.

Torunn thought that three days was enough for Francis and James to regret turning against her and becoming friends with her again.

Torunn approached them sneakily.

**T:** Hi James! Hi Francis!

**F:** Don’t talk to her, James.

James looked at Francis and then at Torunn.

**T:** You don’t own him.

**F:** Not even you.

Torunn frowned.

**T:** But I want to talk to you.

**F:** And we don’t want to talk to you and we don’t like you anymore.

**T:** Please, I want to show you something.

**F:** But we don’t want to see, do we, James?

James didn’t answer.

Torunn frowned, feeling angry.

**T:** James, he's not even your friend more than me. Remember?

**F:** No, he likes me more than he likes you. Right, James?

Torunn looked at James, waiting for him to respond, but James didn’t want to be excluded by Francis too, and at the same time, he felt bad for Torunn. James decided to be quiet.
F: See? He loves me more!

Francis smiled with sarcasm.

Torunn snorted.

T: I will tell the teacher!

Francis kept shrugging as James watched Torunn run to Pepper.

T: Auntie Pepper!

Pepper was helping another child write in the notebook when Torunn approached, speaking in a tearful voice.

T: He said he loves Francis more...

Torunn was already bursting into tears now.

Pepper turned to her and laid a hand on her back.

Pepper: Who, my love?

T: J-James.

Torunn sobbed from crying.

T: That really hurt.

Pepper: Oh my little angel, that hurts, I know.

T: I'm very sad.

Pepper: Don’t be sad.

T: It was… It was really sad words...

Pepper continued stroking Torunn’s back to comfort her.

T: They hurt me and all I wanted to do is to play with them.

Pepper: Did you tell them you wanted to play with them?

T: Yes, but they didn’t let me!

James approached and stared at Torunn, he is not used to seeing her cry.

Pepper looked at James.

P: James, Toto is very upset right now. You know why?

James scratched his head and then approached Torunn.

J: What did you want to show me? Do you want to show me now?

James held out his hand to Torunn, she was still crying, but she nodded and held it in James's hand.
The two walked away and Pepper smiled, shaking her head.

**J:** So, what is it?

Torunn stopped in front of a pile of toys, she stood staring at the toys and then she cried wildly again.

**J:** What?

**T:** You don’t like me anymore.

**J:** I like you.

**T:** You don’t like it, you said...

**J:** Francis said. I like you, you are my friend.

Torunn ran her hand over her face, wiping away the tears.

**J:** Can I give you a kiss?

Torunn frowned and looked at James.

**T:** What?

**J:** Because I like you and my father said that we kiss who we like.

Torunn kept her brow furrowed and she didn’t say yes or no, but James stood on tiptoe and kissed her cheek.

**F:** EWWWW! You kissed a girl! I'll tell everyone!

Francis was spying on the two of them and ran off, shouting "James kissed Torunn" over and over again.

Torunn and James looked at Francis, then Torunn looked at James and gave a small smile.

**T:** Don’t mind him. I like you too.

Torunn kissed James's cheek.

The bell started to ring, announcing the end of the activities in the school, James and Torunn went near the door and were lined up with the other kids.

Francis was the third in line, James the fourth, and Torunn the fifth.

Francis was still humming that James kissed Torunn and as Thor was at the door to pick up his daughter, he listened and his smile changed to a serious and angry expression.

**Thor:** What's it about?

Thor walked over to James.

James and Torunn looked up to see Thor, he is very tall.

**Thor:** Why are you holding her hand? Did you kiss my daughter, James, the eldest of Steve
Rogers?

S: James! Let's go.

James looked at his father and he couldn’t move.

Thor looked at Steve.

Thor: Your son kissed my daughter!

S: What?

Steve looked at James, who released Torunn's hand.

S: James!

J: You said when you like is to kiss.

Pepper: It was a kiss on the cheek, guys, I was here. It's normal at this age.

Thor: There's nothing normal! No kissing! NOW, you have to get married!

Torunn: I want to marry James!

Thor: She wants to! It's decided!

Thor smiled and hit Steve's back, already relieved.

S: Thor, they're just kids. Come on, James.

Steve took James's hand and led him outside.

Thor took Torunn in his lap and continued to stare at James to threaten him. Thor kept whispering, "You're getting married."

...

Tony: Well, well, look who's here.

Natasha was at the door of the bunker nursery and turned to look at Tony.

N: I came to get Sarah.

T: I noticed.

N: How are the twins?

T: They're great when they're sleeping.

The door opened and Tony saw the twins asleep in the nursery cradle.

Sarah was sitting on the carpet, her back to the door, totally distracted by the toys.

N: Sarah!

Sarah smiled just at the sound of Natasha's voice, she turned to confirm if it was her and she smiled
even more when she was sure.

Sarah: Mama! Mama!

T: Mama?

Natasha was smiling at Sarah, but she frowned when Tony questioned how Sarah called her.

N: She heard James call me that, now she keeps repeating. I'm waiting for her to grow up to make her understand that I'm not her mother.

T: But you're being her mother, you sleep with her father, you're her brother's mother... I don't see a problem with that.

N: It's complicated, Tony.

Natasha looked back at Sarah.

N: Let's see Daddy?

Sarah: Dada.

N: Yes. Come on...

Sarah put her hands on the floor and forced herself to stand, she took two steps without holding anything and fell.

Laura: She's done it all day.

N: I know, she's learning fast. James helps.

Laura reached for Sarah and she was able to walk better holding her hand.

Natasha took Sarah in her lap and looked at Tony.

N: Do you need help with the twins?

T: Nope.

N: How are you going to carry two babies?

A daycare assistant brought one of the twins to Tony and Laura picked up the other.

Natasha was even surprised, because Tony really managed to hold the two babies and seemed well acquainted with it.

T: See? I'm an expert. I was born for this.

Tony winked, smiling.

Natasha shook her head.

N: They're really cute.

T: Of course they totally looks like m...
Like Pepper.

Oh yeah, they seen too much with Pepper.

Tony frowned.

I need to go already, it's time for terror. I mean shower! I need Pepper. I need your mama, boys... Let's call her. MOMMY PEPPEEEEER!

Tony screamed and could still make the babies laugh. Tony went to school door to meet Pepper.

Around dinner time, as the line began to form in the refectory, an emergency alarm sounded throughout the bunker.

Natasha was standing next to Steve in line, talking to Logan and Tony Stark.

Everyone looked at Tony, because his W.T. was the one that rang first.

Tony, Hill.

They're back.

Who?

The Guardians?

Who else? Thanos?

Don't even joke with that.

We are on the way there, but you can initiate their access protocol.

I'm already taking care of it. I need everyone to go to the meeting room. We will receive the information first and analyze what will be passed on to citizens in general.

Understood.

Tony ended the call and then he warned the people in there that everything was fine, that it was only the Guardians returning from the mission.

I'll warn Professor Xavier.

I'm already aware, Logan. I'm on my way to the meeting room. I'll meet you there.

The teacher communicated with Logan through telepathy.

Never mind, I'm going with you.

We will receive the Guardians and meet there.

Steve, the kids.

Bucky and Juliana are coming over there.
B: Hello.

Natasha looked at Juliana and Bucky, now the two of them hang around all the time together.

N: So it's official...

S: What is official?

B: That alarm... What happened?

S: The Guardians came back, we need you in the meeting room.

B: Me?

S: Yes. You’re a leader too.

B: I'm not.

S: Yes, you are.

B: I've never been named like that.

S: Well, it's being now.

B: You're very generous, Steve, but...

S: Please, Bucky. Don’t argue anymore, you have taken that position since the day you took the initiative to get rid of this confinement. You deserved it.

Tony rolled his eyes.

T: Now you can kiss the groom.

Steve looked at Tony reproachfully.

Natasha looked at Juliana.

N: Juliana, would you mind...

Ju: Of course not!

Juliana smiled and looked at Sarah.

Ju: I heard you learned to walk now. Do you want to show me?

Natasha put Sarah on the floor and Juliana hold her a hand.

Ju: Let's help her, James? Why don’t you hold her other hand?

James was not in the mood, but he wasn’t going to complain now, he took Sarah’s hand, while Natasha took the chance to get away with Steve and the others.

...

In the meeting room, after they were all together, Peter Quill reported everything about the mission.
S: So you found survivors, completely healthy out there?

PQ: Yes. We rescued them and put them in safety, before going out to explode the cities.

S: Where are they? They wouldn’t fit on your ship.

PQ: No. After we left the environments safe, we helped them set up camps to survive until we got help.

S: That's great!

Steve was very happy to know that even though they exploded everything, they still managed to save some people.

B: Do you have any idea of how many people are out there under these conditions?

Rocket: A lot!

PQ: Let's say about 80 to 100 people per city, not more than that.

N: It's more than expected.

PQ: We found most of them in poor health. We did the best we could.

S: I'm sure you did.

PQ: That king you talked about...

S: T'Challa?

PQ: Yes. That's it! When we arrived in Africa, he helped us. Not just putting an army at our disposal, but like himself, he fought as well.

Logan: Did you see a white-haired woman over there?

PQ: OOOOH! The one who flies and throws lightning bolts? Yes! She is very cool! She’s the queen there.

Logan: Was she all right?

PQ: She was okay and worried about her son.

Logan: Son?

PQ: Didn’t you know? What was the name of the baby? Aladdin? Something with A?

Gamora: Azari!

Gamora rolled her eyes impatiently.

H: Mr. Quill, so you consider the mission a success?

PQ: Yes. We've completed the goal, it's safe outside, we can go out and do a picnic with the sunlight.
T: Oh! Not so fast!

Logan: You want us all to be trapped here forever!

Logan groaned and put his claws out.

T: It’s not that. We just need to be sure that the threat is really over.

Drax: Is not our word enough?

S: You need to understand that we have already suffered too many losses. We'll just do a more thorough search to make sure it's okay. After all, we have children and elderly around here.

H: It’s not only that. We’ve been isolated, confined and frightened in this place for years. The citizens need a slower approach to get used to the idea of living out there again.

N: Hill's right, there's a whole psychological issue involved in the process.

Rocket: My father in heaven! They all think too much!

Rocket tapped his forehead and slid to his face, indicating impatience.

S: But we'll start that right away.

CX: Jean and I can help talking to the citizens.

H: I have agents trained for psychological approaches as well. That will speed up the process.

B: Great! So Hill can check with Tony for a room available to set up a clinic dedicated only for that matter. Everyone must do this therapy, without exception. Those young mutants who didn’t go to war, can set up a calendar and schedule the care of each citizen, so each one gets an assignment, without feeling excluded.

Steve frowned at Bucky while everyone paid attention to his instructions.

Bucky looked at Steve.

B: I… I'm sorry. I was excited and started talking in your place...

Steve smiled and shook his head.

S: You did it right, it was great.

Natasha smiled discreetly.

H: Okay, and I'd like to have my agents to do that scan outside.

B: Only SHIELD?

Hill nodded.

B: It's too risky. You can lose all your agents.
H: I won’t lose any agent. They are trained.

B: How can you be so sure?

H: Because I trained them myself.

Hill looked at Steve.

H: I'll go with them.

Steve nodded.

S: You can also provide more supplies for survivors from abroad.

Gamora approached Peter Quill and brought her lips to his ear, she whispered something to him and Natasha watched them.

N: What is it?

PQ: That's it!!

Everyone looked at Peter Quill.

PQ: I forgot to tell you that one of the survivors we brought with us.

S: Who?

T: If you brought, where is the person?

PQ: We left her on our ship, since you all freak out with new people.

Drax: And we had to arrest her too.

N: She?

H: Is it a woman?

PQ: Yes.

Drax: She’s more like a living weapon.

Gamora: We don’t know her name. She is strong.

PQ: Like really, really strong!

Drax: She attacked us and almost killed Groot.

Groot: I am Groot.

N: We better check this out, Steve.

S: Yes. Take us to her.
I think Thor is going to marry James with Torunn anyway lol
BTW: Can you guess who is the woman the guardians brought with them?
Steve and Natasha followed Peter and Gamora, who led them to their ship, and as soon as they entered the ship, Peter and Gamora frowned.

**S**: So, where did you put her?

**G**: There.

**PQ**: Yeah right there.

Steve glanced over to where Gamora had pointed and saw a compartment with steel bars and moorings, but there was no one inside and the steel bars were contorted.

Peter put a hand on his gun.

**PQ**: Guys, it was for her to be in there. Stay alert.

**G**: Maybe she ran away from the ship.

**N**: There is no sign of break-in on the ship's access.

**PQ**: She's here, somewhere.

Gamora stared around, trying to identify where the woman might be.

Natasha didn’t pick up her gun, but she was alert to take it out, in case the mysterious woman showed up.

Steve put his shield in front of his body and took a few more steps, moving away from the others.

Steve took only three more steps and heard a noise of something coming from near the walls of the pilothouse, he approached slowly and when he reached the pilot's seat, he raised his eyebrows, surprised to see a blonde woman, completely naked, looking at him as if he was her predator.

**S**: Hi. I'm...

Steve didn’t finish the sentence, because Gamora rushed up over the woman, which made the woman attack Steve at the same time, she punched Steve's shield so hard that it made him fly back and stop at the other wall, kneading the ship.

**S**: Gamora!

Gamora went into a corporal fight with her, but she just dodged. She has fought her before and knows that her punches have no effect on her, she is very strong, so she would use the same strategy she used to capture her for the first time, try to make her exhausted.

**PQ**: Why is she naked again??

Peter pointed the gun at the woman.
PQ: HEY! I don’t want to shoot you! We need you!

The woman didn’t listen, she fought ferociously with Gamora, until she was able to dominate her and grab her neck.

The woman lifted Gamora's body, making her feet move off the floor. Gamora struggled and grabbed the woman's wrists to try to free herself.

Peter started to shoot the woman right now.

Steve raised his shield to protect himself and at the same time he stood up to try to save the woman from the shots, but as soon as he looked at her, he realized that she was intact.

PQ: Great! Now my weapons have no effect on her! It was the only thing that helped the other time. Hang in there, Gams! I'm going to get a bomb or something.

Peter started scanning the bookshelf.

N: No.

Natasha said, looking very calm as she looked at the woman.

PQ: What?

Natasha finally picked up her weapons, she walked to the woman calmly.

As soon as she noticed Natasha approaching, the woman growled at her.

Natasha raised her hands in the air, still holding the weapons, showing surrender, and then she placed the guns at the woman's feet.

S: Natasha!

Natasha had gotten too close and Steve was afraid for her.

N: Alright...

Natasha kept eye contact with the woman and then took out her utility belt and all the other guns and knives she'd hidden through her body and placed them one by one on the floor.

It distracted the woman, who tried to understand what she was doing, she loosened her hand around Gamora’s neck.

Steve understood what Natasha was doing and helped her, putting the shield on the floor and asking for calm with the hands.

S: Hi... As I was saying, I'm Steve Rogers. People call me Captain America. Who are you?

PQ: She doesn’t talk. We tried.

- Car-Caro...

The woman had difficulty speaking her own name, but she was trying. She had the appearance of an ordinary person, but she was under stress, or maybe she had some kind of mental problem. They still hadn’t been able to identify what was happening.
N: Caroline?
- Ca... Ro... Carol.

N: Carol? Only Carol?

The woman nodded.

S: Carol? Can you drop her? She won’t hurt you. I guarantee that. Her name is Gamora. I'm Steve, she is... Natasha, and that man over there is Peter Quill. We are not your enemies. I'm sorry they have to lock you.

PQ: We arrest her otherwise she would kill us all.

S: I know. See, Carol? It was all a big mistake. I imagine you were scared, afraid they were those alien creatures. But they’re not.

N: Actually, they're aliens.

Natasha said quietly to herself.

S: We fight a lot against them. You fought them too, right?

Carol finally released Gamora, who fell on her knees and began to cough.

Carol nodded, still standing defensively.

Peter handed Natasha a blanket.

N: Steve?

Steve looked at Natasha and at the blanket she was holding out to him. Steve picked up the blanket and approached Carol, who stepped back.

S: Calm down. I will not hurt you. OK?

Steve took a few more steps again and Carol stared at Steve sideways, very suspicious. Steve put the blanket over her shoulders to cover her up.

S: See? We don’t want to hurt you. We want to help. Are you hungry?

Carol nodded.

Steve looked at Natasha and she nodded, she left the ship and went to get food.

When Natasha returned, Steve was seated next to Carol, looking at a numbered tattoo on her arm.
N: Did she say anything?

PQ: Nothing that matters.

S: These numbers look like the ones we use in the army to identify a military man.

Natasha set the tray on Carol's legs and she began to eat desperately.

Natasha waited for her to finish eating, to get a picture of the tattoo.

S: Ask Peter to investigate this image, if she is a military, we will have record of that.

N: Do you think she's mutant?

Steve frowned and was confused, he didn’t even consider that possibility, but as Carol has an unusual strength, it is likely to be.

S: I don’t know.

PQ: Is there anyone who can tell if she is or not?

N: Yes. Professor Xavier.

S: You can ask him, after you deliver the research material to Parker.

Natasha nodded, went back to the bunker, and headed straight to the command center.

N: Parker!

Peter Parker: Hi, Ms. Romanoff or should I call you Mrs. Rogers? Or Black Widow? Ms. Natasha? I never know, anyway, never mind...

N: I'm not married. Parker, I need you to look at this photo and find out where this tattoo came from, what it represents.

PP: Is this from the person the Guardians brought?

Natasha nodded.

N: We need to identify where she came from and what they did to her.

PP: Did you find out her name?

N: Yes. It's Carol. That's all we know for now. Steve is trying to get more information, but she can barely speak. And from what the Guardians said about how they found her, I believe she was tortured, or something similar.

PP: Any idea where I should look for information about her?

N: Steve believes that this numbering refers to military identification, so start from there. Let me know about any news.

PP: You got it.
Natasha went after Professor Xavier, she found him in a room, talking to a group of younger mutants. Natasha felt she interrupted the story time, everyone was seated, listening intently to Professor.

The Professor asked the students to go out and gestured for Natasha to approach.

**N:** You must know why I'm here.

**CX:** Yes. And my answer is maybe.

**N:** Maybe?

**CX:** Yes. She doesn’t have the X gene, as we mutants have.

**N:** So she is not.

**CX:** Yes, she is. But not like us. She suffered a mutation, just wasn’t the same as we with the gene X suffered.

**N:** You mean someone did that to her?

The professor nodded.

**N:** Can you find out who?

**CX:** Maybe, I need to see her.

**N:** I'll take you to her.

...

A few days later, Carol had managed to stabilize, she was calmer and talking normally, but as a precaution, they found it better to keep her out of the bunker, even the tests indicating she was free of any illness.

They also discovered that Carol is named Carol Susan Danvers, that she had an excellent military career and was recruited by NASA to act on scientific expeditions.

**Peter Parker:** That's all I could find about her. It's very strange the information stops here.

**N:** That's because it's NASA. They are very secretive about their actions. Even SHELD can’t get information from them that easy. If she came from NASA, it means they also have a bunker somewhere and they are trying to create "guns" for this war against Thanos.

**S:** Really?

**N:** I'm assuming yes.

**S:** Carol doesn’t remember much, she gets confused when I try to make her talk where she came from.

**N:** The most important thing is that we have her on our side and she can really help us in this war.
Steve nodded.

...  

The next morning, Natasha was in Steve's dorm, she spends much more days there than in her dorm.

N: James, we're late! Let's go.

J: I'm coming, Mom.

Natasha reached for him, who was coming out of the bathroom.

James held onto Natasha's hand and she walked with him to the door.

Steve had left earlier with Sarah and he left her with Laura on the nursery, he has been working with psychologists to integrate Carol with the rest of the citizens, so every morning he spends two hours talking and explaining about how they live, about the rules, about the Pyrons' war, and so on.

Natasha opened the dorm's door and ran into Bucky Barnes carrying a large cardboard box.

Natasha recognized the box because she received one when she arrived in the bunker. Inside the box has standardized clothing, bedding and bath set, and basic toiletries items.

N: Wow. Are you moving in with Juliana? You are fast.

Bucky smiled and shook his head.

B: No, that's not for me.

Natasha heard the sound of something falling on the floor in the hallway, a little further away from where she was and when she looked in the direction of the noise, she saw Sharon Carter picking up a lot of cleaning items from the floor.

The box Sharon carried was smaller, but the box couldn’t stand the weight of the products, so the box opened and everything fell on the floor.

Bucky stopped immediately and ran to her.

B: Are you okay?

Sharon: Yes, yes. Thanks. What a disaster I made here.

B: It wasn’t your fault, those boxes suck.

Natasha stood watching Sharon and she was trying to figure out why she's out of F Wing. It's alright she's with Bucky and is allowed to walk around with him, but what about these change boxes?

Bucky helped Sharon collect the fallen products.

Sharon: Oh, this one leaked. I'll have to clean it.

B: No, no. Leave it to me, let's put this in your room and then I'll come back to clean it. Don’t worry.

Sharon: I can clean it, Bucky.
B: I know.

Sharon: Then let me do this. I need to feel normal.

B: Of course. I’m sorry.

Sharon: It's okay, you don’t have to apologize.

Sharon gave a small smile and sighed.

Sharon: But you're right, first let's unload things in the dorm.

Sharon and Bucky came walking toward Natasha.

Sharon looked at Natasha and stopped in front of her.

Sharon: Hi.

N: Hi...

Natasha frowned.

Sharon glanced at the door to Steve's room, then glanced at James.

Sharon: You've grown, James and you look very handsome now.

James didn’t say anything, he doesn’t remember her right, he just knows that hangs around sometimes with Uncle Bucky.

N: He... He just doesn’t remember you. Children are like that.

Sharon: Oh it’s alright.

Sharon smiled.

Sharon: I figured he wouldn’t remember but I remember the time I took care of him while you were away...

Sharon sighed and smiled once more.

Sharon: I need to go now.

Natasha nodded, but her forehead was still frowned.

Bucky was anxious to watch them together, but he was relieved to see that Sharon was totally under control.

Sharon walked and entered a room that was two doors away from Steve's.

Bucky looked at Natasha and watched her expression of surprise.

B: I thought you knew.

Natasha looked at Bucky.

N: Is she moving here?
B: Yes.

N: Did Steve knows that?

B: Yes. She's under control. She no longer need any medication. She's Sharon again. You don’t have to worry.

N: But why here? She should be close to you, you are her keeper.

B: Well, yes. But there were no more vacancies in my wing, some of them are also in construction. She was going to the collective dormitory, but the psychiatrist said it wasn’t indicated now. So...

N: So Steve intervened and arranged this room for her, right?

Bucky was afraid to confirm, but he knew Natasha would find out the truth at one time or another, he nodded.

N: Really? Okay and he forgot to tell me about that.

B: Natasha?

N: I need to go now.

B: Nat?

N: James is late.

Natasha walked with James toward the bunker school.

Natasha opened the door quietly and had James enter through the half-open door, to be as discreet as possible.

N: Okay, James. Go.

Natasha walked away, but the door was open wide.

Pepper: Good morning, James! Good morning, Natasha.

N: Good morning. I was going to knock on the door, but...

P: He's late.

N: I know. I'm so sorry. He was feeling sick this morning...

P: Did he go to the infirmary to be evaluated?

N: No, no. He didn’t need any of that, it was just a pain in the belly. But he is fine.

Natasha lied. James was late because Natasha continued to sleep even after Steve woke her up, saying it was time for James to go to school and work for her.

Steve still insisted enough to wake Natasha and before he left with Sarah, he asked if she would really take James or if he should take him to school. Natasha sat on the bed and said she was already
up and going, but as soon as Steve walked out the door, she lay down again and dozed more than she should.

Emphasizing that Steve is to blame for Natasha's fatigue, and you probably know why.

**P:** Oh, okay, I'll watch him and tell you if he feels something again.

**N:** Thank you.

Natasha went to the public service stations, which were set up and organized by the mutants. The public service stations are for the citizens to have appointments to talk about living outside the bunker again.

**N:** How are we doing?

**Kitty:** Everything is fine

**N:** Everyone is accepting the idea of getting out of the bunker that easy?

**Kitty:** I meant that nobody fought or struggle, but there are those who are pessimistic and believe that we will be more protected here.

**N:** I get it. You guys are doing a good job, guys.

Natasha said, leaning against Kitty's back, congratulating her, and walked away.

**K:** Natasha?

**N:** Yes?

**K:** Don’t you want to make your appointment now? There are times available.

Natasha frowned, confused.

**K:** You are one of the few inhabitants who haven't yet come to inquire.

Natasha kept her brow furrowed, looking at Kitty, thinking of some excuse. In fact, she felt that she wouldn’t have to go through the appointments, since she had been out of the bunker several times and had no problem with that change.

**K:** You know Bucky said there would be no exceptions for anyone. I'm sorry.

**N:** Okay... All right. I'll do it now.

Kitty smiled and handed Natasha a clipboard.
K: I need to get your digital, press your finger here and here.

Natasha followed Kitty's instructions and then went to the consulting booth.

When Natasha finished her appointment, Steve called her W.T.

S: Hey. Let's have lunch with the kids today? I've been thinking, I really want to bring James and Sarah out here. No more risk, right? I think this would help the people feel safer if we set an example. I can’t wait to see the reaction of the two out here.

Steve commented all this excitedly as he walked back into the bunker.

N: I'm not hungry.

Natasha replied dryly.

S: Aren’t you hungry? Okay... But what do you think?

N: About what?

S: To bring the kids out there.

N: I don’t know.

S: You don’t know?

Steve frowned.

S: Are you okay?

N: Yes.

S: Are you sure? You sound... different. Are you upset about something?

N: No.

S: Is that what you're going to say?

Natasha just sighed hard to show her impatience, she ended the call.

Steve was already walking towards his dorm to take a shower, but he thought it was better to go look for Natasha, to find out what he did this time.

As he reached his dorm corridor, a door opened and Steve didn’t even look back, he went straight to try to talk to Natasha.

- Hey!

Steve heard someone calling him, he just looked back, but kept walking.

Steve stopped to see who was calling, he turned and stood in the hallway.

Sharon: Hi.

S: Hi...
Sharon: Looks like we'll be neighbors again.

S: Yeah...

Steve gave a small smile.

Sharon: Looks like I've seen this story happen before. What do they call it? Déjà vu?

Sharon smiled.

S: I think so.

Sharon: Can I talk to you for a minute?

S: Hm...

Steve opened his mouth to respond and he was hesitant. He needs to talk to Natasha and now that he’s seen Sharon, he reminded that he didn’t tell Natasha anything about Sharon moving to being so close to him.

Steve intended to tell Natasha, but every time he could talk about it, he felt it wasn’t the right time, anyway every time they were alone, it was to make love and he didn’t want to talk about that in the presence of the children, so he delayed until he forgot to say.

S: Sure.

Can I talk to you for a minute?

Steve agreed because he also doesn’t want to be rude or unkind to Sharon, he will always feel indebted to her over their engagement and daughter.

Chapter End Notes

I think everybody guessed right about Carol Danvers
Chapter 49

Sharon: Do you mind coming in here? It would be weird to talk in the hall.

S: Oh sure. I’m so sorry. Excuse me.

Steve entered the room.

Sharon: Sit down, please.

Sharon pointed to the chair, after Steve came in. Sharon closed the door.

S: Are you okay? How's the change? You need something?

Sharon: Steve.

Steve looked at Sharon and she continued to indicate the chair.

Sharon: Please don’t be like this with me. We know each other better than that. Sit down.

Steve nodded, he sighed and walked over to the chair to sit down.

Steve sat down and felt odd to be in the presence of a normal Sharon. A Sharon that he fell in love once in the past and was going to have a lifetime with her. It was very weird and tense to be with her now.

Steve scratched his forehead lightly.

Sharon: How are you?

Sharon decided to break Steve's nervousness with a simple question.

Steve looked at her and nodded.

S: Fine... I'm fine. What about you?

Sharon: I'm better now. Living in society.
Sharon walked over to the bed and sat on the mattress, she had to sit on her side so she could have eye contact with Steve.

Sharon sighed and looked at her knees for a few seconds, until she faced Steve again.

**Sharon:** What about your son? I saw him earlier today, he grew so much.

**S:** He's fine, he's great, actually.

**Sharon:** He's looking a lot like you. He is going to be a handsome man.

**S:** Do you think that?

Steve smiled and Sharon smiled back, nodding.

**S:** Nat always says that, but I don’t think he looks that much with me.

Steve lowered his head and made negative with his head.

**S:** I'm sorry.

**Sharon:** For what?

**S:** I... I mentioned Natasha.

Sharon shrugged.

**Sharon:** It's all right, Steve.

Steve looked at Sharon and she nodded again.

**Sharon:** She's his mother, I understand. What about the little girl?

**S:** Sarah? She is amazing, she is learning everything very fast, she is already saying some words, she is learning to walk too, you must to see.

**Sharon:** I certainly hope to see that.

Sharon said excitedly.

**Sharon:** I was thinking about her...

Steve watched Sharon, waiting for her to finish.

**Sharon:** She's a blessing, right? I really like her.

**S:** Yes, she is.

**Sharon:** She found you, when she could have been dead if she had stayed outside. Sometimes I think it was a gift from God to you. For us.

Steve was smiling and nodding until he heard the "For us."

**Sharon:** I don’t want to sound crazy.
S: You're not, don’t worry.

Sharon: It's just that we lost a girl and then you won a girl...

Sharon gave a short laugh.

Sharon: Isn’t that strange?

S: You're right, it seems like a gift from God.

Sharon: Yeah... Steve, I want to be a part of her life.

Steve took a deep breath, feeling apprehensive.

S: Sharon... I... Look, I would be happy with that.

Steve said strangely.

Sharon: I know what I did to her in the past, but I didn’t hurt her, I would never hurt her. I wanted her as a daughter.

S: I heard about it.

Sharon: I know it's hard to trust me now.

S: I trust you, Sharon.

Sharon: I wish we could form a family. The three of us.

S: Sharon, I...

Sharon: I know, that's not what I meant, for you to stay with me and her, it just came out that way.

S: It’s not only that, Sharon, but Sarah sees Natasha as a mother, they spend a lot of time together. Sarah has more than one year old now and she’s been with Natasha all that time...

Sharon: I'm not stupid, Steve.

S: I didn’t mean you were.

Sharon: I wanted to be her mother, but I know it's too late for that. I know that Natasha is already occupying that position. I just wanted to spend more time with her once in a while.

S: I don’t see any problem in that.

Sharon: But do you think she'll see?

S: Natasha? No. She doesn’t care.

Sharon: But maybe she cares about my second request to you.

S: What is it?
Meanwhile, in the refectory.

**Bucky:** Are you sure you're ready to work?

Clint smiled and gestured at Bucky.

**C:** Now you see this guy here, thinking I'm still dead.

Laura put her hand on Clint's arm.

**L:** You've been through so much, he's worried and so am I.

**C:** Not you too, woman.

**L:** My love, I just don't want to lose you again.

**C:** You will not lose me if I'm cutting wood and building furniture out there. It's something I used to do all the time.

**Pepper:** I think Barton is right. The doctors didn't forbid him to work. He is fine.

Pepper declared as she gave some food for the twins.

**Tony:** Yes, guys, stop wanting to kill who is alive. If it was to treat him like he was dead, he didn’t even need to come back.

**L:** Never talk about death again! I can’t bear to think about what I went through!

Clint sat down on the side so that he could look at Laura, he put his hand on her face.

**C:** Honey... Listen to me.

Clint looked into her eyes.

**C:** I love you, but you're acting like a crazy person.

Laura looked concerned, but she laughed at Clint's words.

**C:** Quick, disguise before they get you in F Wing!

**L:** Stop!

Laura laughed even more, making Clint smile, then he wrapped his arm around her neck and kissed her fondly.

**Ju:** I think that makes you an unemployed man.

Juliana looked at Bucky.

**Tony:** Don’t worry your boyfriend will get you something to do in a blink of an eye.

**Ju:** Maybe you can help me.
C: Barnes in the infirmary?

T: Barnes in the infirmary it’s only to heal himself. This one costs me more money than my children.

C: That’s not true, he’s also going to the infirmary to see Juliana.

Clint smiled at Juliana, who was slightly flushed and smiled.

P: Sorry guys, the chat is fine, but it's bath time. Tony, help me, get Howie while I take Peter, please.

T: After you shower the babies, can you give me a shower? Like, my back hurts, and a care from time to time doesn’t hurt.

Pepper was already standing with Peter on her lap, she looked at Tony reprovingly.

T: It's been a while, don’t you think, my dear?

P: Tony, do as I say...

Pepper walked out of the refectory.

Tony took Howie in his lap and was slow to get up, he looked at Juliana.

T: You like babies, don’t you?

Juliana stared at Tony.

T: Couldn’t you stay with the twins for like… 4 hours at least?

Ju: I... I'm sorry, I'll be busy right now.

T: Two hours?

Juliana sighed and shook her head.

Ju: Tomorrow would be a good day.

T: Tomorrow?

Tony looked at Laura.

T: What about you?

P: TONY!

Pepper reappeared near the entrance to the refectory.

T: I can pay!

L: Pepper was very clear, Tony. She doesn’t want the twins in the nursery all the time, she wants to raise them, herself and you.

T: But I don’t have anything to do with this decision, because for me they stayed in nursery,
with nannies and etc.

P: TONY!

Tony looked at Pepper.

P: If the twins take a shower, they will sleep...

Tony stared at Pepper, confused, and then a light went on in his head.

T: So it would be my turn to take a shower?

Pepper nodded.

Tony patted the table, smiling excitedly and jumped up with Howie Stark, he waved at those at the table to say goodbye.

T: Good for me!

Clint looked at his wife.

C: I'll introduce myself to work and you should do the same. The children must be missing Aunt Laura.

Laura nodded.

C: See you guys.

Clint and Laura got up and the only ones on the table now were Bucky and Juliana.

Ju: Finished eating?

B: Yeah, I was just waiting for Steve to show up, but I don’t think he's going to have lunch today.

Ju: Come on then.

B: Where?

Ju: To your room.

Bucky looked at Juliana, then raised his eyebrows.

B: I thought you told Stark that you would be busy this afternoon.

Ju: Yes. With you.

B: So... Is this happening? Today?

Juliana nodded and smiled.

Ju: If you have nothing to do and still want...

B: I want to!
Bucky gave Juliana a peck.

**B:** I was just surprised, but ok, I thought this day would never come. Let's go...

Bucky got up and held out his hand to Juliana.

Juliana looked at Bucky and then put her hand over his, she got up and walked hand in hand with him out of the refectory.

As they reached the elevator, Bucky pressed the button to call the elevator and stared at Juliana, who avoided any eye contact with him.

Bucky chuckled and Juliana looked at him.

**Ju:** What?

**B:** You're getting embarrassed.

**Ju:** N-no. I am not. I'm just waiting for the elevator... Just like you.

Bucky laughed even more and pulled her hand, making her body move in front of his.

Bucky let go of her hands, but only to be able to hug her waist from behind.

Juliana sighed as she felt Bucky's chin rest on her shoulder.

*- Elevator going down.*

The elevator announced on arrival.

Juliana tried to walk to enter the elevator, but Bucky held her.

**Ju:** Bucky!

Bucky didn’t let her go and didn’t move.

*- Doors closing.*

**Ju:** Bucky! The elevator! It's going to close and go down!

**B:** Let it go down.

**Ju:** But...

**B:** We'll stay here, like this, until you feel ready to go forward. You are nervous.

Juliana watched the elevator going down and took a deep breath, then she smiled.

**Ju:** I don’t think I'll ever not be nervous.

**B:** Okay.

Juliana frowned and turned her face a little to look at Bucky.

**Ju:** What? Are we going to stay here forever then?
B: Yes.

Ju: Bucky!

Juliana began to laugh.

Ju: You can’t be serious.

B: I am.

Juliana laughed and shook her head.

Ju: Okay.

B: Okay.

The elevator went up again.

- Elevator going down.

The doors opened and some people came out from the elevator.

Juliana looked serious and embarrassed, she had the impression that people were judging the two of them by being hugged in front of the elevator, she doesn’t think that this is decent.

Juliana cleared her throat and Bucky smiled at the people coming out of the elevator.

B: Good afternoon! She is my girlfriend!

- Good for you!

Said a woman as she walked away.

B: It's great for me, actually...

Bucky continued to smile and Juliana put her hand on her forehead to cover her face of so much shame she felt. Bucky kissed her cheek.

B: They're gone, you can open your eyes now.

Ju: You're killing me.

B: It could be worse.

Ju: How could it be worse?

B: We could be naked.

Ju: We would never get naked here. You are crazy.

B: I would totally be naked here. Want to see?

Bucky let go of Juliana and grabbed his shirt to remove. Juliana held his hand at the same time.

Ju: Are you crazy? No! Please!
Bucky laughed and hugged Juliana's waist, he lifted her a little from the floor and she hugged his neck and looked into his eyes.

Juliana smiled.

Bucky let Juliana's body slide down and as her body descended, he laid his lips to hers and Juliana kissed him.

As soon as Juliana's feet touched the floor again, she looked at Bucky.

**Ju:** *I'm ready.*

Bucky looked at her and finally felt it was true now, because she was looking into his eyes with no sign of fear or embarrassment.

Juliana turned to call the elevator, but Bucky grabbed her arm.

**B:** *There's no time for that...*

**Ju:** *What?*

Bucky took Juliana's hand and pulled her to the stairs, the two of them running down the stairs, while Juliana laughed at Bucky's spontaneous and unusual manner.

Bucky opened his dorm's door and waited for Juliana to go in.

Juliana entered the room and walked to the center of the room.

Juliana turned to check Bucky and he had just closed a door and was already taking off his shirt.

Bucky looked into her eyes as he threw his shirt away and he continued to look into her eyes as he walked over to her.

Juliana caught her breath when she saw Bucky without a shirt, she didn’t know where to look, so she moved her eyes to his chest, then to his face, then to his abdomen.

Bucky stopped in front of her and smiled.

**B:** *Don’t forget to breathe...*

Juliana finally let out the air she held, she looked into Bucky's eyes and smiled again, she took her hands behind her body to open her dress, but Bucky held her waist and turned her body.

**B:** *Leave that to me...*
Juliana lowered her head, then she looked at Bucky over her shoulder as he unzipped her dress.

Bucky slowed to unzip Juliana’s dress and when he finally did that, he made sure to let one hand caress her skin to remove her dress.

The first thing Juliana did was put her arms over her breasts, even being with her back to Bucky.

Bucky brushed her hair off the back of her neck, putting it to one side and he spread kisses on her neck, making Juliana close her eyes and sigh.

Bucky kissed all her neck and then the tip of Juliana's ear as he placed his arms over hers, which still covered her breasts.

Bucky dragged his mouth lightly over Juliana's cheekbone and waited for her to signal him to go forward.

Feeling Bucky's lips on her face, along with his breathing and feeling his arms, touching areas of her body that no one had ever touched before, made Juliana turn her face more towards Bucky, it was natural, like a magnet.

Bucky just waited, he watched as Juliana slowly turned to him, and as she pressed her lips to his, she relaxed her arms and made no further attempt to hide anything and all he did was correspond to her kiss, holding on to her.

...

Back in the room where Sharon was talking to Steve...

S: So, what is it?

Sharon: I want a baby.

Steve frowned, confused.

Sharon: My baby. One that is all and only mine. I deserve this.

S: Yes...

Steve answered slowly.

S: You deserve it.

Sharon: Steve, what I want is to get pregnant again.

S: Hm...

Sharon: And I need you to be the father.

S: What??

Chapter End Notes
Will Steve say yes?
Steve raised his eyebrows, completely surprised at Sharon's request. He was so surprised that he couldn’t disguise the shock and confusion he was feeling.

Sharon got up from the bed and walked over to him.

**Sharon:** Please, I know you didn’t expect this. Don’t feel pressured, but think of me, think of the promises you made to me and to Maggie.

Sharon put his hand on Steve's shoulder.

Sharon closed her eyes and shook her head.

**Sharon:** Okay, I'm sorry, I don’t want to use this as blackmail. This came out the wrong way, I just want to be happy again. You understand?

Sharon looked at Steve, he was with his head down. Steve nodded.

**S:** I understand, but…

Sharon put her finger over Steve's mouth.

**Sharon:** Don’t answer now and please promise me you'll think before you respond to me.

Steve was already feeling a huge weight on his back now, he had to look into Sharon's eyes and he felt the famous guilt over making her suffer in the past. The least he could do was to think about it, but he knows he can’t accept that.

**S:** I promise.

**Sharon:** Thank you. You should go now, it's late for lunch time.

Steve nodded and stood up slowly, already feeling the weight of the decision he would make in the future.

...

Torunn and James were in the Bunker's school, study activities were in the morning. In the afternoon, they usually do recreational activities or just play.

**T:** My father said there is this other world, called Asgard. He said I came from there, just like him, Uncle Loki and Aunt Sif. My father said I'm going to rule this world after him. He is the king now.

**J:** Thor is a king?

**T:** Yes and I am a princess.

**J:** Princesses are boring.

Torunn frowned.
T: No, they’re not!

J: Oh yes they are. You don’t do anything cool, just be there waiting for the prince to save you. Boring.

T: But I’m different, I’m not human like the princesses here. I learned something, do you want to see it?

J: What is it?

T: Come on!

Torunn pulled James by the hand to a small room, where the classroom material was stored. A small storehouse, in the case.

J: So, what is it?

Torunn took a deep breath and stood on tiptoe. James watched her.

J: Do you know how to stand on tiptoe? Big deal!

T: No! You are disturbing me!

Torunn took a deep breath and was still on tiptoe and little by little she was rising more and more until her feet lost contact with the ground.

T: See?

James didn’t notice that Torunn was floating because she was very close to the ground, but then he looked right at her feet and noticed she was flying.

J: Torunn!

Torunn stepped back onto the floor and smiled.

T: See?

J: How did you do that? Can I do that too?

T: I don’t know, your dad is a hero too, maybe you can.

James tried to do the same thing and he couldn’t.

T: Maybe you should try to jump from somewhere, that’s how I learned.

J: Some other day.

T: You’re a chicken!

J: I’m not afraid!

- James and Torunn, get out from the storehouse.

Pepper warned them.
T: Okay!

James and Torunn left the storehouse.

T: I have another secret for you.

J: What is it?

T: You have to promise not to tell anyone, not even your father and your mother.

J: I promise.

T: With pinky?

Torunn lifted her pinky finger in James's direction and he did the same, interlacing his finger in hers.

J: Yah.

T: Okay! Come here.

Torunn walked to an isolated corner of the classroom. James followed Torunn.

Torunn sat on the floor and took a small can out of her pocket and set it on the floor.

J: What is it?

T: I don’t know.

J: Who gave you that?

T: My grandfather, the Mighty Odin.

J: Odin?

T: Yeah, he died tho.

J: What's the use of that?

T: I’m not sure, but he gave me and he made me promise to never tell anyone. He said he trusts me, only me. He said no one can touch it, not even my father.

- What is that?

Francis appeared behind James and Torunn by surprise, already picking up the can.

T: Francis Barton!

J: Give it back!

F: What is it?

Francis shook the can and heard the sound of something inside.

F: What's inside?
T: Nothing! Give it back! It's mine!

Francis frowned.

F: That's not yours.

T: Yes it is! My grandfather gave it to me! Give it back!

F: I'll show the teacher!

T: No!!!

Torunn grabbed Francis's shirt tightly, making him fall to the floor.

Pepper heard the noise from far away and saw Torunn holding Francis by the shirt.

P: Torunn!! What is going on? Let Francis go.

Pepper was making handmade flowers with a group of students, but she got up to set aside Torunn and Francis.

J: Aunt Pepper's coming, she'll see!

T: Francis! I hate you! You ruined everything!

Pepper reached all three.

P: So...

Torunn released Francis.

T: Sorry, teacher.

P: You three have always been such good friends, I don’t understand why you are fighting so much. What happened here?

Torunn's heart was racing, she kept the can as a secret for a long time and she was only going to reveal it to her best friend, but now Francis was going to report her and show Pepper the can and spoil her secret.

Torunn looked at Francis and watched him move the can to behind his back, discreetly.

Francis looked at Pepper.

F: Nothing, Aunt Pepper.

P: Nothing?

F: We were only playing.

Pepper looked suspiciously at Francis, then looked at Torunn, who nodded confirming the information.

P: Okay. But no grabbing anyone for the clothes, Torunn. Are we understood?
Torunn nodded. Pepper stepped back and went back to the table.

Torunn and James breathed a sigh of relief.

F: *I've been nice to you.*

J: No, you're a thief!

F: *I didn't steal it! I wanted to know what it is.*

T: You should ask and not get the can, Francis. You're a very bad boy.

Francis frowned and threw the can on the floor.

F: *I don't want that crap! You can stay with that!*

T: Nooooo!!

The can fell to the floor and ended up opening a little. Torunn thought it was broken and she had her eyes filled with tears.

T: Grandpa gave it to me and now it's broken!

Torunn knelt near the can.

James studied the can.

J: It's not broken, Torunn...

Torunn had already a few tears on her face, she wiped the tears and looked at James who took the can in his hand.

F: *I'm sorry, Torunn.*

Torunn looked at Francis angrily.

F: *I didn't want to break, I just wanted to be friends with you two again.*

T: You should tell and not steal and break my things.

F: *I'm sorry, I can fix it.*

J: No! Don't touch it anymore!

James handed the half-open can to Torunn, who took it back and sighed to contain the cry.

F: Can we be friends again? The three of us?

James looked at Francis and then at Torunn, he would do whatever Torunn would.

Torunn took a deep breath and nodded.

F: It's shining.

Francis pointed to the can.
Torunn and James looked at the can as well.

J: There's something inside it.

F: What is it?

T: It looks like a red stone.

J: Why would your grandfather give you a stone?

T: Maybe it's an Asgard jewel.

J: It shines so much.

F: Looks like it's on.

T: Yes, it’s beautiful.

James reached over to open the can and pick up the stone.

Torunn closed the can at once.

T: No! Grandpa said to not let anyone touch it! Not even my father. I need to find out what this is.

J: How will you do that?

T: Easy.

Torunn smiled and put the can back into her pocket.

T: I'm going to ask my friend, Maria Hill. She knows everything.

F: She doesn't, no one knows everything.

J: Maria does!

T: Yeah, Maria does, my mother said that Maria knows everything before anyone else knows in here.

... 

Later in the day...

Bucky: Good morning.

Bucky said, smiling, at Juliana who yawned and moved slowly on bed. Juliana was lying on Bucky's body and she sat up abruptly and looked at Bucky, worried.

Ju: Good morning? Is it morning already? My God, Uncle is going to kill me!

Bucky laughed and sat on the bed, stroking Juliana's back.

B: Calm down, honey, it's not that. I said good morning, because you slept a lot, although it's
already dark and we missed dinner.

Juliana put her hand to her cheek and smiled.

Ju: What a shame! I’m sorry.

B: It's okay. How are you feeling?

Juliana looked into Bucky's eyes.

B: Did I disappoint you a bit or a lot?

Juliana shook her head.

Ju: I feel a bit strange, but in a good way! You didn’t disappoint me at all.

Bucky put his arm in front of Juliana’s belly and gave two long kisses to her lips.

B: Did I hurt you?

Juliana shook her head and began to turn red.

Ju: Can’t we not talk about what happened?

Bucky frowned.

B: Why? Was it that bad?

Ju: No! But I'm ashamed to talk about it.

B: But I want to know what you think, to know if I hurt you, if there's anything you don’t want me to do again... You're my girlfriend, Juliana. That means we'll do it several times, I mean, I hope we do it every day, so...

Juliana laughed and looked away.

Ju: That means I can talk about what I didn’t like and also that you can say what you didn’t like.

B: Yes.

Ju: I knew it! You hated it! That’s why you want me to talk, so you can talk.

Juliana pulled the sheet to cover herself and threatened to get up, but Bucky pulled her down to make her sit down again.

B: Whoa! Calm down! Calm down. I didn’t say that, I just told you that for you to know that we have to be honest with each other, to make it work.

Juliana looked at Bucky.

Ju: Is that true?

B: Of course it is.
Ju: Okay...

B: So... What part you didn’t like?


B: Say it, Juliana, I won’t cut my wrists for that.

Ju: You asked if you were hurting me all the time, like… you asked me that too much... I can’t even count how many times you asked me that.

B: You’re right, I was terrified of making you feel pain. It was your first time, you need to understand that I was also nervous about it.

Juliana nodded.

Ju: I understand and I love you worrying about me like that, but please, don’t treat me like a super fragile object anymore.

B: I promise I'll police myself on that. Is that all?

Ju: Yes. It was all perfect. And what you didn’t like?

Bucky sighed.

B: Well, for starters, I...

Bucky started laughing, seeing the desperation on Juliana's face, he shook his head and she shoved him back onto the bed to lie down.

Ju: You fool!

B: Fool for you.

Bucky smiled and kissed Juliana again.

...

At the end of the day, Steve was in his dorm and he had just put Sarah to sleep, he leaned his arms crossed over the top bar of the crib and watched Sarah's sleep.

Steve couldn’t concentrate right, all he thought was Sharon's request and the consequences of him accepting her request and also the consequences if he refused her request.

Steve was taken out of his thoughts by the bedroom door, being opened, abruptly.

An extremely awake James entered the room, excited.

J: Dad! Can we play cops and thieves? You are the thief! I'm the cop! Go! Run away. Pew, pew, pew!

James imitated a gun with his hand and pointed at Steve. Steve looked at James and heard what he said, but his eyes kept focusing on the woman behind James.

Natasha came in just after James and closed the door, she couldn’t look into Steve's eyes, she was
still angry that Sharon was living almost next to him and he didn’t tell her anything.

N: James, Sarah is sleeping.

Steve looked at James.

S: Your mother is right. It's time for you to sleep, champ. Tomorrow, I promise to play with you.

James ran to Steve and asked for a lap.

J: But dad, I'm not sleepy now.

S: I see you're not sleepy, buddy.

N: Nothing that a hot bath doesn’t solve.

J: No! No! I don’t want to sleep.

N: But you will want to sleep.

J: I won’t.

N: Yes, you will, because your father will take you outside tomorrow.

James stood looking at Natasha, just like Steve, who was surprised, since earlier when he gave the idea, Natasha ignored him.

J: Out in the square?

N: No, James. Out there... In the world. Out of the bunker.

James looked at his father.

J: Really, dad?

Steve looked at James as he stroked his back.

S: Yes, champion. You want to go?

James wasn’t smiling, he looked worried.

N: What? I thought you’d be happy.

J: But it's dangerous outside.

Natasha frowned a little.

N: It's not anymore, James.

J: We learned at school that we should never leave the bunker.

N: That's silly, James. We came from the outside, all of us.

S: Listen, James, if it wasn’t safe, I would never take you out there, you know why?
James stared at his father.

S: Because you are all I have of most precious in the world. You, your sister and your mother.

Steve looked at Natasha and she sighed, averting her gaze.

Steve looked back at James.

S: I'll be there with you.

J: Are you going to hold my hand?

S: Yes. All the time.

J: But Torunn said that whoever breathes outside would turn into a stone statue.

N: She was just trying to scare you. Come on, stop talking, go to the bathroom.

Natasha patted James's ass and made him go to the floor. James ran into the bathroom and closed the door.

S: James, do not lock the door.

J: Okay, Dad!

Steve looked back at Natasha, and she couldn’t avoid Steve anymore now.

S: Are you okay?

N: Do I have reasons to not be?

Steve shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

Natasha sighed and walked over to the bed, she sat up and removed her shoes, then she looked back at Steve.

N: Tell me something, Steve. The bunker has a lot of levels and you put Sharon right next to you. Can you assure me there was no other place for her to stay?

Steve looked at her and shook his head.

S: Only the collective dormitory, but...

N: The psychiatrist didn’t recommended that place for her...

Natasha finished the sentence for Steve and he nodded.

S: How do you know?

N: Bucky told me.

Natasha looked down at the floor.

N: I was worried.
Steve frowned and approached Natasha, he sat down beside her and laid a hand on her back.

N: No...

Natasha shifted her shoulder to refuse Steve's consolation.

N: I was stupid. I don’t know why, but I was...

S: Jealous?

Natasha frowned and looked at Steve, as if he had offended her, then she sighed and nodded.

S: You don’t have to worry about that, Natasha.

Steve tried again to approach, he left his hand in the middle of her back.

S: I love you.

Natasha sighed and shook her head, then she smiled.

N: I was being stupid. It's okay for her to be around. She likes Sarah.

S: Yes. She asked about her, and she...

Steve sighed, wondering if he should tell her now about Sharon's request to him, but he didn’t have the guts, not after learning that Natasha is jealous of Sharon and that Natasha discovered that it was him who arranged the room for Sharon.

S: I didn’t hide from you that she was coming to live close to me. I just thought I wouldn’t have to say it to you.

N: You're right. Because it means nothing. It's all right...

Natasha gave a small smile and turned more to Steve, she put her hand on his face and caressed a little. Soon after Natasha pulled Steve's face to her and began a slow kiss.

Steve slid his palm down on Natasha's back as he tilted his head higher to fit his mouth on Natasha's mouth better, so he had better ways to explore the corners of her mouth.

Natasha slid the hand from Steve's face to his neck, then slid it over to his shoulder and at last she stopped with her hand over his hand.

Natasha put Steve's hand on her thigh and as she touched the Steve’s palate with the tip of her tongue, she made Steve press his fingers over her thigh, just to indicate what kind of affection she wanted to receive now.

Natasha immediately withdrew her hand from Steve's, because he understood the message.

Steve grabbed Natasha's thigh tightly and kept her thigh locked in his hand as he changed the rhythm of the kiss. Steve released Natasha's thigh and then grabbed it again, and he used more force, leaving her leg marked with his fingers..

Steve slowly leaned his body over Natasha's, making her lay back on the bed, and as soon as her head lay on the bed, he let go of her lips and stuck his mouth against Natasha's neck.
Natasha's breathing changed and she let out a sigh with each kiss that Steve applied on her neck and as if that weren’t enough, he still kept squeezing her thigh and with each squeeze he moved his hand closer to her intimate part.

When Steve finally reached her groin, Natasha moaned and put her hand on Steve's wrist again.

N: Steve...

Natasha whispered, trying to take Steve's hand away. Steve looked at Natasha.

N: James is awake.

S: He's in the shower.

N: But he can leave at anytime.

S: So we'd better be quick.

Natasha laughed and shook her head. She hold Steve's face with both hands and gave him a long kiss.

N: Let's wait until he's sleeping.

S: Yes, Mrs. Black Widow.

Steve finally relieved the pressure of his fingers on her intimate part and he started to stroke her belly instead, but he continued with part of his body lying on Natasha and the two continued exchanging kisses and affections, until they were interrupted.

J: DAD!

James cried in a tearful voice.

J: I don’t want to!

Steve got up and looked at James.

S: I'm not touching her anymore.

J: Mom!

N: Oh, James. It's okay, he wasn’t hurting me.

J: I don’t want to!

N: You don’t have to cry over that.

James walked over to Natasha and asked for a lap.

N: You know that mom is Dad's girlfriend, James. There is nothing wrong when it is with the one you love. We already talked about it.

James began to yawn.

N: Then go to your bed.
J: No...

Natasha pointed to the adjoining room. James has been sleeping there for the last few days, he said he is not afraid of being alone in there anymore.

James hold tight on Natasha and shook his head.

J: I want to sleep with you.
S: James...

J: No, not you!

James pointed his finger at his father, who raised his hands up, surrendering.

S: I think I'll have to sleep in there tonight then...

Steve looked at Natasha and she shrugged.

N: I'm sorry.
S: No more than I...

Natasha smiled.

... The next day, Tony was with the twins in his lap, walking behind Steve.

T: Are you sure you want to do this?
S: Yes, Tony.

T: Shouldn’t wait until doing all the therapy?

S: I'm not stopping the therapy, Tony. Me, Natasha and James will continue to do the therapies sessions just like everyone else, we just want to be the first to go outside. Why are you so worried? Haven’t you gone on the therapies?

T: I'm practically a housewife. Pepper's working, so I'm staying with the twins.

N: I'm very worried about them being raised by you, Tony.

Natasha smiled at the twins.

N: But they look good.

J: Uncle Tony is scared? If Uncle Tony is scared, I'm scared too!

S: Did you see, Tony?

T: No, brat. I'm the Iron Man. Does Iron Man fear anything?
James shook his head.

T: Who is the best super hero in the world?

J: Iron Man! Iron Man is the best!

Natasha frowned and looked at James.

N: Tony had to teach this to James, didn’t he?

T: What? Me?? Imagine that I would do such a thing. It's a shame to have two super heroes as parents and still want to be like uncle Tony here.

Tony winked, laughing sarcastically.

N: Are you ready, James?

J: I wanted Toto to go with us.

S: Son, she'll come next time. Jane thought it was better to wait a little, but think about it, if you go first, you'll be able to tell everything you've seen to your friends.

J: I'll be the first!

S: Yes!

Steve smiled.

Natasha got her W.T.

N: Parker? You can open the gate, please.

PP: Okay, Mrs. Widow.

Peter opened the gate of the Bunker and the glare of the day, blinded everyone for a few seconds.

J: Mommy!

James asked Natasha's lap and then he covered his face with his arm.

S: Look, James, don’t be afraid.

Steve was with Sarah in his arms and he was the first to leave the bunker.

Natasha stayed behind because James was shaking a little.

N: James? Look at me. Do you trust me?

Natasha tried to see James's eyes, still hidden in his arms.

James nodded.

N: Look at me.

James lowered his arm and looked at Natasha.
N: It's okay. Your father is already out with Sarah. Can we go out to stay with them or do you want to stay in here? You can stay if you want.

J: No, Mom, I'll go wherever you go.

Natasha smiled and kissed his face.

N: Come on.

J: Bye, Uncle Tony. Bye, Peter, bye Howie...

James waved at the twins who waved back, in their own way.

James looked at his father who put Sarah on the ground and hold her hand.

Sarah wanted to run, but she stumbled on her own feet.

S: Do you like it, princess? Calm down, we'll explore everything out here, you don’t have to run.

Steve looked at James approaching on Natasha's lap.

S: So, champ, Sarah is already on the ground. Come on!

James was afraid, but Sarah is younger than him and wasn’t afraid, on the contrary, she is smiling and wanting to let go of Steve to run free, so James took courage and went to the ground.

S: That's it. Give your sister a hand, let's help her walk.

James ran to them and held Sarah's hand.

Steve started walking with both of them and Natasha came right behind, she used her W.T. to shoot the first moments of the children outside the bunker with the father.

Steve looked back and saw Natasha.

S: Hey! Come on!

N: I'm coming!

J: Come on, mom!

James held out his hand to Natasha and she ran to hold James' hand.

J: The sun!

N: Yes, James.

J: It burns! I can’t look at him.

N: No, it shines so much, indeed. The sun warms us and it warms everything up here.

Natasha looked at Sarah, who was already all red-cheeked.

N: Did you put sunscreen on her, Steve?
S: Yes.

N: Look at you.

Natasha looked at Steve and he looked at her with raised eyebrows.

N: You're getting all red too.

S: And you think you don’t?

N: Am I horrible that way?

S: Not even a little bit.

Natasha smirked, already expecting such an answer.

J: Mom, I don’t like the sun.

N: Why? The sun is very important, James, but we're very exposed here.

J: What is that?

Soon after this slightly more arid area began one with more green, with high bush and some flowers.

N: You know what it is, son. It’s a garden.

J: Can I go there?

S: Of course. Why don’t you run?

J: Can I run here?

S: You can run as fast as you can! Go! Go!

J: Yesss!

James let go of Sarah and Natasha's hand and didn’t seem even more terrified to be outside, he ran like never before until he reached an area where the bush was as tall as he was.

Steve and Natasha took a long time to get to where he had gone.

S: James?

N: James!

J: Over here, mom.

S: Don’t go anywhere you can’t see us, James.

J: What is it? Why is this different from that?

N: Because they are plants of different species. Look at that...

Natasha knelt to stand at James' height and she pulled out a plant branch, which had a few hanging berries, she pulled the fruit and put it in her mouth.
James was scandalized.

J: Mom!

N: Hmm... Delicious.

J: Is that to eat?

N: Yes! Don’t you want to try?

James looked at the berries and took some with his hand, he put it in his mouth.

N: So?

J: Yummy!

N: Try this one.

J: But that’s green! Not a fruit!

N: I know, I forgot the name, but try it on.

James tasted the plant.

N: What do you think, James?

J: It's not yummy, but it's not bad. You want some Sarah?

James offered some berries to Sarah, but Natasha intercepted.

N: I'll help her, she can choke with that.

J: Eat, Dad.

S: All right, James, the cook.

James laughed and fed the plant to his father, who sat next to them.

N: Look here what went up on Sarah's leg.

James looked at the bug on Sarah's leg and he hid behind Steve.

J: DAD! Kill it! Kill it! Is that a Pyron?

Natasha started to laugh.
N: No, James. Pyrons no longer exist here. This is a caterpillar. It doesn’t hurt, it's not hurting Sarah, see?

Sarah watched the caterpillar and she was attracted to her colors, she held the animal and tried to put it in her mouth, but Steve took from her hand.

S: No, Sarah.

N: This is not to eat, Sarah. But this one here...

Natasha dug the earth and a bunch of worms appeared. Natasha took one of them and put it in her mouth.

J: Ewwww!

James looked disgusted.

S: That's very disgusting, Natasha.

N: Oh you guys are a bunch of fools!

S: That's a bit extreme.

N: Survival law.

S: Worms wouldn’t keep you alive, you don’t have to eat them.

N: You're right.

S: You would have more chances with plants and roots. It has more nutritive value.

N: You're boring me.

Steve smiled and nodded, Natasha gave Steve a peck on the lips.

J: Can we eat all the plants?

N: Most of them, but since you’re little, you need to ask if you can first.

J: Can I take some of each to show Toto and Francis?

N: Yes.

S: Soon all of you will be out here together, playing around.

J: It would be fun.

N: So you're enjoying it now?

J: Very much! I want to taste everything and I want to climb up there.

James pointed to the small mountain in the distance.

S: We will do that, son.
J: What's on the other side?

S: I don’t know but we will find out together.

And so the Rogers spent the whole morning, exploring the outside world with the children. James insisted that they come back in the afternoon, and since Sarah always sleeps after lunch, Natasha left her with Laura Barton, so she and Steve and James would return out of the bunker.

...

By the end of the great day they had, the children had already fallen asleep.

Steve and Natasha stayed till late in the refectory, answering questions from citizens who were curious about the outside world.

The two returned to Steve’s dorm, bringing their children, already asleep with them.

Natasha put James in the adjoining room while Steve put Sarah in the crib.

Natasha went back to the master room and leaned against the doorframe.

N: Steve?

Steve was removing his uniform and looked at Natasha. Just the way she looked at him, he already knew what she wanted.

N: Today there is nothing to interrupt us... They will sleep all night.

Natasha smiled and walked over to Steve, she wrapped her arms around his waist and lifted her face to Steve's face.

Steve smiled a little and then he broke his smiled.

N: What?

Natasha frowned a little.

N: Something wrong?

S: Natasha... I need to tell you something.

Natasha frowned even further and she removed her arms from Steve's body, noticing the worry on his face.

S: Sharon called me to talk.

Now Natasha stepped back and looked at Steve, waiting for him to say what he and Sharon talked about.

S: She wanted to make me a request.

N: Does she want to get back to you?
S: No...

Steve shook his head and looked away all the time, which made Natasha even more irritable and worried.

S: She asked me to have a child with her.

Steve decided to say it at once and then he looked her in the eyes again.

N: What??
Chapter 51

Chapter Notes

I updated quick because there's only one more chapter to this fic be equal to the fic in my language. I'll probably post the next tomorrow, I don't know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

N: And you said no, right? Steve... Why are you even telling me that?

Steve was silent, which made Natasha frown and glare at him furiously.

N: You said yes?

S: No! I said I'd think about it.

N: Think about it??

S: Nat, listen...

N: Are you going to bed with her? Is that what you're telling me? And you come to say that you are undecided about it? How can you do this to me, Steve?

S: Nat, I'm not going to bed with her.

N: And how are you going to have a child?

S: I didn’t think about that part... You know there’s technologies, but anyway I wouldn't...

N: So here in the bunker, wheren we have birth control to not overpopulate the bunker, has an artificial insemination sector? With everything we deal with every day, did they create an industry for artificial insemination?

S: No. I... I don’t know.

Natasha smiled, but it was a sarcastic smile, she shook her head.

S: Nat, please, listen...

N: I will not fucking hear any more of the shit you have to say. You shouldn’t even consider this request. Think about it? That’s just so... I can’t even find the words. You still have feelings for her.

S: What???

N: Do you have or do you not have feelings for her, Rogers? You better be honest with me, or I swear to God...

Steve shook his head and stood head down, which made Natasha's chest tighten.
N: You don’t even have an immediate answer to give me!

S: It's not what you're thinking, it’s not about having feelings for her, but try to understand, I had to say I would think about...

N: I was so stupid!

Natasha laughed again and continued to shake her head.

N: I thought you really could love me.

S: I love you, Nat.

Natasha laughed even more and she walked over to Steve's closet and he walked over to her.

S: What are you going to do?

Natasha ignored Steve and opened the closet, she took her clothes from the closet and Steve grabbed her arm with a certain force, because he was desperate to see that she was leaving him.

N: Don’t! Don’t fucking touch me!

Natasha screamed and shoved Steve's chest hard.

S: That's not necessary, Nat... We need to talk

Natasha finished getting her clothes and then began to pick up James’ stuffs that were in his dorm.

S: Natasha!

Natasha walked to the dormitory’s door.

S: You didn’t even let me talk!

N: It's too late, Steve.

N: You should know better what you want for yourself and if your immediate response wasn’t me, then it’s the wrong answer to have me. Don’t come look for me. I'll take James when he wakes up.

S: Will you separate him from me?

N: You can see him anytime you want, but he lives with me. In thinking that… I almost gave
up my dorm to live here with you...

Natasha said and looked into his eyes, one last time before leaving.

...

Early in the morning, the curious and fearless Torunn woke up early and sneak out of her dorm, without telling her parents, she went down the stairs and went to Maria Hill's dorm.

Torunn knocked on the door twice, then began to knock nonstop, while repeating...

**T: Maria! Maria! Maria! Mariaaa! Maria!**

Hill was inside the dorm and she was already awake, she was ready to leave, but when she heard Torunn, she rolled her eyes and shook her head, she decided to remain still in the bathroom, waiting for Torunn to give up and leave.

After a few minutes, Torunn looked tired, the knock on the door stopped, and Hill sighed and turned on the bathroom sink.

**T: MARIA! I heard that! The water! Maria! Maria! Maria!**

**H: God help me to not murder this child.**

Hill told herself as she looked in the mirror, she washed her hands, then wiped it in the towel and walked slowly to the door and on the way from the bathroom to the door, she still picked up her weapons that were on the table and she opened the door, holding the guns in her hand, on purpose, for Torunn to be frightened and maybe leave her alone.

**H: WHAT??**

Torunn smiled.

**T: Good morning.**

**H: Did you come by to say good morning to me?**

**T: Also.**

**H: Okay. Good morning. Bye.**

Hill threatened to close the door, Torunn pushed the door and Hill saw a crumpled can in her hand, but she didn’t give much importance to the object, must be something that she found around.

**T: Maria, I need to show you something.**

**H: I don’t have time now, Torunn.**

**T: But it’s important, Maria.**

**H: I’m sure it’s not.**

Hill began to put the guns in her body, and she almost passed over Torunn for her to release the door.
Hill locked her dorm door and started walking down the hall.

Torunn ran after Hill, she wasn’t going to give up easy.

T: Look, Maria. My grandfather gave it to me.

Hill didn’t even look at what Torunn was exhibiting, but she knew she was referring to the can.

T: Do you know what it is?

H: A crumpled can.

T: Not only that, Maria... Look...

H: Torunn!!

Hill stopped at the top of the stairs and glared at Torunn.

H: I’ve told you millions of times, we're not friends. You and I... Do not exist, okay? I can’t help you, if you're bored, go look for Pepper or Laura.

T: They can’t help.

H: Why not?

T: Because they are not worthy.

Hill started to laugh at Torunn's speech, and she went back to go up the stairs.

H: Thank you for finding me worthy, can I raise your father's Mjolnir now?

Torunn ran upstairs, trying to reach Hill.

H: But...

T: I trust you, Maria. Please. Look. Just look...

Hill stopped at the end of the stairs and sighed, she looked at Torunn and then rolled her eyes.

H: Right. What is it?

Torunn held up the can and she was about to open it, but right now two SHIELD agents approached Maria Hill.

- Director, everything is ready. Coulson is waiting for you.

Torunn hid the can behind her.

Hill nodded.

H: Thank you, I'm on my way.

Torunn watched Maria Hill turn her back on her and walk down the hall with the agents, but Hill stopped and looked at her.
H: I have a mission now, Torunn. It is very important. There are people in need of food and medicine out there. When I get back, I'll take a look.

Torunn just stared at Hill.

H: I promise. And... Stop running from your dorm, I'll tell your father. Go back right now.

Hill disappeared in the hallway with her agents.

Hill had to go on the Command Center first, she had to instruct orders for Peter Parker and Natasha Romanoff before leaving for the mission.

Parker and Romanoff would share the functions of Maria Hill.

After giving all the operating instructions of the bunker, Hill looked at Natasha.

H: Can you come with me for a moment?

N: Yes.

Hill and Natasha left the command center.

Hill looked at Natasha.

H: I only have five minutes, so start talking.

Natasha frowned, confused.

H: Stop. I know you.

N: It's nothing.

H: Peter, open the front gate, please.

PP: Yes, ma'am.

Hill left the base and Natasha accompanied her.

N: I wish I could go with you.

H: Uhm... Steve is the problem then. Of course he is. Sharon is back. It must have something to do with it... What happened? He betrayed you?

N: No!

H: He said he'll betray?

N: Practically.

Hill was surprised.

N: Sharon asked to have a child with him. According to what Steve says, she just wants a child to care for, not having a family with him.

H: But Steve would want to be part of the child's life in the same way.
N: Yes. It was that way with James, he wouldn’t live in peace without being part of that child’s life.

H: This is a very weird request, she obviously knows you’re with him now. If she wants a child, why does she not adopt one? There’s a lot in the bunker.

N: Exactly.

H: Maybe she's still crazy...

Natasha couldn’t even laugh at Hill's joke, she took a deep breath and folded her arms.

The two finally reached the SHIELD jet and Hill handed her small suitcase to the agent at the jet's entrance.

N: Good luck out there and be careful.

H: Is that a joke?

Hill scoffed at Natasha.

N: I need to get back. Do you need anything else?

H: No. I'll see you in a few days.

N: Okay. Stay alive.

Hill nodded, just as Natasha, who started walking back into the bunker.

Hill got into the jet, and as she walked, she started to program her W.T.. The W.T. showed an hologram.

H: Mack, I'm sending you the coordinates now. Check if you will receive and if everything is right with the maps.

Hill was just looking at the W.T. and didn’t see that there was someone crouched in her way, she stumbled in the person and almost fell.

H: What the fuck are you doing there, Agent?

Hill held the W.T. harder to keep it from falling, but the hologram disappeared when she tripped, she didn’t hear an immediate response from the agent standing in the way.

H: Answer me!

Hill had no answer again, so she decided to look to see who the agent was, so he would be punished by insubordination.

- I’m so sorry.

Hill was speechless to see that the person was not a SHIELD agent, she frowned.

H: What are you doing here?

Bucky: They called me to do a repair on the jet.
H: That's not your job.

B: Now it is. I've become a handyman.

Bucky showed his pockets full of tools and smiled.

Coulson: Hill, I think we'd better take Bucky with us.

H: What kind of suggestion is that, Phill? No way.

Coulson: But it would help if we needed help with the maintenance of the jet.

H: We have agents prepared to deal with any kind of situation and I'm sure Barnes has more reasons and interests in staying in the bunker at the moment.

Coulson looked at Barnes, who gave a rather dull smile and nodded.

B: If she says she doesn’t need me, who am I to disagree? I already finished here. You are safe to leave. I hope you have a good trip. Come back safely.

Bucky said the last sentence, looking straight at Hill.

...

Bucky disembarked from the jet and he saw Natasha returning to the bunker, a little further away.

B: Nat!

Natasha heard Bucky's voice and stopped, she looked back and saw Bucky coming up to her.

B: Good morning.

Natasha didn’t answer.

B: Me and Juliana, we finally...

Bucky was excited about his new relationship and noticed that Natasha was there, but she wasn’t listening. At least it didn’t seem to be.

B: Is everything okay?

N: Yeah. I'm listening.

B: No, you’re not...

N: You went to bed with Juliana. Is that what you were going to tell me?

Bucky nodded and lost the excitement because of Natasha’s low enthusiasm.

N: You know I want you to be happy, Barnes. I hope you're feeling satisfied.

B: I hope she was satisfied.

N: Don’t worry, I'm sure she is. You're very good in bed, believe me. I have experience with that.
Natasha winked and smirked, she knew that would make Bucky relax and it worked.

B: You don’t seem to be in a good mood...

N: You're right, but it's nothing. Really.

Natasha and Bucky approached the entrance of the bunker and they saw Steve in the entrance, there was a line of people behind Steve and besides him there were also Professor McCoy, Scott Summers and Jean Gray, organizing the line of people.

Natasha's mood that seemed to be improving a bit, got worse when she saw Steve.

Steve looked directly at Natasha, she looked at him and she knew he wanted to talk to her, but he wouldn’t speak now, not in front of people. Neither of them enjoys a public spectacle of their relationship.

B: Steve! Do the experiences outside begin today?

Bucky said, cutting off the tension between them, but Bucky didn’t notice that tension between Natasha and Steve, I mean, he did noticed a small tension but he couldn’t differentiate sexual tension from the tension generated by animosity even more when it comes to Steve and Natasha.

Steve looked at Bucky and smiled, nodding.

S: Yes, Kitty has been asking who already has the courage to leave and all this people volunteered.

B: That's great. That's a good sign, right?

S: Yes. A great sign. I hope that soon, we will all be out there, rebuilding and cultivating all this land again. I'm sorry, but I have to go, this is just the first group of the day.

B: Alright, go there. Good luck.

Bucky looked at the people in the queue and smiled.

B: Good luck everyone!

The people in line smiled at Bucky.

S: Romanoff.

Steve said as he walked by Natasha to compliment her.

Natasha was silent and Steve passed very close to her.

S: We still need to talk.

It was all Steve said to her. He whispered close to her ear as he passed her.

Natasha said nothing, she just walked into the bunker, while Steve and the mutants took the citizens out.

Natasha went to join Peter Parker in the command center and Bucky continued down the hall, he was going to go back to his sector, but in the middle of the way, he was intercepted by Sharon
Sharon: Good morning, Bucky.

B: Hi, Sharon. Good morning. How are you today?

Sharon: I don’t know.

Bucky frowned.

Sharon: Nothing to worry about, please. I just think I screwed up things.

B: What did you do, Sharon?

The look of fear on Bucky's face made Sharon feel bad.

Sharon: Please, come in here.

Sharon pulled Bucky by the hand and made him go into her dorm, then she closed the door.

B: What is it, Sharon? I'm getting worried.

Sharon: I asked Steve to have a baby with me.

Bucky was speechless, looking at Sharon, he couldn’t assimilate the information he received, maybe he heard it wrong.

B: What?

Bucky asked quietly.

Sharon paced the room, then she stopped and looked at Bucky.

Sharon: I asked him because I thought it would have no problems. He owes me that.

B: He owes you a baby???

Bucky raised his eyebrows.

Sharon: He owes me a life.

B: Sharon...

Bucky sighed and shook his head as he stared at the floor, then he took a deep breath to say in the best way he could that she wasn’t using the reason.

B: Let's get things straight here. I thought you already understood that what happened to you was an accident, triggered by a crazy doctor we had here and Bruce Banner who stopped taking his drugs. Sharon, Hulk killed Maggie, it wasn’t Steve. You can’t just blame him over something like that, he lost her, just like you did. You have faced a pain that no one can imagine, both physical and emotional, all at the same time.

Sharon: I know.

Sharon said in a lower tone.
B: You always knew he felt something for Natasha. Deep down, you knew it. You told him that.

Sharon nodded.

B: See? Steve and Natasha love each other and they're together now and they're happy with their kids. You shouldn't have made such a request. Steve owes you nothing. You broke up with him and you don't deserve to win what you want through emotional blackmail. You're so much better than that, Sharon.

Sharon: Now that you've said it like that, I feel bad, really bad. I just want some company. And it's not Steve that I need. I don't want him, I want a baby. Someone to take care of.

B: Well, I always bring Sarah to be with you and you can offer help to Pepper to take care of the twins. Or you can still work in the nursery if you want.

Sharon: No one would leave me near children, after what I did to Sarah.

B: Leave it to me. And, Sharon, we have an orphanage, remember? Children who need love and attention.

Sharon: There are no babies there.

B: There are not, but they are children. And if you think you'll only be complete with a baby in your life, you should look for the traditional way... Meet someone.

Sharon: I don't want to meet anyone.

B: Why not?

Sharon: Because it takes a lot of work, going out there, meeting people, trying to find things in common with them, create bonds, chemistry and stuff... It's extremely tiring, just to imagine about that.

B: But it should happen naturally, without planning.

Sharon: Just the fact that you're telling me to meet someone, it takes out the naturalness of that. I'm not saying I'm closed to the world, to new possibilities but now I just want to dedicate myself to someone else, someone who deserves it and when I think about who deserves it, I can only think of a baby, like Sarah. There's no way a baby can let me down.

Bucky took a deep breath and he understands that she is not having any psychotic outbreak and she explained the basics of her decision to want a child.

B: What did Steve say?

Sharon: Nothing. He wanted to say no, I'm sure, but he didn't know how, so I told him to think more, because I knew his mind wouldn't stay quiet until he found a way to accept it.

B: Steve wouldn't accept that.
Sharon: I know, but he would struggle a lot.

Bucky ran his hand over his chin.

B: God, did he tell Natasha? That would explain the mood of the two earlier today...

Sharon: Were they fighting? I didn’t want to cause that.

B: What did you expect?

Sharon shrugged.

Sharon: I'm sorry.

B: Ok...

Sharon: I'll talk to Steve.

B: You'll only be able to speak with him at the end of the day, he's busy with the expeditions now.

Sharon: Maybe I should look for Natasha... To apologize.

B: No... Don’t talk to her. I'm not sure if Steve really told her, and if he didn’t, it will only make things worse.

Sharon: I'm really sorry.

B: I know. Don’t worry, we'll figure it out.

Bucky walked to the door.

Sharon: Bucky?

Bucky stopped and looked at Sharon.

Sharon: I thought of you too... To have a baby.

Bucky raised his eyebrows.

Sharon: Because you are a good and honest man. And... Very beautiful too.

Sharon smiled.

B: I wasn’t always that way.

Sharon: Yes, you were. You only spent some time dominated by bad people, but your essence is good. You would be a good father too.

B: Why didn’t you come to me first, then?

Sharon: Because you'd say no. I went where I thought it would be easier to get what I want.

B: Sharon, I just can’t go to bed with you because of Juliana, but if you needed a donor of...
Sharon: Sperm.

Sharon added, laughing, because Bucky was embarrassed to say the word.

**B: Yeah. I would have donated, like it’s no problem for me.**

Bucky opened the door and walked out of the room, he leaned against the door and looked at Sharon again.

**B: I’m still up to this if you really want to.**

Sharon smiled and nodded.

**Sharon: I'll think about it. Thank you.**

Bucky smiled and closed the door.

Bucky is different from Steve in that sense, he doesn’t see artificial insemination as he is generating a life and being responsible for the baby for the rest of his life, he sees as a scientific process.

Bucky didn’t even consider what Juliana would say about that issue, he thinks it's his body and he decides what to do with it. And he is not at all wrong. If it was to donate a liver, or a kidney, the decision is all his as well. Why would it be any different with his sperm?

...

After leaving Sharon’s room, Bucky headed for the production sector, but on the way, he decided to stop by the infirmary.

One of the nurses looked at Bucky.

- **She's with the doctor now.**

The nurse said dryly and before Bucky asked anything, because she already knew who he came after.

**B: Good morning to you too, Berta.**

Bucky smiled and the nurse kept her face serious, she was always unhappy, no matter the day.

Bucky looked at one of the boxes and saw Dr. Cho, giving instructions to Juliana about the patient in the box they were in.

Bucky spent a long time admiring Juliana there, he was proud of her evolution at work, she was already assuming more responsibilities and already acts as a supervisor when the supervisor has to leave for some reason.

Bucky really wanted to be able to kiss her now, but he's not going to mess her up at work.

Luckily, before he gave up and left, Juliana felt herself being watched and looked at the main area of the infirmary, she looked at Bucky who winked at her.

Juliana shook her head and then gave a small smile. Bucky nodded to say goodbye and Juliana motioned for him to wait a little.

Bucky nodded and pointed to the hallway next to the infirmary, Juliana nodded and Bucky left the
infirmary and went to the hall to wait for her.

Cho: Juliana?

Ju: Yes?

Cho: Can you check if this patient is taking the antibiotic at the times I prescribed? It’s important to keep the schedule.

Ju: Yes, ma'am.

Cho: I know that it runs away from your standard medication schedule and maybe it will upset the other nurses, but we need that rigor with that patient. It's seven days in a row.

Ju: I'll take care of his medication myself.

Cho: I didn’t mean it for you to assume.

Ju: If I don’t, no one else will.

Cho: They just want to shift and get rid of work.

Ju: Some of them yes.

Juliana smiled.

Ju: Doctor, I need to use the bathroom, do you mind?

Cho: Of course not. Go.

Ju: Thank you.

Juliana left the box and placed the clipboard she held on the table.

Juliana glanced at Nurse Berta.

Ju: I'll be right back, Berta.

- Uhm. I know.

Juliana frowned a little, but continued to smile, she went to the next corridor and when she saw Bucky, she smiled even more.

Bucky hugged Juliana's waist and turned her body to press her back against the wall. Juliana put her arms around Bucky's neck and she kissed him as Bucky pressed his body against hers.

B: How much time do we have?

Bucky said without ceasing to kiss Juliana.

Ju: Time?

Bucky gave Juliana two pecks and began to kiss the line of her chin and then her neck. Juliana felt a shiver run through her spine.
Ju: Bucky...

Bucky slid his lips to Juliana's neck and she shrugged and tried to push his shoulders back.

Ju: Bucky!

Bucky pushed his lips away and looked at Juliana.

Ju: Not here.

B: Let's go to my room.

Ju: I'm working and so are you.

B: We take a break. Let's go...

Bucky had no such intentions, it was to be just a kiss, but he now gets very horny when he's near Juliana. Juliana feels the same, but in public places, she controls herself more.

Bucky held Juliana's wrist and walked, pulling her, but Juliana paused and pulled him back.

Ju: I can't!

B: Ten minutes?

Juliana shook her head.

Bucky came back to her and hugged her waist again. Bucky squeezed her so tightly that Juliana could feel Bucky's entire body, including his cock, signaling that he wanted her.

Ju: I'll see you later.

B: Are you sure?

Ju: Yes. I'm sorry. I promise. I need to go back now.

Juliana took Bucky's face and kissed him, then she returned to the infirmary.

... Meanwile, in the Guardian's ship, they were all sitting and bored, waiting for Carol Danvers to come out of the bathroom with another uniform she was trying on.

Carol opened the door and appeared wearing a black bikini and a wine scarf around her neck.

Drax: YES! YES!

Gamora: Won't you feel cold wearing just that?

Carol Danvers: I'm just testing the possibilities. What do you think, Quill?

Peter was looking down, he looked sideways and then at Carol, but he could feel Gamora looking at him in a threatening way.

PQ: I think there's a bit of less.
Drax: I think there's too much!

G: It's nothing new to any of you, we've all seen her naked.

Drax: Thank God for that!

CD: Rocket?

RR: I think the scarf has no sense.

CD: But I'm going to be practically naked without it.

Rocket hit his forehead.

RR: It doesn't make much difference.

Rocket whispered to himself, annoyed.

CD: What?

PQ: The scarf doesn't help much... Believe me.

CD: I'll try the other.

Carol went back into the bathroom and five minutes later, she came out wearing a black swimsuit and the wine scarf, she tied to her head this time.

CD: Tchamram!

RR: Why the scarf again?? Is she crazy?

CD: If I wear only the swimsuit, it's going to look like I'm going to the pool, not that I'm a super hero. I know what's missing!

PQ: A cape!

Peter said excitedly.

G: Cape?

PQ: Superman has a cape. And Batman.

G: They are fictitious.

Gamora rolled her eyes.

CD: I don't like capes, but maybe a mask!
PQ: Masks are cool.

RR: Everyone knows who you are, why a mask?

CD: Not everyone.

Carol came back in the bathroom and put on a black mask, she saw a pair of gloves in a box and decided to wear it too because they were also the same color as the swimsuit and the mask.

CD: What about now?

Groot: I'm Groot.

CD: Did you like it, Groot? I knew you would.

Carol smiled excitedly.

G: But maybe you should take that scarf off your head.

RR: That's what I'm saying!!! What's the thing with the scarf? Why does not anyone listen to me?

CD: It's the only thing I have that's mine. I want the scarf!

G: All right, but let me change that.

Gamora got up and walked over to Carol, she took the scarf from her head and tied it to Carol's waist.

Peter cocked his head and put his hand on his chin, analyzing the composition.

PQ: I like it!

Drax: I prefer the first one!

RR: Can we all get on with our lives now?

G: What do you want to do, Rocket?

RR: Since there is no more army to fight, let's hunt!

Drax: Yes. Meat on Earth is yummy!

G: You can go.
CD: Wait for me! I want to show my super heroine look around.

Drax: I want a soup from that crawling creature that has poison that kills humans.

CD: It's not normal to eat snakes, Drax.

Drax: Since when are we normal?

CD: True, I don’t know why I bother to question...

Carol said as she left the ship with Drax and Rocket.

...Meanwhile, in an isolated corner of planet Earth, a figure appeared at the entrance to a cave, located in the middle of a mountain.

- Hello? Anybody there?

This figure decided to enter the cave, and the more he walked, more traces that someone else was there, or luckily, is still living there.

- Hello!

The person spotted a heap on the floor near a fire pit, that the flames seemed to be at the end.

As he approached the light of the fire, the person could see better and identified that the heap was also a person.

- Hey! Are you alive?

The person came closer and saw that the person had no reaction, that person was curled up, lying on his side, hugging his knees.

- Are you hurt?

The person reached out to touch the person huddled on the floor and was shocked when the person held his wrist tightly.

- Please don’t.

- Then you’re alive. Are you the one they call the Hulk?

Bruce: Who's asking?

- Me.

Bruce: Who is "me"?

- Adam. Warlock.
Don't pay attention only to the romance Steve and Natasha. There are more going on now, like Torunn's stone, Adam, Carol Danvers... Don't forget that.
Chapter 52

Chapter Notes

Finally I managed to translate all the chapters that I wrote on my language. Now, all the next chapters are a surprise for everybody.

B: Adam Warlock?
A: Yes.
B: And how do you know me, Mr. Warlock? Stupid question, everybody knows me.
A: You're right. You are well known here and out there.
B: Out there?
A: Yes. You have great strength and you are an important piece in the war that is about to come upon on Earth.
B: The war is already here.
A: That wasn’t a war, it was a test. Thanos was testing the humans. He wants to know what you are capable of, so he sent his most powerful army to see if he could exterminate you.
B: From what you are saying, he is now aware that we are very weak.
A: On the contrary. Most of the planets dominated by Pyrons did not survive the infestation. Earth won this little battle, but it was just that. A battle.
Bruce coughed a little and squinted, looking better at the man claiming to be Adam Warlock, he was a tall, blond and had bright eyes.
B: Adam, right? Can I call you that?
A: Yes.
B: Why are you telling me all this? Why did you come after me? Did someone tell you to look for me?
Adam shook his head.
A: I came because the whole universe is at great risk.
B: Where did you come from? Asgard?
A: I came from far away, I came from a plan, which you on earth would call a spiritual plan.
Bruce remained staring at Adam, expecting something from what he said to make sense.
B: Spiritual plan? You mean you’re a spirit? Am I dead?

Bruce asked, showing no emotion. The question about him being dead was for real and if Adam confirmed his death, he would be more than relieved.

A: I am something more than a spirit.

B: You look very human to me.

Adam gave a small smile.

A: That warrior, friend of yours. The Asgardian. He also looks very human. Just because we are not from the Earth does not mean that we can not have the same image as you.

B: That's true, but...

A: You have doubts and questions, I know.

Adam sat down by the fire.

A: And I'll answer them all, but first, I need to tell you why this is happening. Have you heard about the infinity stones?

B: Yes. I've been close to one, I guess. From the description we have of the stones, it matches with a stone we find here.

A: Yes. You saw the Tesseract.

B: That's right. Why does Thanos want to destroy the Earth?

A: So, Bruce. Thanos does not want to destroy the Earth exactly, he wants the stones and the Earth has at least three important stones that he needs to have them all.

B: Three? Tony searched for energies like Tesseract’s and never found anything.

A: But they are here and Thanos knows it.

B: And delivering to him to save the Earth would be wrong for what reason?

A: I can guarantee that he would spare no one. He tried to negotiate the other stones once, but he was cheated and this made him no longer trust, he thinks it safer to eliminate any threat. Aside from the fact that Earth is very feared out there because almost no one knows about Earth. If Thanos conquers the Earth, he will have the whole universe at his feet, without it needing a brute force.

B: I understand.

A: And if he keeps all the stones, he will become omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, indestructible, an immortal.

B: Like God?

A: Exact.
B: It's too much power for one being.
A: I agree with you.
B: He needs to be stopped.
A: There is nothing we can do to prevent his progress.
Bruce frowned.
B: I don’t understand, you came to help, right?
A: I came because we might have a chance. Yes. I came to ask you to not hide anymore.
B: What can I do? People don’t want me around.
A: They may not want you, but they need you.

Bruce sighed again.

A: I need you to warn your people that Thanos is coming here now.
B: Now?
A: Yes. He's moving to Earth, but he's not with the Space stone, the Tesseract, in case. Then he travels at the speed of his ship. Earth will have enough time to rebuild, but the Earth can’t lower their guard at any time. Thanos makes quick allies, everyone wants his pity and to prove loyalty, they can attack anyone who is of Thanos's interest.
B: How long before he gets here? Four months?
Adam smiled.
B: Two?
A: A few years. Maybe two or three, but you need to leave now, Bruce Banner. Go back and tell them, tell them to prepare and protect the stones at any cost. Oh, and tell Dr. Strange that he is not protected as he thinks he is, in the place he is hiding.
B: Who?
A: Find him.
B: But I don’t who that guy is.
A: You will find out.
B: I'm not a detective.
A: But you know the right people for it. I need to go, Bruce. There is one more place on Earth that I need to be before leaving.
B: Hm...

Bruce closed his eyes for two seconds and when he reopened, Adam was gone. Bruce blinked his eyes a few more times and looked around the cave, searching for Adam.

Was he going crazy after years of solitude, isolated in that cave? Was Adam just a figment of his imagination? Bruce frowned and then looked at the ground of the cave, there was a mark of Adam's footprints, which made him sure that the visit was real, but that didn’t make him sure that he should obey his orders and get back.

...

A few weeks later...

F: Torunn! Torunn!

Francis knocked on the door to Thor's dorm.
The door opened and Francis stared at Torunn's father, frowning at him.

Thor: Say, hawk's cub.
F: Can Torunn come out?
Thor: With whom?
F: With me.
Thor: She's engaged to James Rogers.
F: Is she?
Thor: Yes. Why? Did you want to ask for her hand too?
F: N-no. I just want to play.
T: Father!
Torunn pushed Thor.
T: Go back inside.
Torunn said to her father.
Thor: But I am the father!
T: Mother is calling you! Go. Go.
Thor obeyed.

Torunn was still inside her dorm, she pulled the door to shut and left only a corner open to look at Francis.

T: So, what do you want?

F: Let's play?

T: I can’t play now.

F: What are you doing?

T: It's none of your business.

Francis frowned.

T: Look, go get James and meet me there in the tree in the central square in ten minutes.

F: Are you really going to come?

T: Yes. Go call him, I need to teach him how to fly.

F: Fly?

T: Yes. And maybe you'll fly too if you be a good boy.

F: Me? Are you crazy?

Torunn shoved Francis.

T: If you don’t want to, that's fine, you'll be the only one of us without flying. Me and James are going to be super heroes and you're not.

Francis frowned.

T: Go!!

Francis headed for Steve's room, he knocked on the door and waited to be answered.

Steve opened the door, holding Sarah in his lap. At least he was trying to hold her, Sarah was tossing about and flailing in Steve's lap.

Sarah: Mamma! Mamma!

S: Hi Francis. You need anything?

F: Is James here?

Steve almost let Sarah fall to the floor, she was shaking herself so hard that she escaped from his hands and for fear of her being injured in the fall, Steve grabbed her by the ankle with great force.

Francis held Sarah's head upside down, he held it in reflex, thinking she was going to fall.

Sarah screamed and started crying desperately, Steve knew he had caught her in the wrong way and
right the moment she turned upside down, he could have twisted her foot.

Steve laid Sarah on his lap and looked at her.

**S:** Daughter, I'm sorry. I’m so sorry. You don’t stay still. Did you get hurt? It was just a scare.

**F:** Is James here?

Steve ran his hand over Sarah's face to wipe away her tears and try to keep her calm.

**S:** Francis, I can’t talk right now.

**F:** But I want to talk to James.

**S:** James is not here.

**F:** Where is he?

Sarah was still screaming in despair.

**S:** Sh... Francis, he’s in his room, I guess.

**F:** I thought here was his room.

Francis scratched his head in confusion.

**S:** He's with his mother. Now, excuse me, I need to see Sarah.

Steve came into the room with Sarah and laid her on the bed to see if he hadn’t hurt her bad.

... 

Francis went to Natasha's room and knocked on the door.

**F:** James!

James jumped out of bed.

**J:** It's my friend, Mom!

Natasha was in the bathroom, cutting her own hair.

**N:** Don’t get excited, you're not going anywhere, without me.

**J:** My friend came to play with me! Please, Mom. Can he come in?

**N:** Yes.

James cheered and jumped to the door, he opened it and looked at Francis.

**J:** Hi friend!

**F:** James, let's go to the tree. Torunn said she's coming soon.

**J:** I can’t leave.
F: Too bad.

J: Don’t you want to play in here?

F: There's nothing to do in there. The central square is cooler.

J: We can play drawing or statue.

F: It's annoying. I'll play with Torunn then. Goodbye.

Francis ran to the central square, and James watched from the doorway.

James went back into the room and closed the door.

Natasha heard the conversation and looked at James through the reflection of the mirror.

N: I didn’t say you're not going to play, I said you wouldn’t go out without me.

J: Are you going to take me there to play?

N: Yes. I'm almost done. I think I deserve a smile, right?

James smiled.

Natasha looked at the sink full of hair.

N: I clean it up later.

Natasha left the bathroom and held out her hand to James.

N: Let's go.

James took Natasha's hand and left the room excitedly with his mother. When they reached the central square, Torunn and Francis were already there.

T: Oh no! James brought his mother. Now we can’t train.

F: Why?

T: Because it's a secret.

From a distance, Natasha watched James's friends and she whispered to James.

N: Go play with your friends, I'll be here.

Natasha looked across the square, looking for Laura or Pepper, or anyone known to talk while waiting for James to play, but there was no one there, so she decided to sit on one of the wooden benches, she turned around and went to a bench that is nearer the limits of the central square.

There was a woman sitting on the bench and Natasha recognized her.

N: Barbara?

The woman looked at Natasha and smiled.
N: Hi.

Natasha sat down beside her and felt bad. Barbara was with her in the Pyrons' battle, Natasha heard her story and knew what she expected with the war, recover her sons who were dominated by the Pyrons.

Natasha felt bad because she hadn’t met her after what had happened and knew she hadn’t reached her goal.

N: So... How are you?

Barb: Living and you?

N: Surviving.

Barb: Every day, isn’t it?

Barbara looked at her adopted children playing in the square with other children.

N: Those are the ones you adopted here?

Barb: Yes. They are my only comfort.

N: Your gesture of adopting those children was very noble, Barbara, I'm sure they are very happy to have you.

Natasha kept talking to Barbara.

...

- Steve?

Steve looked at the dorm’s door.

S: Sharon. I'm sorry, I can’t talk about that issue now...

Sharon: I know, I just came because I heard Sarah crying.

S: I almost dropped her on the floor and it scared her.

Sharon entered the room, even without being invited, she stood next to Steve and looked at Sarah.

S: It's nothing, it was just the scare, I guess.

Sharon: I heard her cry before, but it wasn’t like that and she’s crying almost one hour straight and she's been crying a lot in the last few days.

Steve looked at Sarah's ankle and it was reddened.

Steve frowned, worried.

S: She really got hurt. I hurt her, dammit.

Sharon: Sarah? This is your friend, Sharon. Hey, baby it's Ok. Come with me.
Sharon caught Sarah in her lap, but that made Sarah cry even more, because she was scared. Sarah reached out for Steve.

S: Sorry, Sharon. I'd better take her to the doctor, I didn’t know she got hurt.

Sharon: Yes, of course. She's crying too much, take her there. Keep me informed.

S: Yes, excuse me. Can you close the door for me, please?

Steve said, already leaving the room with Sarah.

Sharon: Yes. Of course.

... 

- Natasha? Sorry to interrupt.

N: Juliana?

Natasha was surprised to see Juliana there.

Ju: Sorry to disturb, but Steve asked me to...

Natasha didn’t even hear the whole sentence, just to hear "Steve" she took a deep breath and became angry.

Ju: To call you.

N: Why did he order you to call me? I can’t go now, if he wants to talk to me, he has to come here.

Ju: But he can’t leave her side now.

N: Who you talking about?

Natasha frowned.

Ju: Sarah. You didn’t know?

N: Sarah? What I didn’t know? What happened?

Ju: She got hurt when...

Juliana interrupted the sentence because Natasha got up the moment she spoke the word "hurt."

N: Is she in the infirmary?

Ju: Yes.

N: I'll go there.

Natasha looked at James with Torunn and Francis.

N: James!
James came running to Natasha.

J: Yes, Mama?

N: We need to go to the infirmary.

J: But I just got here!

N: I know, but...

J: Mom, you said you were going to let me play!

N: James...

J: I don’t want to go!

Natasha looked into his eyes.

N: I'll trust you one more time. Don’t leave here.

J: I will not leave. I promise.

N: Okay. I'll be back to pick you.

James ran back to his friends.

... 

Natasha arrived at the infirmary and she didn’t even have to search for the box Sarah was in because she was still crying out loud.

Natasha stepped into the box and looked at Sarah on the stretcher.

N: Sarah.

Sarah: Mamma...

Steve looked at Natasha, but Natasha just wanted to know if Sarah was all right now.

N: I'm here.

Natasha approached Sarah and put her hand on her forehead.

N: It's okay.


Natasha looked at Juliana and she nodded, indicating that Natasha could get her.

Natasha took Sarah in her arms and hugged her, Sarah stopped crying as she went to Natasha's lap.

Ju: See?

Juliana smiled and looked at Steve.

Steve shook his head.
N: What happened? Where did she hurt?

S: Her ankle.

Natasha looked at Sarah's ankle and saw it was bruised, she looked at Steve.

S: It was an accident, she was struggling in my lap and slipped. Anyway, it was my fault, there’s no use for me want to find some justification. I grabbed her by her ankle and I hurt her.

Natasha heard Steve and kissed one side of Sarah's forehead.

N: It would be worse if she did fall with her head on the floor.

Steve looked at Natasha, but she looked away.

N: I'm sure you didn’t mean that.

Steve nodded.

S: I thought I've broken or twisted her ankle.

Steve sighed, with a lot of guilty.

Ju: It wasn’t the case. This bruise is from the pressure of your hand, but nothing that prevents her from walking. She’ll be fine.

S: But she cried too much.

Ju: Like I said before, she wanted Natasha. She was calling for her and not complaining of pain.

S: I'm sorry, Natasha.

The "I'm sorry" sounded like an apology for Sarah getting hurt, but also it seemed to be all over the thing with Sharon's request. Natasha could feel it, but now she doesn’t want to know.

Sarah: Miiie. Mie.

N: Jamie? Your brother is playing right now.

S: Is she free to go, Juliana?

Ju: I'll just put a cold compress on her ankle because it's bruised and she may be in pain, but don’t worry, she's fine. I'll be right back.

...

F: Okay, James's mother left, and so far you haven’t told us how to fly.

J: How to fly?

T: Yes, James. Do you remember what I said? If I can, you too.
F: Why would we be able to do it?

T: Because we all are daughter and sons of super heroes. Of course my dad is the best of them all because he's the strongest and that makes me the strongest too.

Francis rolled his eyes.

T: Do you want to know how I learned?

J: Yes.

T: So I always managed to fly a little, but I would get back to the ground very fast, until one day, when I was here, I climbed on the highest branch and I unbalanced and fell.

Torunn told the story and gestured, explaining what had happened.

T: I don’t know how or why, but I managed to stop in the air. Like that.

Torunn raised her hands in the air and moved one leg away from the other.

T: I stood still in the air and then I could fly back to the branch and now I can fly whenever I want.

F: What a big lie!

T: That's true.

F: Then show to us.

T: Okay.

Torunn climbed the tree.

Francis and James watched from the floor.

Torunn paused on the top branch and jumped.

James closed his eyes, thinking he was going to see Torunn crash on the floor and Francis gasped to see Torunn floating to them.

T: You can look now, James.

James opened his eyes and saw Torunn floating.

F: Incredible! I want to learn!

J: Me too!

Torunn landed on the ground and pointed to the tree.

T: So go up.

Francis climbed up the tree.

James is still afraid to climb the tree to the last branch, although he didn’t say anything. James
climbed after Francis, but he was slower.

**T:** Francis, wait for James.

Francis watched James coming to the branch.

**T:** Okay. Ready?

Francis nodded.

**T:** I'll count to three and the you two jump. One, two... Three!

...

After Juliana left the box, Sarah laid her head on Natasha's shoulder and she was very calm and quiet.

Natasha sat on the edge of the stretcher and laid her face against Sarah's head, then she looked down because Steve was staring at her non-stop.

**S:** She misses you.

Steve was feeling nervous about being around Natasha, in the weeks that passed, she walked away from him and was avoiding being around Sarah to not have much contact with him.

Steve wants her back, but he knows the time is inopportune to be trying anything, so he just wants to try to maintain a healthy relationship with her, because of James and Sarah who is still very attached to her.

There was a silence in the box for a few seconds and despite having more people outside the box, it seemed that there was no one else besides them in that box.

**N:** I miss her too.

Natasha said in a low tone and almost choked to say the sentence, because she didn’t want to talk to Steve, it still hurts and it's still dangerous to be near him.

**S:** I miss you too.

_Idiot!_ Steve said to himself in thought. He shouldn’t be trying anything now, he just came to this conclusion to not make Natasha uncomfortable and to not make her move away from Sarah again. He hates feeling like he is pushing too much.

Steve shook his head.

**S:** I'm sorry. That came out unintentionally. I do miss you, but... I don’t want you to think that I called you here for this. Sarah was really calling for you, she calls for you every day.

Natasha kept looking down and sighed.

**S:** Natasha?

Steve felt his chest tighten, he hates this situation and this mood between them, he wants to kiss her now, he wants to touch her now and no matter how much his mind says for him to respect Natasha's decision, his heart is crying out to have her back and for him to do something to make it happen.
S: I...

Natasha looked into Steve's eyes.

N: Don’t.

S: But I... Listen... It's been very difficult without you.

N: Steve, I don’t want to hear about it right now. I'm here for Sarah.

Steve lowered his head and nodded, indicating that he wasn’t going to insist.

Natasha watched his face. Steve was so easy to read and he is very easy to feel and she could feel his pain and that is what she fears because she always feels compassion for his suffering and it can make her weak.

N: I... I’ll see her more often, I moved away because I needed to. She has nothing to do with what happened between us. Neither she or James.

S: I know. I just wanted to... Can we talk normally?

N: Normally, Steve?

S: I meant… to not pretend that we don’t exist, because I... I can be without touching you, Natasha, but I can’t stay without talking to you, I love you too much for that.

N: Stop...

Natasha stood with Sarah in her lap and walked with her through the box.

Natasha made negative with her head.

Steve looked at her all the time, he also knows how to read her signs, he knows she felt something with his words, he could get a chance to break a brick from the wall she built and reach her.

Steve walked behind her and laid a hand on Natasha's arm and with a single touch, Natasha shivered and closed her eyes, she bit her lower lip.

No. Natasha thought.

N: Don’t do that.

S: I love you, Natasha.

Steve slid his hand down on Natasha's arm, which made her eyes narrow and her breathe get deeper. Steve touched her other arm and as she didn’t pull his hands away or try to dodge, he took another step and he was going to hug her all from behind, but Juliana opened the curtain of the box.

Ju: Natasha!

Steve and Natasha looked at Juliana.

The two were lost by their chemistry, they have this habit of isolating the outside world when they’re together, so they weren’t listening to what was happening outside the box, but now that they were interrupted, the audition came back to work.
N: Is that James screaming?

Natasha frowned.

**Ju:** Yes.

Natasha was listening to the cry of two children and one she recognized as being James, she handed Sarah over to Steve's lap and left the box running.

Natasha saw James in another box, with two nurses examining him.

N: James! What happened?

Natasha stepped into James's box and saw James's arm bent over to the other side. Natasha was in shock.

Steve was coming right behind Natasha and he saw Francis screaming in pain in the other box as well. Steve was trying to figure out what had happened for James and Francis got hurt like that.

**J:** Mommy! It hurts!

**N:** You're hurting him!!

Natasha screamed at the nurses.

**Ju:** Natasha, you better stay outside the box.

Juliana took Natasha's arm.

- Yes, please give space.

**N:** No!!

**J:** Mommy, don’t leave me!

**N:** James!

Natasha saw the nurses holding onto James's arm and she pushed Juliana to release herself, she was about to attack the nurses.

**Ju:** Steve, please, you have to hold Natasha.

Juliana took Sarah in her lap and Steve grabbed Natasha by the waist, which didn’t work, so he had to try to immobilize her. With difficulty, Steve pulled Natasha out of the box.

**S:** Natasha, wait, they'll help him.

**N:** They’re hurting him! What are you doing???

**Ju:** His arm is twisted, Natasha. They have to put it back in place.

Juliana closed the curtain of the box.

**J:** Mommy! Please, mamma!
Natasha looked at the curtain of the box with her heart in her hand.

**Ju:** *It's better if you not look, he'll feel the pain, but he'll be fine after.*

Natasha could hear the sound of James's arm being put back into place and she looked down. Natasha could almost feel the pain of James, she closed her eyes and just wished she was in his place. She knows the pain of a twisted arm.

Natasha turned to Steve on instinct and buried her face in his chest. Steve put his arms around her and ran his hand over her head, trying to comfort her.

**S:** *He is going to be okay.*
- We're done here!

The nurses announced and opened the curtain of the box.

Steve looked at James, who had stopped screaming now.

**S: He's fine, Nat. See?**

Steve grabbed Natasha's arms and pulled her away.

Natasha looked at Steve, but she didn’t want to look at James now, she didn’t want to console him for the pain he felt because she didn’t want him to have been through a pain like that.

**J: Mommy?**

James still called her in a tearful voice, Natasha sighed and Steve looked at James.

**N: Alright.**

Natasha seems to have awakened when James called her, she took a step back from Steve's arms and she pulled her arms, reminding herself that she was still angry with Steve.

Natasha stepped into the box and looked at James.

**N: Hey...**

**J: Mom, it hurts a lot.**

**N: I know, baby, I'm so sorry for the pain you felt. How's the arm now? Is it really hurting too much yet?**

James made negative with his head and stretched his other arm to Natasha, begging for a hug. Natasha sat on the stretcher and hugged him.

**Ju: Steve, get her please, I'll have to help immobilize Francis.**

Steve took Sarah in his lap and looked at Francis's box, he was crying too much yet and calling for his mother, the two nurses who looked after James, were now in his box, trying to immobilize him.

**S: Francis?? Hey, my friend, you have to be quiet, I know it hurts, but the more you fight, the more pain you'll feel.**

**F: Call my mom, please!**

**S: I'll call her right now, but I need you to be quiet, okay? These ladies are here to help you.**

**Ju: Dr. Cho said that she's just finishing an emergency at F Wing, she asked us to immobilize him for a while, and then he'll have X-rays.**

Steve left the box to call the W.T. of Laura Barton, he explained that he was in the infirmary and Laura said she already was warned and that she's on the way.
Steve went back to Francis's box.

S: Your mother is coming now.

F: Uncle Steve?

S: Yes, Francis?

F: It’s a little better now.

S: See? I told you... Stay quiet. I'll stay here until your mother shows up.

- Uncle Steve?

Steve looked back and looked at Torunn, who was standing at the entrance to the infirmary.

T: Are they okay?

S: Yes, they will be fine. Are you hurt too?

Torunn made negative with her head.

S: Torunn, how did this happen?

Torunn stared at Steve for a long time.

T: I need to go, my mom is calling me now.

Steve frowned a little and watched Torunn leave.

Steve approached James's box.

S: James?

James looked at Steve.

S: Are you better, champ?

James nodded.

S: What happened?

James looked at Natasha and she looked at him.

N: Tell the truth.

J: We were playing on the tree and we fell.

N: The both of you? At the same time?

J: Yes, we just fell on the ground.

James finished the sentence, staring at the floor.

S: You have to be more careful. Thankfully it was nothing worse than that. Francis will have
his arm immobilized for a long time.

Steve said in a calm and educational tone, he didn’t notice anything wrong in what James told him, but Natasha knows him very well, she knows that he doesn’t look in her or Steve’s eyes when he is telling a lie, but she wasn’t going to press him now, he was still scared and so was she.

... Torunn was running down the hall toward her dorm and when she reached the dorm, she opened the door abruptly and saw her mother standing, talking to her father, Thor, and they both looked worried.

Jane looked at Torunn at the door. Torunn didn’t move, she kept her hand on the doorknob and was staring her mother, somehow her parents already knew something had happened.

Jane: Torunn. Were you with James and Francis?

T: Yes.

Jane: Do you know what happened to them?

T: Yes.

Jane: Did you have anything to do with it?

Torunn was silent and Jane understood as a yes, she sighed and looked at Thor.

Jane: I don’t know what to do anymore. I don’t know… I just can’t.

Thor: Easy, Jane.

Jane: Easy Jane? She's out of control, Thor. She keep running away from our room, she stay messing around the bunker all day long. I told you that you should be more severe with her.

Thor: What's that got to do with me?

Jane: She's your daughter!

Thor: These Earth children are very fragile. It’s not her fault.

Jane: Thor, for God's sake! Do not say things like in front of her, we've talked about this. We have to do something!

Thor: Like what?

Jane: She has to be punished.

Thor: Again?

Jane: Yes, Thor. Again and every time she behaves badly, she has to be punished.

Thor: If you say so.

Jane: Yes, that's what I said.
Thor: All right.

Thor sighed and looked down as Jane eyed him with raised eyebrows, waiting for him to take some action.

Thor hates to punish Torunn.

Thor: Torunn... Your mother is right, this time you crossed...

Thor said as he lifted his head and looked in Torunn's direction, but he was speechless to see that Torunn was no longer there at the door.

Jane: She ran away. Again! Go after her.

T: I did not run away! I am here.

Torunn had just gone into the hallway, she returned to the dorm and entered the room.

Thor: Torunn, you're grounded.

T: I just wanted to teach them how to fly, like I do. What's wrong with that?

Jane looked at Thor.

Jane: They're not like you, Torunn.

T: How not? His parents are super heroes, like my father.

Jane: But Torunn, you were not born here on the same planet as them, you have a family that has powers. In order for James and Francis have powers, their parents would have too.

T: Only the father.

Jane: No, the father and the mother.

T: What's your power then?

Jane frowned a little.

T: What is yours?

Jane: I... I don't have one, you know that, Torunn. I'm from Earth, like James and Francis. I can hurt myself too.

T: But you said the father and the mother must have power, I have power and you should have some.

Jane looked at Thor.

Thor: This is only for Earth children, daughter.

T: So I don’t get hurt?

Jane: I think you can get hurt, but you're very strong.
T: It's so strange that you have no power. You should have.

Thor: She doesn’t need power, she has both of us to protect her.

Jane: It's not the time to talk now, you're grounded. We're leaving and you're staying here.

Thor: No escaping.

Jane: I'll lock the door.

T: Okay. Alright!

Jane and Thor left the room and left Torunn alone and locked.

Laura: Francis??

Laura appeared in the infirmary, out of breath, she looked at Steve.

S: Hi Laura, they took Francis to do an x-ray, it looks like his arm is really broke, he's at G Wing.

Laura: Oh my God, I'll go there immediately.

S: Go.

Laura was about to walk away but she looked at James.

Laura: How are you, my love?

Natasha ran her hand over James's head and looked at Laura.

N: He's fine now. It was a torsion.

L: Those children! I swear to God!

Laura shook her head and sighed, then she ran to board the elevator.

Natasha looked at James.

N: We have to go now.

S: You can go to my room.

Natasha looked at Steve as if he had suggested the most absurd thing in the world.

S: I don’t want to be away from James now.

J: I want to be with my dad.

N: So you go to his room and I'll see you later then.

J: Oh no, Mommy.
N: You have to choose.

S: Natasha. Don’t do that to him.

N: Do what? James knows that we are no longer...

Natasha was ready to start a discussion, but she took a deep breath and decided to be quiet.

S: Okay, I understand what you want, but he got hurt and he wants his mom and his dad around, you shouldn’t make him choose now.

Natasha sighed.

N: You can come to my room and stay a little, until he sleeps.

S: Okay... Can you hold Sarah so I can get him?

N: Yes.

Natasha hold Sarah in her lap.

S: Come on, champ.

Steve took James in his lap and carried him to Natasha's room.

Natasha arrived shortly afterwards with Sarah.

N: I'll fix the bed for him.

Natasha put Sarah on the floor and then closed the bedroom door so she wouldn’t run away.

N: Stay here, young lady.

Natasha fixed the bed and placed James' pillow over hers to make him more comfortable.

N: Ready. You can put him there.

Steve walked over to the bed and laid James down, who looked pained.

J: Ouch.

S: What? Sorry, did I hurt you?

J: It still hurts.

N: I know your father didn’t want to hurt you. Are you comfortable like that?

James nodded.

Sarah: Zit. Zit.

N: Zit?

S: That means “sit”... She wants me to sit down.
Sarah walked over to the bed and tapped her hand on the bed, indicating where Steve was supposed to sit.

Steve glanced briefly at Natasha, but she looked away.

Steve sat on the edge of the bed.

J: Sarah, stop being annoying.

Sarah: Noy.

Natasha smiled and Steve made negative with his head.

S: She's not annoying, James. You're not annoying, Sarah.


S: James!

N: James, please, do not teach this to her.

Sarah: “Saa duuun”.

Natasha frowned.

N: What?

Sarah: Dumb.

S: I didn’t teach her that.

James was trying not to laugh.

Sarah: Saa dumb.

N: Sarah dumb? No, Sarah is not dumb.

Sarah: Duuumb!

James was now laughing nonstop.

N: Sarah is not dumb, Sarah is a beautiful baby girl.

Sarah: Beauty.

N: Yes. That’s it, you’re beautiful and a very nice baby.

Sarah: Mamma.

Natasha stared at Sarah and she pointed to the bed next to Steve.
Sarah: Sit, mamma.

Natasha looked at Steve and then to Sarah again, she shook her head.

N: I'm not tired, I don’t want to sit.

Sarah: Siiiiit.

N: No!

Sarah frowned and lowered her head.

Sarah: Mamma sit.

Natasha rolled her eyes and then sat on the bed, but she sat closer to James's head while Steve was sitting next to James's feet.

Sarah: Saa sit...

Sarah grabbed the sheet and lifted her leg to try to climb onto the bed.

S: You want to sit down too. I'll help you. C’mon.

Steve grabbed Sarah's arm and she climbed the bed, then she threw herself at James, right on his sore arm.

J: Oouuuch! Mooom!!

Steve pulled Sarah back.

N: It wasn’t her intention, James.

S: Sarah, look, James's arm is hurt.

Sarah: Hut?

S: Yes. Hurt. You can’t jump at him, because he feels pain, you must stroke his arm, like this...

Steve ran his hand lightly over James's arm.

S: See?

N: Try it on now.

Natasha looked at Sarah.

Sarah laid her hand on James's arm and instead of stroking, she scratched his arm.

J: Mooom!

N: No, Sarah! Slow down...

Natasha and Steve went to take Sarah's hand to slow her movements and their hands touched each others at the same time. The two of them looked at each other and froze for a few seconds.
Steve smiled, just a little, and Natasha got angry and removed her hand from his.

Steve lowered his gaze and took Sarah's hand.

S: That's the way you should do, Princess. Got it?

Steve made Sarah run her hand over James's arm.

Natasha cleared her throat and looked away and after a few seconds, she stood up.

N: I'll get food for James. Do you want me to bring Sarah something?

S: Yes, if you don't mind.

Natasha nodded.

J: Mom, don't go.

N: I'll be right back, James. You need to eat and your sister, too.

S: It's okay, James. I am here with you.

James looked at his father and he went quiet.

Natasha left the room and went to the refectory, she informed the kitchen staff that James was injured as well is Sarah and she requested three meals to take to her room.

- We only have soup tonight.

N: That's great.

- I'm going to put some toasts for you.

N: Thank you, Mrs. Johnson.

While the cook served the soup in bowls, she looked at Natasha with curiosity.

- Is everything all right, my dear?"

Natasha frowned a little and then looked at Juliana's aunt.

N: Yes. I was just thinking...

- About your kid? I'm sure James will be fine. I heard about the accident. What a thing, isn’t it? Both siblings getting hurt at the same day. What a tragedy, but they will be fine. They are very strong.

N: Yes, they are.

It wasn’t about that Natasha was thinking, but she let Mrs. Johnson believe it is.

- I hope my niece soon has a son with her fiancé.

N: Fiancé? Juliana and Bucky are getting married?
- Yes, they will definitely marry.

Natasha was surprised that she hadn’t been told anything this news, but soon she disguise her surprise.

- And she is young, if she has a child now, she will be able to enjoy the child very much. Don’t you think? Good thing we're going outside, because if we stayed here, of course it wouldn’t be appropriate to have a child.

Mrs. Johnson set the tray on the counter.

- Here you are, my dear.

N: Thank you.

Natasha took the tray and turned to leave the refectory and as she passed the entrance, she saw Clint Barton standing in line, so she decided to ask about Francis.

N: Barton.

C: Hey, Tasha.

N: How is Francis doing?

C: He's already immobilized, with less pain now, but he's complaining a lot. Cho gave him medication.

N: Has he returned to your dorm?

C: Yes, I came to get his and Laura's dinner, then I have to come back with Lila and Cooper for dinner. These children, man I don’t know. Francis told me that Torunn was teaching them to fly.

Natasha sighed.

N: So that was it? Yeah, it could only be something like that. James is scared of height, he didn’t tell me the truth, he said he slipped.

C: They're protecting Torunn.

N: She's a little bit problematic.

C: A little?

Natasha smiled.

C: Laura is tired, she wants to keep Francis away from her for a while and from James too.

N: Don’t do this, Clint.

C: What can I do, Tasha? We already had that episode of the command center. It doesn’t mean that they will never speak again, but they need some time away.

N: I've been thinking the same, but I feel bad about it, I mean they did it because they wanted
to. Children are like that, you know that.

C: I know. Laura said that Torunn has the worst ideas possible.

N: Her mind doesn’t stop working, it's true.

Natasha sighed.

N: I think I'll have to do the same as you but I don’t want to separate them, they’re so close.

- Are you talking about Torunn?

Natasha and Clint were surprised by Jane and Thor.

N: Yes.

C: Jane, don’t get me wrong, but the James, Francis and Torunn only gets in trouble when they’re together, they need some time away.

Jane: I agree. Torunn is grounded now.

N: It was a children's thing, I don’t blame her. She shouldn’t be grounded.

Jane: Well, she needs to have limits. Thor and I agreed that they three should stay away from each other for some time.

C: Maybe we don’t have to be drastic, just supervise them all the time, when they're together.

N: Spying on our own children?

C: Not spying, this is a very strong word. It’s supervision only.

N: I'll think about it.

- Excuse me.

Clint and Natasha were interrupted again, but this time by Sharon Carter.

C: Oh, hello Sharon. Finally you came to eat with us. Good to see you around here.

Clint smiled and Sharon returned with a small smile.

C: I'm glad you're back.

N: I need to go back to my room.

Natasha stepped to walk away, but she was followed by Sharon.

Sharon: Natasha, wait. I need to talk to you.
N: I really can’t right now.

Sharon: It's important.

Natasha stopped walking, but remained with her back to Sharon.

Sharon: It's about Steve...

Natasha shook her head and turned to look at Sharon.

N: There's nothing to be talked about him.

Sharon: Yes, there is. I'm sorry for...

N: Sharon… I can’t now, James twisted his arm today, I'm not in the mood to discuss anything now.

Sharon: Is he okay?

N: Yes, he's better now, just in pain.

Sharon: I'm so sorry for him.

N: Me too... I need to go now.

Sharon nodded and Natasha returned to her dormitory.

... 

Upon reaching the room, Steve stood up to help Natasha, he took the tray from her hand and held the door for her to come in.

Natasha came in and saw Sarah sleeping in the crib and James also sleeping, but in her bed.

N: They slept. I delayed because...

Natasha looked at Steve and then made negative with her head.

N: They need to eat.

S: Just James, Sarah had taken a bottle, if she wakes up later, I'll take her in the kitchen.

Steve noticed three bowls on the tray, and he set the tray on the little table.

Natasha sat down next to James and ran her hand over his face.
N: James? James? Wake up. You need to eat a little before sleep, okay? Let’s sit down a bit...

Natasha made James sit down and he opened his eyes a little and then closed it again.

Natasha looked in the direction of Steve and reached for the bowl of soup.

Steve brought the soup to Natasha and she started feeding James.

Steve came over and stood by, watching.

Natasha sighed as she felt Steve behind her, that silence in the room and now she didn’t even have the kids to make noise and distract them both from the tension between them.

Natasha continued to feed James and it was as if Steve had been touching her, even though he was only beside her and deep deep down, that was what she wanted him to be doing.

**N: Your soup will get cold too much.**

Steve raised his eyebrows and Natasha turned around to look into his eyes, then she looked at the tray.

**N: I brought it to you.**

**S: I didn’t know. Thank you. But what about you?**

**N: I'm not hungry, but I'm going to eat Sarah's soup, to not waste food.**

**S: So I guess I'll wait for you to eat.**

**N: You don’t have to.**

Natasha turned to James again and when she was about to feed him again, she noticed that James had his head bowed, eyes closed and his mouth open.

**N: You're tired, right, James?**

Natasha looked at the bowl and she considered that he had taken a good amount to be able to go back to sleep.

**S: Looks like we're going to eat together anyway.**

Natasha looked at Steve and he was smiling, victorious and she hates it.

**S: Unless you'd rather for me to leave.**

Natasha sighed and got up, she walked over to the table and placed James's bowl on the tray.

**N: You can eat here, but don’t try anything.**

**S: Like what?**

Steve was right next to Natasha, he touched Natasha's wrist and she dodged from his touch.

**N: Like this.**
S: Natasha... I know you want this.

N: No, you don’t know.

S: What do I have to do to make you forgive me? What do you want from me? Tell me and I will do. Anything, I want you back, I want us back. We are about to leave this place and all I want is to start a new life with you and the kids again.

Natasha looked away and sighed once more.

N: You should have said no.

S: I never meant to say yes! You didn’t let me tell you that day. It’s just because I felt like I should at least think about it, she wanted me to think about it. I thought of you right away. I thought of you and I thought of the children and I thought about what I want.

N: But you still didn’t make up your mind. You have doubts.

Natasha looked back into Steve’s eyes.

S: I have no doubt that it’s you I love. No doubt about it.

That was it. Steve was looking deep in her eyes and he could see that he touched her, and it was great that she was looking back at his eyes, because he was being honest and he could demonstrate that in his eyes, just like the way Natasha prefers to trust... Looking into the eyes.

There was no more anger in the way she looked at him, there was something Steve believed to be fear, but it wasn’t in her way to demonstrate something of that kind, but if it wasn’t fear, he also doesn’t know what it is.

N: I...

Natasha had to take a deep breath.

N: I still need time, Steve.

Natasha said in a lower tone.

N: I need to think.

S: You know that I’d wait for how long you need and I give you your space, I just don’t want to have to pretend that I don’t know you. Can you stop pretending that I don’t exist too?

Natasha nodded.

Steve took the bowl of soup and handed it to her.

Natasha grabbed the bowl and watched Steve eat his.

They were still looking at each other and there seemed to be nothing else to be said.

After some minutes...

S: Kids will start going outside next week.
Steve decided to break the silence, he sat in the chair and Natasha sat on the edge of the bed, she kept looking at Steve.

S: They will go with the teachers. Psychologists believe they will feel more confident going with their friends and teachers, but by then all adults will have had the experience of being out there.

N: That's good to hear. James was already wanting to go out with his friends.

S: Yes.

The two continued to stare at each other and the talk was again over.

When the subject between Steve and Natasha ends, the result is a lot of sexual tension. Always. The silence instigates both.

Steve was determined to have her back, so he held his gaze to Natasha, but Natasha doesn’t want to get involved again now, she thinks she has to be careful, she needs to be sure again that he really wants her, so she lowered her head and began to take the soup.

N: I said it would get cold.

S: It's already cold. I like this way.

N: Could you not look at me that much?

Steve made negative with his head.

S: Sorry, but I can’t. I want to look at you. You are beautiful.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

N: My God, Steve. There is no need to play the romantic this time.

S: I'm romantic.

N: Yeah, you are, but don’t be now.

S: Why? I like to compliment you.

Natasha was still staring at the bowl, she giggled a little and shook her head.

N: You know, for this to work, don’t do that anymore... We don’t need to be this way.

S: All right. Your space, I respect.
Natasha nodded.

**N:** Now eat.

**S:** Yes, ma'am.

Steve started to take the soup again, but he kept his eyes on Natasha, she glanced briefly at him and they both smiled and continued to eat.

...

A week later.

**Laura:** Okay, children.

**Pepper:** Form the lines in pairs, please.

The children lined up in pairs.

James, Francis, and Torunn were in the line, but away from each other, they're all aware that they should no longer be together.

**Laura:** Now, remember to always look for me and Aunt Pepper. Our assistants will also be there, if you need anything or if you get lost, come to one of us.

**Pepper:** If you see the green flag, it means it's a safe place to play around. If you see the yellow flag, what that means?

- Attention!

The children answered at the same time.

**Pepper:** What about the orange flag?

- Caution.

**Pepper:** And if it's red?

- Danger.

**Laura:** That's right! You all are so clever! The red means that the place is dangerous, you can not walk after the red flag. Never.

**Pepper:** You guys are very smart this morning!

**Laura:** We'll have a beautiful morning today. Captain America said the sun is hot and bright and he said there are lots of birds waiting for you outside.

**Pepper:** Are we ready?

- Yes!

The children answered together again.

**Laura:** Let’s go!
Laura and Pepper led the way and the children followed in line. The children walked organized until they became accustomed to the light of day, then they just started running and screaming around.

Laura and Pepper stopped and smiled at the excitement of the children.

- I'm glad they're not afraid.

Steve approached them, smiling.

L: They were very well prepared.

S: I'm glad we're finally moving on with life. Now it will only be missing the F Wing inmates to know the outside, but I think it will still take a few weeks for that.

L: I see you're already building things out here.

S: Oh yes, we are building a base here outside, but the idea is to go back to the city, there is a lot of work to do, but I believe that in a few months, we will be with the cities restored.

P: You're so optimistic, Steve.

S: We have to be. I'm going in, I need to solve some issues. The kids are going to eat out here, today, right?

L: Yes, we will have a picnic at lunchtime.

S: Great! James is very excited, he even dreamed about today, last night.

Steve looked around and spotted James near the plantation that Natasha had shown him the other day and he seemed to be showing the berries that could be eaten for his friends.

S: Excuse me.

Steve stepped back into the bunker.

...

- James, can you really eat that?

J: Yes. My mom gave it to me the other day. Try.

James gave the fruit to his classmate.

- I want to taste it too.

J: Here.

- Me too.

- Me too.

J: There is for everyone, but you have to pay.

- I have no money.
J: It’s to pretend only.

- Ooooh, ok. Then take five bucks, sir.

J: Here you go, miss.

James was playing with the girls, he prefers to play with them, because they’re more nice to him, than the boys are.

Francis: Hey!

James watched Francis walk past him, without his shoe and holding his sock in his hand.

Francis went straight into the group of boys and showed the sock.

Francis: Smell this, guys!

- Hey! Get it out of here!

- Let's throw it at the girls!

F: Yes!

James’ friend looked at Francis and made negative with her index finger.

- Oh no, Francis Barton, if you get close to me, I'll tell your mother.

F: Tell her! I don’t care!

Francis threw his sock in the middle of the girls who screamed and started to run around. James got into the game as well and started chasing after the girls.

Laura and Pepper watched from a distance and they were talking to each other.

- Look what I found.

Laura and Pepper looked at Torunn, with two flowers in his hand.

T: I got this for you two.

L: Thank you.

P: Thank you, Toto. That was very sweet.

T: When does Maria come back?

L: Oh my angel, I don’t know.

P: Why are not you playing with the kids?

T: I don’t feel like it. I saw blue flowers. It's my mom's favorite color.

L: Is that so? Where?

Torunn pointed the place.
T: It has an orange flag over there.

L: Oh, good thing you didn’t go in there by yourself.

T: But I want the blue ones. Can you go with me?

L: Of course, my darling.

Laura left Pepper and went with Torunn to the place with the blue flowers, the bush from there was also tall. Tall enough to cover Torunn, but not enough to cover Laura.

L: These flowers are really very beautiful. I think I'll get some for me, too.

Torunn smiled and began to pick up the flowers.

Pepper: LAURA!

L: YES?

P: THE BOYS ARE FIGHTING AGAIN! I NEED A HELP HERE!

L: I'M COMING NOW.

Laura looked at Torunn and then she looked at the border of the orange flag, and there was a red flag a little bit ahead.

L: Torunn, do not go any further than that. Stay here, I'll be right back.

Torunn nodded and watched Laura walk away, she continued to pick the flowers and her eyes were attracted to the red flag.

What could have been so dangerous there? Torunn knows it's a bad idea to want to find out, she's just curious.

Torunn noticed the flowers after the red flag line and they were white and had a star design.

There was a gleam in Torunn's gaze after seeing that flower, she took two steps toward the red flag.

T: I love stars.

Torunn whispered to herself.

- Me too.

Torunn just didn’t walk anymore, because she was startled by the voice she heard, she looked back, looking for who had spoken to her, but she saw no one.

- Psss… Over here. On your right side.

Torunn looked at the bush and she frowned, she stood on tiptoe trying to see who it was.

T: Who are you?

- Come here and you'll find out.
Torunn tried to see who was there in the bushes, she knew it was an adult, because of the voice, but this person was down in the bush, she couldn’t see so she took a few steps and finally she could see his face.

The man smiled at her.

- You really are not afraid of anything, Torunn Odinson.

T: Why would I?

The man smiled again.

T: Who are you?

- My name is Adam Warlock, and I was your grandfather's friend.

- I imagined. Maybe it's because we haven’t seen each other in a long, long time, but you have his eyes.

T: My grandmother used to say that.

Torunn frowned.

T: Why are you hiding in the bush? Are you a pedophile? My mother talked about people like that. You must know that I am very strong, I can kill you easy, I am Thor's daughter.

Adam laughed.

A: I'm not a pedophile and I'm not hiding.

T: What are you doing there then?

A: Enjoying the flowers, just like you.

T: I've never seen a man admiring flowers.

A: I am different.

T: I have to go now.

A: Don’t cross the red flag.

T: I will not.

A: But you would.

T: I don’t have to justify myself to you. What is your sector, mister?

A: My sector?

T: Yes, at the bunker.

A: I don’t think I have one.

T: Everybody has a sector, unless it's a child or... Wait!

Torunn was worried.

T: You're from F Wing, right? Did you run away from there?

A: I'm not a fugitive. Do I look like a fugitive?
T: How will I know? I am just a child!

A: Now you’re just a child… A very smart child. I came to talk to you.

T: With me?

A: Your grandfather had something that belongs to me, he kept it for many years and now I need to get it back.

T: What is it?

A: I think you know what is...

T: I don’t know, stop talking like a mysterious guy! I’m leaving right now because you’re a stranger!

Torunn turned to leave and Adam gestured for her to calm down.

A: Wait! Wait... Look...

Adam took a small box from his clothes. Torunn, extremely curious, paid attention. Adam opened the box and Torunn was shocked to see a red stone just like hers.

T: You have one!

A: Yes.

T: And it shines too! What is it?

A: Just a stone.

T: I thought it was a jewel.

A: It is a jewel too.

T: Does it worth a lot?

A: More than any money can buy.

Adam looked more serious and faced Torunn.

A: Now can you show me yours?

Torunn was suspicious and took a step back.

T: I don’t have it anymore.

A: No? What's inside the tin that you carry under your clothes?

Torunn frowned, no one ever noticed that she carries the tin with her every day in her outfit, she never left it on display.

T: It's just like yours.

A: I know it is. Can see?
T: I don’t know. It’s a secret.

A: I’m good with secrets and I showed you mine.

T: What if you steal that from me?

A: I have an equal, why would I steal it?

Torunn stared at Adam suspiciously for a minute, and it took her another minute to take the tin out of her clothes.

T: My friend broke it.

Torunn held up the crumpled tin.

A: That doesn’t matter, Torunn. The tin is not important.

T: It’s not?

Adam stared at the stone.

A: Open it.

Torunn opened the tin and the stone shone and then faded, as well as the other times.

Adam reached for the stone and Torunn hid behind her.

T: You want to steal from me!

A: No! I just want to look. Here...

Adam handed his box to Torunn.

A: I let you see mine.

Torunn was curious to see the other stone, although it was just like hers, and Torunn also wanted to know what that stone was and Adam seemed to have the answers since he has one too, so she handed him the tin and got Adam’s box.

T: It's beautiful too. They seem to be the same stone.

Torunn was talking to herself, Adam was just staring at the stone, impressed.

T: Now give it back.

A: Wait!

T: Take yours! Give it back!

A: Calm down, Torunn.

T: Give it back!!!!

A: I will!
Adam stretched his hand with the tin in Torunn's direction and with his other hand, he asked for his back. Torunn returned his box and when she was about to get hers back, Adam backed away a little.

**T:** HEY! YOU’RE A THIEF! GIVE IT BACK! GIVE IT BACK!

Torunn was furious and moved forward on Adam to attack him, who gave her the tin back.

Torunn held the tin and inspected to see if the stone was still inside.

- Torunn? Torunn?

Torunn looked back and saw Laura a few feet away from her. Torunn looked at her tin and she was relieved to see that the stone was still inside the tin, she closed the tin and hid on her clothes again.

**T:** Aunt Laura! I’m here!

**L:** Oh Good Lord, Torunn! I thought you had crossed the red flag. Who were you screaming at so hard?

**T:** With Adam!

**L:** Adam?

**T:** Yes, this guy here.

Torunn looked back and there was no sign of Adam, she frowned.

**T:** He was here! He was right here.

**L:** Torunn, was it some imaginary friend?

**T:** No. He was here. He was a thief! He must have fled from F Wing!

**L:** There are no interns missing, Torunn. It's all right. Have you got your flowers?

Torunn was still staring at the bush where Adam was.

**L:** We'll eat now, if you need more flowers, we'll come back later. Let's go.

Torunn didn’t move.

**L:** Torunn?

Torunn looked at Laura and at her hand extended to her.

**L:** Come on, come with me.

Torunn took Laura's hand and went back to where the other children were.

...

**N:** So, Barnes. When is the wedding?

Natasha asked Bucky when she spotted him in the manufacturing sector.
B: What?

Bucky was welding a plate, he stopped and took the protective mask off his face.

Bucky turned and looked at Natasha.

N: I'm very upset at not being the first one to know that you would ask Juliana to marry and more upset about being told by someone else and not from you.

Again Bucky made a look of surprise. Natasha could notice this time.

N: Well, it looks like you didn’t know that either.

B: Who said that? Juliana?

N: No, I was talking to her aunt and she told me that you were getting married.

Bucky sighed and shook his head.

B: That woman... I don’t know how Juliana was raised by that woman, she is so different from her relatives. Too bad she has a family like that.

N: I should have guessed she was making this up, but I know that this is what she expects. It seemed like a hint.

B: She's crazy.

N: Do you have that intention?

B: Of what?

N: To marry Juliana.

Bucky frowned.

B: Of course not.

N: Of course not...

Natasha repeated Bucky's words and seemed to be reflecting.

B: What?

N: Why so certain of that?

B: I'm not.

N: I thought you were in love.

B: I am.

N: But not to the point of thinking about marriage.

B: You're confusing me.
N: I warned you, Barnes. She's too young. You'll break her heart.

B: What are you talking about? We are dating.

N: And how is your relationship?

B: W-well.

N: Hmm.

B: I know what you're doing, Romanoff. That's not it.

N: You're bored.

B: She's a wonderful girl.

N: My God, you're completely bored in this relationship!

B: I like her!

N: I'm sure you do and I'm sure you don’t like her anymore like you used to, now it's no news anymore.

B: I'm not that kind of man.

N: You are.

B: Why am I being offended?

N: If you felt offended, it's because it's true. I know you as you know me, Barnes. I knew this would happen and you knew it too.

B: Yes, I know you. By the way, how's your effort at pretending you don’t love Steve?

N: I'm not pretending, I love him, but it doesn’t mean I'm going to risk my heart again.

B: Like you said, we know this is going to happen, you're just delaying the inevitable.

N: How did this turn against me?

B: Don’t like to take your own poison?

N: Am I poisonous?

B: More than anyone I know.

Natasha frowned.

N: That's so offensive.

B: If you felt offended, it's because it's true.

Natasha laughed and Bucky laughed too.
B: I like Juliana, I really like her and you're right, our relationship is not the same from the beginning, but it doesn’t mean it has to stop, we're going to improve.

N: If you say so.

B: What about you...

N: Steve? I’m talking to him again, we spent a couple of hours together every day.

B: As friends?

N: Of course. We're getting along. We have children.

B: Children? Like in the plural?

Natasha opened her mouth to justify herself, but Bucky took care of it for her.

B: All right, I was just teasing you. Sarah is your daughter and I'm sorry to say that but you and Steve don’t resist each other.

N: I will resist as much as I can. And you will be amazed at my ability to resist.

B: I'm sorry, but it's stupid, Natalia. If this is all because of Sharon and her request...

N: This is about Steve and what he feels for her.

B: If he felt anything for her, he'd be back with her already. After all, what would prevent this from happening? Use your head, Black Widow. Steve is crazy about you and Sharon doesn’t feel anything for Steve anymore.

N: How do you know that?

B: I asked her.

N: Why would she ask him for a child then?

B: Because she had this wrong idea that he owes her something.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

B: She's aware of that, she knew right after she made the request she shouldn’t have asked, she just wants a baby to take care of.

N: There are so many men in this bunker.

B: I think every woman who wants to get pregnant, wants to get pregnant with a decent guy with a good history. I volunteered as a donor.

N: You?

Natasha was surprised but not much.

B: I don’t have a good history, but I've been decent, gone bad and then decent again.
N: The bad part wasn’t your fault. She accepted?

B: She didn’t talk more about it. Maybe she just gave up. I'll talk to her again about this.

N: She wanted to talk to me a few days ago about Steve, but I was so angry, I didn’t let her talk. Honestly, I don’t want to talk to her.

B: But you should, she is completely lucid and it’s not easy to come back to society after all this time. The SHIELD are still on a mission out there, so she's been lonely.

N: Do you want me to be her friend now?

Natasha frowned.

B: No, I want you to understand her, that you put yourself in her place.

Natasha shook her head.

B: I will not insist, you know of yourself.

N: Glad you know that, Barnes. Thanks.

Natasha and Bucky were silent for a few minutes.

N: I hate you, you know that?

Bucky smiled and Natasha rolled her eyes.

N: If she looks for me again, I'll talk to her.

B: Thank you.

...

A few weeks later, Maria Hill was arriving in another of the camps set up by the Guardians of the Galaxy.

H: This is the last city we can help with what we have. Too many people, the Guardians don’t know how to count.

Coulson: There may have arrived more people after they went away.

H: Maybe.

Coulson: But that's a good sign, right?

H: Yes, of course. That's not what I meant, but I don’t like to do incomplete job.

C: But we will complete. Gradually, but we will.

H: I'm worried about the sick and the elderly.

C: There are not that many of old people

H: But there are many sick and injured. By my calculations, we don’t have enough medical
staff here or even in the bunker.

C: But your strategy of looking for medical professionals at every camp was successful in some camps.

H: Some camps doesn’t mean all camps, Coulson.

C: You're right, but don’t feel bad about it.

H: I don’t. I did what I could. I'll keep doing it. Let's go.

Hill, Coulson, and the SHIELD agents landed and they were immediately surrounded by the people of that camp, everyone craved for food, clothing and medication.

- Please, my baby girl! She's dying! We don’t know what she has, please help her!

Said a lady carrying her daughter in her arms, the girl was gray, so pale, her eyes half-open and she was sweating a lot.

Coulson: We'll help however we can.

- My son is sick, too!

- My husband too!

- I deserve to be checked first, I've been waiting here since yesterday!

H: Since yesterday? How did you know we were coming here now?

- The Guardians said that help would come and here is not far from the camp you visited last time, so we knew ours was next.

- I've been waiting since yesterday too!

- But I came first!!

- We're hungry! Please!

- Don’t push me!

- HEY!

- You're not following the line! Leave! Go away.

- But my daughter is sick!

- Don’t touch me!

- Please, food! Food!

The people were agitated and aggressive with each other in the queue, everything started with a push and ended up generating fights and people stepping one another.

H: HEY! CALM DOWN! WE'RE GOING TO HELP EVERYBODY!
C: GUYS, CALM DOWN. LET'S ORGANIZE EVERYTHING, WE'LL HELP EVERYONE...

- MOVE!!!

- Get out! You're a thief, you shouldn’t be here! You deserve to die!!!

The man yelled at a woman and threw her on the floor.

C: HEY, DO NOT USE VIOLENCE!

Coulson was eventually knocked down by the crowd that kept moving toward the SHIELD agents, causing them to begin to retreat to the jet.

H: COULSON!

Hill screamed when she saw Coulson on the ground, she was going to succor him, but she felt her arm being grabbed by someone.

- PLEASE, MA’AM! PLEASE!

H: Don’t touch me! BACK OFF!

Hill frowned and pulled her arm to set free, but the woman refused to let Hill go.

Hill took a deep breath and pulled out her gun, she pointed the gun at the woman's head, who looked at her in alarm.

H: I said to BACK OFF!

The woman released Hill's arm, but the confusion of the people continued, so she fired three shots into the air.

The crowd stopped at once.

Hill pointed the gun at people, prompting the agents under her command to do the same.

It worked to get everyone's attention and make them stop fighting.

H: Listen!!! We are here to help! It’s not you who decide the order! I decide! If anyone tries to interfere or violate the rules I will establish, that person will be arrested or worse! It depends on my mood and it's not very good right now, so I suggest you to take it easy.

Hill took a few steps forward and the agents too, the crowd began to back off.

H: That's it, calm and orderly. You will receive help!

Hill was able to reach Coulson and helped him to his feet.

H: Coulson, we'll find more of that in other camps.

Hill warned him in a lower tone.

H: When we return to the bunker, it will generate a delay in the other camps and it’s possible for one camp to steal the other.
C: I understand. Should we keep a team here and in the surrounding camps?

H: How? Would we protect 6 camps and leave 30 others without protection? We don’t have enough staff.

C: Understood!

H: We will try to be faster and unfortunately we will have to be more aggressive in the next visits, we can’t waste time with rebellions.

C: They don’t understand, they just want help.

H: I know they don’t understand, but I do and help will come, just not the way they expect it, but as it has to be.

Coulson nodded and walked away to help the other agents set up the duty stations.

Meanwhile in the Bunker, Natasha was looking for Peter Parker at the request of Tony Stark, she went directly to the Command Center, because Peter is always there.

Natasha opened the door and was surprised to not see Peter there but to see someone she hadn’t crossed for more than one month.

Sharon Carter was in the Command Center, with a clipboard in her hands, noting data that was passed by one of the operators.

Sharon looked at Natasha and knew she was surprised to see her there and more surprised perhaps by seeing her working.

N: I’m looking for Parker.

Sharon: He went to get a report I asked for, but he should be coming back already.

Natasha nodded, as if thanking for the information.

Natasha felt weird and she wondered if Sharon feels the same in her presence. Natasha figured she did.

N: Working for SHIELD?

Sharon looked at the clipboard and sighed.

Sharon: Yes.

Sharon looked at Natasha and then she stared back to the operator and asked some questions again and she was writing everything down on her clipboard.

Natasha observed some confidence in Sharon's eyes, a confidence that Sharon used to display at the time she started working at SHIELD, and because of that, Natasha knew Sharon does not feel weird or intimidated by her presence.

Natasha watched her longer and she frowned slightly, but not enough for anyone to notice.
She overcame herself. Natasha concluded, and although the two of them had been practically competing for the same man for a while, which generated an inevitable mood of animosity between them, Natasha felt proud of Sharon.

Yes, she was proud of her, as a person, as a woman. After all, Sharon is a woman, she was always independent as she was, she had certain tribulations and she must be aware about everything she did in the period that she was "crazy" and that would make anyone feel a lot of shame and lose all the self-confidence and self-esteem.

To recover from all shit that happened to her, requires a lot of strength and self-knowledge. Sharon is here, dressed up, with impeccable hair, with her impeccable work posture, working and probably getting being very good at her duties, she had this habit before, despite having different assignments from Natasha in SHIELD.

So as a woman, Natasha was very proud of Sharon.

- Miss Widow???

Natasha was taken from her thoughts by Peter Parker, who had already called her name about three times, wanting to pass, but she didn’t hear.

N: Sorry.

Natasha left the front door and Peter entered the room, he handed the report to Sharon.

Sharon: Thank you, Peter.

Peter Parker: Is that all?

Sharon: For now yes, thank you very much.

Sharon gave a small smile and walked towards the door. Natasha was still there.

Sharon passed Natasha and walked down the hallway to leave.

N: Patrick.

PP: Yes?

N: Stark needs you out there.

PP: Again?

N: Something about the power reactor. He said you would know what it is.

PP: Yes, I know. I will go there.

Natasha delivered the message and looked down the hall, she spotted Sharon already a little farther and ran to her.

N: Carter!

Sharon stopped in the hallway and turned to look at Natasha.

Natasha approached Sharon and she didn’t know what to say exactly. She doesn’t even know why
she called her.

**Sharon:** Are you ready to talk now?

Natasha frowned a little, but Sharon is right, she already expected that.

Natasha nodded.

**Sharon:** Follow me. This way.

Natasha followed Sharon to another wing, Sharon opened a door and gestured for Natasha to enter.

**N:** You have a room now.

**Sharon:** It's not just mine.

Sharon walked in after Natasha and closed the door.

**Sharon:** I split this room with John, but he's hardly ever here, so... Yeah... I think I have a room.

Natasha nodded.

**N:** This is very good for you. I'm glad you're working.

**Sharon:** I'm following my therapist's advice. Work help. It always helped. You probably know.

**N:** Yes, I know.

**Sharon:** Look, I'll go straight to the point. I don't want to fake anything, we're both too big for that sort of thing.

Natasha almost thanked Sharon for that.

**Sharon:** I asked Steve for a child. Somehow I thought he should be the father, because he would be Maggie's father. I didn’t even think about you or your son at the time, I was thinking about me, just me. And I know he doesn't owe me anything, but that was something I wanted. It's something I still really want.

Sharon approached the table and sat on it, keeping eye contact with Natasha all the time, which showed honesty.

**Sharon:** I didn’t want a stranger. I was being considered crazy or ex-crazy, who would want to have a child with me?

Natasha only heard, though she had already heard this justification from Bucky before.

**Sharon:** My request was wrong. I didn’t want to cause trouble between you and Steve, and I felt bad that it made you separate from him. But...

Sharon paused for a moment.

**Sharon:** I didn’t really suffered or tortured myself over it because it's very obvious that he
loves you. It's hard for me to believe that a spy like you doesn’t recognize it. You’re not stupid, so the only plausible explanation is that you want to be separated from him.

Natasha sighed and looked away.

Sharon: I'm not judging, you must have your reasons.

N: Are you apologizing or?

Natasha glanced at Sharon again.

Sharon: I apologize for asking Steve what I asked, but not for you not being with him. It was your decision and I don’t understand your motives.

N: Don’t you understand? Have you ever been afraid of anything?

Sharon: Yes.

N: Steve was very close to breaking my heart again and I barely could handle the first time he did that. I just don’t want to go through this again.

Sharon laughed mockingly.

Sharon: Did you hear yourself? That’s a little ridiculous, isn’t it? Afraid? Fear??? What did you learn from SHIELD? From the KGB?? What do you do with fear?

Sharon got up from the table and took a few steps toward Natasha and she spoke firmly and angrily.

Sharon: You don’t feel fear! You don’t have that luxury!

N: Excuse me???

Natasha frowned at Sharon’s aggressive tone.

Sharon: You need to go, even with fear! You must continue, even with fear! Fear means nothing! No matter how you feel, you continue and finish your goddam mission!

N: I've always done my job very well, thank you. My work has nothing to do with my personal life.

Sharon: I'm not talking about your job, Natasha. I'm talking about fear. And you've always applied what you learned at work in your personal life, but it seems that you've decided to leave that learning aside and honestly I thought you were more than that. It's disappointing.
Natasha frowned and she was no longer so friendly with Sharon, she found absurd the way Sharon was talking to her and she didn’t bother to hide her dissatisfaction with Sharon’s words.

Sharon: You're wasting time and time is not something we have much, isn’t it? How much of your time, can fear consume? Tell me.

Natasha was already breathing heavily, she had nothing to say, but she was angry, very angry and the only thing she thought was that she shouldn’t have talked to Sharon, that was Barnes’ idea.

Natasha walked to the door, opened it and left Sharon's room, she closed the door and went to the stairs to get back to Wing A, before she physically assaulted Sharon for being so disrespectful with her. She does not tolerate this attitude towards her, but she wouldn’t fight with Sharon, for Steve.

As Natasha went up the stairs, she tried to contain her anger and then she began to think why she was feeling so angry and then wondered why Sharon managed to reach her that way.

_Fear? Blocking me?_ Natasha thought and slowed down on the stairs.

Natasha stood on the landing of the stairs and seemed to be thinking and rethinking everything Sharon had said to her.

_N: I hate it when someone is right._

Natasha whispered to herself, finally realizing that what Sharon said was true, she let fear dominate her reason and her feelings, she let the fear block her life.

So what if Steve almost broke her heart? It was almost. She loves him, he loves her and if... _No! Enough of “if”!_ Natasha decided. They need to be together, she can’t stand being without him anymore, she can’t bear to pretend she doesn’t feel anything, that she doesn’t miss him when she miss him, desperately.

Natasha took a deep breath and her gaze had a different glow now, she started to come up the stairs running, she reached Wing A in five minutes, she ran through those corridors to the exit of the bunker.

Natasha went outside and she ran to the new base building, which was in the process of being finished.

Natasha entered the building and searched for Steve on all four floors, she was already out of breath as she ran.

Natasha went downstairs and asked the first builder she found in the way.

_N: You... Please... Did you see Steve Rogers?_

- He left about fifteen minutes ago.

_N: Left?_

- Yeah, I think he went to lunch.

_N: Oh yeah. Of course. It's time._

Natasha gave a small smile, she nodded to thank the information and again began to run again, she ran to the bunker, and she ran to the refectory.
Steve was in line with the tray in his hands, ready to be served, but something told him that the sound of those running footsteps was from someone coming to announce something important, probably some catastrophe. Maybe it was Tony, maybe it was Clint or Bucky.

Steve turned to see who it was and he saw Natasha, running toward him, and looking at him in a different way from the last days.

S: Nat...

Steve was going to ask if something serious had happened in the bunker or maybe with the kids for her to be running and being red like that, she didn’t look normal.

Steve didn’t have time to ask, he didn’t even have time to call her name completely, because as soon as Natasha reached him, she wrapped her arms around his neck and simply glued her lips to his.

Chapter End Notes

Now we're close to the end of this story.
Despite all the gossip and shouts of some people around, such as Tony Stark’s, Steve and Natasha didn’t care at all about the reaction of those in the refectory.

Steve gripped Natasha's waist firmly and lifted her a little from the floor as she kept her hands on the back of Steve's neck to hang onto his body, all that just to end all longing to kiss his mouth.

Only at the end of the kiss, Natasha smiled and giggled a little, because Steve's lips were still glued to hers.

Natasha opened her eyes and Steve was already looking at her, he smiled too when he noticed her smile and not even after that he wanted to move his mouth away from hers.

Natasha laughed a little more and she moved her hand from the back of Steve’s neck to Steve's face, she joined her forehead with his and finally pulled her lips away from Steve's.

**N:** I'm sorry, I should...

**S:** It's all right. Are you sure now?

**N:** Yes, I'm sure. I was so stupid.

Natasha couldn’t stop smiling, she closed her eyes and shook her head, she let out a long sigh, and as she nodded a few times she opened her eyes again and looked at Steve.

**N:** I... I love you, Steve. I love you so much, I have loved you for so long that... maybe I had loved you from the beginning when I met you. I don’t know, but I... I can’t hide it anymore, that was suffocating me. I couldn’t breathe...

**S:** Nat...

**N:** No, let me finish, because saying all this is very hard for me and if I don’t say it now, I might never say again.

Steve nodded.

**N:** It was killing me to see you every day and I was killing myself even more because I could see what you were wanting in your way of looking at me, I could feel the love you feel for me. I guess I just could not believe or accept that you love me. I don’t know why I’m like this... I think I will always feel like I don’t deserve your love and I have created justifications to not be with you, even though I know that my happiness is with you. My happiness is with you, with James, and Sarah. I love Sarah so much.

Natasha smiled and nodded.

**N:** I can’t hide it too, I don’t see my future without her. She's like James to me.

**S:** That's all I wanted to hear.
Steve took a deep breath and nodded.

S: Well... Let's do this.

N: Let's do this?

Natasha frowned a little, feeling confused.

S: Let's make it official.

Natasha frowned a little, looking at Steve, who had a happy and sweet smile on his lips.

N: What do you mean?

S: I want to say that now that you have no more doubts, because I never had doubts that I love you, we can formalize... That.

N: What the fuck are you talking about, Steve?

S: You know what I'm talking about.

Steve took a short step back and began to bend down, Natasha despaired right away, she grabbed Steve's shirt.

N: Steve!

Natasha was worried to see Steve going on his knees, her heart raced, and it seemed as if her heart would come out of her chest.

N: Don’t do this to me!

Natasha whispered and shook her head repeatedly.

S: I will. And you'll say yes.

N: No! Don’t do it! If you do it in here, I'm going to die or I'll kill you. Don’t do it!

S: I'm sorry, I have to.

N: God! No!

Steve was literally kneeling now, Natasha gripped his shirt more tightly and made him stand up.

N: Yes! My answer is yes! But don’t do it. Don’t ask.

Steve started to laugh at Natasha's despair, she was annoyed and to calm her down, Steve put both hands on her face and kissed her again.

S: I love you too. Very Much.

Natasha looked into Steve's eyes and gave a small smile.

S: WE'RE GETTING MARRIED!

Steve screamed at everyone in the refectory and Natasha opened her mouth in shock, she blinked a
few times and stood still, she didn’t want to look around and stare at the people who were clapping and congratulating them.

N: I'll kill you. Why did you do that?

S: Why not? Everybody will know anyway and everybody is invited...

N: Steve...

Steve kissed her again.

Tony cleared his throat.

T: Congratulations! It was about time! Good thing Steve decided to marry you, our thing would never work, Romanoff, I have twin sons and I rather taller women like Pepper and then you know...

Natasha and Steve stared at Tony.

T: I still want to know if James is mine, tho.

N: Shut up, Tony.

Tony smiled.

T: Congratulations, Dorito.

Tony hugged Steve and patted him on the back, then he hugged Natasha.

T: Congratulations, Romanoff.

N: Thank you, Tony.

T: You made the right decision. You will be happy. Anyone can see that you have been made for each other.

N: Wow, I didn’t expect such a speech too, Tony!

S: That was very gentle, Tony. Thank you.

T: Yes, yes, but... How about you get your food and move on, because we are all happy here for you, but we are also very hungry...

N: We won’t eat.

S: No?

Natasha looked at Steve and nodded toward the hall.

S: Oh yeah, we won’t eat. We have that thing to do... Go ahead, Tony.

T: Damn, you’re going to do that, right? Damn, you sure will do, I didn’t have to know about it, I’m going to eat now.
N: I know you like to imagine what we do, Tony. Or should I say what Steve does...

Natasha put her hand to her mouth, pretending to have said the most absurd thing in the world, she laughed and Tony rolled his eyes.

N: Stony. Is how they called you two, right? I ship it.

T: I hate that name. Who invented these rumors? I need to know. I want names.

N: Some genius.

S: I don’t like this story either.

N: That's because Steve prefers Stucky.

S: My God, Natasha!

N: I don't like Stucky. I'm Tony's team!

Natasha winked and laughed sarcastically.

S: Why do you act like that?

N: It's just rumors. Right?

S: Of course!

N: So why do you guys get so upset over it?

T: You're saying this because it's not with you!

N: Really? From what I know, there are a lot of rumors about me and Hill, me and Clint, me and...

Natasha was going to mention Bucky, but she thought it was a bad idea and decided to be quiet.

T: Oh yeah. You and Hill, that’s quite interesting. Tell me... Have you and her…? You know…

S: Guys, the line... People wants to eat and Natasha... We have to go.

N: Yes, we have.

Steve took Natasha's hand and pulled her to the hall.

...

At the Bunker's school, Torunn was talking to the teacher, Pepper Potts.

T: I'm telling the truth. I swear.

P: I believe you.

T: You think I'm making this up, but I've seen him. I saw a man in the bushes, his name is Adam. Adam Witchlok. No. Adam Warlock! That was his name!
Pepper smiled at Torunn.

**P:** Torunn...

**T:** He was blond and handsome, but he was a thief!

**P:** You said he stole something from you. What did he steal?

**T:** He tried to, but he gave me back!

**P:** What was it?

Torunn stared at Pepper and she couldn’t tell it was her can, otherwise she would reveal about the stone and then it would spoil the secret she has kept for years.

**P:** Did you forget what it was?

Torunn made negative with her head.

**P:** I know... Look Torunn. I understand that you feel alone now. You miss your friends and you created that imaginary friend to...

**T:** It's not imaginary!

Torunn raged, she got red with rage.

**P:** My God, you don’t need to be rude! Look, Laura and I, we both believed in you, we checked in right away if there was any Adam Warlock in the bunker.

**T:** Did you find anything?

Pepper made negative with her head, being patient.

**T:** But maybe I have recorded the wrong name. I don’t remember much. I'm just sure of the first name. Didn’t have any Adam?

**P:** Well, there are three Adams in the bunker, but none of them are blond.

**T:** It can’t be!

**P:** I checked all sectors, Torunn.

**T:** But he said he had no sector.

**P:** Everybody here has a sector.

**T:** Yeah, I know, except who's in F-Wing! He ran away from there, that’s the only explanation.

**P:** We checked it too, Torunn.

**T:** You did?

**P:** Yes. We really checked, because we care a lot about the safety of everyone in the bunker,
especially the kids. We have to check any possibility, and I even asked my husband, Uncle Tony, to check the cameras.

T: Cameras! But there are cameras outside?

P: Yes, there are cameras outside and we saw you going to the orange flag with Laura.

T: So you’ve seen Adam! Oh no...

Torunn lowered her head and looked desolate, she remembered that the bush was high and Adam was crouched, the camera wasn’t going to show him.

Torunn was now very sad, she is sure that Adam wasn’t her imagination, she touched him, but no one would believe her.

Pepper was sorry to see Torunn like that, she really had taken the story seriously at the beginning and after the investigations, she found out that Torunn created Adam because she felt alone because she was "forbidden" to play with her best friends.

P: I'm sorry, Torunn. Look... Here at school, you can play with James and Francis. You don’t have to be alone.

T: But my mother doesn’t want to.

P: It's okay, I'll talk to Jane. Go play with them.

Torunn didn’t show much excitement, she turned to look for her friends.

P: But Torunn...

Torun looked over her shoulder at Pepper.

P: No tricks. You must to behave.

Torunn nodded, and she saw James sitting at the table, drawing on a paper, along with two other girls. Torunn searched a little more and saw Francis playing of fighting with two boys, even with his arm immobilized.

Torunn knows that James is much easier to deal with than Francis. Francis would actually ruin everything, so she walked over to James and sat down in the chair next to him.

T: What are you drawing?

James heard Torunn but didn’t look away from the paper.

T: Is it a dinosaur or a dragon?

James was still silent.

T: It looks like a dragon.

- There's fire. If it has fire, it is a dragon. Duuuuhhh.

One of the girls answered.
Torunn looked at her, then at James again.

T: Aunt Pepper said we can play here.

J: Did she?

T: Yes, she said she was going to talk to my mother. Do you still like me, James?

J: I don’t know.

T: You don’t know?

J: I heard my father say you’re a naughty girl.

T: And you are what? A good boy?

J: I think so.

T: You're not that good.

J: Not you.

T: Shut up.

J: You shut up.

T: No, you shut up!

The two frowned in annoyance.

Torunn folded her arms and sat on her side in the chair, she was silent for a few minutes, then she sighed.

T: I'm very sad today.

James looked at Torunn.

J: Why?

T: I can’t say because you don’t want to be my friend.

J: I want to, but I can’t.

T: Pepper said we can. She's an adult, so she knows more.

James was confused.

J: That's it then. I'm your friend.

F: James!

James and Torunn looked at Francis.

F: Are you being friends with her again? You'll get in trouble!
T: Why do you hate me, Francis?
F: I... I don’t hate you.

Torunn stood up and faced Francis.

T: Yes, you hate me. You don’t act nothing like my friend. You turned me in!
F: And you’re not my friend, you like James more.
T: At least James is good for me.
F: I’m bad with you because you’re mean to me.
T: I'm not mean to you.
F: You made me broke my arm.

Francis showed his immobilized arm.

T: I just wanted you two to be just like me! That's all I wanted. I didn’t want you to get hurt.
- But you're a girl and they're boys.
- Yes, they'll never be like you.

James's friends got in the way.

T: But I understand now that you are not like me. We are different, but I like you two the same way. I wish you both could like me too.

Francis sighed and looked at James.

J: Torunn is cool.
F: She is.

Torunn smiled.

T: You guys are cool too.
J: Are we friends again?
T: Yes.
F: Yes.

James stood up.
- James!
- Sit down! We're not done!
J: I don’t want to draw anymore.
T: **Best friends.**

Torunn held out her hand.

James put his hand over Torunn's and Francis placed his over James's.

J: **Best friends.**

F: **Best friends.**

T: **Forever.**

The three of them smiled.

T: **Now come, I need to tell you about the man I saw in the bush, he tried to steal my stone.**

F: **That red one?**

T: **Yes!**

... As they walked down the corridors to get to the dormitory, Natasha and Steve were holding hands and walking in a hurry. The rush was by desire, but also by the fear of some misfortune happening, some emergency, or even fear of the children being released from the school and prevent them from having their moment. That's what usually happens.

They were already near the room, only a few feet away, when Steve stopped and pressed Natasha against the wall.

Natasha looked at Steve and smiled, she made negative with her head and she felt very stupid, because Steve was smiling at her, and she wondered if she had that same look Steve had too. An idiotic and silly look, like when someone who is in love and is acting like a passionate teenager who can’t stay away from the person he loves.

N: **We must go.**

S: **Just a minute.**

Steve pressed his body against Natasha's body and she had to look up so she could look him in the eye, he was much taller than her.

That look of invasion that he has. Steve was a criminal, he can’t just invade her like that, there are limits.

There are limits, but there are no more walls. She lowered her walls for him.

Steve laid his lips on Natasha's and they both closed their eyes at the same time. Steve didn’t do anything else, just left his lips pressing lightly on Natasha's and he stayed that way, feeling the warm air come out of her nostrils and caress his skin for a few minutes.

This kind of affection brought comfort to Steve, he released Natasha's lips and they looked at each other again.

S: **Don’t leave me again.**
Natasha mage negative with her head, holding his gaze.

**N: I won’t.**

Natasha gave a small smile.

**N: Come on...**

Natasha pushed Steve a little, for him to release her body to walk, she didn’t hold his hands this time, she walked to the dorm’s door alone and opened it.

Steve stood in the hallway, watching her walk and saw her standing in the doorway, looking at him.

Natasha raised one eyebrow and called him with her hand.

**N: We only have a few hours.**

**S: That will be enough.**

Steve finally moved and walked to dorm, he came in and closed the door with his foot, while watching Natasha walk to the bed, already undressing herself.

Natasha was on her back turned to Steve, she slipped the zipper down on her cat suit and then she looked at Steve over her shoulder as she let the leather fall, revealing the skin of her shoulders and of her arms.

Natasha was surprised that Steve saw her half-naked and didn’t advance on her, he doesn’t have the habit of waiting for her to get undress, he always come to her with rush and despair and eventually he ended up ripping her uniform apart.

Steve was being patient, he had waited for so long that a few more minutes wouldn’t kill him.

Steve's eyes moved patiently from Natasha's hair to the nape of her neck, then to her shoulder lines to the bones of her back, and to the delicate trace in the middle of her back that drove his eyes straight to the two dimples that Natasha has a little over her butt.

Natasha removed her belt and then she slipped the zipper to the edge, she removed her boots and slid the cat suit to the floor, getting completely naked.

If Steve doesn’t come now, she's going to think there's something wrong, that he's lost his desire for her, and that's why he's holding on and hasn’t grabbed her yet.

Natasha was about to turn around to face Steve and see if his eyes would confirm her suspicion, but as soon as she turned around a little, she felt those huge arms wrap around her waist.

Natasha sighed in relief and she leaned her head on Steve's shoulder and could feel that he had already taken off his shirt.

Natasha loved to feel her skin against his, it was a wonderful sensation and their bodies produced a pleasant warmth when it came together.

Steve slid his hand down on Natasha's belly, in a rude way, letting his whole palm touch her skin, instead of making softer touches with his fingertips.

Natasha doesn’t care about this, she knows Steve well, she knows he's trying to feel her better, the
most he can, so the effect on her is the same, if not greater.

Natasha tilted her head a little to the side and closed her eyes, feeling her whole body shiver with Steve's touches.

Steve slid his other hand down to Natasha's thigh, while the other still stroked her belly, he always stop to stroke the scars of her body and that doesn’t bother Natasha anymore.

Steve lowered his head so that his mouth could reach Natasha's shoulder, he kissed her shoulder lengthy and gave long kisses all over her it, than he spread the long kisses to her neck and at the same time he let his hand slide to the inside of her thigh, and he could feel Natasha’s body shivering with those actions.

Steve continued to kiss Natasha's neck passionately, he bite lightly the area, then he licked and kissed her neck again.

Steve's hand had already reach Natasha's intimate part, he was already touching her clit with his fingers as he exchanged kisses and hickeys with her neck.

Natasha placed a hand on Steve's wrist and she held it tightly, and sometimes she scratched her nails on his arm, she did that every time Steve moved his fingers the right way, in the right place.

Steve moved her clit slowly, and with the same rhythm he explored her neck.

The moment Steve used his other hand to grab one of Natasha's breasts, letting her nipple get a little squeezed between his fingers, Natasha started to cum, she moved her hips in circles and then moved her hips back, escaping from Steve's stimulis.

Natasha only moaned when she came. Steve grabbed her waist and made her face him, and then made her take two steps back, making her reach the bed.

Natasha sat on the bed and looked into Steve's eyes, she gripped his belt and opened it, then she opened the button of his pants and slid the zipper down.

Natasha pulled Steve's pants down and her eyes were drawn to Steve's upturned cock, he is always ready for her when she needs it, she doesn’t have to try hard to get him ready.

She doesn’t have to, but she wants to try hard to please him, she held Steve's cock and he was the one who shivered this time. Natasha lightly massaged his cock and looked into his eyes again, just because she wanted to be staring at him when she put her lips to his cock.

Steve closed his hand tightly and began to breathe heavily when he felt Natasha's lips sliding on his cock, she was good at it, or maybe it wasn’t and it’s just him who gets too excited about anything she does. It makes no difference.

Natasha gave Steve oral pleasure for a few minutes, she went as far as he allowed. When Steve pushed her shoulder back, she knew what he wanted, she lay down and let her elbows resting on the bed.

Natasha came back more, using her elbows to crawl into bed as she looked at Steve.

Steve lay over Natasha and while he kissed her lips, he penetrated her, making Natasha moan in the middle of the kiss.
Each time Steve's cock moved out, or in to the end inside her, Natasha let out a groan, and as Steve increased speed, so did her groans.

Natasha was quick to cum again, she was feeling a lot of pleasure, it wasn’t news that Steve knows how to make her feel pleasure, but this time, there was something different.

Maybe not in Steve's actions, but in the way she feels now. Free. Natasha is feeling free to love and be loved and it made her feel much more relaxed, much more in love, and those are the reasons why she is feeling much more pleasure now.

Steve and Natasha made love for hours, it was already dark when the two of them decided to slow down.

Natasha was over Steve’s body this time, she looked at Steve and got up a little, enough to remove Steve's cock from inside her.

N: Good...

Natasha fell to the side, lying down next to Steve.

Steve ran his hand over his cock and smoothed it, as he waited for the adrenaline of pleasure leave his body.

S: Just good?

Natasha looked at Steve and smiled.

N: I don’t want you to be cockish.

Steve sighed and Natasha lay on her side to look into his eyes.

N: Steve, you know it's late now. If they haven’t finished dinner, they’re nearing to end.

S: I know.

N: The children...

S: I know, I thought about them, but I’m sure they're fine. They would have called our W.T.

N: It's all strangely quiet.

S: At this time everybody already knows that we are back together and that we are going to get married. I'm sure Tony, or Bucky and Juliana are with the kids. They’re just giving us some space. They know we needed time for us.
Natasha looked worried.

S: They're fine, Natasha.

N: That's not it, I know they're fine, but we didn’t tell James about we getting married. You mentioned it now and it's true, the news runs in this place and I'd rather he to know about that from us.

S: Do you think he would not like to have his parents married? He used to ask us to go back and live together all the time.

N: I know, but...

S: I know what you mean. He should know the news from us, but if he heard from someone else, I'm sure he will be happy and he doesn’t care. Don’t worry about it.

Natasha nodded and sat down on the bed.

S: Where are you going?

N: Take a shower.

S: I'll join you.

N: No way, Rogers. This bath would never end. Wait your turn.

Natasha smiled and kissed Steve, she got up and went to take a shower.

Once bathed and dressed, Natasha combed her hair and walked to the bathroom door.

N: Steve?

S: Yes?

N: I'm going to the refectory and I'm going to get the kids.

S: Won’t you wait for me?

N: No, it's the end of dinner, whoever is with them, must already be wanting to get rid of them.

S: You're right.

N: And I'll ask them to hold something for you to eat. Don’t delay.

S: Okay.

Natasha left the dorm and was on her way to the refectory when she was intercepted by Logan.

L: Natasha, I was looking for you.

N: Looking for me, right on the door to Steve's dorm? Something tells me you knew where I was.
L: Yes. I was waiting for you.

N: For me? For what?

L: Can you come with me for a minute?

N: Logan, is it urgent? Because I have to get the kids and...

L: Yes! It's urgent. Come with me.

Natasha frowned.

N: What happened?

L: You will see.

N: Logan.

L: Come!

Logan started to walk and Natasha sighed, she followed him and he was heading towards the refectory, but only because the refectory is on the way to the elevators.

Natasha could only walk past the refectory, she saw Sarah with Clint and Laura, and James with Bucky and Juliana.

Clint watched Natasha pass by and frowned a little, Natasha looked at Clint and gestured, indicating for him to wait, that she would return.

Natasha followed Logan to the elevator.

N: Are we going down?

L: Yes.

N: What is going on?

L: You will see.

Logan took Natasha to the main auditorium wing that is never used except on special occasions.

N: What are we doing here?

T: Natasha.

N: Tony? What is going on? What are you doing down here?

T: There is someone who wants to talk to you.

N: With me? Who?

- Hello, Natasha.

Natasha watched as the man stepped out of the shadows.
Natasha frowned as she recognized who the man is.

**N: Bruce?**

Chapter End Notes

Bruce is back and I think Steve won't accept him that easy, if Nat tries to defend Bruce, Idk what will happen
Chapter 56

Chapter Notes

Biggest chapter ahead but it’s just because we are at the end. Sorry

See the end of the chapter for more notes

N: What's happening? Why are you here?
B: I needed to see you.
N: See me?
Natasha shook her head and looked at Tony Stark.
N: Steve doesn’t know about that, does he?
T: Of course not.
Logan: They said Steve was going to freak out if he saw Bruce.
N: He will.
T: That's why I brought Bruce here in secret.
B: Natasha, I don’t want to cause problems. I just came because it's important. I need your help.

N: My help? For what?
B: First, tell me… How are you? Are you okay?
N: Yes.
B: I'm sorry about what happened last time, I...

Natasha closed her eyes briefly and sighed, she felt sorry for Bruce, she couldn’t help it, even though
he had taken the life of Steve's daughter and injured dozens of people.

Natasha knows that Hulk and Bruce are different people living in the same body and she understands the battle of one trying to suppress the other to come out.

Natasha now knows that when she tried to have a relationship with him, she was feeling more pity than passion for him, but she really likes him and she doesn’t want him to be isolated.

Yes, Natasha voted for his exile from the bunker, and if everybody would still live in the bunkers, she would keep the same position, but they are about to move to the outside and that means Bruce would be freer and could live in society again.

N: It’s okay, Bruce. Let’s not talk about the past no more, but I still think it's too dangerous to have you in here. I don’t want you to live alone, but this enclosed environment is only going to make bad for you.

B: I didn’t come to stay.

L: Why are you here?

B: A guy named Adam Warlock showed up for me.

N: Adam Warlock?

L: Showed up for you? Where?

B: I was on a mountain, in a cave… very far from here and he came, he found me, I don’t know how, but he knew my name.

T: You're famous, Banner, as much as I am.

B: Yes, I know that, but this guy had information about Thanos.

The expression on Tony's, Natasha’s and Logan’s faces shifted to one of astonishment and alertness.

T: What did he say about Thanos?

B: He…

N: Wait! We need to call Steve.

T: Are you crazy?

L: Steve's going to kick him out again.

B: Don’t call him, Natasha. Please.

N: We have to, he needs to hear it too.

T: How about Bruce tell us and then we, or I pass all for Steve? See? No problem.

N: Steve needs to know that Bruce is here.

L: Natasha, it won’t work.
N: I can’t lie to him.

T: Oh Lord, you got engaged to him and suddenly you can’t hide things from him anymore?

B: Engaged?

Natasha looked at Bruce for a few seconds, then she glanced at Stark.

N: No, I can’t hide this from Steve, you shouldn’t have brought me here, then.

T: Well, actually I didn’t want to, I thought it was a bad idea, but Bruce insisted I should call you.

B: Natasha, please, just listen. You can tell Steve that I am here, but listen to me first.

N: I want you to say what you have to say in front of him.

B: He won’t let me talk.

N: He will.

T: Natasha, I agree, he will let him talk, but first he will talk and talk and talk and you know...

Natasha nodded and she listened to everything Bruce Banner had to say about Adam Warlock, Thanos, and the infinity stones and also about Dr. Strange.

N: Do you want my help to find Dr. Strange?

B: Yes. I’m not a spy, I don’t know how to find people.

N: I will do my best, I can ask Maria Hill to check in the camps, he must be in one of them.

B: No, I think it will be a bit more complicated than that.

L: Why?

B: I don’t think he’s on the same dimension as us.

L: Dimension? What the fuck are you talking about now?

B: Adam said that he is hiding in a place that he thinks is safe, but it’s not. Adam made it clear that Thanos’s last stop is Earth, we have the latest stones he wants.

N: And if Thanos gets all the stones...

T: He becomes indestructible.

B: Yes.

L: How can we be sure that this Adam was telling the truth?

B: Actually I even thought he was part of my imagination.

T: And you’re sure he wasn’t?
B: No, I'm not sure, but I didn’t want to risk it.

T: What's his full name again?

B: Adam Warlock.

T: Adam Warlock?

Tony was thoughtful.

N: What is it, Tony? Does this name sound familiar to you?

T: I don’t know... I'm not sure.

N: Bruce?

Bruce looked at Natasha.

N: Are you hungry?

B: Actually, yes, I am.

N: You need a shower too.

Natasha looked at Logan.

N: Logan, take him to the gym, he can take a shower there, I'll send someone to bring clean clothes and a meal.

Logan nodded.

N: I'll go upstairs and I'll tell Steve.

L: God, this is a bad idea. We can keep Bruce here without his knowing.

N: I can’t do this to him, if he finds out, he won’t forgive me. We just got back together, I don’t want to ruin it.

T: Steve has to forgive Bruce, or accept his presence here, after all I accept the presence of his boyfriend.

Natasha looked at Bruce.

N: I promise it will be alright.

Bruce nodded.

N: And, Tony... Give him that medication.

Bruce looked surprised, Natasha looked at him.

N: Sorry, but it's necessary. I have to go but I'll be back.

Natasha went to the elevator and went up to Wing A, she went to the refectory, but everyone had already left.
Natasha knocked on the kitchen door and requested the extra meal, she asked to leave it on the counter because some agent would pick it up and take it to Bruce.

Natasha still went to the command center and asked help from one of the agents to arrange some bedding and take the food to Bruce Banner, and she required discretion.

Natasha finally went to Steve’s dormitory, she opened the door and Steve was coming out of the attached room, he looked at her and he already noticed concern in her face.

**N:** James and Sarah?

**S:** I just put them both to sleep.

Steve walked to the center of the room.

**S:** What happened? I thought I'd meet you in the refectory but Clint said you walked by there and didn’t even eat.

**N:** Yeah...

Natasha choked a little, she took two deep breaths to think how to tell the truth to Steve.

**N:** Steve?

Steve didn’t answer, just kept looking at Natasha.

**N:** I'll tell you something, but I don’t want you to get mad.

**S:** Did you give up on the wedding?

**N:** No. It's nothing with us.

**S:** If it is not, what then?

**N:** Calm down, please.

**S:** I'm calm, I'm just worried.

Natasha looked down and sighed.

**N:** Bruce is here.

Natasha whispered.

**S:** What??

**N:** Bruce... is here. Bruce Banner.

Natasha looked at Steve.

**N:** He showed up tonight and...

Natasha didn’t finish the sentence, because Steve was blinded with rage and walked to the door, Natasha stepped in front of him and pushed him back.
N: Steve! Listen me!

S: He shouldn’t have come back!

Steve kept trying to walk to the door and Natasha pushed him hard back.

N: Steve, please!

S: Get out of my way, Natasha!

N: No!

Steve was about to step over her, but Natasha pushed him harder and she was almost beating him to make him stop and listen to her.

N: You're going to make me wake the kids! Just listen to me! Okay???

Steve hadn’t looked into Natasha’s eyes yet, he took a deep breath to try to control himself and looked into her eyes.

N: Steve.

S: You know what he did.

N: I know.

S: Don’t ask me to forgive him.

N: I won’t.

Natasha made negative with her head.

N: I just want you to listen to what he has to say.

S: I don’t want to hear his apologies.

N: Steve, stop, Bruce is not the Hulk.

S: WHAT??

Steve looked disgusted at Natasha, she sighed and made negative with her head again.

N: I mean that Bruce... He's a decent guy, he's good, he went through an experiment that didn’t work, but he has always helped us and you know that we have won several battles with his help. And above all of that, you know him, Steve.

S: Not as well as you do.

Natasha frowned and decided to ignore this nasty comment from Steve.

N: I understand you don’t want to forgive him, I really do.

S: But you don’t seem to understand, you're here asking me to calm down and I bet that if it was the other way round, you wouldn’t accept him back!
N: No, I wouldn't. But that's me, you're different from me. You are Steve Rogers.

S: I'm not an idiot, Natasha!

N: My God, Steve, I know... I'm not saying you are.

Natasha held onto Steve's shirt and looked into his eyes.

N: I’m saying you're a decent, centered and good man. I don’t want you to see him to hear his excuses, it’s not that. Bruce has information about Thanos.

Steve looked at Natasha for the first time with a little more calm.

N: You need to hear what he has to say, you know we need all kinds of help and information. Think above what you are feeling. Please, just listen to what he has to say.

S: Natasha this is very difficult for me.

Natasha hugged Steve's waist, trying to calm him down.

N: I know. I know. But you have to try.

S: I need some time. Give me an hour.

N: No...

Natasha made a last-minute decision.

N: Stay here. Sleep. Tomorrow morning, we'll talk to him. Together. Okay? Better this way?

Natasha nodded encouragingly to Steve as she continued to stare at him.

N: What do you say, huh?

Natasha put her hand on Steve's face and he nodded.

N: Give me a kiss.

S: Nat...

N: Please.

Steve lowered his face a little and Natasha pressed her lips to his, she gave him a long peck on his lips and as she brushed her lips away, she looked into his eyes again.

N: It's okay.

S: It’s not.

N: But it will be okay. Just lay down.

Steve released Natasha and sat on the bed, he looked at Natasha heading toward the door.

S: Are you going out?
N: Yes, I have to...

Natasha could come up with an excuse now, but if she's going to marry Steve, she doesn't want to have to lie to try to make things better with him. Steve values honesty and she values frankness.

N: I need to find a place for Bruce to sleep and I want to see if he got clothes and food.

S: You still care about him.

Steve said, looking away.

N: Steve, his clothes were filthy and torn. Don’t be like that. I just want him to look presentable, you know? It’s not healthy to walk around like an animal.

Steve lay down on the bed and didn’t answer Natasha.

Natasha stared at him for a few seconds, she wasn’t going to go back, just because Steve has hatred and maybe jealousy of Bruce, she left the room.

...

Natasha went to the gym and found Bruce Banner already bathed. Logan was keeping him company. In fact, Logan was escorting him.

L: I'll stay outside, while you talk.

Natasha nodded and Logan withdrew.

Natasha looked at Bruce who, as always, seemed out of place.

N: I'm sorry, we don’t have dorms available. I could let you in my dorm, but... It’s not a good idea. Too close to people and Steve…

B: Yes, I know that. A man brought this kit to me, has a blanket, pillow and sheet and that's more comfortable than what I had out there.

N: Do you want to talk about it?

B: Not really.

Bruce frowned, then looked back at Natasha.

B: So you and Steve are getting married...

Natasha gave a small smile and nodded.

N: Are you surprised?

B: I'm more surprised that you aren’t married yet, after all this time.

N: A lot happened.

B: I can imagine.

Bruce adjusted his broken glasses on his face.
B: I didn’t see those creatures outside anymore.

N: Yes, we defeated them.

B: Adam told me about it and he said that it was just a test.

N: Just a test?

B: Yes.

N: I'm curious to know more, but I'll wait for Steve.

B: He refused to see me?

N: No, I just thought we should leave this conversation for tomorrow morning, but he's not happy to know you're here.

B: I'm sorry for what I did, I swear I was taking the medication.

N: Bruce.

B: I had stopped for a while, I know but after the little accident, I went back to take it and I don't know how that happened.

N: Who made you mad?

B: I don't remember, I do not think it was anyone.

N: There was a crazy doctor here, he practically kept me hostage in F wing and he used Sam to try to kidnap James, he poisoned and spread diseases. Sam died because of him.

B: Sam died?

N: Yes.

B: My God, I didn’t know. I'm so sorry. How Steve is...

N: He's okay now, it's been a long time... Sometimes he remembers him and gets a little depressed, but he gets better.

Natasha sighed.

N: I believe this doctor could have bring the Hulk, but we don’t have evidences.

B: It's okay, I'm already accustomed to living with guilt.

N: I need to go now. Logan will be here to supervise you.

B: Thank you for being honest about this, he just said that he was wondering how I am, but we know it's not his style.

N: It’s not. See you tomorrow.

B: Thank you, Natasha.
Natasha walked to the door.

**B:** Hey… What about James? Is he okay?

**N:** Yes. He is great. Thanks for asking.

**B:** Good night.

**N:** Good night, Bruce.

...

The next morning, Maria Hill and her SHIELD team arrived in the bunker.

Peter Parker came running down the hall to talk to her.

**PP:** Director Hill!

**H:** Why do we still keep this gate closed? I'm waiting for ten minutes!

**PP:** Steve's orders.

**H:** Of course it is. Typical. He says it's safe, blah, blah, blah, but we're all still living here, locked up. That idiot!

**PP:** Director Hill?

**H:** What is it, Patrick? Look, I just got here from a fucking mission and I'm very tired, very dirty, very hungry. So, I need a shower, some food and a bed.

**PP:** Don’t you want to know who's here? Well, who arrived here yesterday?

Hill stopped walking, she took a deep breath, and rolled her eyes.

**H:** Who, this time?

**PP:** The Hulk. Himself.

Hill frowned.

**H:** Banner is here?

**PP:** Yes! He arrived yesterday. At night.

**H:** So we're in the middle of a Civil War 2.0? Did he kill Steve for trying to kill him?

**PP:** No, I don’t think they have seen each other yet.

**H:** They hid him? Smart move. Of course.

**PP:** But he knows Bruce is here, Romanoff told him and they all have a meeting this morning.

**H:** Don’t tell me it's on breakfast time.

**PP:** Yes, it is.
H: What's the problem with these people?

PP: There's still half an hour left to the meeting...

H: Yes, I have half an hour to take a shower and be present at that meeting.

PP: Yes, ma'am, your presence was requested.

H: Even if it hadn’t been, I'd be there.

Hill walked toward the elevator.

H: And that's all that happened in my absence?

PP: Of important yes. I mean, your friend got engaged, that should be important to you.

H: Natasha?

Hill frowned.

PP: Yes. Cap asked her to marry him in the refectory.

H: Oh my God. In front of everyone? What a humiliation.

PP: Yes, I was there. It was pretty cool.

H: Thanks for the info, Peter.

Hill got into the elevator and before the doors closed, Peter remembered something else.

PP: Your other friend hasn’t stopped asking about you.

H: Another friend? I don’t have any other.

PP: That little blondie, Thor's daughter.

H: Torunn?

PP: Yes, she was coming to the command center door every day, asking if you were coming back, she said there's something important to talk to you about.

H: That girl... I swear to God.

Hill made negative with her head.

H: Thank you, Peter.

...

Steve was getting dressed, he woke up in a bad mood and kept his face showing how mad he is.

J: Dad, can we go outside today?

Steve didn’t answer.
J: I want to go with you and mom, so you can teach me more things and I can teach to my friends. That would be cool. Can we dad? Dad?

James didn’t notice Steve's mood, he climbed on the bed and jumped on his father's back.

J: Come on, Dad? Please.

S: James!

Steve grabbed James and set him down.

J: Come on, Dad!

S: Not today.

J: It has to be today!

S: Not today.

J: But dad, please!!! Take me today!

S: How many times do I have to repeat an order for you to understand? I say, and I have to repeat, because you don’t want to hear! You never want to listen!

Steve raised his voice a little and that made James understand that Steve is angry and Steve is never rude with him, especially without him giving a reason.

Natasha was in the attached room, putting the sweater on Sarah, she took Sarah in her lap and went into the main room when she heard Steve being harsh with James.

N: James? Go get your work from school.

James ran to his room.

Natasha stared at Steve and he avoided eye contact with her, he was already feeling bad about the way he talked to James.

Sarah: Daddy.

N: Daddy is a little busy right now, Sarah. Let's have breakfast.

Sarah: Daddyyyy.

N: Come on, James! Hurry up!

J: It's here, mom!

Natasha walked to the door with Sarah in her lap and James followed them both.

J: My dad is not coming to have breakfast with us?

Natasha glanced briefly at Steve.

N: No, your dad has some bunker’s issues to solve now.
Natasha opened the door and James ran away towards the refectory. Sarah asked to go to the floor and as soon as Natasha placed her on the floor, she ran after James.

Natasha watched them, but continued on the door, she looked at Steve again.

N: I'll meet you there in the meeting room.

Steve nodded.

Natasha went to the refectory and picked up a tray with the children’s breakfast, she went to sit down and called James and Sarah to eat.

N: James, sit up straight and start eating, I don’t have much time.

Juliana: Good morning, Natasha.

Juliana came up with her tray to the table where Natasha was.

N: Good morning, Juliana.

Sarah: Juuuu.

Ju: Hello, baby Sarah. Good morning, James.

James was paying attention to Francis, who was in line with his mother Laura and brothers.

N: James, Juliana is talking to you.

J: Hi.

Juliana smiled and sat facing Natasha.

N: Where's Bucky?

Ju: He said he was called to a meeting now.

N: Oh, it's true.

Ju: I thought you'd be there.

N: I should be, but I had to come here to give breakfast to the kids.

Ju: I can do this for you.

N: Oh no, you just kept them for me yesterday, they need some time with me.

Ju: If that's the reason, okay, because I don’t mind at all.

Juliana began to eat, while Natasha gave Sarah the porridge.

Sarah: Yummy mamma.

N: Is that yummy, my love? Yes, it is.

Natasha smiled at Sarah.
Ju: Natasha?

Natasha was listening to Juliana, but she was concentrating on giving Sarah food, so she didn’t look at her.

Ju: You know Bucky very well, don’t you?

Natasha now looked at Juliana.

N: I think so.

Ju: Hm...

N: What is it, Juliana?

Ju: Did he say anything about me and him?

N: Why the question?

Ju: I think he's a little different.

N: Why you say that?

Ju: I don’t know, I think it's just something from my head. Never mind.

N: Okay.

Natasha didn’t want to hear, so she didn’t insist with Juliana to speak.

Ju: He has treated me differently, you know? He used to want me all the time and he was so careful, so protective with me, it was like I was everything for him and all of a sudden...

N: Not anymore?

Natasha looked at Sarah again and imitated her expressions as she ate the porridge.

Ju: I don’t know, he was so happy at first, now he looks a little... I don’t know the word.

Natasha looked at Juliana with raised eyebrows.

N: I'll tell you something now, Juliana, because I don’t think anyone told you that yet. We, women, we have this power, you know? See, this power is called intuition, we can notice things even before men know they are feeling something or not feeling it.

Ju: Yes, but intuition may be wrong.

Natasha frowned and then made negative with her head.

N: You can try to convince yourself that, but if you think something is wrong, it’s because something is wrong.

Juliana was speechless and went back to eating.

N: It's not what you wanted to hear, but it's the truth. Don’t ask me what he's feeling or not,
ask him, he's your boyfriend.

Ju: Okay. I'll do it.

Natasha doesn’t have much patience with young people, even Juliana being a good person, who always helps her with the kids. All this drama of first love simply does not fit with Natasha.

N: Laura!

Laura was approaching with her children.

N: I need to go, Sarah already ate much of the porridge and James...

Natasha looked at James who was sitting with his back to the table.

Natasha pulled James and made him sit right on the chair, she looked at him seriously.

N: Sit and eat! Now! If I hear any complaints about you, James, I swear...

Natasha took a deep breath and looked at Laura.

N: Can you take them to school with you after you finish here?

L: Of course.

N: I have this meeting...

L: I know, Clint has already gone there.

N: Thank you.

Natasha kissed Sarah's forehead.

Sarah: Mamma! Mamma!

Sarah grabbed Natasha's suit as she put her on Laura's lap and threatened to start crying.

N: Look at Lila, Sarah. Lila is here!

Lila: Hi Sarah!

Lila approached Sarah and smiled at her.

Natasha took advantage of Sarah's distraction with Lila and ran out of the refectory.

When Natasha arrived in the meeting room, Steve was arguing fiercely with Tony Stark and Bruce Banner, while the others were all sitting, wondering whether or not they should intervene.

In fact, Bruce was not arguing, he was with his head down, listening to everything Steve had to say and it all started when Bruce decided to apologize to Steve before announcing what he had to announce about Thanos.

Then Steve became irritated and started to fight with Bruce, although he didn’t respond, which caused Tony to interfere and Steve turned against Tony.

Natasha watched the scene and then looked at Hill, who had a small smile of satisfaction on her face.
Natasha could imagine what Hill was thinking, something like "Great, Natasha has arrived, now this circus will be upgraded to the next level: Jealousy."

Natasha walked over to Steve and stepped in front of him.

The only ones standing now were Steve, Tony and Natasha.

**N:** Steve, what are you doing? You promised.

Steve didn’t look at Natasha, he was looking at Tony.

**T:** Tell me how this is different?? He killed my father! My father!

Tony pointed to Bucky without any concern.

**T:** And I accepted him here because you were willing to die to keep him safe. So I went over it and let him live here in my bunker.

**S:** Your bunker...

**T:** My bunker yes! And don’t come with that look of "Tony you stingy" I built it, I paid for it. Why do you have such a hard time admitting it?

**S:** You're so arrogant, Tony!

**N:** Guys, that doesn’t get us anywhere. Steve, forget about Tony. Forget what Hulk did, that's not our purp...

**S:** Forget what he did???

**N:** Hulk and Banner are different persons.

**S:** If he had taken the medication...

**N:** Steve, we don’t know if he took it or not... He told me he took it.

**S:** He said? And you believed?

**N:** That's not the point, Steve. We have no proof. He may be innocent in all this.

Steve looked at Natasha and he is furious now.

**S:** How can you say that?? Are you on his side?

**N:** I'm on your side, always.

**T:** We should all be on the same side, that's the question.

Hill sighed and rolled her eyes.

**H:** Jesus Christ.

Hill whispered to herself, Bucky looked at her and looked back at Steve and Natasha.

**S:** How can you ask me to forget Maggie? She was my daughter!
N: I didn’t say that, Steve! Why are you acting like...

H: ENOUGH!

Hill screamed and hit the table hard, drawing everyone's attention, she got up and walked to the front of the table, where Bruce was.

H: Do you all know what I was doing a few hours ago?

Hill looked at everyone.

H: I was burying children's bodies! You know I don’t care about anything in life, but God... Bury children... It's not an easy thing to do. I was in a camp where I had 15 children dead and the 13th died in my arms as I ran to take her to the health clinic we set up. I...

Hill hit her own chest a few times.

H: I carried someone to be saved, she died and I returned the body to her mother, I returned to that mother, the body of her daughter dead. The scream of that woman… I’m sure I'll never forget.

Hill made negative with her head.

H: But I can deal with that. I can and that woman is dealing with that.

Hill looked only at Steve now.

H: You lost your fucking daughter, Steve. Okay, it's sad. I get it. We all get it. We all felt for you and Sharon, but there are many people who have lost their children, their husbands, their parents, their friends. Stop acting like you're special, just because you have a serum and it has become the symbol of America and carries a fucking Vibranium shield. Everyone has their pains, and yours is not bigger than anyone else's. I understand you want revenge, everyone wants revenge, I want revenge too! But you should be smarter.

Bucky was looking at Hill with surprise and shock at the harsh words. In fact, everybody was very shocked, because Hill is usually silent and rolling her eyes, she only talks to make a decision, not to argue, much less explain her point of view. Or the person understands half word, or the person is too stupid to deserve her complete word.

H: Do you want to take revenge on Bruce? And getting revenge on him, what happens? Will your pain end if he dies?

S: I didn’t say I want him dead.

H: Of course you don’t want him dead, because you're not capable of killing him, none of us are. That's one more reason why it's so stupid to keep arguing. You don’t realize this is not about Bruce or the Hulk? Who made us move here?? Who makes us fear for life now? Who is the real threat? Who is the one to blame for taking the life of Maggie, John, Sam, Clarice, Alice or who else died in this damn war???

Hill paused for a few seconds and lowered her tone.

H: You know who is to blame and it’s not Bruce Banner.
One more person arrived for the meeting and everyone turned to the front door to look who it was and everyone was shocked to see Sharon Carter at the door.

T: Oh my God, what's she doing here?

S: I warned her that Bruce was here.

T: Why??? You're so dramatic that I still don’t know why I haven’t shot you yet. You needed to bring more drama.

S: I warned her, I didn’t call her here.

H: No, I called Sharon here. I know Sharon very well and if she can stay here, without attacking Bruce and hearing what he has to say, you can do it too, Steve.

Steve looked at Sharon and she looked at him, she nodded and Steve stepped back.

Steve sat in the chair.

Sharon walked over to the table and sat down.

Sharon Carter: But I need to say I hate you.

Sharon said looking at Bruce.

SC: I don’t forgive you for what you did to me and my baby, but I won’t live for revenge. I'm sure your conscience tortures you every day and that’s enough for me.

Hill looked at Tony and Natasha.

H: Great! Let's sit and listen to what Bruce has to say.

Tony, Natasha and Hill sat down and finally Bruce was able to talk about his meet with Adam and what he revealed about the Infinity Stones and Thanos.

S: We have to protect these stones at any cost, we must put them in a safe place.

Logan: Are you kidding me? We have to send these stones off the Earth!

N: This can make it easier for him to find it. He would destroy us anyway.

Clint: But he already has some stones and he is already very strong without all of them. Do we have any chance of being able to protect this stones?

Peter Quill: Guys, we kind of have no choice. We have to take the risk.

Gamora: We'll only know when the time come.

Carol Danvers: One thing is certain, we will die fighting. It won’t be easy to bring down the Earth without a good fight.

Gamora: Carol's right, we'll give him a lot of worm.
Professor Xavier: How much time do we really have, Bruce?

B: He said 2, at most three years.

T: We will rebuild everything and we will build an army and we will have new weapons.

N: The Guardians did a job upgrading the weapons to the Pyrons battle.

T: But we need more!

PQ: No problem, we'll get more technology and bring it to Earth in time to build more weapons.

Professor Xavier: Maybe Earth is not completely alone.

PQ: Of course not, I know what you mean.

H: Alliances?

Bucky: That might work. Guardians, do you think Earth has friends out there who can help?

Gamora: Friends? I don’t know, but planets with the same objective as your, yes, it has.

Bucky: Great! We need to negotiate with them.

G: We are not so good with negotiations.

PQ: It's true... We kinda ended up stealing some stuff and they come after us to kill...

Carol Danvers: Thank God you have Miss Marvel for that!

H: Who is this Miss Marvel?

CD: Me!

PQ: That's her name now.

CD: Superhero name!

Tony looked at Bruce.

T: I would love it if you stayed, I miss you. I miss more your brain, to be honest. Science Bros... That's what they call us. What do you say? Like the old good days?

H: Yes, we need Bruce and we need the Hulk.
Hill stated to let Steve know that he wouldn’t have opinion in this matter.

H: He can’t stay inside the bunker, tho, he can camp out there.

S: There is no need, there is room in the new base we have built.

H: Great, I think we're clear. Dismissed.

T: Why does she act like she's the boss?

Clint: She’s the boss. Let's go, Tony, I'm starving.

H: I'm hungry too, I'm going straight to the refectory.

C: Come on, I don’t know why the meetings have to be at mealtime. It's food, bro! Our fuel!

Everyone started to get up and leave.

...

C: Hill? Where are you going?

H: I'll be right back.

C: What about your hunger?

H: I'll be back!

Hill informed Clint Barton before leaving the refectory, she ran to the Bunker school.

Hill opened the door and looked at Pepper.

H: Can I talk to Torunn for a minute?

PP: Is everything okay?

H: Yes. It's just a routine thing.

PP: I'll call her, the kids are watching a movie in the next room.

When Torunn was brought in by Pepper, she opened a huge smile at the sight of Maria Hill, she ran to her and hugged her waist.

Pepper was surprised by the scene.

T: Maria! You're back!

H: Yes.

Hill pushed Torunn to release her and pulled her out of the room and closed the door.

H: What did you want to show me?

T: What?
H: Before I left for the mission, you were disturbing me to show me a crumpled can. What was?

T: Oh! Yes! You remembered!

H: Of course I do remember. I promised to look.

Torunn took the can under her clothes and opened it, she showed it to Hill.

T: It's not shining anymore. It's the fifth time I open it and it doesn’t shine.

H: What is it, Torunn?

T: I don’t know, I thought you could tell me.

H: Where did you get that?

T: My grandfather gave it to me and I kept it, then I showed it to James and Francis saw it, I didn’t show it to him, but he saw it and he kneaded the can and I cried, I was sad and then I kept it. Did you know that James and Francis got hurt and I was forbidden from playing with them? I was very sad and then we went out one day and this guy Adam Warlock, I think it was his name, he tried to steal my stone from me! Do you believe? And he had one equal to mine! Why did he want mine? So stupid! Anyway, I should've killed him! I think he broke my stone, because after he held my can, the stone never shone again, and it shone every time I opened the can.

Hill was almost slept listening to the whole story of Torunn and in the end, she frowned.

H: Did Adam Warlock talk to you?

T: He is not my imaginary friend! You won’t believe me either.

H: When did this happen?

T: I don’t know.

H: Where?

T: Outside, he was in the bush, so the camera didn’t show him.

H: Show me this stone again.
Torunn held up the open can.

Hill reached for the stone, but Torunn pulled away from her.

**T:** You can’t touch it!

**H:** Why not?

**T:** My grandfather said I can’t touch it yet. No one can.

Hill took a deep breath and looked at Torunn.

**H:** Torunn, how long have you been with this?

**T:** Ever since I was little.

**H:** Your grandfather gave you, that means you got this in Asgard while he was still alive.

**T:** Yes.

**H:** You never told anyone?

Torunn made negative with her head.

**T:** Not even for my parents, just for my best friends.

**H:** Who?

**T:** Francis, James and you.

**H:** Me?

**T:** Yes, but you don’t want to be my friend.

**H:** We are friends, Torunn.

**T:** We are?

**H:** Yes, but that's a secret, don’t tell anyone.

Torunn smiled.

**H:** And do not tell anyone about that can and the stone.

**T:** Do you know what this stone is?

**H:** Maybe. I'll tell you when I find out everything about it. Meanwhile, keep it with you.

Torunn nodded.

**H:** Now go back to class.

**T:** Okay.

Torunn walked to the door.
H: Hey!

Torunn looked at Hill.

H: I missed you when I was out there.

Hill smiled discreetly. Torunn smiled at her again.

T: Me too.

H: Go, have a good class.

Torunn nodded and walked back into the school.

...

Six months later...

N: I'm here!

J: MOM!

James came running from his bedroom and jumped on Natasha, who hugged him and covered him with kisses.

Sarah: Mommy!

Natasha looked at Sarah in Steve's lap.

N: Sarah... I missed you.

Natasha also looked at Steve and smiled.

Steve approached her and gave her a long kiss.

Natasha hugged Steve and Sarah at the same time, she kissed Sarah's cheek.

S: I missed you.

N: Me too. Very much.

S: Did you find him?

N: Yes.

Natasha sighed.

S: Did you bring him with you?

N: No, he didn’t want to get out of there. But I warned him of the risks and he claims the stone is safer with him than anywhere we try to hide.

S: So you didn’t bring the Eye of Agamotto?

Natasha shook her head.
N: I couldn’t fight him and he gave me no reason to do it. He showed me another dimension.

S: Another dimension?

N: Yes... It was a very, very... Surreal experience... There is so much in the world and out of the world that we don’t know. We're nothing, Steve.

J: What do you mean we're nothing, Mom?

Natasha forgot that the kids were around, she ran her hand over James's head and looked at him.

N: Nothing, baby. Now come here, because I've been without smelling your neck for four months and I've missed it so much!

J: Oh no, mom!

James tried to run, but Natasha grabbed him, she sniffed his neck and gave several kisses on his face.

Sarah: Mommy!

Sarah grunted when she saw Natasha with James, she released James and took Sarah in her lap.

N: You too, your little brat, come here.

S: What about me?

Natasha looked at Steve with a raised eyebrow.

N: You?

Natasha put Sarah on the floor and leaned her body on Steve's, she hugged his waist and stood on tiptoe.

Steve kissed her and Natasha moved her lips to his ear.

N: You, I'll take care of tonight.

S: I can’t wait.

Natasha smirked.

J: Dad, can I go to Torunn's apartment?

S: Yes, but be here at dinner time.

James left the small apartment and went down to Torunn's apartment.

In six months, they had already built a neighborhood, with residential buildings and small shops, they built a hospital and a school, all close to the bunker yet.

In the other bunkers the same thing was happening, some later than theirs, some far more advanced, like Wakanda's bunker, the whole town was restored, as if it hadn’t even been a battle of years.

And, also it had the parasite bunker, which took advantage that another bunker evolved to live outside and took the opportunity to go along, like the government’s, that as soon as they left the
confinement, began to take the leadership position again and to rule the world.

By government order, instead of building new housing, all resources and workers were directed to renovating the destroyed or partially destroyed cities, with priority for government buildings.

Two and a half years later...

**J:** Why are we without seeing my dad since yesterday?

**N:** Because today is our wedding and I've been getting ready since yesterday.

**J:** But why can’t he see you?

**N:** Actually I don’t know, but some people believe that seeing the bride before marriage brings bad lucky.

Natasha looked at James.

**N:** Can you help me put my shoes on?

James nodded, he grabbed the shoes and knelt in front of Natasha to put the shoes on her.

Natasha smiled.

**N:** You look very handsome in a suit and tie, James.

**J:** I look like an idiot.

**N:** You look like your father.

Natasha frowned a little.

**N:** And your father is an idiot, so... Yeah, you look like one.

James laughed and Natasha smiled.

**N:** Come here.

Natasha held out her hand to James.

James held onto Natasha's hand and she made him sit on her lap.

**J:** I don’t want to ruin your dress.

**N:** It’s okay, I'm careful.

**J:** And I'm too big for lap.

**N:** You'll never be too big to be on my lap. You are my son.

James smiled and Natasha kissed his cheek.

Natasha hugged James's waist and rested her chin on his shoulder.
N: I'm a little nervous.

James looked at his mother.

J: Why? Don’t you love my father?

N: Of course I do. But... Marriage is a little scary.

J: I don’t want to get married.

N: Why not?

James shrugged.

N: Not even with Torunn?

James got all red.

J: Mom! No, she is my friend.

Natasha smiled.

N: Your father is my friend too. It's better when we marry our best friend.

J: Really?

N: Yes.

J: I don’t know if she wants to.

N: And you won’t ask?

J: Thor would kill me. And still there's Francis.

N: He likes her too, right?

J: Yes.

N: This is complicated, because you’re his friend too.

Natasha and James heard knocks on the door.

N: I think Fury is here to take you.

J: I want to be with you, mom.

N: We'll be together in a few hours. Sarah is already with your father, you have to go because I have to try to look beautiful.

J: You don’t have to mom, you're already very pretty.

Natasha smiled.

N: How can you be so cute? You're the best man I know, James and you are and always will be the man number one in my life. Your father is number two.
J: I'll tell him.

N: Please, tell.

Natasha smiled and James smiled back, he hugged Natasha and got off her lap, he ran to the door and before leaving, he waved to Natasha, who blew him a kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Why Steve and Natasha had to late the marriage for the same time Bruce said Thanos would be arriving at Earth? Hope Thanos don't interrupt the wedding.
J: Sarah! You broke my game!

Sarah: I broke anything!

J: It was you!

Sarah: It was nooot.

J: It was you, you always mess with my things.

Sarah: I didn’t touch it!

J: Stay away from my room!

Sarah: I stay where I want, I live here.

J: Give me this here. You will see.

James took a doll, which is similar to Barbie, from Sarah's hands, he pulled the doll's head, ripping out.

Sarah gaped open and then began to cry hysterically.

- What the fuck is going on here?

Sarah ran to the man in the wheelchair who entered the room.

Sarah: Ja… Jamie...

Sarah burst into tears and Nick Fury looked at James with a broken doll in his hands.

NF: Did you break her doll? For what reason?

J: She broke my game!

Steve appeared in James' room, right after Fury.

S: What's happening?

Sarah: Daddyyyyy. Daddy, Jamie!

Sarah ran to Steve, who took her in his lap and then he looked at James holding Sarah's broken doll.

Sarah: He broke it! Daddy, he broke it!

Sarah repeated as she sobbed.

S: Shhh... calm down, Sarah.
Steve ran his hand over Sarah's face and then looked serious at James.

S: James, did you break your sister's doll?

J: Dad, she broke my game!

Sarah: I broke anything!

S: She's only three, James.

J: I asked her to not mess with my things and she moved, she always moves and now it’s broken.

S: That does not justify what you did, James. You're older, you should be more mature than her.

NF: It's one thing for another. It's fair.

S: You're not helping, Fury.

Steve looked at James.

S: You're grounded!

J: No!

S: What?

J: I will not be grounded! It's her fault!

Sarah: Not me, daddy.

S: Enough you two. Yes, James, you're going to be grounded and you're going to sit there all by yourself until it's time to leave.

J: That's not fair! She has to be punished too!

Sarah: No.

J: Yes!!!

Sarah laid her head on Steve's shoulder and yawn, Steve kissed Sarah's forehead and stroked her back.
Steve kept looking at James.

S: James, you don’t decide who's going to be punished or not, I'm your father and you can’t answer me like that, and that’s one more reason for you to be grounded. Do you forget that you're only seven? You don’t own yourself yet...

Wanda: Steve?

S: Yes?

W: It's time to go and Hill is on the phone wanting to talk to you.

Steve took Wanda's cell phone and left the room, carrying Sarah with him.

W: Sarah, let's finish fixing your hair, we have to go.

Wanda took Sarah in her lap.

W: Let's hurry, Sarah. You're the bridesmaid and you’re not ready yet.

S: Hill? Just a minute.

Steve looked into James's room and pointed at him.

S: Stay here and behave.

James threw himself on the bed and took the tie off from his neck.

S: Don’t do this, James. Don’t ruin your clothes! We do not have time for that.

Steve waited for Nick Fury to leave James's room to close the door.

As soon as the door was closed, James tossed his tie on the floor, then he unzipped his shirt buttons under his suit and ruffled his hair, he took off his shoes and threw them against the wall.

Outside, Steve was able to pay attention to Maria Hill again.

S: Sorry, Hill. What's it?

H: It's not me who wants to talk to you. One minute.

N: Hey.

S: Hey, my love... I was thinking about you.

N: Really? I shouldn’t be calling you.

S: I thought only seeing the bride before the weeding gives bad luck.

N: I don’t care about this anymore, I want to see you. Now.

S: We'll see each other in three hours.

Steve heard Natasha sigh.
S: Are you okay?

Natasha took a moment to reply.

N: Yes, I am.

Natasha sighed again.

S: I love you. Don’t leave me at the altar.

Natasha smiled and Steve could imagine exactly what kind of smile she was giving now and that made him smile a little.

N: I won’t leave you, I made a promise. Never again, remember?

W: Steve!

Steve looked at Wanda and raised his eyebrows.

W: We're all ready, the car is already down there and James has messed up his clothes.

Steve nodded and took a deep breath.

N: Steve? What did Wanda say about James? What is he up to?

S: Don’t worry, baby, I'll solve this. Stay calm. I have to go now. I'll see you soon.

N: Okay...

Neither of them hung up the phone, they were silent, listening to each other's breathing.

S: Don’t forget... I love you.

N: Second time, Rogers. Now you've made me lose my temper. I'm going to hang up.

S: At least it worked.

Steve laughed.

N: Was it on purpose? You suck. You'll pay me for it.

Natasha finished the call and smiled.
H: Ready? My God, it's a drama that never ends when it comes to the two of you. Please don’t be late for like three or four hours to get married, don’t do this.

N: I won’t, I'm so looking forward to my honeymoon. It will be only three days, but three days without Sarah and without James. Only me and Steve and I couldn’t be happier.

H: You only think about that...

Natasha and Hill heard knocks on the door, and then they saw Clint Barton entering the dressing room.

C: Well, if you're not the prettiest bride I've ever seen, after Laura.

Natasha smiled and got up, Clint came over and kissed her cheek.

N: What are you doing here? You should be at the saloon.

C: Laura and the kids are there but I wanted to see you first.

Clint looked deep into Natasha's eyes.

C: Don’t run away.

Natasha rolled her eyes.

N: Why does everyone keep asking me that? I'm fine and I’m here.

C: Because we know you and you like to get away from what makes you happy.

Natasha sighed and smiled.

N: I'm ready for this.

C: Of course you are, I just came to remind you of this and wish you good luck.

N: Thank you, Clint.

C: I'll see you there.

Clint walked towards the door to leave.

N: Clint?

C: What?

N: I want to ask you something.

C: What?

N: Can you take me to the altar at the wedding?

C: M-me?

Natasha nodded.
C: I thought Fury was going to take you...

Natasha shook her head.

N: I was going to go alone, but... I want you to join me.

Clint smiled from top to bottom and he was thrilled, he went back to Natasha and hugged her tightly.

C: But of course, Tasha. Thank you.

Clint kissed Natasha's forehead.

N: No. Thank you, my friend.

Natasha caressed Clint's face.

C: So I should wait for you?

N: Yes, you go with us.

H: You won’t have to wait too long.

N: Yes, we are ready.

C: Then let's go.

...

While Natasha was on her way to the saloon, Steve was trying to make James get ready again.

S: James, it's past time we should be in the saloon now. Put your shoes on.

J: No!

S: James, I'm not asking.

J: You just defend Sarah. Everything she does! Always!

S: James, she's young, you're older, I'm counting on you to protect her, not the other way around.

J: You don’t believe she does anything wrong.

S: I believe, son.

Steve sighed and took James's shoes, he sat on the bed next to James.

S: She's a bit naughty, I know she's tricky, but she's still learning, she's testing the limits of what she can and can not do, you did the same thing at her age... And everything Sarah wants, is to be your friend.

J: I don’t want to be her friend.

S: When you are with no one else to play, you call her to play with you. This is not fair, James. She doesn’t do that to you.
James rolled his eyes.

**S:** Son... Dad already told you about our situation here in this world.

**J:** Stop!

**S:** James.

**J:** I don’t want to hear!!!

James put his hands on his ear and lay down on the bed.

Steve looked at James and sighed again.

**S:** I know you don’t like to hear this, but...

**J:** Dad, we’re fine!

James sat down and looked at Steve.

**J:** We’ve been living here for a long time and we are fine! Maybe that guy Thanos died or gave up, or someone beat him and he’s not coming here anymore. Nothing will happen!

Steve ran his hand through James’s hair.

**S:** I wanted it to be true, son.

**J:** Dad...

**S:** I just made you one request, James. If we don’t come back and you'll survive...

James frowned and looked down, he hates when Steve comes up with this speech about a future where he or his mother doesn’t exist anymore and it hurts James immensely.

**S:** For you to take care of your sister... And you promised you would. Remember?

**J:** Yes.

Steve looked at James' face and felt really bad to see a tear on his face.

**S:** Come here. I’m sorry about that, I know you don’t like to hear about it.

Steve pulled James and hugged him.

**J:** I don’t want you to die, dad. Not even my mother.

**S:** Sh... It's okay, we're here now.

**J:** We should go to another planet, dad! Peter Quill came from other planet, so we can leave too! Let Thanos stay with the Earth if he wants it so bad!

**S:** It's not quite the space on Earth he wants, son.

Steve kissed the top of James's head.
S: But I promised you something too, remember?

James nodded.

J: You'll try to come back.

S: I won’t stop fighting to get back to you and your sister, okay?

Steve put James' shoes on him.

S: We have to go.

J: My tie.

S: We don’t have time for this now, let's go.

Steve got up and left the apartment with James.

...

N: I don’t understand, why can’t we go in?

H: Let's wait for Barton to come back.

N: My thigh is itchy and I can’t reach my own skin in this huge dress.

Natasha moved back and forth on the seat, trying to generate friction between her thigh and the car seat.

Hill looked at Natasha and frowned.

H: Natasha! Stop masturbating, for Christ's sake! You'll be on your honeymoon soon, calm down.

N: I'm not masturbating! It's this fucking dress!

Natasha looked at the driver of the car who looked away and pretended to be paying attention to the newspaper in her hands.

N: It's too itchy, I hate this dress. I need to stand up, I'm going to enter this saloon now.

Natasha opened the car door and saw Clint Barton returning to the car.

C: Guys, it looks like the groom has not arrived yet.

N: What?? How not? Steve said he was leaving home at that time I called him and we still waited one hour and a half to leave!

H: He gave up.

Natasha looked at Hill, who was laughing.

H: Must be the traffic.

Natasha looked at Clint.
N: Call him, please.

C: I already did that, he's on his way with the kids, Wanda and Fury.

N: He's making me wait, I'm going to kill him!

H: Well, I need a drink.

N: Where are you going?

H: Go out, join the rest of the guests...

N: Hill, no.

Hill looked at Natasha.

H: Do you want me to hold your hand and say it's all right, my dear?

Natasha narrowed her eyes at Hill's mockery.

N: Go.

Hill got out of the car and Clint kept company with Natasha.

...

Steve arrived fifteen minutes later, carrying Sarah in his lap, he greeted some guests at the entrance and Natasha watched him from the car.

N: Asshole!

C: Calm down, Natasha. Now it’s time to get married...

Natasha gave a small smile.

C: But you'll have to do some time here.

N: I hate waiting. I'm going to die of boredom.

C: No, you wont. I'm here. Let's play stone, paper and scissors, go...

Natasha looked at Clint and rolled her eyes.

...

J: Dad? Torunn is with Francis, can I go and play with them?

S: Yes, but take Sarah with you.

Steve put Sarah on the floor.

J: But dad...

S: Either you take her or you'll be sitting with your godfather, because you’re still grounded.
James snorted.

**J: Come on Sarah!**

James looked at Sarah and she followed him to where Francis and Torunn were.

**J: Torunn?**

Torunn turned to stare at James and grinned at him.

James couldn’t smile, he was repeating the scene of her turning, a thousand times in his head.

**J: You look really nic...**

**T: Saraaaah!**

Torunn lowered and kissed Sarah’s face.

**T: You look so beautiful in this dress. You're the bridesmaid, aren’t you?**

Sarah: Yes, I am.

**F: James, we're going to play.**

**T: I'm not going to play today.**

Torunn got up and looked at the boys.

**F: Why not?**

**T: Look at me... I can’t ruin my dress, or my hair.**

**F: No one cares about your dress or hair, you look awful.**

Torunn frowned and took a deep breath.

**J: Do not listen to him, Torunn. You look very pretty.**

Torunn smiled.

**F: James is only saying this because he likes you.**

**J: I don’t!**

**F: You do.**

**J: You too.**

**F: I don’t!**

**J: It's true!**

**F: I'll punch you!**

**J: Come on then! Bring it on!**
T: Shut up!

Torunn took a deep breath and ran her hand over her forehead.

T: Boys are so annoying and so immature… I’m sorry, but I will not play with you today. It’s my final decision. Please respect.

Torunn moved away.

F: So let's play, James.

J: I have to stay with Sarah.

F: Sarah? Put her to play with another baby!

J: There's no one of her age here.

Sarah: I'm not a baby!

F: There's Maximoff's daughter.

J: But she's only 2 years old, she's a baby.

F: Hey, Sarah.

Sarah looked at Francis.

F: Do you like babies?

Sarah: Yes!

F: We'll take you to play with one, do you want?

Sarah nodded and Francis took her hand and guided her to the table where Vision was sitting.

Vision was accompanied by Thor and Jane.

V: Hello children!

Vision smiled.

Sarah: Oh yes! A baby!

Sarah jumped with joy as she saw a dark-haired girl sitting on Vision's lap.

Sarah: What's her name?

V: Lina.

Sarah: Lina?

V: Yes. Lina Maximoff.

Sarah: She's cute, can I play with her?
V: Well...

Vision looked at Wanda approaching the table.

V: Wanda, this little girl here wants to know if she can play with Lina.

W: Yes, but near here.

Vision put Lina down, but she hid under the table.

Sarah: It's not catch and hide, Lina!

W: Lina, don’t be silly, get out of there.

J: Is she scared?

V: I think so.

F: Scared of what?

Sarah: She doesn’t want to play with me, Jamie?

James knelt and lifted the tablecloth, he looked at Lina.

J: Hello.

Lina looked at him but didn’t answer.

J: My sister wants to play with you. She is boring, but doesn’t bite. You don’t have to feel afraid of her.

James called Lina with his hand.

J: Come on. I help you. Come…

Lina took James's hand and crawled off the table.

Sarah: Lina!

Sarah hugged Lina, who got up and straightened her dress.

Sarah: I'm Sarah and I'm your mother now. Come on, daughter.

Sarah held Lina's hand.

F: Okay, now let's go James!

J: Okay.

James looked at Sarah.

J: Sarah, don’t leave here, okay?

Sarah: Where are you going?
J: Play.

Sarah: But I need Francis.

J: What for?

Sarah: He will be the father of my baby.

Sarah stroked Lina's hair.

J: We are boys, we don’t play house.

F: Yeah! I'm not going to be the father of your fake daughter.

Sarah: She's real, she's here.

J: Sarah. Enough, I found somebody for you to play with, now leave me alone.

James ran off with Francis.

...-

I was looking for you.

Maria Hill was standing next to a waiter, taking a glass of champagne, she turned to see who was talking to her.

H: Oh... It’s you...

Hill took a sip of the drink.

- What did you think of my dress? It's new!

H: What did you think of mine?

- It's beautiful, but...

H: But what?

Hill frowned.

- Nothing, my father said you're very skinny. He said no one would hold you for fear of breaking your bones.

H: Did Thor say that?

Torunn nodded.

H: Nobody hugs me because I do not allow it.

T: Just me, right?

H: No, not even you.

T: But I always hug you.
H: Are you insane?

T: I will hug you right now.

H: No way, I'm going to pour a drink in your beautiful dress... Step back.

Torunn laughed.

T: You're so funny.

H: I'm not.

Torunn sighed and looked around the room.

T: It's all very beautiful.

Hill looked around as well, then looked at Torunn.

T: I hope to get married someday too.

H: That probably will not happen.

Hill started walking around the room, looking for a table to sit.

T: Why not?

Torunn started following Hill.

H: Because there's a good chance you'll be dead before you be old enough to date.

T: You don’t know that... I can survive and my future husband too. I am Asgardiana and daughter of Thor. I am strong and I will be as strong as my father one day.

Hill gave a mocking laugh.

H: Okay, stay waiting for the enchanted prince, while Thanos devours your insides.

Torunn frowned.

T: That's disgusting. Is he cannibal?

H: How would I know?

Hill finally found a table where she wanted to sit, only had one guest at that table so far and it's someone Hill can tolerate for the rest of the night.

H: Good evening, Sharon.

Sharon: Good evening, Boss.

T: Good evening, Aunt Sharon.

H: Can I sit here with you?

Sharon: Sure. Please.
T: Can I sit here too?

H: No.

Sharon: Yes.

Torunn and Hill sat at the table.

Torunn looked at the stroller beside Sharon.

T: Is he sleeping?

Sharon: Yes, I fed him and he slept.

T: Is he the same age as Wanda's daughter?

Sharon: Hm, I’m not sure. Wanda's daughter is how old?

T: I don’t know.

H: Two, I believe...

- Is it true that she generate her daughter?

Hill, Sharon, and Torunn looked at Pepper Potts sitting at the table next to theirs.

Pepper was paying attention to the conversation and hearing about Wanda's daughter and she decided to clear a curiosity she had.

H: That's what she says.

Sharon: I generate mine.

H: Yes, but not alone...

P: Yes, Bucky helped you...

Sharon: Well, wasn’t that her case? I thought it was.

Pepper made negative with her.

Torunn: It's because she's a witch. A very powerful witch, she can create lives, which means she can take lives too. Isn’t it scary? Maria said she's dangerous.

H: I didn’t say that.

T: You said yes... Oh... No, it may have been someone else, but what I mean is that Aunt Wanda generated her daughter Lina, because Uncle Vis can not have babies, but he is Lina's father anyway, because what counts is the love of those who create...

Hill, Sharon, and Pepper stared at Torunn with their brows furrowed.

Torunn looked at them and shrugged.

T: That's what my mother told me... Don’t you think it's true?
P: Yes, Torunn... Surely love is what counts...

- Hello... What's the subject?

Pepper looked at Jane, who was accompanied by Laura Barton, five months pregnant.

H: Oh no...

Hill complained quietly to herself and took a long sip from the drink to disguise that she was annoyed that so many people were coming to the table.

T: We're talking about Aunt Wanda's daughter.

Jane: Oh yeah?

P: Yes, Jane. Do you have more information?

Jane: Nothing you don't already know.

P: Did she create that child out of nothing?

Jane: That's what she said.

P: That's so weird!

Jane: How else would you explain she appeared pregnant a few years ago?

P: Well, I thought the Vision...

Laura: He can't, he is not human, he is an android.

P: That makes it even weirder... How do they... You know...

Jane: Maybe they don't do anything.

L: Anything? She is young.

P: Sex is not that important.

L: Say it for yourself.

Sharon: Sex is important, but not the most important. I can stay a long time without it and now that I have Ben, it doesn't bother me that much.

L: I can't imagine.

Sharon: I'm sure not, Laura. Is this your fourth baby?

L: Fourth and fifth, they are twins.

P: Oh my God Laura! My congratulations, this is wonderful.

L: Is it? How did you survive by raising two boys at the same time?
P: As incredible as it sounds, Tony is a wonderful father, he helped me a lot, so much that the boys are more attached to him, than to me...

H: Excuse me, I just remembered that I'm going to sit somewhere else... Where people don’t talk that much...

Hill stood up and Torunn hurried up to stand too.

T: I'm staying with Hill, Mom.

Jane: All right, my love.

Jane watched Torunn walk away with Hill, then she smiled.

Jane: Torunn is fascinated by Maria, she must be great with children.

P: That's true ...

Sharon laughed, which caught the attention of the others.

Sharon frowned and smirked, she shook her head.

Sharon: I was thinking... About a funny thing that Ben did earlier...

Laura: Awn, let me see Ben...

Laura walked to the stroller and looked at Sharon's son asleep.

L: Benjamin is a beautiful name. I loved it, even I wanted to put this name on mine.

Sharon: Yes. Benjamin Carter.

L: Sounds great with the surname too.

Sharon: Thank you and feel free to use on your twins as well.

P: I thought he would have Bucky's name too.

Sharon's son woke up and began to grumble, Sharon took him in the lap and smiled at him, then she looked at Pepper.

Sharon: Well, Bucky wants to, but I'm not sure about that yet.

P: A father is so important, Sharon and you are always together.

Jane: A father is important, indeed, but no more than a mother, Ben's lucky to have you, Sharon.

Sharon: I'm not worried about him having a father, I'm sure I'm enough for my son. The idea was always to have him just for me.

L: Sharon, I used to think like you when I got pregnant with my first child, but the truth is that we don’t raise a kid for ourselves.
P: It's for the world...

Sharon: To this world that we are?

Jane: It’s so much better now...

Sharon: Yeah, but for how long?

They were all silent and tense as they thought of the answer...

Sharon: But anyway, I didn’t want a father for him, but Bucky is such a nice guy.

P: Yes, he is.

L: That's right.

Sharon: So that's why I considered that possibility. If it was anybody else, the answer would be “no” right away, but being Bucky...

- Are you talking about me?

Bucky approached the table and the guests on the table looked at him and smiled.

Sharon: Yes, we are and very bad by the way.

B: Oh I knew it!

Sharon smiled.

B: How's Ben?

Sharon: He just woke up...

Bucky looked at Ben and smiled.

B: Hey, Ben!

Laura and Jane looked at each other.

L: I think I'm going back to my place.

Jane: Me too.

L: Pepper, if you want to visit us at our table.

P: Oh no, I'm afraid of losing this place and it's very close to the stage. I love weddings, I don’t want to miss a thing.

Jane: Okay, see you later then.

P: See ya...

Jane and Laura walked away and Pepper sat back straight, facing her table, to give Sharon and Bucky more privacy.
Bucky pulled up a chair and sat facing Sharon.

**B:** Can I hold him for a bit?

**Sharon:** Sure.

Sharon handed his son to Bucky's lap.

Bucky held him and played with him, making faces and mouths, trying to wring a smile from him, but he didn’t smile.

**B:** He's very serious, isn’t he?

**Sharon:** He smiles when he wants.

**B:** Have you decided on my request? You know... time is ticking and we don’t have much time.

**Sharon:** I know.

Sharon bowed her head for a moment.

**Sharon:** I just wonder if it would be weird for Ben.

**B:** To have me as a father?

**Sharon:** Now you mention father and son all the time and you said that you knew how to separate one thing from the other very well when you became my donor and that worries me.

**B:** Sharon, I'm your donor, yes. If you don’t want him to be mine too, I'll understand.

**Sharon:** But you will change with me and Ben.

**B:** I won’t, Sharon. I like you two too much for this. I just talked about it, because I see you two all the time. The boy is going to grow up and make questions... We are neighbors, I spend more time in your house than in mine. And also, I really like this boy, because he's yours, only yours, but I thought that maybe you could let him be mine too.

Sharon gave a small smile and nodded.

**Sharon:** Okay, Barnes...

**B:** Okay?

**Sharon:** Yeah.

**B:** Am I, a dad? Officially Dad?

Sharon laughed and shrugged.

**Sharon:** It seems so.

Bucky smiled and lifted Benjamin up.
B: My Ben!

...

S: Clint, where are you guys?

C: Out here. Inside the car.

S: I'm going to announce that we're going to start, okay?

C: Steve said he will announce the start of the ceremony.

Clint warned Natasha and she frowned.

N: No.

C: No?

S: What?

C: Just a minute, Captain.

N: He made me wait, so he'll pay for it.

C: But you said that you couldn't stand to keep waiting here anymore...

N: Yes, but now I'm angry and I will not go in there like that, or my answer to the judge will be no.

C: Jesus from heaven.

Clint rolled his eyes.

S: What's happening? I heard what she said. Let me talk to her.

C: He wants to talk to you.

N: Tell him to go to hell.

S: Why is she angry?

C: Because you're late.

S: Because James decided to mess up... Let me talk to her.

C: Natasha...

N: No...

Natasha pushed the phone, gently, refusing to speak to Steve.

C: Sorry, Cap.

Steve sighed and finished the call.
Tony: What? The bride gave up? This lasted longer than expected.

S: Almost that.

T: Really?

S: She's angry because I arrived here late.

T: Soon everyone will be angry because they are waiting too long. Except me, I love parties, it can last all night.

S: Tony, I'll have to go outside and talk to Natasha and try to calm her down.

T: No, man. Bad lucky. You can’t see the bride yet.

S: Even you believe that?

T: I believe and I follow this. I didn’t see Pepper until the wedding time and see... It worked.

Steve sighed.

T: Don’t worry, Dorito. I'll talk to her.

S: You're going to make everything worse.

T: Naaaar. Trust your old friend. I mean, the old is you, I'm just the friend, but...

Steve watched Tony leave the saloon and wondered why he was giving this vote of confidence on him.

... 

Clint and Natasha heard knocks on the car glass.

Clint lowered the glass.

T: Heeey! What’s up???

N: Oh my God.

Natasha complained, rolling her eyes when she saw Tony Stark smiling with a glass of whiskey in his hand.

T: So you're giving up on marriage? If it's for me, don’t waste your time, I'm happy with my wedding, thank you.

N: Tony, I'm one step away from shooting someone and you're practically offering to be this someone.

T: I love your sense of humor, but now... seriously... It doesn’t make sense for you to stay in the car, you'll calm down and marry anyway... And then you two will fight, and make up and Fight again... This is how you are, but it works. With you two always works.

Natasha stood looking forward, but she was listening to Tony's speech.
T: But you know the only thing we don’t have now is time... And you both used too much time to finally get married, so if I were you, I would get out of this car running, get married, and have a lot of sex tonight.

Natasha looked at Tony indignantly.

T: You know it may be the last time.

Clint nodded and looked at Natasha.

C: That's right, Tasha. Tony's right.

Natasha closed her eyes and sighed.

N: I know...

T: I'm going back to the party because these drinks are wonderful, and I'm not wasting a second of my life anymore, I want to be around people and I want to drink and eat what I can. So what should I tell Steve when I get back in there?

Clint looked at Natasha and she was silent for a few seconds.

N: Tell him I'm coming.

Tony tapped on the car door, smiled, and bit his lip.

T: Yay! That's it. See you in there!

Tony returned to the party.

N: That's it. Will happen.

C: It's already happening.

...

T: Everything under control, Steve.

S: Really?

T: Yes. She's coming.

S: Really? How did you… I mean… So what should I do…
T: Go to the altar, you're the fiancé!

S: Yes. Of course... Thank you.

Steve started to get nervous, his body was cold and his hands began to sweat as he walked onto the altar.

Upon reaching the altar, Steve picked up the microphone.

S: Is this working?

It was working very well and very loudly. Steve pushed the microphone away from his mouth a little bit.

S: Sorry... Good night. Good night to everyone present here today. I want to thank you for the presence and apologize for the delay, but finally the ceremony will begin, so I ask you all to go to your seats and...

Steve looked around the room, searching for his children.

S: I don’t see my son anywhere...

James was playing hide and seek with Francis and Stark's children, he was running through the tables when Thor saw him.

Thor: HE'S RIGHT HERE!

Thor screamed and lifted James up, who was startled, because he didn’t expect to be caught and lifted high up out of nowhere.

S: Oh! Thank you, Thor. James... Go to the place agreed, the wedding will start and... where is my princess?

Sarah: I'm here, Daddy!

Sarah climbed on the chair and raised her hand.

S: Great, go to your brother. So folks, that’s it. Hm... And the judge, please, come on the altar. And the witnesses...

Steve hung up the microphone and placed it on the decorated table.

Everyone went to their seats.

On the altar now were Steve, the Judge, Bucky Barnes and Maria Hill.

Steve looked at Hill and nodded.

Hill also nodded and sent a message to Barton's cell phone.

...

C: That's our cue. We're going in.

Clint opened the car door and held out his hand to Natasha.
Natasha approached the door and couldn’t get out of the car.

C: Do not start with that shit! I'll carry you there on my back, if necessary.

Natasha closed her eyes tightly and took a deep breath.

N: Okay... I need a moment.

C: You don’t have a moment to waste anymore. C’mon!

Clint took Natasha’s hand and pulled her out of the car.

N: I hate you, Barton.

C: Let’s go.

Clint offered his arm for Natasha, she held on his arm and they walked to the door of the saloon.

- You will enter as soon as the music starts and the doors are opened.

An organizer announced.

The wedding march began. All the guests rose and watched the doors.

The doors were opened and Steve could breathe when he saw that Natasha was still there. It's still like a dream to him.

Sarah and James stepped in front of Natasha and Clint, each carrying a basket and started walking as it had been rehearsed before.

Natasha didn’t take a step, she was looking at Steve and he was looking at her.

Steve nodded and looked gratefully at her, ready to marry him.

C: Tasha...

- You have to go now. Go...

The organizer whispered.

Natasha finally started to walk next to Clint, she glanced briefly at some guests present and she was relieved to see Bruce Banner in the back at one of the tables, he looked at her and gave a small smile. Natasha smiled back.

It was a struggle to convince Steve to accept Bruce as a guest, they were already coexisting better, but Steve still resents the events of the past.

Sharon also questioned Steve about Banner's presence at the wedding, but Steve said it was a request from Natasha and he had to accept it, but he would ensure that he didn’t sit next to her.

Natasha reached the altar and Clint kissed her hand and then her face, he handed her to Steve and he looked at Steve, pretending to be fighting with him.

C: Take care of her! Otherwise...

Clint smiled and Steve too.
Steve looked at Natasha as he took her hand.

N: You're cold...

S: I am.

N: And wet.

S: I'm sorry for that.

Natasha smiled.

N: I love when you're like this for me.

S: I'm just happy and nervous.

N: I was nervous too until I saw you, now it's okay.

Steve smiled.

S: You look beautiful.

N: You're not too bad either, Rogers.

The judge cleared his throat, to call the attention of Steve and Natasha who were lost with each other talking.

S: Sorry...

- Thank you for giving me the word...

The judge began the ceremony and it was nothing too long. Natasha and Steve had already asked for this before.

Near the end of the ceremony, the judge asked them to stand facing each other.

- Steve Grant Rogers is of your own free will accepting Natalia Alianovna Romanova as your lawful wife, promising to be faithful, to love her and to respect her, in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, in wealth and poverty... For all the days of your life until death do you part?

Steve stared at Natasha and the two were lost in each other's gaze, they isolated everything else as usual and weren't listening to anything other than the sound of their own breathing.

Steve and Natasha seemed to be even talking mentally, because sometimes they smiled or laugh, or they were making positive with their heads… They were communicating in their own secret language.

- Mr. Rogers!

S: What???

The guests began to laugh.

Steve looked at the guests and looked confused, Natasha started to laugh too. Steve looked at her and
smiled, then he looked at the judge.

S: I’m sorry.

- I will ask you again... is of your own free will accepting Natalia Alianovna Romanova as your lawful wife, promising to be faithful, to love her and to respect her, in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, in wealth and poverty... For all the days of your life until death do you part?

Steve nodded and looked at Natasha.

S: Yes. I accept, but...

Natasha frowned.

S: Not even death would make me separate from you. I would be with you and follow you wherever you go, even dead. I want you to know that.

Natasha took a deep breath and shook her head, she couldn’t help but smile.

N: Well, Rogers, I don’t want to be haunted...

The guests laughed and Natasha winked at Steve, she understands what he meant by that phrase.

Nobody is too confident that they won the war against Thanos, so everything has to be said before it's too late. Natasha joked just to break the tension.

S: I meant it.

Steve whispered.

N: I know.

Natasha smiled and took a step forward to kiss Steve.

- Oh hold on... Please, let's leave this to the end...

The judge cleared his throat again.

- Your turn...

The judge looked at Natasha.

- Natalia Alianovna Romanova, is of your own free will accepting Steve Grant Rogers as your
rightful husband, promising to be faithful, to love and respect him, in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, in wealth and poverty. For all the days of your life until death do you part?

Natasha was looking at the judge and paid attention to every word and all of that speech meant.

Natasha sighed and Steve looked at her, as all the guests stared at her, waiting for her answer.

N: I...

Natasha felt her breath failing for a few seconds, her heart raced up and she felt a slight dizziness.

Steve noticed it and frowned, he held her hands.

S: Nat?

Natasha put her hand to her mouth and coughed.

Steve was worried.

N: I'm fine...

Natasha nodded, looking at Steve.

N: I'm fine and...

Natasha took a deep breath.

N: I'm... pregnant.

All the guests were surprised, Natasha could hear them commenting on each other, but no one was more surprised than Steve, he seemed to have seen a ghost, he turned pale and couldn’t react.

N: I'm sorry.

Natasha whispered to Steve.

S: Sorry you?

Steve shook his head.

S: Are you pregnant?

Natasha nodded.

S: Are you really, really pregnant?

Steve ran his hands over his face and stared at Natasha's belly, nothing indicated that she was pregnant from the aesthetic point of view.

S: How?? I mean, I know how, but... Oh my God...

Steve sighed and knelt down.

S: You're pregnant...
Steve kissed Natasha's belly and she ran a hand over his head.

N: It's the wrong time to be, I know... I didn’t want to, but it happened. I’m so sorry.

Steve shook his head and kissed her belly again.

Natasha ran her hand over her face, wiping away a tear that escaped unintentionally.

N: Are you happy??

S: If I am happy?? I couldn't be happier!

The judge cleared his throat loudly on the microphone.

- Congratulations to both of you, but can we finish this...?

S: Yeah. I'm sorry...

Steve got up and put his hand on Natasha's belly.

S: I can’t believe it!

N: Neither can I!

- Then Natalia Alianovna...

Steve grabbed Natasha's face and kissed her, he kissed her lips several times and was on impulse, he couldn’t contain himself.

The judge rolled his eyes.

- Guys, please.

S: I'm sorry, go on...

- Do I have to repeat it?

Natasha shook her head as she stared at Steve.

N: No, I remember everything... My answer is yes. I accept.

- Finally! Now, Steve and Natalia... I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss the bride...

Natasha and Steve smiled and kissed each other, with the cheering of all the guests present.
Chapter End Notes

Next one is the final
A few months before the wedding of Steve and Natasha, somewhere in the universe, the messenger of the apocalypse of Thanos, reached a small planet. In fact, it could be said that it was a satellite and not a planet, because it was too small.

- THANOS!

The messenger shouted.

- THAAANOOOOS!

Thanos. Thanos. Thanos. The man's voice echoed through the completely deserted and uninhabited place.

- I know you're here! I came to negotiate! THANOS!

The man shouted again the name of the being who wants to conquer the Earth and the universe.

After a few seconds he could hear a low chuckle that started to get loud, it was a perverse laugh, it could tell by the tone.

As the man turned toward the evil chuckle, he saw nothing but dirt everywhere and a tarred black sky filled with silver stars.

The laughter continued, and finally a gilded, imposing chair began to appear before the messenger's eyes. And in that chair, which was more like a throne, he appeared.

Thanos. Live and in colors. Literally in colors. His skin has a vibrant purple hue, looks thick and rough, the purely evil eyes and a mouth shaped into the most ominous smile the messenger had ever seen.

Th: Who comes to negotiate with the king of the universe?

- My name is Adam Warlock.

Th: I've heard about you Adam Warlock and you carry something that belongs to me!

A: Forgive me Thanos, but you are no king of the universe.

Thanos frowned, feeling outraged.

A: Not yet, at least.
Adam redeemed himself.

Th: Why aren't you afraid of me, Adam Warlock?

A: Fear is an emotion that is not useful, so I got rid of it. Just like other emotions that doesn't make sense.

Th: So you have powers, Adam?

A: I have.

Th: Bigger than mine?

A: How could it be? I have powers, yes, great powers. But my powers do not compare to yours, at least not now that you're wearing the Infinity Gauntlet.

Thanos looked at the Gauntlet of Infinity filled with pride. The gauntlet was a long glove made of gold and other materials unknown to Earth, it was large and imposing, and has spaces designed to receive every infinity stone and at the moment, there are four vacant spaces in the Gauntlet of Thanos.

A: I can help you get the Gauntlet filled.

Th: How?

A: I have a jewel here with me.

Thanos frowned and growled as he sat on the edge of the chair and glared at Adam.

Th: Show it to me!!!

A: I'll show you...

Adam displayed his box, then opened it and inside the box, Thanos could see the red jewel glittering and seducing him.

Thanos rose from his chair and ran toward Adam, who didn't move, nor did make any attempt to protect himself.

When Thanos reached Adam, he tried to grab him and felt his hand touching the emptiness.

Th: But what??? How is that possible? Is that a trick? How dare you? Where are you?

A: I'm right here.

Th: Why can't I touch you then??

A: Because I am in this plane, but also in another one... You are seeing my soul, not my physical body.

Thanos grunted and clenched his hands in anger.

Adam remained calm and serene.

A: I don't want to fool you, Thanos. I know it's a matter of time before you find me and find
the other jewels.

Th: Yes!! It's no use escaping. Death will find you all!

A: That's why I came to negotiate.

Th: Say your terms, Adam Warlock.

A: You can keep my stone.

Th: And what do you want in return?

A: To be spared.

Thanos began to laugh.

Th: If that's what you want... You'll have to serve me.

A: I will.

Th: Give me my stone, bow before me and you shall live, Adam Warlock.

A: I will do more than that, Thanos. I will give you the Earth and the other stones.

Adam knelt in front of Thanos and held out the little box to him.

Th: Are you here now?

A: Now I am.

Thanos picked up the jewel and began to giggle again, he placed the jewel in one of the empty spaces of the Gauntlet.

A: You need to make one more attack on Earth before you attack the Earth yourself.

Th: Why?

A: Because I need a distraction so they can trust me.

Thanos looked at the sky and at a particular star. It was a star from the point of view of who is on the same satellite as Thanos, but approaching that star, you would see that it is not a star but a planet. The blue colored planet, planet water. The Earth.

Th: Let the fire rain from that sky!

Thanos smirked.

...

Today, at Steve and Natasha's wedding, after they were officially married, the first thing they did was kiss their kids and run out of the place.

Steve's bike was already waiting on the sidewalk.

After Steve got on the bike and put on the helmet, he gave Natasha a hand, who ripped half the skirt
of the dress and climbed on the rump of the bike.

N: I hate this dress!

Steve handed Natasha her helmet.

Tony: Yeah, but what about the wedding’s dance? And the cake???

Tony asked from the doors of the Party Room. All the guests were gathered there to say goodbye.

S: I guess the dance will stay for another day...

N: And the cake, you can start to eat.

Steve smiled and honked, Natasha nodded to say goodbye to the guests.

Pepper: Natasha, don’t you dare leave without throwing the bouquet!

Tony: Why? Do you want to get married again?

P: Miraculously no, Tony. I don’t.

Pepper smiled.

P: But there are a lot of young single ladies here who wants...

Steve started the bike and all Natasha did was stand on the bike's backrest and throw the bouquet back.

Steve sped up shortly after Natasha sat up and hugged his waist.

S: Who picked it up?

N: I have no idea.

S: Didn’t you look?

N: No, I don’t care.

Natasha rested her chin on Steve's shoulder.

N: The only thing that interests me now is right here with me.

Steve smiled.

...

The young woman who took the bouquet looked at it with a big smile on her lips.

Sarah watched and ran to her.

Sarah: Juliana you got the bouquet! You’re going to marry! You will marry!

Torunn also approached Juliana.

T: Has your boyfriend proposed to you yet? He will have to give you’re a ring now, it’s the
law.

Ju: The law?

T: Yes. This is how it works.

Juliana smiled at Torunn and Sarah and then she showed her hand to them.

T: Oh! You're engaged! He already gave you a ring!

Ju: Yes!

T: That's so romantic! I want to win a ring too!

Sarah: What for?

T: To know that my boyfriend loves me.

Sarah: Do you have a boyfriend?

T: No. Not yet, but I will have and he will love me very much, he will give me rings and everything I want.

Sarah: Anything you want?

T: Yeah, Sarah.

Sarah: So I want a boyfriend too.

Torunn and Juliana laughed.

T: You can't, you're too young.

Ju: And so are you, Torunn.

T: I know, I'm 9, but soon I'll have 13 and I'll be able to date. My mother said.

... 

There were some people inside the party room who didn't make a point of getting up to go to the door to say goodbye to the bride and groom.

Maria Hill was one of those people, after leaving Sharon's table because she didn't want to hear gossip, she found no table to sit on, so she just paced back and forth around the place.
Hill could have stood still, but the problem was that Torunn was following her around and talking about a thousand issues that Hill didn’t want to hear, so she was trying to get Torunn interested in something at the party that wasn’t her.

Hill was unsuccessful by the time the newlyweds announced they were leaving, and some girls got up and said it was time for the bouquet.

Torunn's eyes flashed.

T: Come on, Maria! We have to try get the bouquet!

Hill frowned.

H: For what?

T: For us to be the next to be married! You don’t want to get married?

H: Of course not!

T: I'll go there. Do you mind?

H: Not at all. Please, go.

T: I'm going back after!

H: You don’t have to. Go. Go.

T: Yes I have, I want to stay with you all night!

Torunn shouted as she walked away to the hall entrance.

Hill took a deep breath. Finally silence.

Hill watched a waiter come out of the kitchen area with a tray full of drinks and he stood there not knowing what to do, since everyone had left to say goodbye to the groom and bride.

Hill approached the waiter and as she walked over to him, she drank at once the drink she had on her hand.

H: I'll take one.

Hill picked up a glass from the tray.

H: Stay right here.

Hill took a long sip from the glass, then glanced around the room.

Hill noticed that there was a table almost hidden near one of the walls. There was only one person at that table.

Hill frowned a little.

H: Hmm...

Hill took the rest of the drink at once again and replaced it with another. She took another glass and
walked over to the table.

**H:** It seems that wine and champagne is all that is served at this party.

Hill stated as she placed the second glass in front of the man sitting at the table, looking impatient.

The man said nothing, he looked at the glass and at Hill, then he looked back at nothing.

**H:** Can I?

Hill asked but didn’t wait for the answer, she just sat at the table as well.

**H:** You look like you need a beer.

- At least ten.

Hill gave a small smile.

**H:** There's a bar near here.

The man looked at Maria Hill and frowned.

**H:** It's not like you want to be here in this wedding anyway.

He was silent.

**H:** We can stay here without talking and drinking wine and champagne or we can go to the bar to also stay without talking, but to drink beer and maybe some whiskey or liquor.

The man made a sound like a grunt.

**H:** You know I don’t like to talk, so I won’t be bad company.

- You're very talkative now.

**H:** Well, yes. Because you're almost an animal, and it would be easier to talk to a boar than to you. I have to make sure you understand what I say, Logan.

Logan: I understand.

**H:** Great! Let's go? Oh!

Hill was getting ready to get up and looked at Logan.

**H:** Just to make it clear, I'm not flirting with you.

Logan: Aren’t you?
H: No, but that doesn’t mean we won’t have sex tonight. There are great chances of that happening.

Logan: You're very sincere.

H: Would you like me to make the difficult and shy girl type?

Logan: No, I'd rather you to be yourself.

H: Great.

... 

Torunn: Ju! Did your boyfriend kneel to ask you to marry him?

Juliana smiled and nodded.

T: Oh my god! This is so exciting! It must have been so beautiful! You're very lucky, Juliana!

Ju: I think so.

- What are my fiancée and these two beautiful ladies doing outside the party?

They all turned to look who was talking to them.

Sarah: Uncle Bucky, Ju got the bouquet!

Sarah ran to stand beside Bucky and hold his hand.

Bucky looked at Juliana and then at the bouquet in her hand.

Ju: If you were thinking about giving up, it’s too late now.

T: Yes! It's the law. You have to get married!

B: Law?

Ju: Yes, and you can be arrested for it.

B: Well, I don’t want to go to jail.

Juliana smiled and approached Bucky, and she gave him a kiss.

B: And I don’t want to suffer your aunt's wrath either.

Juliana shook her head as she smiled.

Bucky looked at Sarah.

B: I heard there's a huge cake being served now.

Torunn: Really?? Let's go inside, Sarah!

Sarah: Cake!!!
Torunn and Sarah clasped hands and ran back into the party.

Bucky waited for the girls to enter and hugged Juliana's waist.

Juliana put her arms around Bucky's neck, now there were just the two of them outside and a few people at the door of the party.

**Ju:** Are you still sure you want this?

**B:** Yes.

Bucky sighed.

**B:** The time I was without you just made me see how much I'm in love with you. And when I asked you some time to think, you just got stronger, more woman... More sexy...

Bucky smiled and kissed Juliana's neck, who smiled and shook her head slightly to leave her hair behind.

Juliana looked back into Bucky's eyes.

**B:** And when I saw you getting involved with another guy, I just wanted to punch him and punch me for letting you go.

**Ju:** Don’t be ridiculous.

**B:** That's serious. I got mad with jealousy. To think he would have this whole body just for him... Not this time, my friend. Not this time! She is mine!

Bucky frowned, pretending to be angry. Juliana laughed softly.

**Ju:** It wasn’t easy giving my heart to you a second time, Bucky.

**B:** I know, you don’t have to tell me. I’ve never fought so much for someone like that in my life. I'll never leave you again.

**Ju:** I hope not, Bucky. Because I've always been dedicated to you, and I want someone who is dedicated to me too.

**B:** I am your eternal servant...

Juliana smiled and kissed Bucky again.

Juliana and Bucky heard a loud sound, as if they were fireworks, they unglued their lips and looked up at the sky.

**Ju:** Natasha would put fireworks at the wedding?? I'm surprised.

**B:** No, she wouldn’t. Not even Steve, but Tony Stark...

**Ju:** But I don’t see anything.

**B:** It may not be from this wedding, it could be from some other event, or game...
Ju: But it's very close.

B: Come... We can see on the other side of the street.

Bucky pulled Juliana by the hand and crossed the street with her, they looked at the sky again and
they were frightened to see a huge ball of fire falling from the sky.

Ju: Buck ...

Juliana lost her breath and her voice failed.

Bucky glanced over to where the fireball was going to fall, right up the party.

The ball came at full speed and there was no way Bucky could stop the fireball from reaching the
party, so he just ran to cross the street back and stopped at the door of the room.

B: EVERYONE OUT NOW!

The party guests were entertained with each other, and also with the music, so they didn’t hear
Bucky scream. Only those who were closer to the door, but still, they stood without understanding
his attitude.

Bucky then started pulling whoever was passing by the door and he literally threw people onto the
sidewalk.

That did catch the attention of the guests.

Tony: But what the hell is that lunatic doing???? Has he returned to the winter soldier mode?

B: OUUUT! EVERYONE OUT. HURRY! C’MON!!!

Pepper touched Tony's shoulder.

P: Tony, I don’t think he is kidding! There's something going on.

Pepper watched the despair on Bucky's face.

Tony pressed a button on his wristwatch.

T: Pepper, get the kids!

Pepper started chasing after her kids, she shouted their names.

Jane: Thor, what's going on?

Thor got up from the table and watched the movement, the people finally started to get up and try to
leave the party.

Sarah was with Torunn near the cake table, which was placed on the altar. Neither of them realized
what was happening.

Jane: TORUNN! Thor!

Thor glanced at Torunn and saw only the ceiling start to plummet suddenly, near the altar. And from
the ceiling came that ball of fire of the size of a car.
The ball of flame struck half the altar and much of the guests' tables area. Whoever was in that area was surely dead now, if not crushed, burned.

Torunn heard the sound of the roof cracking and watched him plummet and her first reaction was to get Sarah under her arms and fly away immediately.

Thor and Jane looked worried and now relieved that Torunn had managed to fly away.

**Thor:** Jane, get out of here!

**Jane:** I can’t leave you!

**Thor:** Hurry up, Jane! I need to see if there are any injuries.

All the room started to catch fire quickly and people began to scream and run over to leave the place.

Clint was able to bring Laura safely out of the building as well as his older children.

**Laura:** Francis!! Clint!

C: Francis?

L: He had gone to the bathroom with James!

A few feet away from them, Bucky watched Torunn coming flying, holding Sarah by the arms.

**Bucky:** Sarah!

Torunn was landing with Sarah on the sidewalk.

**B:** Torunn, I'm glad you found Sarah! Thank you so much! Where's James?

**T:** I… I don’t know, I did not see him. He’s not out here?

Another ball of fire fell from the sky and struck the entrance of the hall, causing people to shout and move farther away from the building.

- What is going on???

People asked.

Bucky looked at the entrance of the building, completely destroyed, and in flames, there was no way to enter now.

**Clint:** Francis is in there, I'm going in.

**B:** Clint, we're not fireproof.

**Torunn:** I'll help!

**B:** No, Torunn!

**Torunn:** I'm from Asgard! My father is in there! I'll get the boys!

Torunn flew again and tried to cross the flames, but she cried out in pain as her skin burned from the
Torunn lost strength and almost fainted with the pain she felt, she almost fell over the ruins of the entrance, but Maria Hill had just climbed up the rubble, wrapped in several tablecloths she took to protect herself. Logan was also with Hill and had helped her find the exit from that place.

Hill saw Torunn falling and took her in her arms, and then she was helped by Clint and Bucky to come to the sidewalk.

Bucky: Maria, are you okay?

Maria was having a cough crisis, her face was scorched and the her clothes were in torn parts, because of the debris that fell on her and also because the fire burned.

Hill nodded, while still coughing, she was kneeling on the sidewalk and looked at Torunn lying on the floor.

H: What were you doing, you idiot?

Torunn was crying and couldn’t speak.

H: She does not answer! She's not talking! There's something wrong!

Hill gripped Torunn's shoulders.

H: Torunn!

B: Calm down, Hill, she's in shock.

H: She hurt herself. She's burned! We need help!

Jane came running across the street and tried to talk to Torunn to see if she would react.

The only thing Torunn did was to put her hand in the pocket of her dress and she held her tin tightly.

Tony Stark appeared in seconds, wearing his armor.

Iron Man: We need to take these people to safety. Look at the sky... It's not over yet.

Clint: Tony! My son is in there.

Jane: Thor is in there too!

Bucky: I think James is in there too.

IM: I'll find them, but take these people to a safe place. Begin the evacuation procedure.

The iron man whistled.

Peter Parker: I'm here, sir.

Tony looked at Peter, dressed in his new Spiderman uniform.

IM: I need you to remove these debris and rescue all who are alive.

PP: Yes, sir.
Sarah: Uncle Bucky!

B: Sarah! Come here!

Bucky caught Sarah in his lap.

B: Don’t cry, Sarah, it's going to be okay.

Sarah: I want my daddy.

B: Calm down, your father will come to meet you, but now I need you to go with Juliana. Stay with her, I'll meet you later.

Ju: Come with me, Sarah.

B: Juliana, your aunt...

Juliana shook her head.

Ju: She was in the kitchen.

Juliana also had tears in her face.

B: Let's rescue her and everyone.

Juliana nodded, she took Sarah in her lap and began marching with the others to the subway.

... 

Francis: JAAAAAMES!

J: I'm here!

F: Why are we without light? Why is everything collapsing and catching fire?

J: I don’t know!

F: We need to get out of here. But there is a huge rock in front of the door!

J: You need to ask for help.

F: What?

J: My leg is stuck.

Francis couldn’t see right, but he managed to get closer to James. They were both in the bathroom, when everything began to collapse and catch fire.

Francis saw a piece of concrete over James's leg and tried to push.

F: It's too heavy! I can’t push!

Francis began to cough as the smoke began to invade the bathroom.

J: You need to get out of here.
F: We'll bake in here.

J: Then go away!

F: My dad said we don’t leave a friend behind.

J: What was that?

Francis and James heard something like a roar.

F: It's Thanos, James! He is here!

J: It's not Thanos.

F: How do you know?

J: How do you know it's him?

F: He's our only enemy! Who else would attack the wedding?

J: You're right. It must be Thanos!

F: It’s Thanos!

J: It’s him and…

F: We're dead! He's going to kill us!

Francis looked at James and saw that he was crying.

F: Do you cry now???

J: If it's Thanos, so he already killed my father, my mother and Sarah. I don’t like her, but I didn’t want her to die.

James broke down in tears and Francis reasoned that if James's parents are dead, so are his.

Francis also began to cry.

F: I liked my brothers, even Lila! And I wanted to know my little sister!

J: Francis! We're going to die! He'll kill us!

F: James, I don’t want to die!

J: But we're going to die!

James and Francis continued to cry, desperate, and the roar grew louder and louder.

They both closed their eyes, when they felt the roar was too close, then the two had to protect the face, when part of the wall was destroyed.

As soon as the dust settled down, the two remained with their faces covered and trembling like bamboo stick.
They heard the roar there, close to them, they could feel the breath of Thanos in their faces. It was the end, they could only pray now.

James still cried a lot and his heart never beat so fast, the only thing he thought was that if he's going to die, there's no reason to not to look at the face of the feared enemy. After all, he also always imagined what Thanos would be like.

James took his hand from his face and opened his eyes slowly.

James swallowed dry as he looked at that creature.

F: Are we dead? James? James, did you die? James don't leave me alone! I don’t wanna be the last. James!

J: Francis...

James spoke quietly and he was still shaking with fear.

J: Thanos is not here...

Francis looked at James and then at the huge green creature in front of them.

F: THE HULK! WE'RE GOING TO DIE ANYWAY!

The Hulk looked at Francis and at James, lying on the ground with concrete on his leg.

The Hulk entered the bathroom and both James and Francis were terrified.

The Hulk brought his hand closer to James, and James closed his eyes.

Francis took a deep breath and jumped on Hulk's arm and began to punch him.

F: Leave him alone!

The Hulk held Francis with one hand, his body fit almost entirely in his hand.

James looked at the Hulk and was surprised when the Hulk pulled the concrete off his leg.

Then Hulk grabbed James with his other hand, and when he turned to leave, he came upon Thor, completely naked and holding the hammer in his direction.

Thor: BANNER!

The Hulk growled at Thor.

Thor: Put these kids down, Banner! They’re just kids!

Thor tried to negotiate, he didn’t know that Hulk was rescuing the boys and not killing them, but someone else arrived and also understood that the Hulk was attacking, then fired shots at him, which made the Hulk growl and growl with rage.

Francis: THOR! He helped James!

Thor: The Hulk???

J: Yes! Uncle Tony! Stop it! He is saving us!
James tried to talk to Tony Stark, but he wasn’t listening and was about to shoot at the Hulk again.

Tony even shot, but Thor threw the hammer into his armor, causing Tony to hit a wall.

**IM: Are you crazy, Leonardo Di Caprio?**

**Thor: Banner is saving the boys, Tin Man!**

Thor helped the Iron Man to his feet.

**IM: Hulk is saving them?**

Hulk growled in Tony Stark’s direction.

**IM: Sorry. My bad, pal.**

Tony looked at Thor from top to bottom.

**IM: Why the hell are you naked? That's very offensive, there are kids in here. God!**

**Thor: My clothes started to catch fire and I had to take it off.**

... 

Steve and Natasha were already almost two hours away from the party, they heard the crack in the sky and also thought it was fireworks and then saw a flash in the sky and then that rain of fire meteors falling.

Natasha felt her whole body freeze, just like Steve who was standing with the bike in the middle of the street, looking back.

All the cars on the street had stopped to watch the phenomenon in the sky.

**N: I've seen this before.**

**S: It's Thanos thing, isn’t it?**

Natasha nodded.

**N: Steve?**

Steve didn’t respond, he was too shocked by that scene, he prepared himself so much for the arrival of Thanos, but he seems to have been caught totally off guard.

**N: We need to get back!**

Natasha finished the sentence with the sound of an explosion a few yards away. The rain of burning meteors was hitting the area they were too.

Then all that was heard was the panic of people shouting, some coming down from the vehicles and starting to run around like dingy cockroaches on the street, as well as cars that tried to move on and ended up crashing into each other, or against some pole or building.

**S: We need to help these people!**
N: No, we have to go back! James and Sarah! We have to go back!

Natasha's only concern was her children, she needed to get them safe first.

Steve worries about everyone, but his kids come first, so he turned around with the bike, and ride through the cars at high speed, but because they were going against the flow, they found several obstacles and instead or another they had to drive straight down the sidewalk.

Natasha had already removed the helmet and shouted for the people to get out of the way and as if enough the meteor shower of fire only increased, which created more obstacles for Steve and Natasha.

Luckily, all the police, firefighters, community leaders had been trained in emergency situations like this, so the action to save people started much faster, this time they don’t want to lose so many people.

It arrived at one point, that it was impossible to continue with the bike. The street was with a curtain of fire and when Steve and Natasha tried to turn back to follow another path, they were hit by the impact of the meteor that fell very close to them.

Steve maneuvered the bike fast, but when the meteor hit the ground, it caused an explosion that knocked over the bike, and as a result, knocked over Steve and Natasha as well.

The two rolled away at the time of the fall, it was the best thing to do to avoid burns from the exhaust pipe of the bike.

Steve looked at Natasha.

N: Come on!

Natasha got up and Steve nodded, getting up too, the two of them looked around and there was no way out to the street, only curtains of fire, surrounding them on all sides.

Natasha took her gear from under the wedding dress, now torn and singed.

S: Do you always carry this with you?

Natasha raised an eyebrow.

N: You never know when you might need it.

Natasha pointed her device to the window of one of the nearby buildings, Natasha typed a command on the device and it fired a thin steel rope into the building.

The rope was fixed to the inside of the wall.

All of Natasha's weapons and apparatuses, as well as all Avengers', have been technologically improved by the Guardians and their allies.

N: Now Rogers, you better hold me tight, it seems like it's going to be the most we'll do on our honeymoon.

Steve hugged Natasha's waist and gripped the steel rope. Natasha pressed another button and the device pulled Steve and Natasha's bodies to the building's window.
The two of them hung by the rope, and as they approached the window, they rested their hands on the sill and entered the building, one at a time, of course.

Steve and Natasha started running around the building and found some people disoriented in there.

S: GUYS! You can’t stay here! It's not safe!
- What should we do?
- Will you help us?
- Please help us!

N: We're helping, warning that you need to get out of here! Immediately!
- Where should we go?

S: Follow us.

Natasha looked at Steve.

S: We'll have to get out of here too, they can join some group of first responders on the street.

N: They will not jump rooftops, Steve!

S: Are you thinking of going up?

N: I don’t want to face blockages on the street, I need to get to my children.

Natasha paused and took a deep breath, she walked over to Steve and grabbed the back of his neck, she made him bow his head and kissed his lips.

Natasha moved away from Steve's lips and when he looked into her eyes, he realized it was a goodbye.

S: Natasha.

N: Steve, you won’t be in peace if you don’t help these people. I know you. And I love you very much for being that way.

S: I don’t want to be away from you.

N: I know. I can take care of myself and our son.

Natasha put her hand on her belly. Steve looked at her belly and put his hand over hers.

N: Trust me.

S: I trust.

N: Great, because I trust you will find us.

S: Yes. As soon as I can.

Natasha nodded, and before she ran away, she kissed Steve’s lips again.
Natasha ran up the stairs and Steve began to mobilize people to go down the stairs and go to the street to find some first aid group.

...

After forty minutes, running, jumping off rooftops, drifting away from meteors and lost people in the street, Natasha managed to reach the building where her wedding took place, but not for the relief of her heart, quite the opposite...

The place was completely destroyed and there was no one else around.

Natasha's heart was tight and she wanted to get into the rubble, take stone by stone until she found James and Sarah, but she couldn’t do that.

If she did that and found them, they would be just lifeless and charred bodies and that’s something that she can’t accept. This reality can not exist.

Natasha's mind began to work.

_Bucky was at the party, Bucky would protect James and James would protect Sarah._ They should be together and have gone to the safest place nearby.

Natasha glanced at the street and walked to the middle of it, on the asphalt.

Natasha started running in search of the next subway station. There was one a few blocks away and Natasha knows that the subway lines now have a special access to a even more underground tunnel.

A bunker. The tunnel is some kind of a bunker, but those ones scattered around the city are just to ensure the immediate safety of the population, they have no accommodation to sleep, not enough food for an extended stay.

Natasha went down the stairs to the subway station and it was all desert, there was a composition standing on the rails, with the doors open and no one inside.

- Over here!

Natasha heard someone whisper.

- Over here! Here! Come!

Natasha looked toward the end of the station, there was a door painted the same color as the wall and that was where the voice was coming from.

Natasha approached the door and saw Pepper Potts at the door.

**N:** Pepper!!! Is James here? What about Sarah?

**P:** Yes, they are here and they are fine.

Natasha now breathed a sigh of relief.

**P:** Come in, come in.

Natasha came in and Pepper closed the door.

**P:** Sorry, but I need to scan you.
Pepper ran a scanner through Natasha’s body.

They created a human-identifying mechanism in case there was another Pyron battle.

**P:** All right, just go down that ladder, turn left, open the door and go down the last ladder.

Natasha nodded and did as Pepper pointed out.

The last staircase was the sailor type, and the walls around it were dark and very close to one another. It was so tight that Natasha couldn’t look down, just up and it was all dark.

Natasha felt like she was going down to hell.

The ladder was long and when Natasha finally arrived in the tunnel where the people were, she heard James scream.

**J:** MOM! Mom!

Natasha let go of the stairs, jumping to the floor, she couldn’t run because there were a lot of people sitting on the floor, but she went to James as fast as possible and hugged him tightly.

**N:** James!

Natasha ran her hand over James’s head and then kissed his cheek.

**N:** Are you okay?

**J:** Yes. The Hulk saved me.

**N:** The Hulk?

**J:** Yes, but he didn’t want to come in here. He is outside.

Natasha frowned, thinking James was confused by something.

**N:** Where's Sarah?

James pointed to Sarah sleeping on the floor near Sharon, her head resting on her leg.

**N:** Let's check her out.

Natasha held onto James's hand and when she started to walk with him, she noticed that he was limping.

**N:** Are you injured?

**J:** It doesn’t hurt so much now, the ceiling fell on my leg!

**N:** On your leg????

**J:** Yeah, but the Hulk saved me!

**N:** Were you serious about this?

**J:** Yes, Mom!
Natasha sighed and walked over to Sharon. They looked at each other briefly.

Natasha crouched down and ran her hand over Sarah's head.

**N:** Did she get hurt?

**Sharon:** No, she's just tired. I put her to sleep because she was very nervous, calling you and Steve.

**J:** Mom? Where is my father?

Natasha looked at James.

**N:** He's helping people out there, James.

**J:** But mom is very dangerous! There is fire falling from the sky without stopping! He needs to come here!

James was very nervous.

**N:** He will come as soon as possible.

**J:** Did you leave him there alone???

**N:** I came to see you, James. You and Sarah. I needed to put you safe.

**J:** I'm safe and I want my father!!

**N:** James! Son... Calm down. Your father is coming here.

Natasha reached out to touch James's arm, but he took a step back.

**N:** James?

James had tears in his face.

**J:** It's happening! He said that Thanos was going to kill him! I'm never gonna see him again!

**N:** What???

Natasha frowned.

**Sharon:** James, no one is going to die.

**J:** They already dying! I saw it, I saw a lot of dead, crushed and burned people!

**N:** James! Baby...

Natasha held onto James's arms and he was cold and shaking.

**N:** Listen, you have to take a deep breath, okay? You can’t panic now, honey. We need you. I need you. James, look at me.

**J:** But my father...
James said through his sobs.

**N:** Your father will come back! I promise!

James looked away and sighed.

**N:** Do you trust me?

James nodded.

**N:** Come here.

Natasha pulled James's hand and hugged him tightly.

**N:** It's okay!

- Natasha.

Natasha looked at Bucky Barnes who approached.

Natasha stood up.

**B:** Thank God you're safe!

Bucky hugged Natasha who hugged him back.

**B:** And Steve?

**N:** He's fine.

**B:** But he didn’t come with you?

Natasha glanced briefly at James, who was paying attention to Bucky and Natasha's expressions.

Bucky understood Natasha's signal.

**B:** When he gets here, let's start acting.

Natasha nodded.

**B:** Leave James here with Sharon or Juliana, we're gathered in a room nearby and we need you.

Natasha nodded and looked at James.
N: James, you know you can’t leave here. You have to stay close to your sister, keep her protected.

Natasha looked at Sharon.

N: Is your son okay?

Sharon: Yes.

N: Do you mind to...

Sharon: Of course not.

Sharon interrupted Natasha.

Natasha looked back at James.

N: If you need anything, ask Sharon or Juliana.

J: Mom!

James gripped Natasha's hand tightly.

N: I'll be right there next door. It's all right.

James let go of Natasha's hand.

Bucky led Natasha to the room where some of the Avengers and X-Men were, not all of them went to the same subway station in the rush, some went to other places.

Those in the station with Natasha began to consider the possibility that the meteors were with Pyrons again and have been thinking about how to eliminate them.

Logan: But this meteor rain is way bigger than the other.

Hill: No doubt it's bigger. Thanos must not be dumb, to attack again, he would have to be much more aggressive and powerful. He wouldn’t make the same "mistake" again.

Tony: I think you're right, Maria. But then, we can not wait here any longer, we have to go out and start fighting now.

Scott Summers: Yes, let's not allow this to spread like the first time.

Natasha walked to the door.

Clint: Where are you going, Tasha?

N: Out there! Haven’t we just finished this?

Clint nodded.

Bucky: Yeah, let’s go. Tony, the guns?

T: They're in the warehouse, I need help to get all.
Peter Parker: You can count on me, Mr. Stark.

Charles Xavier: Kitty and Nightcrawler will help as well.

B: But they’re not even here.

CX: But I already warned them. They are coming.

Charles put his index finger on his forehead twice, remembering that he could communicate telepathically.

... 

There were two avengers out of the station Natasha was in, that was because they had left earlier the wedding, almost immediately after the bride and the groom had left.

Wanda and Vision had gone back home and they were almost entering the house where they lived when the rain of burning meteors began.

The couple of Avengers didn’t even enter the house and from where they were on the sidewalk, they have already begun to take action against the attack.

Wanda levitated in the air, she is much stronger now and with a simple hand gesture, a red cloud formed an extensive "sheet" above the roofs of the houses.

The meteors fell on this sheet of contention that Wanda created. And, Wanda was doing that while holding her 2yo daughter Lina Maximoff on the other arm.

Vision flew to another area, not far away and used the stone, stuck on his forehead to hit the meteors and make them crash into a thousand pieces.

The more they did that, the more the rain increased. Wanda could hold it longer, but Lina was already scared and crying a lot. Wanda feared for her safety.

W: Vis!

V: Wanda.

W: We can’t stay out here! Not with Lina.

V: We can’t abandon these people.

W: No, we'll take you to some subway station. It's safe there! We have to get Lina safe.
V: You have to stay with her.

W: You're not coming with us?

V: You can get to the station and keep those people safe without me.

W: Yes, but...

V: You go with Lina. I stay and I help here.

Wanda looked at Vision for a few seconds.

W: I'll be back to help.

V: I'll be waiting.

Wanda sighed and levitated lower to speak to the civilians in the street.

Wanda asked everyone to follow her and asked them to call their neighbors because no one would be safe at home.

Almost an hour later, while Wanda was distant, arriving at the station that was far from their house. Vision made an expression of pain when he was struck by a kind of lightning in the back.

Vision turned to identify where the shot came from and this time he was hit in the belly, soon after he was hit again.

Now Vision could see who was firing at him and he began to fight the man who could also fly.

The man had no weapon, he fired energy directly from his body, he was blond and had a slightly yellowish skin with an unusual glow. Vision has never seen him before, but he knows he is not from Earth, he scanned his body and he couldn’t identify what he was made of.

The fight was very fast, the energy emitted by that man's shots were surreal, nothing that Vision had ever faced before.

The inner system of the Vision body was already badly damaged, he was on the floor and could barely move.

The man levitated to Vision, landed next to him, and crouched.

V: Who… are you?

- I'm a friend.

V: Friend?

- I'm sorry, but I need this.
The man rip the stone of Vision's head and protected it, placing it inside a small box.

The whole system of the Vision body has been shut down.

... 

Wanda was coming down the stairs from a subway station with Lina on her lap and with a lot of people around her.

Wanda stopped suddenly in the middle of the stairs, she felt a strong tightness in her chest and a brief breath of air, she looked back and closed her eyes slowly and then reopened them also slowly.

Wanda blinked again and this time when she reopened her eyes, she had tears rolling on her face.

...

After they were armed, the Avengers and X-men from the station where Steve and Natasha were, headed back to where the civilians were.

James stood up again at the sight of his mother.

**J: Mom?**

Natasha looked at James.

**J: Where is my father? Are you leaving? Are they going to fight without him?**

**Bucky:** James, your father is already out there and he will help us.

**J: He's not fine, is he? You lied, Mom.**

**N:** I didn’t lie, James. Your father is helping people out there and he's trying to come here.

**Clint:** Always on time! Look at him arriving now.

Natasha and James saw Steve coming down the sailor ladder. Natasha sighed, she was relieved now.

Steve was serious and came to them.

James hugged Steve's waist and Steve ran his hand over his son's shoulder.

**S:** Are you okay?

**J:** Yes. Dad? Now you’re here, you can stay with me and Sarah.

James hold Natasha's hand.
J: You and mom.

S: James, you know we can’t.

J: Yes, you can, Torunn's mother always stays when there is war, and aunt Pepper and aunt Laura. There's a lot of mom staying and some fathers too. You can stay, you don’t have to fight. Uncle Bucky is strong and they have the Hulk! And the iron man! They can fight without you.

S: James, we don’t have time for this now, but you know what you have to do…. And you can cry, son, but that won’t help.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: The rain is worse. I don’t know what we can do about it, but we have to do something, or this place will be just the grave of all these people.

N: Did you see any Pyron?


N: Steve, don’t say those things next to James.

Steve looked at James and then at Natasha.

S: He needs to know.

N: No, he doesn’t need to know, he is just a child and we have to talk about the things you told him.

S: We don’t have time for this now, Natasha. Let's go...

Natasha kissed James' face and then kissed Sarah. Steve did the same.

They waited for everyone to say good-bye to their beloved ones and then they started to go back to the street.

Steve looked at Pepper who stood as a lookout for the access door. Each monitor stayed for a certain time and was still in Pepper's turn.

S: Pepper, do not stay here. Get down because it's safer down there, you get very exposed here.
Pepper nodded and went downstairs.

Steve joined the Avengers and X-men at the station, they looked at the top of the staircase and saw the flashes of fire and meteors.

**S: Come on!**

The Avengers and X-men advanced to reach the street and they had no one to fight against, there was no army at all, just fire in the buildings and this rain of meteors.

Steve looked at the colorful sky and felt hopeless for some future after that. It was the end. The end of them all.

And it would be the end, if weren’t for a great glare that appeared in the sky. The glare was so strong it blinded them all for a moment.

Soon after the glare, the meteor shower stopped mysteriously.

Steve and the others managed to open their eyes and watched in what the glare had become, or what it always was and they hadn’t seen it before.

**N: Is it a man?**

**B: Not human, that's for sure.**

The glare now revealed itself in the figure of a man, blond with curly hair and he was with his arms outstretched towards the sky and all the meteors were barred at his height, he was containing the meteors and he managed to extinguish the flame of those meteors.

Soon after what the man did, he let the meteors fall to the ground softly to not hurt anyone else.

The man looked tired and had a free fall in the air, but he was rescued by Thor in time.

Thor put the man on the ground and everyone surrounded him.

He was the great savior now.

The man was still conscious.

**S: Are you okay?**


**N: You came to rescue us?**

- Yes.

**S: And who are you?**

**T: Steve! The man just saved us, let him rest!**

The man smiled and got up, looking already recovered.

- **Steve Rogers!**

Steve frowned when the man called him by name.
- It's nice to meet you. It's okay to ask who I am. I am Adam Warlock and I came to save you all.

Adam smiled.

Chapter End Notes

So sorry for Vision and whoever died and will die in the end.
So folks, I want to thank everyone who followed the story. It was a long journey, I thought about giving up 500x to write this fic, because there were too many characters, with too many arches to deal with and having to focus on romanogers, I got lost several times and I was super insecure if I could finish the story. I got it, I'm happy with what I got here, but not satisfied with myself, so I apologize if I let someone down in any way.

The day after the rain of meteors, people were allowed to return to their homes or to improvised homes, for those who lost their house with the rain of meteors. And that was only possible because Adam assured them they would still have time, that he knew of the location of Thanos and that he was still far away.

Even on the night that Adam appeared and saved everyone, Steve had some questions to ask him, but Tony interfered and said that Steve should give Adam some time to recover, after all he had just saved everyone's life.

N: Steve, Tony's right, we can ask the questions later and I'm worried about the kids.

S: Well, where is Adam going to stay?

T: In my house, of course... He will be more than welcome there.

N: Come on, Steve.

S: There's plenty to do around here yet, Natasha. There are injured, may have missing persons.

Steve looked at Natasha.

S: But you can go. Tell the kids I'll see them in the morning.

Natasha sighed and shook her head.

N: James will not calm down if you don’t come home with me.

S: You'll be there with him.

N: He was freaking out earlier because I arrived without you, he thought you were going to die and that I had left you out there to die.

Steve sighed.

N: He said that you told him that you and I were going to die in this war... Can we go home? We need to talk about this.
Steve took a deep breath and looked around.

Steve was slow to decide, he looked at Natasha.

S: Okay.

Steve agreed, but it was not immediately, he asked Natasha to go ahead with the children and he said he would meet them at home and that he would not be long in arriving.

When Steve arrived at the apartment, two hours after Natasha, he opened the door to the apartment and Natasha was sitting on the couch with her arms crossed and with a frown.

S: Children?

N: Sleeping. In their room.

Natasha replied dryly.

Steve started to remove his uniform and walked to the center of the living room, he sighed and decided to start the explanation, since Natasha was clearly waiting for one.

S: I was just preparing him for a possible future in which we were not here.

N: Prepare a children for something like that? Are you crazy? He's seven years old, Steve!

S: Natasha, if we're not here, he'll have to mature. Sarah is very young yet, she will need her brother.

Natasha took a deep breath and closed her eyes for brief seconds, then she stared into space and seemed to be trying to be calmer to deal with Steve now.

N: He's only seven years old.

Natasha reminded Steve again.

S: Natasha...

N: You do not tell a child that his parents will die! You don’t rush a child to grow! You don’t force a child to mature.

S: I just...

N: Shut up, Steve!

Natasha got up off the couch and looked into Steve's eyes and she was very angry.

N: He is my son and I can’t believe you did that to him.

S: I... You're acting like I've been cruel to him.

N: You were cruel, Steve! Don’t you see?? I told you so many times what they did to me when I was a child. I didn’t get a chance to be a kid, they rushed me to mature, they forced me to. They stole it from me, they stole my childhood and I won’t admit you do the same with my son.
S: I'm not doing this.

N: Yes, you are.

Steve looked down.

N: You're doing exactly this.

Natasha sighed.

N: Sarah is little, I get it, you worried about her, she needs care, attention, affection, love... But James is also a child. He feels fear as Sarah feels and he deserves to be protected as Sarah deserves to be. But we are the adults here, this is our job, it’s our duty, not his.

S: I...

Steve seemed to be speechless, he sighed before speaking again.

S: I didn’t know you would react like this. I love my son, Natasha. I don’t want to make him unhappy, I didn’t have that intention.

N: So why did you say those things to him? How do you think he felt? Did you even stop to think about it? About how he felt about the things you told him?

Steve shook his head, remorse began to hit him like a giant rock falling on his back.

S: I'm sorry. I’m so sorry.

N: You need to talk to him.

S: I don’t want to lie to him.

N: You don’t have to lie, Steve. But you don’t have to make him scared. I don’t want my son going through a terror like that.

Steve nodded.

S: I'll talk to him now.

N: No, not now. It's too late and he's exhausted. You are too. Tonight was a nightmare for all of us. Let's sleep, you talk to him tomorrow.

Steve remained standing in the center of the living room, he was looking down and looked defeated.

Natasha approached Steve and took his hand.

Steve looked at Natasha as soon as he felt the touch of her hand.

N: Why don’t you take a shower? I will help you.

Steve sighed and followed Natasha, who pulled him by the hand to the bathroom.

N: Take this off while I fill the tub.
S: I'm leaving everything dirty with this uniform.

N: It's all right, we'll have time to clean tomorrow. It doesn’t matter anymore.

Steve undressed and after the tub was full, he stepped inside and sat inside it.

Steve looked at Natasha, who sat on the toilet seat.

S: Don’t you wanna join me?

Natasha shook her head.

N: No.

Steve sighed and left the back of his head on the edge of the tub.

Natasha ran her hand through Steve's hair.

N: You're always full of hope, Steve. It’s so hard to see you without any and not be overwhelmed by the feeling of despair and defeat.

Natasha spoke in a lower tone as she slid her hand down to Steve's face.

N: You're the one who motivates us more, Steve. You put us forward. You can’t give up. We need you.

Steve sighed.

N: It's a weight to carry, I know, but I can’t take that weight off your back, but I can carry it along with you.

Steve looked at Natasha.

N: We're going to defeat Thanos together and we'll both get back from this war, because there's no other choice, Steve. We have to win. For James and Sarah.

S: We're going to win.

Natasha nodded.

S: You know I love you. More than anything.

Natasha nodded again.

N: I love you too.

Steve put one hand on the edge and stretched the other to Natasha's belly.

S: Is everything okay? Is he fine?

Natasha put her hand over Steve's hand.

N: Yes.

Natasha whispered and approached her face to Steve and she kissed him with love and that night,
they were just glad to have each other, to have survived another day.

In fact, everyone was grateful every day for what they were having.

The next morning, Steve and Natasha talked together with James and explained to him everything that was going on. Steve apologized for the things he said and stated that they would survive, and that they would be together at the end of the war and that it was okay to be scared.

**J:** I'm going to take care of Sarah anyway, Dad.

**S:** I know, son.

Steve ran his hand through James's hair, then pulled him and hugged him tight.

...

A few days later, in Thor and Jane's apartment, the bell rang at 8 in the morning. Jane answered the door and raised her eyebrows at the sight of Maria Hill.

**H:** Hi.

**Jane:** Hello... What a surprise... A good surprise, I mean... Good morning.

**H:** I was just passing by and decided to stop here to hear news about Torunn. She hurt herself and I wanted to know how she is?

**Jane:** Don’t you want to come in?

Hill glanced briefly into the apartment.

**H:** Is she sleeping?

**Jane:** Yes.

**H:** Then okay.

Hill didn’t want to talk to Torunn, but she wanted to know if she’s okay.

Hill entered the apartment and Jane closed the door.

**Jane:** She's a little scared yet and she's different. I think it was the trauma.

**H:** Is she in pain?

**Jane:** She says no, but we are giving the medicine that Dr. Cho has prescribed for her. I'm more concerned about her emotional recovery.

**H:** She'll be fine.

Hill looked down the hallway and put a hand on the back of her neck, then sighed.

**Jane:** Do you want to see her?

Hill looked at Jane.
Jane: You seem like you want to see her…

H: No, that's fine, let her rest.

Jane: She would be happy. She likes you so much.

Jane smiled a little.

Jane: Please.

H: Okay.

Jane walked into the hall and Hill followed her, but Jane stopped suddenly and looked at Hill.

Jane: Do you think that's the end now?

Hill looked at Jane blankly, then sighed before answering.

H: For those who don’t believe in anything, it may be the end. For those so-called believers... And y that, I mean the person who believes in anything divine or something like that, it may be the beginning of another life. In another dimension. It’s a matter of point of view and faith.

Hill answered this because she notice fear and a deep sadness in Jane's eyes.

Jane couldn’t smile fully, it was a half smile and a slight nod, indicating that she agrees with Maria Hill.

Jane went to Torunn's room and opened the door slowly.

Torunn was in bed, still sleeping.

Jane: She's still sleeping.

Jane whispered.

Jane: You can come in.

Hill entered Torunn's room and watched her.

Thor: Jane, I forgot the towel!

Thor screamed from the bathroom.

Jane: Don’t scream, Thor. Torunn is asleep!

Jane looked at Hill.

Jane: I'll help Thor, but please stay a bit with her.

Jane left the room and closed the door behind her.

Hill was still looking at Torunn, then looked around at her room.

The room was quite typical of girls from the age of Torunn. Pink walls with flower wallpaper and white stripes, dolls on shelves and many pictures of scattered princesses and even had two crowns
that Hill imagined Torunn using it.

*Princess of Asgard*. Hill thought and smiled involuntarily.

Hill still looked at Torunn's study table, it was a mess, lots of papers and scattered materials.

A particular paper with a drawing caught her attention.

Hill took the paper and saw a drawing of a tall black-haired woman and a yellow-haired girl. Hill noticed that Torunn drew a smile on the face of the yellow-haired girl and the tall black-haired woman, she put on a serious face.

Hill turned the paper over and on the back was a text and preceded the text had a header with the name of the school that Torunn attends, her grade, the name of the teacher and the name of Torunn. The header would ask to make a drawing and a story according to the drawing.

"Friends Saving the World", was the title that Torunn gave to her history. "Once upon a time, a girl named Torunn Odinson and her best friend in the world, Maria Hill..." This was the beginning of Torunn's story.

Hill frowned when she read that the character was her, she flipped the paper again and laughed at history.

*This girl is crazy*. Hill thought as she chuckled and put the paper back on the table.

Hill kept looking at the table.

**H: You can stop pretending now...**

Hill spoke without looking at Torunn.

**H: You're awake.**

**T: How do you know?**

**H: I saw your eyes shake when your father yelled.**

Hill turned to look at Torunn.

**H: And I know everything. Forgot?**

Torunn sighed and opened her eyes.

Hill approached the bed and crouched down next to her.

**H: I came to know how you are...**

**T: I'm okay.**

**H: That's it?**

Torunn looked at the ceiling and nodded.

**T: Hill?**

**H: Yes?**
T: I'm not special and now everyone knows that.

H: What are you talking about?

T: The fire burned my skin. How could I be queen of Asgard if I can get hurt? That means I can die.

H: You wouldn’t want to live forever.

T: Yes, I would.

H: No, you would not. You would grow old and feel pain in your body for the rest of your life and your skin would be wrinkled and your hair white.

Torunn looked at Maria Hill with a frown.

H: It's just a joke.

Hill gave a small smile.

H: Why do you think getting hurt makes you stop being special?

T: Because I'm just like everyone else.

H: Am I just like everyone else?

T: No.

H: I am human and I am weaker than you. You're still very strong, Torunn. You're stronger than James, or any other child I know. And you can fly!

Torunn sighed and was still discouraged.

H: But do you know what really makes you special?

T: What? My Golden hair?

H: No... And it's not your father. It’s not your strength, or your powers. It's your bravery. It’s your loyalty and your focus. That makes you very special. At least for me.

T: For you?

H: Yes.

Torunn looked at the ceiling again and sighed again, she stood still for a few seconds and then smiled.

T: Do you really think I'm special? Do you think I'll be a leader like my grandfather?

H: Yes. I know the fire scared you that day, but don’t let that change you. Don’t be afraid, Torunn. Because of all of us, I think you’re the one who has more courage and we need that on the team.

T: More than the Avengers?
H: Yes.

T: What about the Guardians?

H: It's almost a draw, but you win.

Torunn smiled.

T: Thanos will lose, Maria.

H: I hope so. I need to go now.

T: Come visit me more often.


Hill joked and Torunn smiled.

... 

The next day, the Avengers, the SHIELD, and the X-Men were gathered to pay homage to all those who had died during the New York meteor’s rain.

Wanda could barely stand, Steve was holding her by the arms, holding her up.

Pepper was the one who took care of Wanda's daughter, Lina Maximoff, during the funeral.

James approached Pepper and he was holding Sarah by the hand.

Pepper: What is it, James?

James looked at Pepper and then at Lina.

J: I'm sorry.

P: She still does not understand what is going on, James, but it’s very sweet of you.

J: I brought Sarah, my sister.

Lina looked at James and then at Sarah.

Sarah: Let's play with you, so you won’t be sad, Lina.

L: Mommy sad.

J: She is. Are you too?

Lina didn’t answer.

J: Do you wanna play outside with us?

P: Oh no, honey, you can’t stay outside alone. It's dangerous. But let's go to the church playroom. You can play there.

Pepper took the kids to the church playroom.
The religious leader was finishing the ceremony now.

- It's so hard to believe he's gone.

Natasha told Maria Hill. The two were standing, along with the SHIELD team, at the back of the church.

Hill didn’t respond to Natasha's comment, she just walked to the altar of the church, where the coffins were displaced.

Hill passed by Nick Fury's coffin and touched the coffin's wood, she took a deep breath, and for a few seconds her eyes filled with tears.

Hill took three deep breaths and walked quickly off the altar and she also walked to the back of the church to get out of there as quickly as possible, she was feeling smothered.

N: Hill...

Natasha was following her and she was the next to stop at Fury's coffin to say goodbye to him, but she was more concerned about Hill's pain than hers.

N: Hill...

H: Please, don’t.

Hill asked Natasha and Natasha stopped in the middle of the church and watched Hill run out.

Natasha and the others stopped to pay attention to Wanda who despaired more when Steve took her to the altar to say goodbye to Vision.

W: Why does this keep happening to me?

Wanda was shaking and crying a lot.

Sharon was sitting in the audience and got up, she went to Wanda and Steve.

Sharon: Steve, let's get her out of here.

W: No. No!

Sharon: Wanda this will only hurt you more. I know how you feel. Let's get out of here.

Wanda didn’t protest any more, nor did she say anything, which Steve and Sharon regarded as a yes and they took her to leave the altar and go to the back of the church.

- Natasha.

Natasha turned to look at Bucky Barnes.

N: Bucky.

B: How are you?

N: How could I be?
B: I'm sorry.

N: Yeah, me too.

B: I have to go, I'll also have to go to Juliana's aunt's funeral.

Natasha nodded.

Bucky held Natasha's arms and kissed her face for a long time.

Outside the church, Hill was still breathing deeply and trying to fight off the sense of suffocation caused by the pain of losing her mentor.

An arm was stretched out in front of Hill. An arm holding a bottle of whiskey.

Hill looked at the bottle and then at person who was offering it to her, he said nothing, he just looked at her.

Hill took the bottle and took a long sip.

Hill watched Logan light a cigarette and walk to the bike parked in front of the church.

Logan mounted on the bike and held out his helmet to Maria Hill.

Hill took another sip of the drink and walked to the bike, she mounted behind Logan and Logan took her away from that place.

...

A few days later, again, the Avengers, SHIELD and X-Men gathered in a large conference room of the new Avengers Base.

They were all gathered there to be formally introduced to Adam Warlock, it took a while to happen that because of the mourning of all the dead in the tragedy of New York.

As there were a lot of people there, and was having a lot of confusion with everyone asking a lot of questions and arguing with each other, Tony and Steve took the lead and demanded that they be quiet, that everyone could ask questions, but in an organized way and that before everybody, they would be the first to ask.

Steve and Tony even pointed out that this was better because maybe what they asked would already be the question that many of them have right now.

And all the confusion started when Adam arrived at the Avengers base that morning.

Hill reminded Tony that Torunn and Bruce claimed they had seen Adam before and that no one believed Torunn and that a visual reconnaissance should be done to confirm if that Adam was the same as Torunn and Bruce claimed to have seen. This happened hours before this meeting with everyone.

Torunn and Bruce were placed in a room. Torunn was being accompanied by Maria Hill and Jane.

Tony and Steve opened the door to the room, they entered, and then Adam came in.

Torunn looked at Adam and frowned, she got up and pointed at him.
T: IT'S YOU!

Tony: See. She recognizes him.

T: He's a thief!

Torunn moved to run toward Adam, to attack him, but she was held by Hill and Jane.

Jane: Torunn! But what is that? Manners, please!

T: He stole me!

Adam smiled and showed no other reaction to the accusation.

A: What did I steal from you?

T: You stole my... My...

Torunn frowned further and had to bite her lip to not reveal her secret. Adam knows that and that’s why he questioned and was smiling.

Torunn looked at Hill and Hill shook her head.

Tony: She must be getting confused.

S: No, wait...

Steve looked at Torunn and approached her.

Steve bent down to stand at the same height as Torunn.

S: What did he do?

Tony: Oh God, are you kidding me? He saved our lives! That's what he did!

Steve gestured for Tony to be quiet.

S: What did he steal from you?

T: He... My tin. My tin box.

S: Your tin?

T: Yes. Like a box, he gave it back to me.

A: I was just looking.

Torunn glared at Adam.

T: But you broke! It doesn’t work anymore!

A: A tin?

Jane: What are you talking about, Torunn? What tin?
T: It's a tin that my grandfather gave me and...

S: Calm down...

Steve gestured with his hand, looking at Torunn, asking for calm.

S: Breathe...

Torunn took a deep breath.

S: Ready? Now speak.

T: My tin was new and it shone and it doesn’t shine anymore. After I let him hold.

Torunn pointed at Adam.

A: I'm really sorry if I broke it.

T: Shut up, I don’t like you. I'll punch you in your face.

Jane: Torunn!! Oh my God, I don’t know where she learned to be so rude! I’m sorry, Mr. Adam.

Bruce adjusted his glasses and got up too.

B: That's the guy who found me.

Bruce looked at Torunn.

B: I know you're upset, but everything he told me was going to happen, it happened.

Tony: Yeah, and best of all, he was here to save us.

S: Yes, but why?

Tony: Why? What the hell is that question?

H: Guys!

Hill spoke louder.

H: Let's start the meeting.

Steve nodded.

H: Jane, you can go. Take Torunn with you.

Jane nodded and left the room, taking Torunn with her.

And that's how started the mess, because when they went to the conference hall, Steve said what Torunn said about Adam.

Tony: She's just a kid. We can’t take seriously a "tin" that shone and does not shine any more...
Tony gesticulated quails with his hands.

Tony: ...that even her mother didn’t know it existed. We know how Torunn is, she was probably lying.

H: She was not lying.

Tony and the others looked at Hill.

H: I know her, she wasn’t lying.

Tony: So Adam is a thief?

Thor: In Asgard, we cut off the hands of a thief as a lesson.

S: We will not cut anyone.

Tony: And it's just me who does not care about him stealing or not... In fact she said that the tin is with her and he admitted to having broken it, not stolen. There was no theft and even if it did, what does it matter? This guy saved our life!

Before the discussion continued, everyone heard the sound of a song playing in the background and everyone frowned in confusion. The sound grew louder and everyone looked at the conference hall doors, seeing their allies coming back.

Hill frowned.

Gamora: Peter...

Rocket Raccoon: What's going on here?

Drax: Is this a party?

G: Peter!!

Only Gamora, Drax, and Raccoon had entered the room. Gamora saw the seriousness in everyone's face and was a little embarrassed that they arrived with loud music and even more so that Peter hadn’t turned it off yet.

G: QUIIIIIL!

Peter finally appeared in the room, holding an iphone in his hand, and he was dancing to the song.
PQ: Uh oh, uh oh, uh oh, oh no no...

Carol Danvers: Peter, no, this is not how we twerk. You can’t twerk.

PQ: I twerk very well. That woman you showed me Rih... Rihyoncé.

CD: Beyoncé!

PQ: Oh! I thought it started with R.

CD: That is Rihanna. But which one are you talking about?

PQ: Hmmm... Who sings this song?

CD: Beyoncé.

PQ: That's it. She's no match for me. Look at this!!!

Gamora took the iphone from Peter and turned off the music.

PQ: Gams!!! It was coming in the Jay-Z part now! It was the best part!

Gamora indicated the room with her head and Quill looked at everybody in the room.

Peter raised his eyebrows and smiled.

PQ: HEEEEYYY! A Party!

Peter held up his hands and continued to dance.

G: Quill, this is not a party.

PQ: Oh no?

Logan: Those stupid aliens.

Logan complained to himself.

H: I know, right.

Logan looked at Hill and she nodded.

S: Mr. Quill, please, you and your team, can join us. Welcome back.

Clint: Where the hell were you?
Drax: We were in the best place on Earth!

C: Bahamas?

Drax: Australia!!!

Carol Danvers: It was crazy! This was the craziest trip I've ever done in my life! I never want to travel with them again.

Drax: Best food ever.

CD: They ate all the exotic animals they found. They even brought some to eat on the trip.

Carol looked disgusted.

CD: I feel my stomach wrap to remember.

Tony: What everyone wants to know is why you did not come when the meteors hit us?

S: Tony, if they weren’t here, they must have contained the rain where they were.

PQ: Oh we saw the report on meteors on TV.

Bruce: You mean the attack just happened here? We are still without television signal, or radio, or internet.

Adam: Yes. Thanos only attacked New York. This time.

S: Why only here?

H: Perhaps because the greatest concentration of heroes is in New York and because New York is part of the United States, the world's largest power.

Everyone watched Maria Hill.

PQ: We come as soon as we know what happened, but you have already solved it. Hey! Who is this yellow guy over there?

A: I am Adam Warlock, Peter Quill.

PQ: Do you know my name?

A: It has been repeated here several times since you arrived.

PQ: True, but wait... You look familiar.

Adam watched Quill.

PQ: Are you from that golden people that keeps chasing us because of a little robbery? Are you here to kill us?

S: What?

A: I'm similar to them, but I'm not like them.
PQ: Hmm.

A: I am superior.

Thor: Say that to my Mjolnir!

A: I didn’t mean to offend.

T: Guys! Guys! For the love of God. Adam saved us and he came to warn us of Thanos's next attack. The next one will be for real. The game is over.

The meeting continued, having several discussions and lasted hours, practically all day. The overwhelming majority trusted Adam fully, but Steve was very suspicious, though grateful to Adam.

In the end, they were all listening to Adam's speech, about what he was in the universe, and how things work on his dimension, but Adam didn’t detail about his powers at any time.

A: You have prisoners.

S: Of course.

A: We'll need them.

S: We should free all the bad guys on the street?

A: Yes. If we are going to war, we should use all available force.

S: They can receive training in jail and when it's time, they will be released. Just to help.

A: Yes, but I'm afraid some of those prisoners will not agree to help so easily.

S: What do you mean?

A: The prisoners of Asgard.

Thor frowned immediately.

Steve and Tony looked at Thor and then at Adam.

S: We can’t use them.

A: We will use them.

Thor: They will not help.

A: Arresting them as you have arrested, it will make it difficult to get their help, but they have no choice.

Thor: No way Loki will get out of that cell!

Adam smiled.

Thor pointed the hammer at Adam, then at Tony and Steve.

Thor: You know what Loki is capable of. They came as prisoners of war. As my prisoners!
S: Thor, calm down, let’s...

Thor: They betrayed me! They betrayed my father and mother!

S: We understand.

Thor: They won’t be freed. It's my final word!

Thor threatened seriously and left the room, filled with anger.

And, Thor continued angry with Steve and Tony, because they authorized the release of Asgard's prisoners.

Adam went personally to the prison cell.

They all stood up at the sight of Adam.

A: You are Loki.

Loki looked at Adam and smiled.

Loki: So the legend is real. You exist.

A: You know who I am?

Loki: I know that if you're here it's because the everything is very massed up, up there. I knew that day would come. And my terms are...

Adam was silent, listening to Loki.

Loki: My cedar.

A: Ok.

Loki: My Tesseract.

A: Oh, that does not belong to you.

Loki: It's mine! By right.

A: You can’t have it.

Loki noticed something in Adam's eyes. Both are good at playing with the minds of others and they can detect signs more easily.
Loki: Oh... You thought Tesseract was with me. I see now.

Loki laughed sarcastically.

Loki: Why do you want that?

Adam remained silent.

Loki: You're up to something, Adam Warlock.

A: You will be free and you will have your cedar. Nothing else. If you step out of the line, you won't return here.

Loki: Oh, no?

A: No. I will take your soul with me.

- His soul? What are you? The death knight?

Adam looked at the long, black-haired white woman as he approached her cell and stared at her for long seconds.

A: But what a beautiful creature you are.

Loki: I keep telling her that.

A: What is your terms?

- None. I should not be here. None of us, except Loki.

Loki: Look, what a bitch.

A: Are you innocent?

- Yes!

A: What's your name?

- Sif. They call me Lady Sif.

A: Lady Sif...

Adam smirked.

A: You will be free, Lady Sif.

Sif: Please tell Thor I need to see her. He needs to let me see her!

Adam frowned for a moment, he seemed confused but then he seemed to understand everything.

Adam smiled.

A: I'll tell him.

Adam left the jail and returned to the Avengers base, he was wondering where to find the Tesseract,
since it was not with Loki.

Adam went to the person who most trusted him as soon as he arrived. Tony Stark.

Adam talked a lot with Tony about random things until he got the information he needed. Adam was an influential person and got the trust of the people who were willing to believe him.

Tony took Adam to the place where the Tesseract was being kept, it was a very restricted and underground area, just as is the jail of the Asgard prisoners.

**A:** This can’t end in the hands of Thanos. It’s not safe here.

**T:** What do we have to do?

**A:** Give it to me. I can go to another dimension, where Thanos would never find me. That's why I survived, I can hide from him, so I'll survive this war. But I do not want to be alone in this universe.

**T:** No one can know about this.

Adam nodded.

Tony handed the Tesseract to Adam and Adam extracted the stone from the cube and said that it was the stone that powered that cube that protected it. Adam put the stone in a box and made it disappear before Tony's eyes.

**T:** Are you sure?

**A:** I am. Tony?

**T:** Yes?

**A:** There's still a stone here on Earth. If I get it, I can take to my dimension. It's the only safe place for them.

**T:** Then Thanos would forget the Earth?

**A:** I don’t know. Perhaps.

**T:** We have to try everything now.

Adam nodded.

...

Next week...

**J:** Why do we have to go to the Bunker again?

**N:** I've already answered this several times, James.

**J:** I want to stay here with you.

**N:** It's not safe.
Natasha told James as she slipped his clothes into a suitcase. They were both in the living room of the apartment.

N: It won’t be for long, James. I promise.

James threw himself on the couch and left his face buried in the cushion and grunted in protest.

Sarah: Mommy!

Sarah shouted from the bedroom.

N: What is it, Sarah?

Sarah: My doll does not fit into my bag! I took everything out of the bag and it does not come in!

N: Did you get everything out of your bag, Sarah?? I had just finished your bag!

Natasha snorted and went to Sarah’s room.

Natasha watched the clothes all on the floor.

N: Sarah!

Sarah: You forgot my doll!

N: I put the small one. I can’t believe you messed it up!

Sarah: But I like this one!

N: Sarah, you need clothes more than dolls. Help me put it all back in the bag.

Sarah: But my doll!

J: MOM!!!

Now it was James who shouted from the living room and it was a cry of despair.

Natasha almost had a heart attack with James's scream, she scrambled up and went into the living room, already holding a gun in her hand.

- I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.

Natasha looked at Dr. Stephen Stranger in her living room.

J: Mom!

James was curled up on the couch.

- I didn’t mean to scare him. I didn’t know you had kids.

Natasha looked at James.

N: James, it is all right. Go to your room. Help Sarah put her clothes back in her suitcase, please.
- Are you moving?"

N: Yes. Everyone is. What are you doing here?

- I have been warned that there is great power here on earth, and that power has increased since he got here.

N: Yes. It's Adam Warlock. I told you about him when I came to see you.

- And what does Adam want? He saved you all, right?

N: Yes. He will help in the war against Thanos.

- Will he?

N: Don't you trust him?

- Do you?

Natasha shrugged.

N: I'm betting on anything now.

- It's classic of human nature itself. In the hour of despair, I would do the same, I am not judging.

Dr. Strange walked through Natasha's living room and looked at her again.

- He's in my office in London rightnow.

N: What? Who?

- Adam.

N: No, no, he's at Base, with Steve and Tony. I was there with him only an hour ago. They were solving some things together.

- Yeah, he's there too.

N: Also?

- Yes. Mr. Warlock is very fast.

N: How could he be in London? Even being fast, it would be impossible.

- He can teleport.

N: Oh...

- You're not so surprised.

N: I guess nothing else surprises me. What is Adam doing in your office?

- Stealing from me.
N: Stealing? So he's really a thief. Aren’t you going to stop him?
- It wouldn’t work.
N: Won’t you even try?
Dr. Strange shook his head.
- I'd lose the same way, and besides, he needs of what he stole.
N: I don’t understand.
- I have my reasons.
Natasha frowned and looked at Dr. Strange.
N: You have the eye of Agamotto, you can control the time... So, you saw how it all ends...
He did not answer.
N: Do we have a chance? You're not going to say, are you?
He shook his head.
- I'm going back now. I'll see you in a few days.
N: Some days?
- Yes. That's when the war really begins and ends. I hope it ends well.
Dr. Strange opened a portal and moved back to his office.
James was peeing and heard the conversation, he ran back into the living room when Dr. Strange left.
J: Who was he, Mom? Thanos?
N: Of course not, James.
J: Mom?
N: What?
J: Can you leave Bruce with us in the bunker?
N: But what an absurd idea, James.
J: But mom, he's strong. He saved me. I’d feel safer.
Natasha sighed, not knowing what to say.
N: But we need him up here as well. But don’t worry, you will have protection too. You like the X-Men, don’t you?
J: Yeah...
James replied.

N: So, baby, there’s gonna be some of them there with you and Uncle Clint. You’ll be safe.

Natasha ruffled James' hair.

N: Did you help Sarah?

J: Hm...

N: James, were you spying on me? You little bastard.

James laughed and Natasha slapped his ass.

N: Let's help her now.

J: We can let her carry the doll in her hand, Mom. She likes her.

Natasha looked at James and nodded.

James helped Natasha to put Sarah's things back in her suitcase. The two of them were sitting on the floor of the room and Sarah was lying on the bunk, cuddled with her favorite doll.

J: Is dad coming to take us to the bus?

N: Of course. He would not miss this moment for anything, he must be arriving already. Why won’t you take a shower while he does not arrive?

J: When I finish, will he be home?

N: Yes.

J: He's going to take me in his back.

Sarah: No, he's going to take me in his back.

Sarah pointed to herself.

J: Mom...

N: Shower, James.

J: Ugh.

James complained and went to take a shower.

N: James said first, Sarah.

Sarah: But I want to go on Daddy's back.

N: What if I take you on my back?

Sarah: You take James.

N: Oh, so you don’t want to go with me?
Sarah: But Dad is tall.

N: Ah. Got it. You're calling me short.

Sarah smiled.

Sarah: Sorry, Mama.

Natasha smiled and shook her head.

N: No need to apologize.

Sarah: Mommy?

N: Yes?

Sarah: Did I stayed inside your belly too?

N: In my belly?

Sarah: Yeah. Like the baby that's there now.

Natasha frowned and held out to Sarah.

N: Come here.

Sarah got out of bed and went to Natasha, she sat on Natasha's lap and Natasha hugged her and kissed her forehead.

N: No, you did not come from my belly. You were adopted, you already know that.

Sarah: Yes, but I don’t understand, I am your daughter. And James is your son, but he came from your belly and that baby too.

N: I know. Look... you came from the belly of another mommy.

Sarah: Another mommy?

N: Yes. She loved you too, and she loved you very very much, Sarah.

Sarah: What happened to her?

N: Well, she got hurt, baby. She got hurt very bad and she...

Sarah: Oh, yeah. Then God took her home.

N: Hm...

Natasha frowned a little, confused by Sarah's answers, but she assumed that Steve must have talked to her about it and used that term to explain her mom’s death.

Sarah: Why did not God take me too?

Natasha felt a shiver just to imagine that possibility, she hugged Sarah harder.
N: Because your father was very sad and alone.

Sarah: Was he crying?

N: Yes, he cried a lot, he had lost an angel too.

Sarah: God took Maggie too, Daddy told me.

N: Yes... And your father saw you and he fell in love with you that minute, he knew he could not live without you anymore. So God did not take you to his home, so you could be here with your daddy and me.

Sarah smiled.

Sarah: And you, mama?

N: Me? I took a little longer.

Natasha smiled.

N: You used to cry so much! You didn’t want to eat anything. In fact, you didn’t want to nurse. Eat, you ate really well. But I've learned to love you and you've learned to love me, right?

Sarah nodded.

N: Listen, Sarah. I may have a thousand babies, but none of them will ever take your place. You’re here in my heart and you are very special to me.

- And to me too.

Natasha and Sarah looked at Steve. Neither of them noticed him arrive.

Sarah: Daddy!

Steve smiled and bent to pick up Sarah who ran to him.

J: DAD?

James shouted from the bathroom at the sound of his father's voice.

S: Yes, James?
J: I'll go on your back! I asked first!

Steve looked confused at Natasha.

N: Just say yes.

Natasha stood up.

S: All right, champ.

Natasha approached Steve and gave him a quick kiss on the lips.

S: Are they ready?

N: Yes.

S: Did you talk to them?

N: Yes. For the thousandth time.

Sarah: I'm going to take my doll with me.

Sarah showed the doll to Steve.

S: Okay, princess.

N: I'll hurry James.

Natasha passed by Steve and he took her hand, which made Natasha stop and look at him.

S: How are you?

N: Fine.

Natasha answer with no excitement and tried to smile, because Sarah was present, but she was dying inside, because only the civilians were being moved to the bunkers, they could visit them, but it would be for a few hours, they would all be vigilant in the cities.

N: We'll talk about this later.

Natasha nodded and Steve released her hand.

After James got ready, Natasha and Steve went down with the kids to the street. There were already many people mobilizing to move to the bunkers.

Each person was entitled to only one suitcase, whether child or adult.

Steve was carrying James on the back and Natasha was carrying Sarah on her back. There were buses waiting in several streets, to take the civilians to the bunkers, which were out of town.

Natasha's heart tightened as she approached the bus that was going to take James and Sarah.

Laura was at the door of the bus, receiving the children.

Steve crouched and James jumped to the floor, then Steve pulled Sarah from Natasha's back and kissed her face.
S: Give me a hug, princess.

Sarah hugged Steve.

Sarah: Daddy.

S: Don’t worry, I'll be there when it's time for you to sleep.

J: You promise?

Steve looked at James.

S: Yes.

N: You'd better go.

Natasha said dryly, she just wants to distance herself from this reality.

Sarah: Look, it's Toto!

Sarah pointed to Torunn, arriving with her father Thor and her mother Jane.

Sarah: Toto!

Sarah smiled.

Torunn was serious.

T: I don’t want to go!

Jane: We need to go.

T: I should not leave my father. I'm his daughter, I need to protect him.

Thor: Daughter, the time will come when you will protect me, but that day is not today.

- JAMES!

James looked at the bus window and saw Francis shouting at him.

F: Come on! I kept your place! Come on. Get on the bus!

James looked at Natasha and she nodded toward the bus, authorizing him to go.

James hugged Natasha's waist and she hugged him, but she made him drop her fast.

N: Go, James.

Natasha approached Steve and kissed Sarah's face.

N: You'll be fine. Behave and be nice to James.

Sarah: He has to be nice to me.

N: He will be.
Natasha looked at Steve.

**N:** It's time.

Steve kissed Sarah's face and hugged her one more time.

**S:** James, come here.

James hugged his father.

**S:** I love you, son. I love you both.

Steve put Sarah on the floor.

**J:** Come on, Sarah.

James held Sarah's hand.

Sarah: Come on, Toto. Can I sit with you?

Torunn nodded.

**Jane:** So let's go.

Jane kissed Thor and Thor hugged Torunn.

Torunn hold Sarah’s hand and headed for the bus door, along with James and Jane.

James and Sarah were the first to board and Torunn was standing on the step when she heard someone scream her name.

- **TORUNN!**

Thor and Jane, Steve and Natasha, and Laura looked at the woman who was coming now, clad in armor and carrying a sword.

Torunn looked back and had no idea who she was.

- **Torunn!**

The woman screamed again and tried to reach Torunn, but Thor stepped in front of her.

**Thor:** Sif! You're not welcome here. I told you to stay away from her!

Sif: She's my daughter!!!! You don’t say if I can be near her! You've kept her away from me for all these years. Get out of my way!

A fine shower began to fall.

**T:** Father?

**Thor:** Don’t do this, Sif. Please.

Jane looked at Torunn and she put her hand on her shoulder.

**Jane:** Get on the bus, my love.
T: But, mother, that lady... Who is she?

Sif: Mother???

Sif tried to walk towards Torunn, but Thor continued on her path, Sif inclined her head and looked at Torunn.

Sif: She's not your mother, Torunn! Look at her, she is human. She couldn’t be your mother. You are my daughter!

Thor: SIF!

T: Father!

Sif: Tell her, Thor! Tell the truth!

T: Father! What is going on???

Sif: I'll kill you, Thor!

Thor: You're a traitor!

Sif: Torunn, come with me. I am your mother... I love you.

T: What??

Jane: Torunn let's get on the bus.

Thor: Get on the bus, Torunn!

T: No!

Thor turned to look into Torunn's eyes and he lifted the hammer toward her and a lightning struck the hammer directly, which made everyone scared, especially Torunn.

Thor: Get on the bus! Now!

Torunn looked at Jane and began to cry.

T: Mother?

Jane: Come on, my love...

T: Aren’t you my mother?

Jane: Torunn...

Laura: Torunn get on the bus, we have to go, honey.

Steve approached Thor and Sif to try to calm them down.

Torunn got on the bus and ran to sit at the window, she watched the woman.

Thor glanced at Torunn and then at Lady Sif who lowered her head as the bus left.
Sif: But she's my daughter...

S: Guys, you have to figure this out, but not in front of Torunn.

Sif: He won’t let me get near her, but she's mine. He had no right.

Thor: You betrayed Asgard.

Sif: Or did you betray Asgard?

Thor: Because of you and Loki, my father is dead.

Sif: Is that what you repeat to yourself over all these years? We did what we had to do to save Asgard, Loki was the only one willing to help and if we failed to save Asgard, it was because of your ego. Your ego killed your father and your pride made a daughter grow away from her mother and made you trap your own friends and brother.

Thor just looked at Sif angrily and at the end of the speech he could no longer look into her eyes.

Thor turned his back and walked away, but after a few yards he stopped.

Thor: Stay away from my daughter, if you love her, you will hear me. Neither of us wants her to suffer.

...

Inside the bus, Jane sat down next to Torunn and laid a hand on her head and Torunn dodged.

T: Go away!

Jane: Torunn...

T: I said go away! Sarah's going to sit here!

Jane: I'm sorry. We had reasons to...

T: Leave me alone! I don’t want to hear!

Torunn covered his ears.

Jane was crying, she got up and went to sit next to Laura who tried to comfort her.

Torunn cringed on the bench and hugged her knees.

James and Francis were in the seat behind her, and the two were standing, looking at Torunn.
J: Toto?

T: I'm not crying.

F: Yes you are.

Torunn turned her face to show that she was not crying.

J: But you're sad.

Torunn shrugged.

J: We can sit with you if you want.

T: What about Sarah?

James looked for Sarah on the bus and saw her sitting with Sharon, who was with her son on her lap and with Lina Maximoff as well.

J: She's with Aunt Sharon.

Torunn stepped aside and James and Francis seated next to her.

... And as Dr. Strange said, within a few days, Thanos finally arrived on Earth, with his imposing figure and only slightly larger than the Hulk.

And with Thanos, his allied armies arrived, which generated war throughout the world, and Adam had already said that this would happen, so he had already had a division of the heroes for each group to operate in one part of the world and the strongest and important would reaming in New York, to the main battle. Against Thanos, directly.

As soon as they had the first sight of Thanos, they were all very impressed. Not only because he looks like evil in person, but because of all the curiosity and anxiety generated by waiting for him to arrive.

S: Now that I'm seeing him, I don’t feel fear anymore.

A: But you should, Captain. This is an emotion that seems to work with humans to motivate them to do something.

Thanos: So here we are. The dreaded planet Earth. It's not like I expected.

Iron Man: Guys, we can beat him. He only has three infinity stones. He is strong, but without all the jewels, he will lose.

Bucky: Yes! We're going to win. We will not perish today! Fear nothing, my friends, fight for your lives and fight for the lives of others!

Thor: By Asgard!!!!

Professor Charles Xavier: To me, My X-Men.

Hulk: HULK SMASH!
Rocket Raccoon: What the hell are they saying???

PQ: I don’t know, but it's pretty cool.

Carol Danvers: It's like a battle cry! What’s yours?

PQ: Hm...

G: We don’t have any.

PQ: What about… For Beyoncé??

Drax: I like it! FOR BEYONCÉEEEE!!!!

Drax screamed and ran toward Thanos to attack.

Groot: I'm Groot.

PQ: FOR BEYONCE!

Gamora: Idiots!

All Guardians and Carol Danvers began the attack on Thanos, without waiting for anyone else.

Iron Man: Are those guys really crazy? They have already attacked alone.

S: And we will do the same! Avengers Assemble!

Steve ordered and everyone who has powers and armor, like Tony Stark, concentrated on attacking Thanos first. The others had to invest in the fight against the allied armies of Thanos.

Every shot taken against Thanos seemed to be only tickling at his skin, he was even laughing, while defending himself by making only small shots, straight from his hand.

Carol Danvers was the first to be struck by his shot, she was thrown away and fell to the ground, making part of the asphalt break with the impact of her body on the ground.

CD: Ouch!

Carol frowned and put her hand on her belly, then she looked at her outfit, which was designed by Peter Parker and Tony Stark, and there were no scratches on the clothes.

Carol's uniform was still a black swimsuit, but there is a yellow-rimmed ray now and she wore long leather boots as well and didn’t stop wearing the red scarf on her waist, which she claim to be the
only thing that is really hers.

The Guardians distract Thanos from one side, firing at him. Thanos grunted with rage toward them and Hulk took advantage to attack Thanos from behind, he jumped on Thanos' back and hugged his neck and tried to choke Thanos, wrapping his arms around his neck.

**Thanos: DAMN YOU ALL!**

Thanos could feel that Hulk was very strong, but he used the strength of the purple stone, the Orb, to increase his strength even more, he grabbed the arms of Hulk and pulled him easily, then he threw the Hulk away, as if he was nothing.

That battle ensued for almost two days, the avengers saw the day dusk, brighten, then dusk again and clear again.

In the morning, most of the military, SHIELD and Avengers were already beginning to feel the energy going away, especially those with no powers.

The sense of defeat dominated them all, and the hope that kept them on their feet was beginning to disappear, and it all got worse when Natasha looked up at the sky and saw a huge flash coming through the clouds.

*More army?* Natasha thought to herself as she watched many ships coming out of that glare. If they are allies of Thanos, then it was the end of Earth now.

**Peter Quill: Ah! Finally!**

**Iron Man: Are they friends?**

**PQ: No, exactly our friends, but they're against Thanos!**

**N: Thank God!**

Thanos laughed at this new alliance.

**Thanos: Do you think you can defeat me?**

**Bucky: We could only made small scratches on this dude. Seriously, we’ve been hitting him for so long and nothing happened.**

**S: But it's what we need, that means he can be hurt. We can't stop now! Total strength on him now, guys!**

Thanos grunted, because he was starting to get really injured now that everyone was aiming at him for too long.

**Thanos: WARLOCK!!!**

**S: Why is he calling Adam?**

**A: I'm sorry, guys, but I made a deal with Thanos.**

**Iron Man: What are you talking about?**

**Thanos: Give me my stones!**
S: What?

Iron Man: The stones are not here. They are safe.

A: Actually, Tony... They're here with me. They have always been.

Adam flew high to move away from the battlefield.

Iron Man: We trust you. I trusted you. You saved us. How can you betray us now?

Thanos began to laugh.

Thanos: And you believed him?

Thanos held out the gauntlet to Adam.

Adam displayed the final three stones. There was a green, which controls the time, the blue, which controls the space and finally had the yellow, which belonged to Vision.

Iron Man: The stone of Vision!

Wanda looked at Vision's stone in front of Adam, the three jewels were floating in front of him.

Wanda's eyes went red, filled with power and hatred.

W: So it was you who killed Vision! You will pay for it!

A thick red cloud formed around Wanda's body and she began to fly too.

Thanos controlled the stones, using the mental power and he was trying to attract them to the gauntlet, but he was having difficulties in executing this action.

Thanos grunted and looked at the bald man in the wheelchair and at the young redhead beside him.

Thanos: STOP!

Thanos screamed and again used the power of the purple stone, to expand his powers, he fired a single shot in the direction of Charles Xavier and Jean Gray.

Jean stepped in front of the professor, and formed a kind of protective shield around her and him.

JG: He's very strong! I can’t hold for too long. Professor?

CX: I can’t beat him, Jean. You have to retreat.

JG: I will not do that.

CX: You will.

JG: You can’t face him alone.

CX: Not even you, Jean, but you might have a chance…

JG: Professor? Are you blocking me? Don’t do that.
CX: I'm sorry, Jean.

JG: You're going to die! Professor!

Charles Xavier used all the power he had to form a shield larger than Jean's and to block her power for a few seconds.

Charles warned Scott to get Jean Gray and he came immediately.

As soon as her powers were blocked, Jean lost her strength and almost fell on the floor, fainting but Scott took her in his arms and ran away with her.

Soon after, Thanos smiled, as Charles was losing his strength and Thanos’s shot began to dominate Charles, until the moment Charles could no longer resist and the shot hit him, killing him instantly.

Logan: NO!!!

Thanos finally managed to draw the stones to the gauntlet and a strong light dominated his body, he didn’t even expect the power to be so much and he even felt pain at that moment.

The light around Thanos grew louder and louder until it reacted like an explosion, causing everyone nearest to him to be repelled away.

Wanda was about to make her attack on Adam, but at the time of the explosion, she was repelled away too and when she was able to regain her balance, she looked around and didn’t find Adam anymore.

W: Where is he???

Wanda questioned furiously.

S: Wanda. There is another one to blame for the death of Vision. Concentrate on him.

Wanda looked at Steve and then at Thanos, who was laughing and looking even bigger than before.

Iron Man: It's the end! He has all the stones now. He is indestructible now.

W: It doesn’t matter! I will not stop until I or he is dead!

Loki: THOR! WAIT! You can’t!

Loki shrieked to see Thor, making a great leap with his hammer in the direction of Thanos, more precisely toward the gauntlet in his hand.

Thor: FOR ODIN!!!

Steve saw Loki running towards Thor, he was trying to stop Thor, but it was late, late for both of them.

As soon as Loki reached Thor, he grabbed his arm to try to stop him from hitting the Mjolnir on the gauntlet. Thor had a lightning struck at the Mjolnir at the moment he hit the Mjolnir on the gauntlet.

Thanos's arm didn’t even move.

The Mjolnir crashed as soon as he hit the gauntlet and Thanos fired a shot that hit both Thor and
Loki at the same time, killing both at the same time.

_S: THOOOR!_

Steve shouted.

_N: We have to remove the gauntlet from Thanos!_

_Iron Man: I'm open for suggestions._

_N: We have to get close to him._

_S: Whoever comes near is destroyed. It's insane._

_N: We will all be destroyed anyway, but we have to try. It's the only way!_

Thanos started laughing, ironically, he looked in the direction of Steve, Natasha and Tony.

_Thanos: You guys are so pathetic... Hey... You..._

Thanos looked directly at Natasha and smirked.

_Thanos: I can feel life inside you._

Steve closed his hand tightly, holding his shield.

_Thanos: How would you feel, if..._

Thanos pointed the gauntlet at Natasha and she bent over and felt pain in her belly, she put her hand on her belly and Steve stepped in front of her, he tried to protect Natasha with the shield.

_S: STOP IT THANOS! LEAVE HER ALONE!_

Thanos fired at Steve, and as soon as the shot hit the shield, he broke it in half.

_Thanos: Who will make me st..._

Thanos didn’t finish the sentence, because Hulk attacked him again, but he didn’t attack the arm with the gauntlet, he had already noticed that it would be worse on that arm.

Hulk just wanted to create a new distraction.

Natasha moaned in pain and she was more relieved when the attack was stopped.

_S: Natasha, you need to get out of here!_

_N: I will not go anywhere!_

Natasha replied breathlessly.

_Iron Man: Steve's right, you're pregnant. You shouldn't be here._

_N: So what? If I don’t die here, I can die there anyway._

As Hulk distracted Thanos from one side, the Guardians and Avengers fired several shots at the arm of the gauntlet, they were trying to cut off Thanos's arm.
N: We need more people!

S: Let's get the protection out of the bunkers?

Bucky: It's necessary! We have already had many losses!

Hill: I'll take care of it.

Hill warned and they had no vision of where she was, but Hill boarded a small jet and flew to the bunkers area, she landed and ordered whoever was guarding the bunkers, to go out and join the fight.

...

Carol Danvers: GUYS! THAT’S THE MOMENT! Let's try with everything we have!

Carol said as she fired at Thanos's arm. Everyone started firing on Thanos, and he growled in anger.

Thanos: I got tired of all of you! This ends now!!!

Thanos screamed, and the stones of the gauntlet lit up, but one of them shone brighter than the others. It was the Orange stone, the soul stone and as the name says, it controls the souls, of the living and of the dead.

With that single attack, Thanos took the souls of everyone on the battlefield at once, not only there in New York, but in Wakanda, Russia, and everywhere where there was being war and by taking the souls of the bodies, all the bodies fell to the ground, because without soul, there is no life.

And so that’s how that Thanos won the war, killing all the Avengers, all the Guardians and all the X-Men in battle at once.

...

In the bunkers, as the guarding staff began to mobilize to go to war, Hill entered the bunker to warn what was happening to the bunker civilians and asked them to remain calm.

Hill went to the room where the children were being kept, it was in the deepest part of the bunker, the idea was to keep them all protected.

T: Hill!

Torunn spoke with surprise as Hill entered the room, she stood up and approached her.

H: Torunn.

T: You're all hurt.

H: I was in a war, but I'm fine.

James: Did we win? Is that why you're here?

Hill shook her head.

H: No. We're losing, actually.
Hill looked at Torunn.

H: Torunn, that stone you have...

T: It's broken.

Hill shook her head.

H: Do you want to know what it's for?

Torunn nodded.

H: It's a infinity stone.

Francis: Infinity stone?

J: What does that mean?

H: That's a stone with incredible power, I don’t know what it does exactly, but it can give us luck, it can help us to win. I believe that Adam just wanted to pretend to have changed the stones, he just had to deceive Thanos. Your grandfather gave it to you, because he trusted that you could save us all.

T: Me?

H: Yes. I want you to come with me.

T: Outside? In war?

H: What about your courage? Lost it?

Torunn shook her head.

J: We're going too.

H: No way.

F: We're going with Torunn.

T: My friends go with me. We are the next Avengers.

H: What???

F: We will be Avengers in the future.

Hill rolled her eyes.

H: Okay! We don’t have much time, I didn’t even know if I'd get here before Adam. He should not know which bunker you are in, but he is coming for you.

T: Adam? What does that thief wants with me?

H: He wants your stone.
J: You don’t trust him?

H: No. Come on, let’s go!

Hill left the room, with Torunn, James, and Francis. Pepper was approaching in the hallway.

P: Oh, hi... Where are you going?

H: They want to go in the bathroom. I didn’t see anyone in the room and I was going to take them.

P: Oh, you want me to take them?

H: Better not, the kids are all alone in there and the bunker if out of the guard now. Better not leave them alone.

P: Yes. You’re right

Pepper smiled and followed to enter the room.

Hill took the children by the elevator and as soon as they arrived at floor A, the other civilians looked confused at her, not understanding why three children were there with her, but no one dared to question.

Hill and the children ran up to Hill’s jet and boarded.

Hill flew back to the city and as soon as she approached the place, she observed everything very still and quiet and after she saw a lot of bodies on the ground.

H: No...

T: What? What's it?

H: We're too late.

J: Too late?

Thanos walked through the bodies of the Avengers, smiling, pleased with himself.

Thanos: I am the all powerful now. Nothing and no one is capable of destroying me. Whoever survived has only one option: to serve me.

- I will not serve you.

Thanos took a fright to see a woman move from the clutter of bodies.

Thanos: How can you not be dead?

- I think death does not like me, but she likes who I love.

Thanos: What are you?

- I'm Wanda Maximoff and I'm a Scarlet witch and I'm going to destroy you.

Thanos laughed with mockery.
Thanos: You can’t kill me. I have all the stone. I am omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. I'm the God.

W: You are not God to me.

Thanos: I am God to everyone.

- Well, if that's true...

Thanos looked at the man who appeared out of nowhere, floating over the bodies.

W: YOU!

Wanda was filled with anger at seeing Adam Warlock again, her eyes turned red again and she regained all her strength.

A: ...If that's true, why aren’t you omniscient?

Thanos: Huh???

A: You didn’t see me coming. You didn’t feel that Wanda was alive.

Thanos: HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?

Thanos screamed angrily.

A: The stones are not that powerful.

Thanos: They are! There is something wrong!!!

Adam, Thanos and Wanda looked at the small jet that was landing a little farther away from them. Adam smiled as Torunn disembarked from the jet, with Maria Hill and two other children. Thanos grunted.

Thanos: Puppies of humans! Why would they come here?

T: FATHER!

Torunn cried out in terror as she saw Thor's body lying on the floor.

T: NOOO! FATHER!

Torunn ran toward Thor and lay down on him. James and Francis were looking at all those bodies on the floor and could barely move, they were in shock.

F: Are they all dead?

H: Unfortunately. Yes...

Hill looked down.
F: We lost the war...

James was still looking at all the bodies and he saw only a patch of red hair on the floor and over Natasha's body still had other bodies, but James recognized her right away.

James has never shaken so much in life.

J: MOM!

James ran up to Natasha's body and crouched close to her face, her eyes were open but utterly lifeless.

J: Mom!!! Mom! Wake up! Mom!

James ran his hand over Natasha's face and not too far away, he sighted the shield of his father broken in half.

J: DAD!

James ran to the shield and found his father near it.

J: Dad! You promised! You promised to come back! You can’t die...

F: Is my father here, too?

H: No Francis, your father was guarding the bunker, he's probably alive.

T: Father! Father, please! Don’t die. You are a God! You can’t die!

Thanos: I am the only God now.

T: I'm going to kill you!

Thanos was going to smile, but he felt a strange energy coming from Torunn, he frowned and grunted.

Thanos: You! What do you have there with you?

Adam: She has the stone of Truth.

Thanos: I have the stone of Truth!!! I can change reality to whatever I want!

Thanos looked at the red jewel in the gauntlet.

Thanos: That's fake! You deceived me, Adam!
A: It seems so.

Thanos: You'll die for it!

Thanos pointed the gauntlet at Adam and attempted to fire a shot, but he was stopped by Wanda’s powers, levitating in the air, completely dominated by her own powers.

W: He'll die, but I need him first… to kill you.

Thanos: You can’t kill me!

Thanos turned and looked at Torunn and he tried to run towards her, but he was trapped by the powers of Wanda and Adam.

Thanos: Nooo!

H: Torunn! Francis, stay behind the jet! I will come back!

Hill ran through the rubble and bodies and grabbed Torunn.

T: No! My father! Father!

H: Easy, Torunn. We can’t stay here, it's too dangerous!

Hill dragged Torunn as far as possible.

Thanos: Nooo! You can’t defeat me!

Thanos screamed, but he was losing his strength.

Wanda and Adam concentrated on the gauntlet and together they managed to blow the gauntlet and all the stones fell on the ground.

Thanos: Nooo!

For Adam, removing the Thanos Gauntlet was enough, so he stopped the attack and concentrated on luring the stones into a small box.

Wanda was dominated by hatred and thirst for revenge, then she continued to attack Thanos which weakened after losing the infinity stones.

Wanda defeated Thanos.

Wanda fell to her knees on the floor, she had already used much of her powers.

Now Adam had the five infinity stones and one of them always belonged to him and he had purposely lost it to Thanos.

Adam held the soul jewel in his hand, and his eyes went completely white, his skin was much brighter, and he seemed to be restored.

W: I have not finished with you yet.

Wanda said to Adam, while panting.
A: Oh sorry. I didn’t want to hurt him, but I needed to, or we would lose. But I can give you something that will bring him back.

Adam directed the stone of mind to Wanda and she held the stone.

A: It's the only exception I'll make with stones.

H: What will you do with the others?

A: Make sure no one else ever uses them.

Adam looked at all those bodies.

A: Do you want to know who I really am? I am Adam Warlock, and I care for the souls of those who die. I, myself, have died a couple of times, but my soul has been rejected by death.

H: Rejected by death? What does that mean?

A: I can’t be among the dead and I don’t want to be among the living, so I live in the middle of the two. On a different dimension from those.

Adam sighed and levitated around the bodies again.

A: There are souls trapped with the dead, but they have not died, so they can’t stay there. I will return the souls of these, but the others, they are where they should be and I’m sorry for that.

Adam spread his arms in the air and began to return the souls that Thanos had stolen.

James was still crying over his father's body.

Steve opened his eyes slowly and took a deep breath as his soul returned to his body.

J: DAD!

James shouted and grabbed his father's uniform.

Steve was slow to regain consciousness, as were the others who had their souls returned to their bodies.

Steve looked at James and blinked his eyes several times, until he could see clear.

S: James...

J: Dad!

James hugged Steve tightly and Steve sat up and hugged him back, still feeling dizzy.

Torunn watched James with his father and watched other people regaining consciousness, she looked at her father, full of hope.

T: Father? C’mon. Wake up... Father!

Torunn saw people start walking and she was nervous when her father didn’t wake up.
T: Father! Why doesn’t he wake up?

H: Adam!

A: I'm sorry, he did not have his soul stolen. He really died.

T: No! No! Get him back!

A: I can’t do that.

T: My chest hurts so much!

Torunn couldn’t stop crying.

A: I know, but this is just sadness you’re feeling. It's not a smart emotion, you should get rid of it.

Hill frowned at Adam, nor would she say such a thing to a child who is seeing her father dead.

Torunn looked at Adam and then at her father, she wiped away her tears and held the tin in her hand.

T: It's the stone of truth. Thanos said it can make any wish.

H: You can’t touch it, Torunn, I don’t know what would happen to you.

A: She can handle it. She is strong.

T: I want my father back!

Torunn put her hand inside the tin box and before she could touch the stone, Adam teleported himself close to her and took the tin box out of her hands.

T: No! Your thief! Give me back!

A: I'm sorry, you can’t bring him back. These stones weren’t meant for any existing being to use. You all are full of vanity, hate, love, sadness and longing. You are not intelligent creatures enough to deal with the power of these stones.

H: And you are?

A: Maybe. The difference between you and me is that I don’t want to dominate the universe. I want to find the balance and I want the universe to find it too, but you are not ready yet.

Adam levitated toward the sky.

A: Who knows, someday?

Adam levitated further and he just disappeared into the air, carrying all the infinity stones with him.

Steve recovered and stood up.

S: Your mom, James.

J: She was there.
James pointed and Natasha was still on the floor.

Steve and James ran to her.

Steve crouched down and laid his hand on her face.

S: Natasha? Natasha?

J: Why doesn’t she wake up?

S: Natasha!

Steve laid his lips on Natasha's and they were hot, he kept his face close to hers and he could feel her breathing.

S: She's alive.

J: Why doesn’t she wake up?

S: I don’t know, James. Let's take her to a hospital.

...

When Natasha woke up, she was in a room with white walls and a monitor near the bed, repeating a beep every three seconds.

Natasha looked at the monitor and sighed, she felt a little dizzy yet and she couldn’t speak, so she moaned softly.

Soon after, Natasha felt a shadow cast over her body, she looked toward the shadow and saw the figure of a man.

*That stupid damn smile!* Natasha thought as she recognized Steve.

N: Are we dead?

Steve shook his head.

Natasha closed her eyes for a few seconds and then abruptly reopened them and sat up abruptly on the bed.

N: Steve! Where's James? And Sarah?

S: Calm down! They are fine. They went out to buy soda with Bucky, we've been waiting here for hours.

N: Hours? Did I faint for hours?

S: Actually, you're out for almost one month now.

Natasha frowned, completely shocked.

N: One month???

Natasha looked at the covers over her belly and legs, she lifted the covers and looked at her belly,
she put her hand on her belly and felt a deep desperation.

**S**: He's there.

Steve reassured Natasha and nodded.

**S**: He's fine and perfect. Growing up pretty fast.

**N**: Did we win?

Steve sat on the edge of Natasha's stretcher and took hold of her hand, Steve looked into her eyes and sighed before answering.

**S**: Yes. We have lost many things, many people, but yes, we have won. The nightmare is over.

Natasha took a deep breath, but it was a breath of relief, she rested her back on the pillow and closed her eyes for a few seconds.

**N**: After everything we've been through... And we witness. I'll never be the same again.

**S**: None of us. We're all changed forever.

**N**: Will the kids get over it?

**S**: I don’t know, but they will have time to recover and they are free to be whatever they want to be. And that's the most important.

Steve kissed the back of Natasha's hand.

Natasha watched Steve.

**S**: My shield broke during the war.

**N**: Are you upset?

**S**: No. On the contrary. I am relieved. I'm wrapping up my activities as Captain America once and for all.

Natasha was not surprised.

**S**: I put that burden on Bucky.

**N**: He deserves it.

**S**: Yes.

Steve sighed.

**N**: I think I will do the same.

**S**: No need, if it's for me...

**N**: No. It's not for you. It's for me. For us and the children. I finished my work. I feel like I have wiped out my ledger.
S: You have and it was a long time ago.

Natasha smiled.

S: Has anyone ever said that you look beautiful when you smile?

Natasha rolled her eyes.

N: You.

S: Sorry, I have to repeat.

Natasha and Steve smiled at each other. Steve leaned toward Natasha and kissed her lips.

Sarah: MAMA! James got my ice cream!

J: She said she wanted strawberries, but it only had chocolate and vanilla. But chocolate was the last one, and I had chosen chocolate first.

Sarah: I want chocolate!

S: Hey, hey, your mom just woke up from a coma and you guys are fighting over chocolate? I thought you went to buy soda.

Bucky: Yeah, they changed their minds at the time.

Bucky approached Natasha and kissed her forehead.

B: How are you?

N: Better now, Captain.

Bucky laughed.

B: Juliana is waiting for me at the reception. I'll visit you at home. You look great, you won’t be here for long for sure.

N: Not really.

S: You'll stay if the doctor says you have to stay.

N: Don’t tell me what to do, Rogers!

S: I'm not doing that.

N: Yes, you are!

S: I’m only concerned about you, why this has to be a big deal?

N: Give me a break, oh my God…

B: Oh, I've already seen that this discussion will not end today, so... See you later, guys.

Bucky left the hospital room.
J: Stop, Sarah!

Sarah: Stop you!

J: You're boring!

Sarah: Daddy! James called me boring.

S: James!

J: I didn’t do anything. Mom!!!

N: Oh my God, I want to go back to the coma now.

Natasha joked and Steve laughed at her.

N: It will be like this every day and we will still have a third little guy to increase the fight.

S: I would still have five more with you.

Natasha frowned.

N: You're crazy, we're living an infinity war here already and you still want more? I'm sorry, but you're going to have those kids with somebody else.

Steve smiled and shook his head.

S: So I don’t want to and I'm happy with three.

N: That's only what you gonna get. Is that enough for you?

S: It's more than enough.

Natasha smiled.

S: I love you, Romanoff.

N: I love you too, soldier.

The End
Guys, now that you’ve just read, is Adam a villain or a hero, or neither? What you think?

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!