the sun did not yet know

by asocialconstruct

Summary

Really just an excuse for gratuitous tiny!Steve/Thor slavefic id porn, and later shrinkyclinks porn. Tags to be added as chapters progress but in general consider this choose not to warn.

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Thor finally steps into view, arms crossed over his chest, and he’s bigger than he looked on the dais, broad shoulders made ever broader by the heavy drape of a cloak brushing his heels. If not for the long hair and the close trimmed beard, he could be on a poster for the Reich, blond and strong-jawed as they come.

“So,” he says. “You are still a disappointment.”

Notes
The basic gist of the backstory, which I will probably not go into much in the fic: pretty much CATFA canon up until Steve takes off to rescue Bucky, except instead of finding Bucky and rescuing the 107th, Steve gets taken prisoner by Hydra for Evil Science Experiments. The Nazis go on to win the war and make contact with Asgard circa 1944, at which point this picks up.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Steve takes the fall on his right shoulder, rolling into it to protect his throbbing left shoulder. He lands hard on a cold floor anyway, temple glancing off the stone hard enough to hurt but not enough to move the blindfold. Rumlow’s gloved hand in his hair pulls him back up to his knees, head bent back so Steve can barely breathe, but at least now Steve knows where he is to spit at him again.

“Here you are, your Majesty,” Rumlow says, satisfied. “Captain America.”

“This is not the warrior your masters promised,” someone—your majesty—says, from in front of them and above. Rumlow’s men shift around them, the sound making Steve vaguely queasy as chills chase over the healing lash marks across his back. He can feel air moving around them, cold with his chest bare, but he can’t tell how big the space his, how far your majesty is, whether there’s anyone else besides Rumlow’s men.

“The very same, my lord. The rainbow bridge took some of the shine off, but it’s still him,” Rumlow says, pulling the blindfold off Steve, jerking it roughly where the knot’s caught some of his hair.

Steve takes a shuddering gasp despite himself, almost physically struck by the unearthly size of the room. The Nazis would like this sort of thing, gold for miles and your majesty nearly lost in it, a solid bear of a man up on a dias of gold, on a low throne of gold. Schmidt would wet himself for such a gaudy grand thing.

Steve gets one more shaky breath as he takes in the full size of the room, craning his neck but unable to see the ceiling, catching sight of people—what must be a court—behind them, and guards besides Rumlow’s men, looking small and drab in their black uniforms. Steve’s never felt so small in his life, never mind the seasick imbalance of finding himself pigeon chested and skinny again after the queasy disorientation of however they landed here.

Rumlow throws Steve down by the hair again and Steve doesn’t go any more gracefully than the last time, catching his chin on the inlaid stone, hands still tied tightly behind him. He hisses and starts to push himself back up to his knees, only to get Rumlow’s boot in the middle of his back. “So what’ll it be, your majesty?” Rumlow says conversationally, perfectly at ease even as he slowly presses the breath out of Steve, boot grinding into the barely healed lash marks. “We kept our end of the bargain, the rainbow bridge is your problem.”

Your majesty makes an annoyed noise far above them and Steve does his best to glare a hole in the side of the boot he’d polished yesterday. “I’ll discuss it with your masters, errand boy.” A snap of fingers, loud in the sudden frozen silence of Rumlow and his men gone rigid. “Take the slave away.”

It’s so absurd Steve nearly doesn’t understand until he realizes that the hands hauling him up aren’t Rumlow or his mens’—a pair of the strange guards haul Steve up in the midst of them, towering over not just Steve but Rumlow and the other SS goons too, taller than Steve’s mind had been prepared to accept. Steve sways on his feet from more than just the pain, legs gone jelly under him if not for the hard hands on his arms.

“See you later, Cap,” Rumlow says, reaching out to pat Steve on the cheek. Steve spits in his face, the guards dragging him off as Rumlow wipes his face.

What exactly the Nazis sold him off for is clear as soon as Steve’s unceremoniously chained to the foot of a massive bed and left there to contemplate his sins. The chain’s just long enough to allow
him to be bent over the bed, bigger than some rooms Steve’s rented, but not long enough to let him reach anything else in the ridiculously large room; just the fireplace alone is bigger than some rooms Steve’s rented.

Even with the thin collar around his neck, the guards didn’t bother to untie his wrists, but Steve can’t stretch to the end of his chain far enough to reach anything to chafe the thin cord against. Trying to rub his wrists against the carved posts at the foot of the bed just gets him sore wrists and a sorer back, the lash marks burning to match his wrists rubbed raw. The floor is stone like everywhere else, covered with the fur of some kind of huge, unrecognizable beast, wooly and thick enough that Steve can feel for the first time how cold his feet are as the rest of the hurt starts to sink in.

Steve’s just slid down onto it, leaning against the foot of the bed to rest his back, when he hears a door unlatch somewhere out of sight. The set of rooms, what Steve saw as he was dragged kicking through, are sprawling, hung with rich fabrics and oversized furniture, though Steve tries not to think about or look at the bed he’s leaning against, and the size of man who would need such a thing. An improvement over the cells and labs the SS kept him in, or Rumlow’s spartan officer’s quarters, but only insofar as Steve doesn’t know exactly what your majesty intends to do with him yet. Rumlow had started out kind, too.

Your majesty finally steps into view, arms crossed over his chest, and he’s bigger than he looked on the dais, broad shoulders made ever broader by the heavy drape of a cloak brushing his heels. If not for the long hair and the close trimmed beard, he could be a poster for the Reich’s Ubermensch, blond and strong-jawed as they come.

“So,” your majesty says. “You are still a disappointment.”

Steve stiffens; as though it’s his fault the Nazis traded him away like a show pony with a limp.

Your majesty crosses the room in three steps and he’s bigger yet looming over Steve, leaning down to haul him up by one big hand around his arm. Steve tries to kick away as he’s pushed down over the bed, heart racing even though he knew to expect it, panic clawing at him with the easy way he’s held down with one big hand in the middle of his back. The blankets smell like smoke and wool and Steve feels like he’s suffocating, no leverage to get away or even fight back with his hands tied, the bed too tall for his bare feet to touch the floor like this.

“Be still,” your majesty snaps, and then Steve’s wrists are free and he’s up, scrambling back across the bed as far as the chain allows. Not far enough; just barely past the foot of the bed, not even out of arm’s reach.

Steve breathes fast and shallow. He’s made a misstep already, your majesty’s face dark. The thin collar bites into the back of Steve’s neck as he leans away, wound tight even though this has been inevitable since Rumlow blindfolded him. Inevitable, maybe, since he let the Nazis take him alive, even though he’d been barely alive enough to do anything about it and half blind with grief over Bucky besides.

“You are a filthy disappointment,” your majesty says, frowning at him. “Come.”

Steve’s breath catches; it’s not that he’s scared, exactly, but he freezes where he is. At least with Rumlow he’d been more than a match, even if it hadn’t mattered in the end, but your majesty could break one of Steve’s wrists without thinking much of it.

“You will obey me,” your majesty says, one hand on the chain to Steve’s collar, the threat clear enough.
Steve lifts his chin, heart beating fast. “And if I don’t?”

*Your majesty* looks him up and down slowly. “Then I will make you obey, or I shall send you back to your masters on Midgard.” Back to Rumlow, back to Zola’s lab table, away from whatever chance at breaking out of this gilded cage he might have.

Except—Midgard. The wrongness of it all hits him physically, like a punch in the gut, because this gilded cage is as far from home as he could possibly be—the Nazis had traded him away to—“Asgard?” Steve says, his throat thick with what he’d overheard of Zola and Schmidt’s plans. “This is Asgard.” And *your majesty’s* not just an Ubermensch wet dream, but Thor himself, king of Asgard.

“Yes,” Thor says, annoyed. “Come, so that I may release you for a bath, as we do on Asgard, and tend your wounds, as we do on Asgard.” Steve’s stomach growls in the silence and Thor raises his eyebrows with half a smile. “And I shall feed you, as we do on Asgard.”

That gets Steve to move; he might not be the size he was, but he hasn’t eaten since last night and the mention of food after the queasiness of landing here makes him light headed. He makes himself inch closer along the bed, legs still jelly from being thrown around and the heady shock of finding out all that Ahnenerbe nonsense to be true.

Thor catches him with one big hand around Steve’s arm again, gentler this time, but Steve still flinches back despite himself. Thor puts his hand to the chain where it attaches to Steve’s collar and brings it away with a quiet click, no key that Steve saw. Steve pulls away without thinking about it, but Thor keeps a hand on him, like he thinks Steve’s going to bolt. And maybe he is, even if he has no idea where he’d go. Steve hates himself for the raw stink of fear and sweat on him, worse now as Thor tugs him down to stand and Steve barely brushes his shoulder in bare feet, Thor looming in boots and fully dressed. Next to the smell of Thor in clean clothes and what can’t possibly be aftershave, Steve smells himself like he hasn’t since the Nazis got him, feverish hot and panicked since the disorientation of finding himself small again.

Thor loosens his cloak and lets it drop to the floor, pushing Steve ahead of him as he steps over the fabric.

The door beyond is a bathroom, palatial with its sunken tub and wide, high windows, the sky already tipping towards twilight. Steve balks, because how do they do baths on Asgard, with a tub big enough to fuck or drown in, but Thor propels him forward, hand on Steve’s shoulder. He startles back against Thor as the faucet starts of its own accord, surprising a huffed laugh out of Thor, who squeezes his shoulder before releasing him.

“Strip,” Thor says, turning his back on Steve for the first time. The door’s closed; the windows are too high; if Thor means to fuck him then Steve may as well find out how sooner rather than later, even if his heart hasn’t stopped racing. He swallows convulsively, hands on the drawstring band of the thin hospital pants they’d put him in, cuffs rolled now that they’re ten sizes too big for him.

He takes a breath and unties them, stepping out of the fabric as Thor turns back to him, towels and a few small jars in hand. Thor presses a small cloth and round ball of soap into his hand but doesn’t otherwise touch him, gesturing at the tub, where the faucet has stopped but the water steams.

Steve looks between the water and Thor apprehensively, hand tight around the slippery soft ball of soap.

“I have already bathed. And I do not care for blood in my bathwater,” Thor says.
Steve catches sight of himself in a large, silvered mirror on the other side of the room; even in the hazy dim reflection Steve’s all pale skin blotched with red blush, his knees scuffed and one of the lash marks across his back oozing blood slowly where the thin skin of it broke open. The welts across his ass and thighs are nearly gone, just dark bruises now. He ducks his head, blush spreading down his narrow chest for all that his feet freeze on the cool tile.

Thor gestures at the bathwater again and Steve finally steps down into it, wary even though Thor stays where he is, still fully dressed. The water, when Steve finally steps into it, is only just to his knees, not enough to hide him if he stands. Not enough to hide much if he sits, either, but he glances at Thor anyway and gets another indulgent wave of the hand.

Steve sits with his back to Thor, as if he’s had any privacy or dignity since he joined the Army, but unnerved anyway, being watched intently like this. The hot water stings on the open lash mark and darkening welts, but Steve unravels more than he’d thought, his knees and feet and back aching after being thrown around roughly. His left shoulder throbs, but he can’t feel anything out of place or see any bruising as he rinses, Thor still watching him intently.

Steve scrubs his hair and what he can reach of his skin, dawdling if he’s honest about it, uncomfortable in the hot water and under scrutiny, but not about to get back in arm’s reach sooner than he has to. He rinses his stinging back, worrying his lip raw at the thought of an infection here, so far from home, and here, back in his skinny frail body.

The respite, if that’s what this is, doesn’t last long, Thor dipping his hand in to test the water, starting to go cool. “Come here,” Thor says, sitting placidly on the stone floor. Steve hesitates for half a heartbeat; there’s no chain this time, but he hasn’t got the shadow of a doubt that if he balked this time, he’d find out what made to obey looks like.

Steve steps up out of the tub slowly, acutely aware of his nakedness as the water chills on his skin and the collar retains the heat of the bath, thin and warm at the base of his throat. He hadn’t gotten a good look at it when they put it on him, but it’s light, nearly forgettable if he doesn’t touch it.

Thor unfolds himself from his spot on the floor, a large towel in hand as he approaches Steve slowly, like an animal he’s trying not to spook. Steve lets himself be enveloped in it, shivering with the effort of holding himself still as he’s rubbed dry, brisk and efficient despite the forced intimacy of it. Thor goes gentle with his bleeding back and his left shoulder when Steve hisses and flinches from his touch there. When Steve’s dry but still naked, Thor takes his face in hand, turning his face back and forth like he’s looking for something.

Whether he found it or not, he nudges Steve over to kneel against a chest, wrapped in the damp towel. “This will hurt, but it will make you heal faster than your Midgardian medicines,” Thor says, showing Steve a little pot of ointment before making him lean forward against the chest.

Steve braces for it, watching his own reflection and Thor’s in the mirror, but the pain never comes. It stings across the split skin of the opened lash mark, but otherwise the only pain is from the bruising pressure of the ointment being rubbed into what will probably be scars. Would never have been scars if he’d stayed his other size, would have healed fast enough on their own if he wasn’t suddenly back in this fragile body.

Even if he were in his new body, Thor’d be more than a match for him, broad and likely taller than Steve. Though it’s hard to tell, like this.

Thor works slowly, rubbing cool ointment into the lash marks across Steve’s back. “Who did this,” Thor says without pausing.
“Who d’you think?” Steve snaps, patience worn thin.

Thor puts a hand under his chin, tipping Steve’s head up so they make eye contact in the mirror, so that Steve’s breath comes short and he can feel his thready pulse pick up under Thor’s hands. “I do not care for willfulness.” He holds Steve like that for a beat, and then releases him so that Steve tips forward, gulping for breath.

Steve leans on the chest and hangs his head. Contrariness buys him nothing, if he can make himself simper and fawn the way he couldn’t before. “Rumlow,” Steve says eventually.

“What?”

Steve bites back his first response, because it doesn’t matter why Thor wants to know. Steve’s strung tight with pain and hunger and fear when he admits it to himself, but maybe cooperation will buy him what contrariness won’t. “About a week ago,” Steve says to the floor.

Thor makes an annoyed noise at that, but otherwise says nothing.

“Don’t you have—people for this?” Steve says, hissing at the cold dab of ointment on his sore shoulder. “My lord,” he adds as an afterthought, if he’s going to make the best of this until he gets out of here, dependent on Thor’s good graces.

“Yes,” Thor says, not pausing in his work. “But you are a very pretty disappointment. And you may simply call me master,” Thor says magnanimously. Steve does his best to not stiffen; worse after Thor taps his ass. “Up,” he says.

Steve swallows, his belly twisting around nothing. His knees shake despite himself as he pushes himself up and allows himself to be pushed forward across the chest, knees nudged apart. The stone tile hurts his scraped knee; the edge of the chest bites into his stomach; he tries to concentrate on that and not look at the mirror as he waits to be fucked.

He flinches hard enough to crack his knees against the chest when Thor brushes a dry thumb across his sore hole, Steve’s nails digging into his palms as he waits. No pressure, not yet, but there were enough of them last time that this time will hurt no matter what.

“Who did this?” Thor says, sharper than last time, his other hand coming to rest on Steve’s ass, the warmth of his palm making the welts sting. It must look as bad as it feels, to be worth asking about. Steve wonders if Thor’ll get his money back for damaged goods, or just return to sender.

“Rumlow,” Steve says, forcing himself to not cringe away, to stay still. “And his men. Last night.” He swallows, making himself stop babbling.

The sound of his own breathing is suddenly loud, chills chasing down his back and thighs.

“Stay,” Thor says after a long minute, and gets up. Steve lifts his head to see where he’s going, if he intends to fuck Steve with something else instead, but catches sight of himself in the mirror, naked and knees spread, just waiting obediently. The little collar is gold like everything else in this fucking place, barely anything but Steve can see it shaking in the mirror as he tries to get himself under control.

Thor puts a heavy hand on Steve’s ass when he comes back, the sound of another little glass jar being put down on stone as Steve closes his eyes. His knees hurt from kneeling, his back aches, and his thighs shake despite everything. Steve squeezes his eyes shut; no matter what, it can’t be as bad. There’s only one of him, and he’s at least not a talker.
More ointment into the welts down Steve’s ass and thighs. The shivers won’t stop now, full body shudders that he can’t get under control, chest aching like he can’t breath.

Thor smoothes a warm hand down his thigh, absurdly gentle like Steve isn’t ass up over a crate like he had been last night. It’ll be fine; Steve’s lived through the same and worse. It has to be fine, because there’s no alternative.

Thor’s fingers are blunt and huge when they finally press into Steve, first the tip of one and then another, slick and cold. Steve shakes convulsively, like a fever he can’t push down. It’ll hurt less if he can make himself relax but he can’t, not after last time, not even with his eyes squeezed shut trying to will himself anywhere else.

It’s slow and inevitable, the pressure and stretch familiar and wrong as Thor works him open slowly. Steve should be grateful for it, because a man as big as Thor has to have an even bigger cock, but what’s it matter when it’ll hurt no matter what.

Except that Steve can feel his own cock start to pulse and thicken the longer it goes on, hot and shameful. He tips his forehead against the wood cover of the chest, bracing for Thor to notice, to say something about it. He can’t not. It’s nerves; it’s the pressure of thick fingers working his ass open; it’s Steve’s mind playing tricks with his body trying to pretend he’s anywhere but as far from home as he can possibly get.

And then it’s just—over. Thor sits back on his heels to wipe his hands on a cloth, and then he’s hauling Steve up to stand. Thor looks him up and down, giving Steve’s half hard cock a long look before turning to wash his hands in the basin. When he turns back, though, it’s to dump a soft gray tunic in Steve’s arms, so big it has to be Thor’s own, and Thor huffs a laugh as Steve struggles into it, holding it up so Steve can get into it straight.

He swims in it once it’s on—on a man as big as Thor, it’d be barely an undershirt, but the look Steve gets of himself in the mirror is like a child in a grown man’s shirt, the collar opening wide enough to slip off his shoulder and the shirt hanging down to his knees. Steve picks at it irritably, annoyed with the blue embroidery around the opening, annoyed with the way it doesn’t hide the collar, annoyed with his shaky legs and growling stomach.

Thor picks him up bodily, like he weighs barely anything, striding back towards the bed purposefully. Steve knows better than to kick, but he scrambles to right himself when Thor dumps him unceremoniously on the foot of the bed, hooking two fingers into the collar to keep him from going anywhere. It doesn’t hurt, but it’s uncomfortably tight, promising worse as Steve pulls against it, like he’s actually a match for Thor’s strength like this.

But Thor just reconnects the chain without a word, and as soon as his back’s turned, Steve slithers off the foot of the bed. The rest is bad enough, but in a choice between the bed and the floor, he’ll take the floor. He tucks his legs against his chest and presses his back against the post of the bed, like that’ll give him any kind of protection, as if he can do anything about any of this.

Thor comes back with a bowl and cup in hand, looking Steve up and down again where he’s huddled on the floor. Steve lifts his chin and knows it’s a challenge he can’t back up, but he’s got nothing left besides his pride. Better at this point to know the consequences.

But Thor doesn’t take the challenge, unperturbed the way Rumlow would never be. “You are too skinny,” he says, and pushes the bowl and cup into Steve’s hands.

The bowl’s a big, unwieldy thing carved of wood, too big for Steve’s hands, and he puts it in his hand to pick at the buttered bread and smoked fish suspiciously. The wooden cup, though, is full of
beer, and that Steve drinks greedily and damn the consequences. He hasn’t been drunk since before Bucky died, and if this is the price of it, it’s as good a time as any.

Thor pulls a chair by the dark fireplace to watch him, a bigger cup of beer in his own hand and more bowls on the little table beside him. Steve ignores him as best he can, inhaling the fish and buttered bread faster than he meant to after however many months of Hydra’s gruel and thin soup. Rumlow used this against him too, real food after weeks of starving, but he can’t help showing weakness with the way his hands shake as the food hits his stomach, bread still warm and soft and the butter salty and perfect.

“At least you eat like a man,” Thor says, dry. Steve blushes hot, the beer gone straight to his head. Not drunk, but enough to wish he could be and escape from all of this, for just a little while. “Come here and you may have more,” Thor says, holding out another piece of buttered bread.

Steve hesitates, but what he got was enough to make him more hungry, not less. The chair is just at the edge of what Steve can reach with the chain, and Steve blushes hotter when Thor gestures for him to sit on the plush fur covering the floor, but at least with his back against the leg of the chair he doesn’t have to see Thor watching him eat.

Thor gives him another cup, this one of thick, dark stew with actual meat, and Steve eats it greedily with the bread without stopping to wonder if it’s an animal he’d recognize. The bread and butter tastes the same, so the rest of it doesn’t bear thinking about. By the time he’s done eating, the windows are full dark, soft lights coming up from glass globes around the room that Steve also tries not to think about. The whole place is unnatural and the disorientation of wondering about it isn’t worth it.

Thor hands him a cup of beer when he’s finished, the same one Thor had been drinking from, only a quarter full. Steve drains it anyway, exhausted enough to not realize that he’s leaning against Thor’s leg until Thor takes the empty cup back and starts combing huge fingers through Steve’s damp hair. Everything hurts, and Steve hates himself that having his hair petted, sitting here on the floor like a toy, like a pet, isn’t enough to make him want to risk moving away. He’s warm enough and full enough for the first time in months and he hates it, hates the way he feels heavy and stupid and tired enough to allow Thor to lay Steve’s head against his knee to keep petting him.

“You may sleep,” Thor says, magnanimous again, and Steve bristles. Thor’s got a book on his knee when Steve glares up at him but doesn’t pay him any attention, just going on with his reading and carding fingers through Steve’s hair.

It’s warm, and quiet, and Steve keeps his eyes open for as long as he can. He stays where he is, leaning against Thor’s knee, because there’s nowhere else to go with Thor’s hand heavy on his hair and the collar around his neck, light as the chain is. He definitely does not doze or close his eyes, not even for a minute.
Chapter 2

Steve wakes up curled right where he’d fallen asleep, cramped and cold. He doesn’t move, listening for the sound of breathing or movement around him, eyes open just enough to tell it’s late enough for the gray morning light to filter in from somewhere, but early enough for the sun to not be fully up yet. If Asgard has the same sun. If they have butter, they must have at least a sun, Steve supposed. Like waking up in one of Bucky’s pulp novels.

Steve swallows and squeezes his eyes shut, unbalanced. There’s a window open somewhere, cool air moving through the room, but no sound that Steve can hear; not breathing from the bed, not movement anywhere else.

Sitting up hurts in his joints, his bones, his sore back and his neck cramped from sleeping wrong. That he didn’t have enough beer to get hungover isn’t much of a consolation, because at least there would be a good reason for a hangover, but as it is he’s only sore because of his own miserable fragility same as before. If he was going to be sore regardless, sleeping on a rug over stone didn’t help any, not that he’d have gotten any better from Hydra. Not that the bed would have been any better, with the price of it.

There’s even a bowl with another hunk of soft bread and honey set on the floor just within reach, and a mug of something bitter and dark that Steve doesn’t finish. At least Rumlow had real coffee. The honey almost makes his eyes sting, sweet and private with no one handing it over like a favor, as though Steve had never thought of selling his soul for a piece of penny candy.

And, just out of reach, the little table set with bowls of fruit and what looked like a little pitcher of cream, if it were at home, if it were Mrs. Barnes setting the table. Steve eyes it covetously, because when was the last time he even saw a strawberry. Except the chair’s gone and there’s nothing else in sight to drag the table closer with, leaving Steve to pick at the chain irritably and contemplate strangling himself for strawberries and cream.

The chain’s light enough to practically be jewelry, finely engraved links interlocked like a rope, and if Steve were in his new body he could probably rip it apart, if not just rip it from the foot of the bed. It’s thinner than his pinky and doesn’t make a sound as he investigates how it’s attached to the bed, strung tight listening for sound from the other rooms. It’s just looped around one of the big carved posts of the bed and clipped to itself, and if Steve were strong again he could just lift the bed and pull it down from where it’s looped around the foot of the post. As it is, he can’t budge the bed an inch, his back burning with the effort of even trying.

The chain’s just long enough to let him lean around the far side of the bed, where he can see the bathroom and an alcove open to a balcony facing the same direction. The open window, if he could get to it. If he leans as far as he can in the other direction, he can just squint through the other rooms, with a wall of bookshelves and furniture, but no door in sight if he ever did bolt.

Investigating the bedframe and the limits of the chain gets him nowhere; there’s nothing within reach he might use to pry the links of the chain apart, and the sun’s fully up by the time he gets under the bed and out again, back scraped raw where he misjudged how low the taut rope supporting the mattress was. Not that he got anything for it besides dust down the front of the absurdly large shirt, evidence against him if anyone comes in again.
But he has plenty of time to brush dust off it, sitting against the foot of the bed and braced for any noise. Around midday there’s the sound of someone moving through the outer rooms, but they don’t come within Steve’s sight, and the door latches quietly behind them after a while.

If Hydra and the USO gave him one thing, though, it’s the patience of a saint, and he’s at least got more to look at than the blank walls of Hydra’s cells even if it’s not as good as the USO train cars. Steve keeps his mind off the strawberries, off the collar, off Bucky, off the nauseating distance from home, off the thought of Nazis in Manhattan as best he can, focusing all his attention on the way the sun shifts across the floor.

The collar is dull and blood warm as Steve runs fingers over it obsessively, and he can’t help thinking it would have been better if his hands were still tied, so he at least didn’t have to feel the angular engraving on it and wonder about it. Decorated like a toy, like the embroidery around the collar of the gray shirt, a pretty disappointment and useless.

Steve’s dozing against the foot of the bed when he startles awake to the sound of purposeful footsteps coming towards him. The direct sun is gone, but the windows are still bright, and Steve’s heartbeat kicks up like it makes any damn difference if he’s braced against the foot of the bed or not. Doesn’t keep him from pressing himself back against it like it does, his back and ass sore from sitting on the stone floor all day.

Thor just walks right past him, though, just brushing his fingers through Steve’s hair without a glance and goes to piss with the door open.

Steve eyes him warily when he comes back out, but he keeps on ignoring Steve, walking right by without a look to flop on the divan to the other side of the fireplace, putting his feet up on the cushions with his boots still on so much like Bucky that Steve half expects to hear Mrs. Barnes scold from the other room.

But Thor settles with his eyes closed, one arm thrown over his eyes and a long sigh and then the room’s quiet again. The silence grates in a way street noise in Brooklyn never did, because where in the hell are they that there’s no sound of other people.

Steve starts at the sound of Thor snapping fingers at him, other arm still thrown over his eyes. “Come,” Thor says, without looking at Steve.

Steve stands slowly, joints protesting, and stops at the end of the chain, short as it ever was and not long enough to reach the divan so he’s left just standing there with no idea what to say. Thor finally turns to look at him after a minute, face dark and mouth open like he’s going to say something about it, but he gets a look at Steve standing there shifting foot to foot and barks out a laugh, loud in the quiet room.

“This is already tiresome, is it not?” he says with a half smile, unfolding from the divan to come unchain Steve with a soft little snick at his collar. If there’s some trick to it, Steve can’t tell what his fingers do and couldn’t find any mechanism for it after hours of obsessively fingering it.

Thor’s hand on his shoulder to push him towards the divan, Steve hesitates, glancing back at the bathroom. It’s humiliating. Nothing about this hasn’t been, but Steve still can’t make himself ask yet.

Thor follows his look, though, eyebrows raised. “Go,” he says, letting go of Steve like it doesn’t matter if he bolts, like he hasn’t been chained to the foot of the damn bed this whole time.

Steve hesitates, but where would he bolt to. He goes to piss, trying not to notice that the door won’t close for him, cheeks hot by the time he rinses his hands in the basin nearly chest high on him like
he’s a child. Thor’s back lying on the divan, not giving him any damn notice until Steve’s rinsing his hands and Thor starts snapping his fingers at him.

Steve dawdles, spine stiff. The high windows are right there, and if Steve skirts wide around the bed he can see more of the balcony, blue sky visible past the gauzy curtains. Thor raises his head as Steve drags his feet, though, eyebrows raised.

So Steve goes, but not quickly. With the bigger man stretched out on the divan, there’s no room for Steve except on top of him, so Steve settles himself on the floor before he can be told otherwise. Thor says nothing of it, though, handing Steve a strawberry with his eyes closed, before going back to casually petting Steve’s hair.

And the strawberry is—almost worth all the rest of it. The petting, the chain, the collar, everything. Even more than the honey it’s so sweet Steve’s mouth almost hurts, and if he pretends like Bucky would ever put his hand in Steve’s hair like that—but it’s not home, and Steve squeezes his eyes closed against the dangerous narcotic of wishing it was even as he tries to eat as slowly as possible. It’s enough, at least, to not have to think about how much his back and joints hurt, or the irritation of having the chain clipped back to his collar now that it’s apparently been lengthened.

Steve jerks away when Thor tries to feed him a second strawberry, because the chain and the collar aren’t worth *that*. It gets him another look with eyebrows raised when Thor picks up his head, but he settles again. “You are fickle as a cat,” he says, and eats it himself, going back to petting Steve’s hair slowly.

The casual affection of it grates on Steve’s nerves the longer he sits there, because it’s too comfortable, unconcerned, like Steve’s not worth thinking about and should be grateful for it. Even Rumlow never expected him to be grateful, and his back and neck hurt from the strain of holding himself so stiffly under a stranger’s hands.

Thor dozes; Steve doesn’t. Harder to track time without direct sun sliding across the floor, but Steve’s back and knees go stiff sitting there, Thor’s hand heavy on his shoulder when Steve tries to move away.

And then Thor’s up and gone just as suddenly as he appeared, getting up to stretch his back with a heavy sigh. He leaves Steve there without a word, and that’s that.

But if the extra length of chain didn’t get him anything useful, just barely long enough to let him ascertain that the divan has no screws, nails or pins to pry out, it does bring the little table with its strawberries and pitcher of cream in his range. Steve eats them spitefully before Thor can come back, perched on the massive divan with his knees pulled up to his chest like a child stealing cookies. He drinks the little pitcher of cream straight, room warmed as it is and doesn’t care, because it tastes as good as everything else he hasn’t had in months. He eats the little sweet rolls set out on the table too, and damn the consequences.

Steve startles awake to the sound of laughter in the other room, shaky and rattled by his own complaisance. Sleeping all day like Bucky’s fat old dog. From his spot on the divan, he can just make out Thor and others in the far room; three men and a woman. Big as Thor, all of them, though not looking likely to notice him, laughing and leaning into each other. Drinking, though, which could change that.

The blond man notices Steve looking, though, and Steve ducks back down, heart beating fast. He hates himself for being so skittish, but even in his bigger body he’d have barely been a match for Thor, let alone four men the same size. If Rumlow and Hydra taught him anything besides patience,
it was to avoid drawing attention to himself when he didn’t have to.

Steve’s hungry, though, headache pounding at the smell of food in the other room. Roasted meat and warm bread, Steve’s empty stomach flipping over itself nauseously at the smell. Who would have thought Hydra would be kinder, with their tasteless, odorless gruel given out so sparingly he forgot to be hungry. Steve rubs his eyes with shaky hands, frustrated with himself for giving in so easy.

“It’s uncivilized, though, innit?” one of the men says, the one with the big red beard and long braided hair, when Steve chances a look. The blond one catches him at it again, eyeing Steve up and down thoughtfully before Steve ducks back out of sight.

“What do you expect from Midgard?” Thor says, and there’s the sound of more laughter.

“Well, a little more than just pretension to civility if their Fuhrer expects to join the Nine Realms,” the woman says. “Even the Jotun are more civilized.”

Thor makes a derisive noise and demands to be passed more beer, a change of subject if Steve ever heard one.

They’re there for hours, Steve’s stomach growling the whole time. He knuckles at his eyes in the dark room, the glass globes from the night before staying cold. His head pounds from too much sleep and his feet are burning cold when he tucks them under himself, pulling an overstuffed cushion against himself for warmth. If it’s objectively warmer than a basement Hydra lab, Steve’s fragile, faulty body can’t tell the difference, chilled to the bone and worse every time a breeze blows in from the balcony.

When the others are gone, Thor stumbles back in the dark, catching up short at the sight of Steve huddled on the divan. Steve holds himself stiffly, ready to bolt if he has to.

Thor turns on his heel, though, muttering to himself under his breath as he goes back into the further rooms. He comes back with—a plate of leftovers, looks like, and a cup of beer. He drops the wooden plate of meat next to Steve on the divan and gives him the beer, Thor pulling off his shirt as he goes to piss.

Steve bolts the food, in case he doesn’t have very long—a cold cut of roast beef and a cold baked potato the size of both Steve’s fists, the beer warm and flat. The empty bowl of strawberries and cream pitcher are right there on the table, screaming his guilt. He’s still clutching the potato in both hands against his chest when Thor strips to his drawers and falls into the middle of the big bed. Steve stays still in the dark, listening for Thor to change his mind, but his breathing just evens out into the deep, even breath of sleep.

The potato tastes better when Steve starts eating it again cautiously, watching Thor start snoring face down on the bed, laid out on top of the covers shirtless and near naked. Bucky slept like that sometimes in the middle of the summer, face down in his drawers when it was nearly too hot to breath, and Steve—

Steve finishes his cold potato and licks grease off his fingers and doesn’t think about anything else.

Thor rolls to his feet in the middle of the night, scratching himself on his way to the bathroom. Steve blows out a breath, heart beating too fast where he woke up frozen on the divan. He’s going to give himself a heart attack or a stroke if he’s not too careful; if he’d been this high strung or this fragile when the Nazis had him he’d have never lived through it. That’d would have been the point, maybe.
Steve’s still trying to calm himself down, arms wrapped around his chest, when Thor staggers back out towards the bed. Thor yawns and stretches, the pop of his back loud enough that even Steve can hear.

And then he stands there looking at Steve, scratching his belly, frowning. Steve hunches further into the divan, toes icy and shoulders tight. Mostly naked in the dark, Thor’s even bigger than during the day, biceps near as big around as Steve’s waist, gold hair over his chest and belly. Even if Steve were in his new body, Thor’d still be broader.

“You’re cold,” Thor says, coming to stand over Steve. Steve doesn’t say anything to that, just presses himself back further into the divan cushions. He can see the outline of Thor’s thick cock through his linen drawers, the head of it huge and obscene where it presses against the thin fabric. He’s not even half hard and he’s that thick.

Thor makes an annoyed noise when Steve stays quiet, reaching down to pull Steve up by his collar. Steve scrambles to get his knees under himself before he chokes, hands clutching at Thor’s on his collar like it’ll make a damn bit of difference. He’s drunk, Steve can smell it on him this close, heart racing. Rumlow drunk was even more unpredictable than Rumlow sober, skin-crawlingly kind one minute and vicious the next, whiplash fast.

But then the chain’s unclipped and Steve’s off his feet, hauled over Thor’s broad shoulder ass over teakettle. Steve lands in the middle of the big bed with a solid oof, the breath knocked out of him before he can scramble away. Steve rolls to his hands and knees, tangled up in the too-long gray shirt as Thor puts a knee on the bed and pulls Steve to him, broad hand on Steve’s waist.

Then Thor—pulls a wool blanket up off the end of the bed, draping it around Steve, practically swaddling him before pushing Steve down to curl around him. Steve freezes in the center of the big bed, Thor huge and hot as a steam engine behind him, curled close like Bucky would have never. Steve can feel Thor’s cock pressed against his ass, but there’s a blanket between them and Thor doesn’t move once he’s settled, big arm tree-trunk heavy over Steve. His breath’s hot against the top of Steve’s head and everything smells like beer and warm wool, overwhelming where Steve can’t get away.

Steve holds his breath, not daring to move while Thor’s awake. If he can wait until Thor’s asleep, he can slip out of the bed and try his luck with the windows. Thor’s hand curls in the middle of Steve’s chest, wrapping fingers in Steve’s loose shirt.

Chapter End Notes

omg, thank you for such nice comments last chapter! I’ve been obsessively not writing this fic for the past few months because I was worried about what the reaction would be (which, uh, given the rest of my fics is silly, but there it is). thank you all so, so much for coming along for this ridiculous ride. <3 <3 <3
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Steve wakes up with his nose pressed to Thor's chest and his half-hard dick pressed to Thor's thigh, because he's both useless and pathetic. He can't tell what time it is, chest to chest—or, face to chest—like this. Steve's leg is trapped between Thor's and Steve's arm is slung over his waist, trapped where Thor's massive arm is wrapped around Steve. Steve tries to pull away, but just ends up pulled back with one massive hand on his ass. Thor stretches against him lazily, his thick cock pressed to Steve's belly through the blanket.

Everything hurts—Steve's shoulders and neck still ache from being thrown around and sleeping fitfully with Thor's massive weight half draped over him, headache pounding behind his eyes before he even moves. The bed dips towards the center with ropes instead of springs and Steve got pulled back towards the center all night no matter how hard he tried to squirm away. He didn't mean to fall asleep, especially after sleeping all day, but between the blanket and Thor's furnace heat it was finally warm enough to feel how cold his toes had gotten. Steve's just useless and lazy this size, trapped by all his own weaknesses.

Thor wakes up gradually, rubbing small circles on Steve's back through the blanket. It's somewhere between painful and pleasant, if the lash marks Rumlow gave him for fighting back didn't still sting like hell. But it's casually affectionate like the hair petting, fond like no one else has ever been with Steve, trapping him there whether he wants it to feel good or not. If it were Bucky—

Steve tries to push away, but Thor just pulls him closer, big hand on his ass again. Thor hums as he comes fully awake, shifting so Steve's basically straddling his thigh lying chest to chest and Steve wants to die feeling himself get harder grinding against Thor's thigh. Thor pulls the blanket away so he can play with the hem of Steve's shirt, running big fingers up and down the back of Steve's thigh, goosebumped in the sudden cold air.

And then Thor—licks his fingers and presses one blunt finger to Steve's ass, making him take a sharp breath. It doesn't really hurt, and Steve's cock doesn't know any better after everything else, jumping fully to attention even as he stiffens, waiting for it to hurt.

"I do not wish to hurt you, I know it is still painful," Thor says against Steve's hair, but doesn't stop, slick and steady pressure. Steve swallows and tries to keep his breathing even, hiding his face against Thor's bare chest. He smells like sweat and spicy soap, the way Bucky—

Steve shudders, trying not to think about anything, not Bucky, not his hard cock throbbing at the slide of Thor's fingers against him, not how badly he wishes it were Bucky doing it instead—

Thor hums a smile against Steve's hair and rolls them so that Steve really is straddling him, pulling the shirt off Steve as he does so Steve's left bare naked with Thor's insistent cock pressed up against his ass. Thor gives him a sleepy, lopsided smile, kicking out of his linen drawers while he holds Steve steady by the waist. The head of his cock his wet and slick where it rubs up against Steve's ass, and Steve can feel himself blush blotchy red across his face and chest. At least held face down he didn't have to look at anyone else, didn't have to look at himself.

Thor smiles lazily, pulling Steve's hand down to wrap around Steve's cock, Thor's big hand over his. It's mortifying, somehow worse than being fucked by ten men at once, because no one else has ever put a hand on Steve's cock, much less watched him do it. He can feel his cheeks blush deeper red
and he squeezes his eyes shut, trying not to think about it as Thor plays with his ass lazily. At least if it were fast and hard like Rumlow Steve wouldn't have to think about it.

Steve's stomach flips as Thor takes his hand off Steve's cock and starts stroking himself lazily against Steve's ass, slow and inevitable. Steve's jaw tightens, waiting for it to hurt, and his cock softens in his hand by heartbeats until he can't pretend anymore, just bracing for Thor's blunt fingers to be replaced by his cock.

“You would be more lovely if you did not always scowl so,” Thor says, bringing a hand up to trace his callused thumb over Steve's bottom lip.

Steve swallows convulsively as Thor licks his palm and replaces Steve's hand with his own, working him back to hardness even as Thor strokes his own thick cock against the curve of Steve's ass. The head of his cock is huge and wet where it slides against Steve’s ass and Steve can’t not think of what it’ll be like fucking him.

But if he keeps his eyes closed, it's easy to pretend it could be Bucky, Steve clinging selfishly to the fantasy that Bucky would have ever woke up slow and lazy like this. Bucky would have never rubbed the head of his cock against the back of Steve's thigh, indolent in the gray light of the little apartment they'd shared for a year, teasing the tip of Steve's cock with the pad of his thumb. Bucky would have never had Steve straddle him like this, broad and furnace warm watching Steve blush furiously with his cock in Bucky’s hand.

It's nearly painful when Steve comes across Thor's broad chest, the first time in front of another person, and Steve wants to bury himself under the floor. Bucky would be ashamed of him, but Steve’s already a sinner so what’s it matter.

Steve's still got his eyes closed, face hot with shame, when Thor brushes sticky fingers against his lips. “Suck,” he says, and pushes Steve's lips open before he can jerk away. The taste is bitter and salty and strange, and Steve finally opens his eyes again to look mortified at his come smeared across Thor’s chest and Thor looking radiant and satisfied as he presses come-covered fingers to Steve's mouth and strokes himself faster.

Steve can’t do anything but suck, trapped where he tries to lean back but meets Thor's knees and his hard cock. Pressed back he can feel exactly how big Thor is, rubbing the slick head of his cock between the cheeks of Steve’s narrow ass as Steve swallows around his blunt fingers.

Steve can’t tell if he’s ashamed or relieved when Thor finally comes against his ass, hot and thick as Thor takes his fingers from Steve’s mouth to rake blunt fingers down Steve’s chest and inner thigh, making him shudder and jump. Thor holds him in place with a hand on his hip as he finishes with half lidded eyes, rubbing his still-hard cock through the sticky come on Steve’s ass. Steve shivers, over sensitive as Thor rubs a thumb in the hollow of his hip, trailing down to tease the soft skin of his inner thigh.

“See?” Thor says, still lazily tracing fingers down the inside of Steve’s thigh and bringing fingers up for Steve to lick his come off. Steve closes his eyes and doesn’t think about it, even though the bitter smell and hard callused pads of Thor’s fingers are almost all he can think about. “You are much prettier when you forget to scowl,” Thor says.

Steve opens his eyes to make a displeased noise at that and Thor barks a laugh, pinching one of Steve’s nipples.

“Come, you are filthy,” Thor says, swatting Steve’s ass as he rolls Steve off him, tumbled face down in the blankets. Thor disappears into the bathroom, and Steve doesn’t waste any time untangling
himself.

He scrambles off the bed ungracefully, yanking the crumpled gray shirt on. He’s still unsteady on his feet but he bolts for the balcony, because who knows what’s on the other side of the door, and—

Steve catches up at the balcony railing, skidding to a stop on the slick stone floor, hands out to stop himself from tumbling over the railing what looks like miles down.

It’s so quiet because he’s higher in the air than he’s ever been in his life, higher even than in Stark’s plane with a whole lot of nothing stretching straight down. There’s a city down there, Steve can see it, what Manhattan might look like from above if it were some gaudy gold-plated fantasy thing, and water beyond it.

Fingertips on the stone railing is all that keeps Steve from pitching straight over it with vertigo, shaky with the sheer alienness of it, the sheer wrongness of it, because there’s two—moons, planets, something—hanging low in the early morning sky, and even if the sun feels no different, it’s definitely not the sun and Steve’s stomach flips with the horrible finality of it.

Thor’s hand on his shoulder lands heavy and hard, Steve so lost in the undertow of realization that he didn’t hear Thor come up behind him. Steve startles, tries to break away, but Thor keeps him in place, giving him a long look.

“It is a very long fall,” Thor says finally, looking away from Steve to wave a hand in the air over the balcony. Except—his hand stops, the air around his hand shimmering in a grid as his hand—touches?—it, and Steve’s stomach flips again at the strangeness.

Bucky would love the pulp adventure of this horrible place, and the thought makes Steve’s chest hurt.

Thor places a hand flat on the—grid—in the air, glancing down at Steve. “Come,” Thor says, pulling Steve in from the balcony with a squeeze of his shoulder. “You may have the liberty of the suite, so long as you behave. The windows are all likewise protected.”

Protected.

Steve lets himself be bullied into the bath again, legs shaky with adrenaline and Thor huge and looming, undressing Steve like a recalcitrant child. He’s brisk and efficient scrubbing Steve and himself down, though, even half hard again as he is. He’s got a—earring in the head of his dick, two big metal beads under and at the tip of his cock, not that Steve tries to look at it.

Steve holds his breath and keeps his eyes down, cheeks hot. Thor’s not—a bad looking man, the kind of solid, dense muscle Steve would have snuck looks at home at the YMCA or the beach, but Asgard’s not home and it doesn’t feel safe regardless. And at any rate, Steve’s exhausted just from the effort of not looking at the windows and holding himself as stiffly as possible, shying from Thor’s big hands on him to scrub his hair. After, Steve watches him sideways through his eyelashes like he used to do Bucky, and—

Steve pushes that thought away, ducking under the water to rinse his hair.

Thor’s hard not to look at, though, unavoidable even in a big room. He moves easily as he pushes Steve out ahead of him, dumping a towel the size of a quilt in his arms. Steve wraps it around himself and trails after, still off balance from the balcony. Thor ignores him, like nothing Steve could do matters.

Thor tosses a dark blue tunic at him, just as big as the gray one, embroidered in gold around the
collar with horses or dogs or some kind of twisted up animal. Steve struggles into it slowly, shoulders aching, more chilled hopping from one bare foot to the other for having slept warm and had a bath. Thor gives Steve a long look up and down as he pulls on his own shirt, pausing to give Steve an unreadable look with his trousers undone and his shirt half pulled on.

Steve crosses his arms across his chest and sticks his chin out, meeting Thor’s look. His damp hair feels icy in the cool room but he’s not going to beg for a pair of socks.

Thor doesn’t take the challenge, though, finishing dressing in silence, holding out his shirt cuffs for Steve to button. It’s fiddly and strange, almost like a double set of little pearl cufflinks in a shirt of soft wool the color of bread mold, and Steve can feel his ears going hot as he fumbles with them, conscious of Thor watching the top of his head. It’s no different from helping Bucky with his shirt cuffs, even if the heavy silence is uncomfortable and unfamiliar where Steve misses Bucky’s constant stream of talk. Steve’s overly conscious of the size of his hands compared to Thor’s, twice as broad as Steve’s even if he doesn’t move while Steve buttons his cuffs.

Thor sits to pull on soft leather boots, and Steve tries not to be relieved that he doesn’t have to lace them or polish them or anything else.

And then he just—leaves. Or rather, leaves Steve standing there like a moron surprised he’s not chained back to the bed. Thor takes his cloak from the chair he’d thrown it over the night before, going out to the further rooms Steve hasn’t seen since he was dragged kicking through the first day.

Steve creeps through the rooms in his oversized child’s nightgown, conscious of Thor watching him with half an eye while going through papers at a big desk in front of even bigger windows. No wonder no one worried about anyone going out windows that size, if they’ve got that invisible grid across them too.

Thor scratches something out on the papers in front of him, writing in short, sharp little strokes before pushing that sheaf of papers away and pulling another to himself. It’s none of it in any language Steve can recognize, nor the books and scrolls spilling out of the big bookcases lining the main room. The bindings are in dark jewel tones, nonsense markings up the bindings in gold. Some of them have symbols Steve half-recognizes from Schmidt’s Ahnenerbe nonsense, but otherwise it’s unintelligible.

The door’s a massive gilded thing, like everything else here, solid wood carved in twining animal patterns and banded with thick iron hinges engraved and gilded. Steve eyes the hinges, thinking.

“It is locked to you,” Thor says with his back turned, making Steve jump. Zola and Schmidt said Asguardians could—but there’s no such thing as Ubermensch. They said Steve was one, and look how that turned out.

Thor stands slowly, tucking papers into the folds of his cloak, straightening his clothes. “Come,” he says, snapping his fingers at Steve as he walks by.

Steve scrambles after him, feeling and looking ridiculous, catching up where Thor stops by the door. “Open it,” Thor says, crossing his arms over his chest to watch.

Steve looks back and forth from him to the doorknob, looking for the trick. Thor just said it was locked. “Open it,” Thor says again.

The doorknob’s massive, a gilded iron bar twice the span of both Steve’s palms. It’s cold and nothing else when Steve puts a hand on it, half expecting a shock. He glances at Thor again, but the doorknob turns smoothly, the door swinging into the room easily, weighing nothing like it looks.
And the corridor beyond is just—empty. No guards so far as Steve can see in either direction, no
nothing. Just stone floors, carved walls, and the occasional globe light like the ones in Thor’s rooms.
Steve looks back at Thor, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“It is locked to you,” Thor says again, gesturing at it.

His stomach sinking, Steve stretches out a hand towards the open door and—the glimmer of a grid in
the air comes up around his hand like it did in the air over the balcony, staticky hot when Steve
presses his palm flat against it.

“Do not be underfoot when the steward comes in the afternoon,” Thor says, tapping Steve on the top
of the head with one finger, striding out the door like nothing’s there, leaving Steve standing there
with his hand pressed flat in the air.

Steve’s not underfoot when the steward comes, because by that time he’s been over every inch of the
rooms and found not a goddamn thing useful for getting himself out of this mess. If it’s a more
comfortable prison cell than the one Hydra kept him in, it’s still a cell.

Steve peevishly pulls a blanket off the bed to drag out onto the balcony, where he can at least tell
himself he’s doing something instead of huddling in a corner, pathetic and miserable. If he’s still
cold, he can pretend he’s trying to figure out how to get home, watching the little boats flit around
the sparkling bridge. Bucky would laugh himself sick if he knew, Steve locked up like a princess in a
tower waiting to be rescued.

It’s dark outside and light inside when Steve wakes up on the balcony, groggy with Thor’s shadow
over him. He feels drunk and weak as a kitten when Thor reaches down to pick him up, practically
swaddling Steve in the blanket to carry back to the bed. Steve tries to push out of his hold but he’s
too strong, Steve shaky and coughing when he’s settled gently into the middle of the giant bed.

Steve tries to crawl away, but Thor puts a hand on his chest like a lead weight and then it’s too hard
to fight back.

“Well, you are certainly not the warrior your Midgardian masters promised,” Thor says, smoothing
Steve’s hair back.

Steve laughs, cut short coughing with wracking, full body coughs. “That what they told you? That
I’m a—that I was a soldier?” Steve says when he gets his breath back. “Captain America’s a
character. I’m an actor, a fake.”

“A character,” Thor says, flat.

“I punched Adolf Hitler over two hundred times,” Steve says sleepily, eyes too heavy to keep open.

The next time Steve wakes up, someone makes him drink broth and a foul smelling tea, petting his
hair until he stops coughing.

The time after that, Steve wakes up alone and crawls out of bed and back to the balcony because
there’s no one there to stop him.

“You are far too contrary for your own good,” Thor says when he comes back to carry Steve back to
bed, patting his stinging hot cheek with a big hand. He makes Steve drink more of the foul tea,
propping him up in the center of the bed and rubbing circles on his back and not letting him stop drinking until the tea’s gone. It tastes like bergamot and camphor and cigarette butts, and Steve’s tongue feels clumsy and thick as he lies back.

Steve lets himself be tucked back in, and the next time he wakes up he’s chained by one wrist to the headboard with a little gold bracelet that matches the collar.

Steve’s in bed three, maybe four days, sleeping fitfully because every inch of him hurts and he wakes up sore and coughing until someone forces more tea down him. He’s practically smothered under too many blankets but freezes anyway, curled up on his side feeling sorry for himself that he can’t just rip the thin little bracelet and its chain from the headboard.

He definitely does not cry hot, frustrated tears one night when he lets Thor pull him into his lap and pet his hair, shivering and miserable and missing Bucky like a pathetic mess.

It’s mid afternoon or early evening by the time Steve comes back to himself enough to be hungry, thirsty as hell, and desperately in need of a piss. He’s curled on his side with his head in Thor’s lap, who sits against the headboard reading, carding fingers through Steve’s shaggy hair. It’s been nearly six months since he had a haircut and he feels it more than ever even if he’s back to not needing to shave, eyes gummy and mouth painfully dry as he sits up.

Thor gives him a long look, but unchains Steve’s bracelet even as he opens his mouth to ask for it, and Steve stumbles out of bed without a word. He’s in a nearly transparent linen shirt now, which feels stiff and rumpled from fever sweat.

By the time Steve pisses and washes his face with a cool cloth, he feels mostly human again, and the stone floor doesn’t feel as burning cold underfoot as it did. Thor’s ignoring him when Steve glances out the door, so he washes all over, stripping out of the sweat-stiff linen shirt and rinsing his hair in the basin. He’s still fever-weak, winded by the time he’s clean enough he can no longer smell himself, but at least he doesn’t hurt all over like he did, just the distant ache of having slept too much.

“You may dress properly,” Thor says as Steve pulls the dirty linen shirt on, Thor pointing at a neat stack of clothes folded on a little stool by the bed while Steve stands there half naked with the shirt rucked up his arms to pull on.

The stack of clothes is dark grays and blues and greens, there’s a small pair of dark shoes Steve’s size perched right on top.

Steve pulls the linen shirt on anyway before padding across the room even though Thor pays him no attention, still shy. The shoes are soft soled leather, nearly slippers, and they’d be destroyed in a minute if Steve made it outside. Probably slippery as hell if he ever had to run, too, and he tries not to wonder if that’s the point. Steve turns them over in his hands and sets them aside.

Then he holds up a—nightgown, basically, soft white cloth from collar past his knees with long sleeves, embroidered in red vines around the collar and cuffs. “That is for nighttime,” Thor says, reaching over to tap him on the top of the head with one finger.

The rest is trousers and tunics in soft grays and blues, cut the same style as Thor’s, the trousers cut slimmer than Steve’s used to and all of it embroidered delicately. There’s even a high-collared jacket with long sleeves, thigh length when Steve holds it up.

And there’s—panties. Silky blues and blacks like the girls in Bucky’s racy pinups, some of them with delicate embroidery or lace edging. Nothing like Thor’s plain linen drawers, and Steve blushes just holding a pair up, but Thor says nothing of it. Steve scowls at the neat pile of them, picking out
the plainest pair; with the high collared jacket and the rest of it, it’s not as if anyone will know besides him.

And Thor.

Steve tries not to think about it, pulling on clothes that fit for the first time since—ever, really. Even in his bigger body Army uniforms didn’t fit quite right, tight across the shoulders and loose in the waist, and Hydra wasn’t much interested in tailoring.

When Steve gets the stockings pulled up, they’re up to his thighs, and between that and the silky panties he really does look like one of Bucky’s pinup girls. Thor gives him an appraising look up and down but doesn’t otherwise move a muscle, only snapping his fingers for Steve to come when Steve’s struggling with the fiddly lacing on the fly of the trousers.

Except he doesn’t let Steve pull away once his trousers are done up, unfolding to march Steve back into the bathroom and hauling him up by the armpits to sit on the high bench with the water basin.

Not to fuck, apparently, Thor turning away to rummage in a cabinet. Steve crosses his arms over his skinny chest anyway, uncomfortably aware of the silky flimsiness of the panties.

Thor comes back with a bottle of clear liquid and—a needle.

Steve’s off the high bench before Thor can stop him, slipping and skidding across the stone floor in his stocking feet as Thor grabs after him. Steve ducks out from under his hands, catching up at the door that won’t open for him, slammed back against it as Thor spins him against it, the healed lash marks screaming pain. He’s still got the needle in his hand.

Steve freezes, heart racing as Thor wrenches his face up, big hand on Steve’s jaw. “Have I hurt you yet?” Thor demands, hand hard on Steve’s chin, but all Steve can see is the needle in the corner of his vision. “Have I?” Thor says again when Steve doesn’t answer, shaking him.

Steve squeezes his eyes shut and swallows; at least that way he doesn’t have to see the needle.

“Please don’t,” Steve says, and thank god for small mercies it comes out less shaky than he feels.

The silence stretches out thin, Steve fighting to keep his breathing even. He doesn’t know and doesn’t want to know what the needle’s for, but it’s nothing good. He didn’t have to have Rumlow put out cigarettes on the back of his thighs to know he didn’t want that either.

“You are afraid of a needle,” Thor says finally, hand still on Steve’s chin. “You are skittish as a rabbit. Have I yet hurt you?”

Steve opens his eyes, breathing mostly under control. Thor could break his nose or jaw without even trying; the waiting’s worse than the pain. Steve can handle pain. He swallows once. “No.”

“I do not wish to hurt you,” Thor says slowly, keeping Steve’s chin tipped up. “You will have your ears pierced so that all may know you are mine when you have liberty of the keep. I do not wish the Midgardian ambassador and the rest to touch you.”

Steve takes a deep breath. “Rumlow?” he says. He doesn’t say anything about the rest, trying not to jinx it. He could have his ears pierced like a girl if it meant getting out of the suite.

“And his ilk. Come, it will not hurt.”

Steve can feel his heartbeat in his throat as he lets himself be herded back to the high bench and put back up on it like a child, watching Thor lay out the needle and a set of small gold rings on a clean
cloth. Thor wipes down the needle and rings with—rubbing alcohol, from the smell of it, sharp and familiar in a way nothing else has been in this awful place. There’s too many rings to be just for earrings, seven or eight of them smaller than Steve’s thumbnail and Steve shies away despite himself.

Thor smooths a big hand down Steve’s thigh like he’s calming a dog, then he uncaps another little jar of ointment. He dips his fingers into it and takes Steve’s ears between his fingers, rubbing it into the lobe and shell of Steve’s ear. It’s slick and strange and cold, and stranger still as the skin goes numb under his fingers.

Then, while Steve’s still bracing himself for it, Thor brings the needle to one of his ears, and punches through the lobe into a little piece of cork.

Steve jerks away from the sensation of pressure, but Thor moves faster this time, letting go so that the needle doesn’t tear out of Steve’s ear. “Be still,” Thor snaps, pulling Steve’s chin back. “You only expected to be hurt.”

Steve sets his jaw; of course he did, after being jabbed and injected and inspected by Hydra for too many months. Just because this is a prettier prison doesn’t mean Thor’s not just like them.

Steve holds perfectly still, breathing shallow as Thor replaces the needle with one of the little gold rings, the pressure and pull strange. The next isn’t so bad, done quick and brisk like everything else, and Steve balks when he realizes Thor means to do three more in the shell of his right ear, but they don’t hurt any more than the first two.

He really does balk when Thor takes the salve to Steve’s nipples, rolling one between his fingers. Thor laughs at the look on Steve’s face. “Two here or one elsewhere?” Thor says, cupping Steve’s dick, and Steve nearly jumps off the bench again. “It is a joke,” Thor says, pushing Steve back. “Perhaps later.” Steve can’t tell if he’s laughing or not.

Steve doesn’t watch, turning his face away. It’s not so bad a price to pay to get out of the suite; he can take them out when he gets back to Earth. But the thought of someone putting a needle through —anywhere—is unsettling enough that he doesn’t need to see it and worry himself sick imagining what it’d look like somewhere else. The pressure and pull as the ring slides in his nipple is enough.

“Very brave,” Thor says when the second one’s done, smoothing Steve’s hair back from his face. Steve glances at him sideways, unsure of his tone. Thor says nothing else of it, though, wiping his hands on a cloth and giving him a long look up and down. Surveying his handiwork. Steve glances down at his chest; his nipples are only a little swollen, peaked and pink with the odd little gold rings.

Thor caps the jar of salve and wraps Steve’s hand around it, lifting him down. “You will be sore later. Do not worry at them,” he says sharply as Steve touches fingertips to the rings in his ear.

Steve bites his tongue, scowling at Thor’s back as he sweeps past.

Thor doesn’t say anything else as Steve finishes dressing, though, going to shuffle through papers on his desk, scratching out notes as Steve picks out a shirt. Steve glances out to see how Thor’s dressed, sifting though his stack of clothing, all of it in Steve’s size. Thor’s unhelpfully underdressed in just soft boots, trousers and an undershirt, thick arms bare and collar open.

Steve finally settles on a high collared linen undershirt and woolen shirt over it, because he’s still cold and it looks like he’s just got a sweater and coat on once he pulls the long jacket on, if he doesn’t think about or look at the rest of it. He smooths hands down the embroidered front of the jacket to make it lay straight, uncomfortably conscious of the rings making his nipples peaked and promising soreness. The jacket only clasps at the waist though, making it impossible to hide the collar at his
throat. So much for needing the earrings.

“Come here and eat,” Thor calls from the other room, sounding like Bucky’s mother. “You are even skinnier than before.”

Chapter End Notes

what do you mean this isn't a pierced-artist-hipster-college-Steve AU
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Steve sleeps wrapped up in his long embroidered nightgown and a blanket, spooned tightly all night, but Thor’s gone before first light without demanding any more of him. Steve’s left to his own devices, dozing and pacing all day and sitting at Thor’s feet all evening. The lash marks are healed up enough to only itch, Thor’s blunt fingers tracing over Steve’s scalp and shoulders to make chills chase down Steve’s back all evening. It’s a cozy, easy, deadly boring routine.

Two days is all Steve’s patience can take. He jogs after Thor, getting ready to leave in the gray morning.

“May I come with—”

“No,” Thor says.

“You said I could—”

Thor grabs Steve’s chin, cutting him off. “I did, and you shall,” Thor says slowly, but with no threat Steve can hear. It’s uncomfortable anyway, just one side of painful with his head tipped almost all the way back, Thor’s hand huge on Steve’s narrow jaw. “But not yet,” Thor says, letting him go and turning away to arrange the folds of his cloak.

Steve swallows. It’s a bad idea, but if he never presses his luck, he’ll never know how far he can press it. “When?”

Thor gives him a sideways look. “You are very willful,” Thor says, finishing with his cloak. “You may have liberty of the keep when you are recovered,” he says, tapping Steve on the top of the head, “when you are healed,” another tap, “and when you learn to be both obedient and quiet.” Two taps for emphasis. He doesn’t straight up laugh in Steve’s face, but he’s definitely smiling when he leaves.

Steve sulks, going to pout on the balcony and hating himself for having nothing to do about it but pout. A slap would almost have been better, because Steve’ll never be both obedient and quiet.

The day stretches out. It’s somehow even worse in real clothes and healed up, because he can’t just sleep and mope when he’s not coming down with a fever.

The books are maddening; he never had Bucky’s attention to sit down with novel after novel, but there’s hundreds of books, stacked up in neat little piles on tables and chair arms and spilling out of the bookcase, sheafs of papers spilling out of folios and stacks on the desk, and none of it Steve can read. He flips through a couple books peevishly anyway, annoyed with himself that he’d be grateful for even pictures or symbols to look at, but it’s just walls of what must be text, the same inscrutable little forked scratches Thor writes out at the desk.
Without a radio or street noise he feels like he’s going to chew his fingers off. At least Hydra kept him in a blank little box when they weren’t making him wish he’d never been born, so he could let his mind wander until he had to come back to himself. This is insufferable in a wholly different way, because it’s comfortable enough that Steve hates himself for it. There’s Nazis marching down Fifth Avenue and sitting in the White House, and Steve’s dressed up like a doll. At least when Hydra had him, he made more work for them when he caught them off guard and broke a nose or two.

Steve ends up running through the drills they did at Lehigh just to burn off his nervous energy, stripped down to just his trousers to do pushups and situps. The steward leaves a knife when he comes to lay out the evening meal, but Steve’d have to be more than stupid to think that’ll do him any good. Use it against Thor or anyone else and he’d just be trapped waiting for execution or worse; the best Steve’s going to do is be ready to run for it the first chance he gets.

Jumping jacks are out of the question, the nipple piercings sore and protesting even as he starts a short set of pushups. Stripped down to just his linen undershirt, they’re visible through the thin fabric, keeping Steve’s nipples hard even after he rubs the cool salve into them. He gets dressed again and tries not to think about it.

Thor’s gone well past dark, leaving Steve in the suite with no lights. He climbs up the bookcase to tap at one of the glass globes that lit up before, but it stays dark and so far as he can see there’s nothing in it. It’s all Ahnenerbe nonsense, lightbulbs tarted up to look like magic and spirit lights.

Steve picks at the food the steward left out, poking at things in the dark when his stomach gets the better of him. There’s fish that smells like vinegar and tastes like feet; coarse bread and onions; and cuts of a cold roast that tastes like wet wool and liver with a tart jam Steve doesn’t recognize. Steve steals some of the bread and meat, trying to rearrange the tray so it looks like nothing’s gone.

After, Steve leans on the broad stone railing of the balcony and wishes for one of Bucky’s acrid Lucky Strikes. The city at night looks even more like New York, like he’s at the top of the Empire building, like Bucky’ll walk out of the dark any minute.

The breeze is cool and gentle despite the height, Steve chewing on his lip watching the lights below. Bucky would have loved all of this, the fantastical nonsense, the adventure, the unreality of it all. He’d be able to charm his way out of all of this in a minute flat and find a princess to seduce besides.

Steve startles to the sound of the door thrown open, lights flaring behind him. “Steven! Come!” Thor calls from the front room.

Steve drags his feet; he hadn’t even thought Thor knew his name. Rumlow and Hydra knew, and who knows what else they said about him when they sold him off. The thought’s unsettling, making Steve’s stomach turn even though Thor’s not paying him any attention when he drags himself into the front room, ignoring him in favor of the feet-smelling fish.

“Beer,” Thor says, pointing at a closed jug across the table when he finally notices Steve standing there in the arch between rooms.

The clasp for the thing is needlessly complicated, the intricate bale needing to be pulled sideways and up when Steve finally figures it out, the thing opening with a loud pop that makes Steve jump back. It’s a dark gold when Steve pours, unsteady with a jug so heavy.

Thor drains the cup as soon as Steve hands it to him, pressing it back into Steve’s hands so he can keep eating like a starving man. “And yourself,” Thor says with his mouth full. He snaps his fingers
Steve pours himself a cup of beer and makes himself sit at Thor’s feet, same as every other night. It’s not so bad a price to pay, after everything else. Except to run a hand through his hair and tip Steve so he leans one shoulder against Thor’s leg, Thor leaves him alone for the most part if he does what he’s told. He’s already a far cry better than Rumlow, and Steve can hold his tongue for a couple hours if it means getting a chance to get out of there. Obedient and quiet, he just has to put his mind to it.

The beer’s—too sweet, and too sharp, tasting like it’s cut with brandy or some other rotgut. Steve drinks it anyway, if only for the escape from the grinding boredom if nothing else. The only other alternative is picking at vinegary feet-smelling fish or coarse bread and jam, and given the alternative Steve’d rather be drunk at the moment.

He’s halfway to it when Thor finishes his dinner with a belch, leaning back in his chair. Steve’s cup’s almost empty, giving him nowhere to hide in when he feels Thor’s attention start to shift to him.

“You already ate,” Thor says after a long minute, and Steve goes stiff. “Good,” Thor says, tapping the top of Steve’s head. “Bold and willful,” he says, standing and handing Steve his empty cup. “Another, and for yourself. You eat like a man, let’s see you drink like a man.”

Steve’s unsteady on his feet when he gets up, feeling clumsy drunk as he goes to pour another round. The jacket is tighter across the shoulders than any suit coat or uniform Steve’s ever worn, making him sit up straight when it’s clasped at the waist. He struggles out of it so he can pour the big jug more easily, and when Steve glances at Thor, he’s moved to the divan by the bookcase, contemplating the chess game and turning a piece over in his hands, back to ignoring Steve.

Steve stumbles back in his shirtsleeves, standing just within reach to hold the cup out. Thor takes it without looking at him, placing his knight right in the way of black’s trap.

“He’ll take your piece there,” Steve says before he thinks better of it.

Thor lifts it, giving Steve a flat look.

“Black?” Steve says. His hand tightens around his wooden cup, wishing he hadn’t said anything, but he’s only had three days to think about it, playing out moves in his head. “He’ll take your piece with his bishop if you take the pawn,” he says, pointing out the moves. Bucky used to fall for that sometimes, trying to brute force his way through a problem until he could see right through Steve and they’d leave the board sit for weeks trying to outthink the other.

“Where, then,” Thor says slowly, holding out the piece, “would you place it, my skittish little rabbit?”

Steve takes the piece with his arm outstretched, their fingers barely brushing. He turns it over in his hands, looking at Thor and the board through his lashes.

“Move your Queen's bishop's pawn instead. Black will think you're trying to block, and when he moves his rook you can move to take his knight.”

Thor sits back in his seat, giving Steve one of those long up and down looks, like he’s being weighed, and Steve regrets taking off the jacket even though he’s blushing hot enough to feel like he’s radiating. He’s at least still got the woolen shirt over the linen one so that his nipple piercings aren’t painfully obvious, even though Steve can feel them just standing there. “So you are not just
pretty,” Thor says finally.

Steve blushes nose to toes at that, because who’s ever called him that and meant it as anything but an insult. Standing there in his stocking feet and his shirt sleeves, Steve feels stark naked.

Thor drinks his beer, watching Steve over the rim of his cup. “What do you know of Schmidt?” he says, the conversation lurching sideways from what Steve expected.

“He’s a bully,” Steve says, off balance. “A bigot. He uses the Nazis’ bigotry to get more power for himself, does experiments on people for his super man program. He wants to be more powerful than Hitler, more powerful than God. Wants to make himself a god.”

“This is why you are afraid of needles,” Thor says, and Steve makes himself not flinch back. It’s not as if he hadn’t already given that away; knowing the why won’t make it any worse if Thor decides to use it against him. Steve lifts his jaw and makes himself look Thor in the eye.

Thor just watches him thoughtfully, drinking his beer and searching Steve for something. Steve shifts from foot to foot, sweat prickling down his back and sides despite the cool room. Hydra never bothered interrogating him for anything because he didn’t know anything.

“Come here,” Thor says suddenly, draining his cup. “Come here, come here,” he says again, snapping his fingers impatiently when Steve hesitates. “I will not bite you, not yet,” he says, catching Steve’s wrist to pull him closer when he gets within reach.

He takes Steve’s cup away, leaning forward to push Steve’s shaggy hair out of his face and put a hand on his chin. Steve holds his look, jaw tight as Thor gives him an amused look. “You are very brave for such a small rabbit,” Thor says finally, letting him go. “Undress.”

Steve shouldn’t be shocked but he is, jolted by the sudden sideways jumps. Thor sits back with his arm thrown over the back of the divan, so frank it makes Steve blush even hotter.

Better to get it over with fast, then, if Thor finally means to fuck him, even if it means he has to put on a show first. He just has to be obedient and quiet long enough to get out of the suite. Steve pulls off his wool and linen shirts before his hands can shake, taking a deep breath before he tugs the lacing of his trousers open and shoves them down to step out of.

Thor catches his wrist and pulls him close before he can push down his stockings though, making Steve stand between his spread knees so Thor can straighten the lacy tops of his stockings. The steward takes away Steve’s laundry same as Thor’s, so Steve’s already out of plain stockings and panties, down to just the embarrassingly lacy ones in just a few days.

Steve had picked out the least bad of bad options that morning, fine white stockings knit with an open vine pattern and charcoal panties tied with little bows at the hip, but now he regrets it standing there to be inspected. Thor runs big hands down Steve’s chest and thighs, pausing to thumb the rings in Steve’s nipples. Between the cool room and Thor’s frank attention, Steve’s nipples are hard already, Thor smiling when Steve shivers ticklishly under his hands.

Thor doesn’t make a move to undress himself, though, pausing to look Steve up and down with his hands on Steve’s hip, his thumbs idly hooking under the band of the panties to stroke the hollow of Steve’s hips, his fingertips tracing over the lace edging curved over Steve’s ass. It’s embarrassingly obvious when Steve’s cock starts to thicken, the thin silk hiding nothing, but Thor just keeps looking him over, the first person who’s ever thought Steve’s narrow pigeon chest and crooked shoulders worth looking at.
Thor’s not a bad looking man, blond hair trailing over his shoulders where it’s half pulled back, tunic open at the throat just enough to make Steve even more conscious of standing there with his stiffening cock straining against the thin silk while Thor sits there clothed. His hands are callused smooth, like he works with his hands when he’s not here, reading and petting Steve’s hair. Sitting down, he’s not so threatening, just close enough for Steve to feel his even breathing.

“Pretty and clever and willful,” Thor says after a while. “You are not what was promised at all.”

He lets go of Steve to lean back and press his big cup into Steve’s hand, and as Steve goes to pour from the jug again he’s intensely conscious of Thor watching him pad across the room in his stockings and panties, the warm light catching on the gold rings in his nipples. Walking, it’s even more obvious that Steve’s half hard, the head of his cock clearly visible pressed to the silk and throbbing every step he takes, silk whisper soft.

When Steve brings his cup back, Thor lifts his arm across the back of the divan and snaps his fingers; he’s never said it yet, but he only allows Steve on the divan to lie down with his head in Thor’s lap.

If it’s familiar, it’s not comfortable, especially this time, Steve waiting rigidly to be held down or have his throat fucked, especially now that he’s more vulnerable than ever. But Thor lets him settle on his side with his knees drawn up, same as always, petting Steve’s hair and ignoring him to pick up a book from the neat stack beside the divan.

Steve holds his breath, waiting. Thor scratches blunt nails over Steve’s scalp and down his neck, tracing under the thin collar, running his fingers lightly over the four rings in Steve’s ear. Steve can hear him turn a page, the book balanced against the divan arm.

If being left alone all day was one kind of torture, this is a whole different kind because Steve both wants to squirm and hold absolutely still, a wet spot soaking through the dark silk of the panties as Thor traces fingers down Steve’s throat and chest. He draws idle circles around Steve’s hard nipple, thumbing it occasionally, making Steve’s cock jolt every time.

“Be still,” Thor snaps once, when he pinches Steve’s nipple and makes him jump, and gives Steve a swat on the ass for good measure. It’s not a real slap, it barely stings, but Steve can feel it anyway, hot on his skin in the cool room.

Can feel it even more when Thor smooths a big hand down Steve’s side and over his ass, pausing to rub the slap mark before running a hand down Steve’s thigh and the lacy tops of the stockings. Thor’s fingers dip under the lace edge of the panties again even as he turns the page of his book, and Steve almost wishes Thor’d get it over with and just fuck him so it could hurt, instead of this endless, humiliating teasing.

Steve’s fully, painfully hard and Thor knows it, Steve shivering when Thor traces the tip of one big finger down the line of Steve’s cock and back up, slow even though he’s got Steve’s heart racing. It takes all of Steve’s effort to stay still, practically vibrating as his breath goes shallow. It’s just enough pressure to make his cock leak and the muscles of his thighs twitch but not enough to be any relief, and all Steve wants is to be obedient enough to get out of the suite.

Then Thor turns another page and goes back to petting Steve’s hair, like this is normal, like Steve’s not hot all over and half out of his mind.

The quiet stretches out, broken every few minutes when Thor turns a page, full attention on the book. Steve feels like he’s going to burst into fire.

“When are you going to fuck me?” Steve says finally, voice rougher than he’d like.
Thor makes a noncommittal noise, still stroking Steve’s hair. “When I am not so tired. Go to sleep.”
Blithe, like Steve’s supposed to sleep almost ready to come in his panties.

Steve staggers to bed later when Thor lets him, still painfully hard when Thor curls around him and presses his cock to Steve’s ass, dropping promptly to sleep and leaving Steve with the monumental unfairness of throbbing harder with every tiny movement.

Somewhere in the middle of the night, when he’s sure Thor’s dead asleep, Steve squirms just far enough away to get a hand around his cock, intending to get out of the damp panties and take care of it in the other room. He comes even before he can get the panties off, cock jerking against the thin fabric as Steve goes nearly blind with relief, whole body trying to curl in when Thor stirs in his sleep just enough to pull Steve back.

Steve tries to push away but he’s limp as a dishrag, Thor settling so that Steve’s rolled over on his belly with Thor’s weight draped half over him. And then Steve’s stuck, over sensitive cock trapped between his belly and the wet fabric of the ruined panties as Thor settles back into a deep sleep.

If he notices in the morning, he doesn’t say anything about it, even though it’s painfully obvious when Steve rolls out of bed with hot cheeks to go wash.

Then more long days of trying not to crawl up the walls. Steve knows their routine as well as his rosary. Thor’s gone before dawn and back after dark, eating like he hasn’t seen food all day and ignoring Steve even as Thor has him lie half naked and squirming in his lap all evening. If Steve wasn’t half-blind already, he’ll surely get the rest of the way there with the number of times he’s had to bring himself off in the middle of the night or else lie there painfully hard and fully awake all night.

Thor has to know what he’s doing, but he pays Steve no mind, attention on whatever has him working mornings scratching out notes, scribbling over the sheafs of paper the steward brings to fan across his desk, crumpling up drifts of them with a disgusted noise to throw across the room. They’re gone by evening, swept away by the steward around afternoon when he brings the late meal. But in the mean time, they just lay scattered around the suite, mocking Steve even though he can’t understand a thing on them.

Steve knows it’s a bad idea even as he picks one out that looks like it has a blank side, smoothing it open against the cool stone floor. It’s a bad idea, but Steve’s bored out of his goddamn mind, and he can crumple it back up before he gets caught at it.

When the paper’s as smooth as it’s going to get, Steve stands in front of the desk, licking his lips and wiping his sweaty palms on his trousers. The pen’s right there; it’s not as if he’s rummaging through anything to get it, and not like he’d understand anything he saw anyway even if he did.

Steve grabs the pen before he can think better of it, snatching it off the desk like someone’s watching. And maybe there is; how would he even know.

Trying not to think about it, he retreats to a far corner with his stolen treasure and crouches over it like a goblin in one of Bucky’s novels. Steve scratches something out fast, giddy and wild having a pen in his hands for the first time in—months, nearly a year now, since Hydra got him. The paper’s beautiful and heavy even crumpled as it is, the pen smooth and the ink dark. It’s better quality than anything Steve’d been able to afford at home, and for the first time he appreciates the ridiculous gilded cage he’s gotten himself trapped in.
The lines of Bucky’s face coalesce, because what else has Steve got graven on his heart and behind his eyelids like a wicked sinner. Bucky with his mouth quirked like that night he shipped out, head tipped like he’s going to say something, and Steve—

Steve hears a noise in the corridor and scrambles, crushing the paper in his hands. The door knob turns and Steve kicks the crumpled ball of paper away from himself, pushing back against the bookcase so that the pen’s hidden when the steward steps into the room.

The steward pays him as little mind as ever, sweeping the dusty corners, picking up Thor’s dirty laundry and laying out the afternoon meal while Steve sits nailed to the floor trying not to stare at the quirk of Bucky’s smile betraying him from a crumpled fold of paper.

The steward sweeps it away with the other crumpled notes scattered around Thor’s desk, and Steve finally lets himself breathe when the door latches shut behind him.

Another long evening, another long stretch of hours trying to be obedient and quiet while slowly going out of his mind. Even in just black stockings and panties Steve’s prickled all over with fine sweat, Thor petting him idly as he reads.

“What are you reading?” Steve says finally.

“An accounting of the harvests of Vanaheim,” Thor says, thumbing Steve’s nipple absently.

“Are they . . . good?” Steve says. Anything to keep his mind off how hard his cock is for the fourth night in a row.

“Nothing you need concern yourself with,” Thor says, tapping Steve's temple twice before going back to stroking his hair.

Steve chews the inside of his cheek. “Where's Vanaheim?” he says after a long minute.

“If your mouth must be occupied, I shall find something to occupy it,” Thor says. He traces Steve's bottom lip with the rough callused pad of his thumb, dragging Steve’s lower lip open.

Steve opens his mouth and he can feel Thor’s attention snap to him for the first time in days, Thor pushing his fingers in Steve’s mouth to suck. His fingers are thick and callused and Steve’s heartbeat picks up, because if this is the kind of obedient he needs to be to get out, he thinks he can do it. He sucks around Thor’s fingers clumsily, unsure what he’s supposed to be doing as Thor drags the pads of his fingers across Steve’s tongue and teeth.

He makes the mistake of biting down, just a little, just trying to swallow, and Thor’s fingers are gone from his mouth. Thor gives him one sharp, stinging slap across the ass for it, his fingers still wet with Steve’s spit, and Steve comes with a broken moan trying to hide his face against Thor’s thigh, his cock jerking untouched in his taut silk panties.

Thor twists his fingers in Steve’s hair and pulls, just enough to keep him from hiding his face as he shudders through it, eyes squeezed shut. When Steve’s left gasping and wishing he could sink through the divan, Thor pushes his fingers into Steve’s mouth again.

“You are a wicked distraction,” Thor says, rubbing Steve’s nipple with spit-slick fingers and going back to reading his harvest reports. Steve nods limply against his thigh, shivering and over sensitive.

More long days and long evenings, Steve memorizing the steward’s schedule so he can sketch
uninterrupted, and more importantly, uncaught, for longer. Steve tells himself he’s being productive, leaning out the windows to draw the city from every angle as though it would be anything alike once he makes it out of the keep and tries to find his way home.

Thor’s gone from sunup to dark and the steward only comes for a few minutes in late afternoon, leaving Steve most of the day to sketch before the papers are swept away. He thinks about hiding them somewhere, in the bookcase, or under the bed, or in the shallow drawer of the wardrobe where Steve’s allowed to keep his clothes, but the risk’s too much. If he had needle and thread he’d try to put a pocket in the lining of his jacket for a little picture of Bucky and Peggy, but he doesn’t and the thought of them seeing this extended humiliation is too much anyway.

He tries not to think about them, that the only real reason he’d need to sketch the city is to show Bucky when he gets home. Peggy, God willing, is still fighting Nazis, and if Steve ever sees her he’ll hopefully never have to think of Asgard again.

The city is beautiful, less disorienting as Steve looks at it longer, breaking it into manageable geometric shapes, the same as anything. He kneels in the chair at Thor’s oversized desk, dipping his fingers into the dark, bitter tea Thor drinks every morning, using it to lay down a wash for the reflection of the long bridge stretching away from the city. He can’t get the sparkle of the water, more or less trying to paint with the tips of his fingers, but he sketches the little boats in loosely, the edges loose against the wash.

The city itself is all layered angles interspersed with greenery, and Steve uses the edge of a black stocking to dab in the shapes of trees. Not his best work, but a few strokes of the pen give them definition, and it’s good enough for something that will be swept away in a few hours.

Steve’s leaning over the desk, stocking in one hand and pen in the other, when the door open. He stiffens, frozen where he’s caught.

Thor walks up behind him slowly, footsteps heavy on the stone floor. Steve braces to be knocked out of the chair or jerked up by his collar, practically vibrating with the effort of holding himself still. If he’d had any sense, he’d at least have done this somewhere he wouldn’t be seen as soon as the door opened.

Steve flinches hard when Thor’s hand lands heavy on his shoulder, heart hammering in his throat. If it were a fair fight, he’d still get knocked down but at least he’d be on his feet to start. If it were a fair fight, he wouldn’t have a goddamn collar around his neck, warm and unavoidable where he can feel his pulse beat against it thready fast.

Thor picks up the sheet of paper from under Steve’s hands, slow with his other hand on Steve’s shoulder. Steve can practically hear him look it over, Thor tilting the paper in the light as Steve holds his breath. Rumlow nearly stripped the skin from his back when he caught Steve glancing at Zola’s keys left lying on a table; hot chills chase over Steve’s scalp and back radiating out from where Thor’s hand lays on his shoulder like a brand.

“This is very good,” Thor says, laying the paper back down on the desk in front of Steve. “Bring it to me when it is finished.”

Then he leaves Steve there, going to—change clothes and find his book, maybe, Steve can’t tell from what little he can hear over the sudden rush of blood in his ears. Steve puts the pen down carefully, his back stiff and absolutely straight where he can hear Thor moving around behind him, settling on the divan by the bookcase.

Steve puts his hands flat on the desk, blowing out one slow breath and then another, until he can pick
up the pen again without embarrassing himself.

Thor looks the piece over silently when it’s finished, and Steve would rather be inspected in stockings and panties again because he would feel less naked. There’s no reason for his heart to kick in his chest like it does, but the silence is almost unbearable. In truth, the sketch could have been done hours ago but Steve dawdled, over working it and trying to avoid this.

“Very good,” Thor pronounces it finally, standing. Steve holds his ground, not sure what he’s bracing himself for, but braced anyway.

Thor brushes past him, going to tack the sketch up on the wall near his wardrobe. Steve watches, not sure what’s going on.

“You may ask the steward for any paints you would like,” Thor says, going back to settle on the divan with his book again. “A table will be put near the balcony for you.”

Steve stares at him, totally off his balance.

Chapter End Notes

yes yes nipple piercings are supposed to heal for much longer but who wants to wait nine months for the porn
Chapter 5

Steve doesn’t ask the steward for anything at all, because the next afternoon he comes in with a set of brushes, paints, inks, pastels and pencils bundled under one arm and a neat sheaf of papers and three sketchbooks under the other. Steve stands there awkwardly as the steward lays it all out on the little table set in the alcove, nodding mutely when he asks if it’s satisfactory.

Steve dances around the little table the rest of the afternoon; it’s his size with a backless stool and both low enough Steve can sit without having to push himself up like a child, like all the other furniture in the place. The porcelain palette alone is nicer than anything he ever bought for himself, the papers all different textures but fine and thick. The paints, when Steve finally works up the courage to open them, are rich and luminous like everything else.

It’s not fair. Steve never asked for it and he can’t help feeling like it’s a trick, to make him happy to bargain away his dignity or for something to hang over him, to take away if he doesn’t do as he’s told. It’s a claustrophobic, smothering gift, all the worse because the thought of looking ungrateful and what Thor might do to him for it makes his stomach clench up.

But there is a small, fine fountain pen sized for his hands, and it’s plain enough Steve can pretend to himself that he didn’t trade anything away for it.

In the end, he dashes off a quick, messy ink sketch of the view from the balcony on the front page of one of the sketchbooks and leaves it laying open where he’s sure Thor will see it.

In the end, it doesn’t matter, because that evening Thor walks past it without so much as a glance.

“Your move,” Thor says the next night, frowning at a letter and standing over the chess board. He moved one of black’s pieces right where Steve said black would move, pushing the center.

Steve goes to stand at the board even as Thor moves away, tossing the letter down on his desk and starting another one. “Who am I playing?” Steve says, taking black’s knight in the trap he set up.

Thor glances over his shoulder at Steve placing the piece by the side of the board, then turns back to his letter. “My brother,” Thor says, writing with his back to Steve. “I have not won against him in a very long time.”

Steve fills up the sketchbooks with views out the windows, obsessively drawing birds and trees and boats and the bridge and the peaks of buildings. He doesn’t draw the low—planets, moons, whatever they are—or the seasick disappearing edge of the horizon that isn’t quite there past the bridge, fading out into the inky black or blue or gray of the sky no matter what time of day it is.

Steve is so well recovered he could climb the walls, but Thor still doesn’t let him out of the suite. He’s so bored out of his mind he’s practically glad to see Thor in the evenings, if only for the distraction of being made to fetch and clear away supper dishes.

Less glad when Thor brings the others with him, the woman and three men from before tumbling into the room like school children as Thor snaps fingers at Steve to fetch cups and pour beer. Steve
feels like a pigeon among horses, small and drab and trying not to be stepped on as he dodges around them, anxious despite himself to get back close to Thor and hating himself for it.

“So he lives after all,” the blond man says, sounding pleased as he and Thor settle at one of the small tables. Thor sets out a pack of cards, the other man giving Steve a long look up and down and Steve feels naked for all that he’s dressed head to toe. It’s the same look Rumlow gave him, making Steve’s stomach go cold even as he feels a blush creep up from his collar.

Thor half smiles, snapping his fingers and pointing for Steve to sit on the floor at his feet. Steve goes, but only for the marginal protection of Thor against the other men. If he’s lucky, Thor won’t want to share.

“I said, he is stronger than he looks,” Thor says placidly, handing Steve a wooden cup of beer without looking at him. Compared to the ones on the table, it’s practically child sized. “My very brave little rabbit,” Thor says, combing fingers through Steve’s hair before going back to his cards.

Steve keeps his eyes on his cup to avoid the appraising look he knows he’s getting from the blond man. Even ignored by Thor, Steve feels like a bug on a card, put out for examination with his wings out.

The conversation flows over his head, people and places Steve doesn’t recognize and doesn’t dare ask about. Gossip, from what Steve can tell, and vulgar from the way they laugh about it. Steve watches them sideways through his lashes, hating himself when he realizes how hard he’s leaning into Thor’s leg, like he’s trying to hide behind skirts.

The woman’s magnetic, the same kind of intense, cool beautiful as Peg and Steve hopes she’s alright. If anyone’s still kicking, it’s Peggy, with her Resistance experience and her daring. Probably still blowing up bridges with her lipstick perfect.

Steve hopes so, anyway.

“Pour my lady Sif and the rest more beer,” Thor says, nudging Steve in the thigh with his boot.

Steve unfolds stiffly, back and knees protesting. He’s not as cold as he was with the fever, but the floor is still cool under the furs and rugs scattered around, making his joints creak as he hauls the jug around the room.

Sif gives him a cool look up and down as he pours her beer, making him falter and blush. She doesn’t say anything about the spill, though, and the two men on the divan with her don’t notice, going on with their argument like Steve’s not there. He ducks a wild gesture to get their cups, grateful for the inattention even as he can feel the third man’s attention on his back.

Steve keeps his eyes down when he goes to pour Thor’s beer, ears pink. Thor runs a hand up the back of Steve’s thigh and down, resting fingertips on the back of his knee while going on with his card game. It’s an excuse to move no closer to the other man, but it means Steve has to reach across the table to get his cup.

He gets caught glancing between the man and the cup, the man tilting his head to look Steve in the eye before passing him the cup with a bemused look.

“Fandral,” Thor says in a warning tone as Steve pours.

“What?” Fandral says, picture of innocence even as he frankly appraises Steve, taking the cup back with a deliberate brush of fingers over Steve’s. “I said nothing.”
“You covet,” Thor says, but he doesn’t sound angry. He plays a set of cards; Steve doesn’t see what and doesn’t particularly care, hiding back in his spot at Thor’s knee, wishing he could disappear into the floor.

“I merely appreciate my friend’s good taste and hospitality,” Fandral says archly. He gives Steve a wink over the rim of his cup.

“You will appreciate me into yet another foolish bet, the way you appreciated away my favorite mare,” Thor says. He plays with Steve’s hair idly, tracing fingers over the rings in his ear and along the line of his collar, warm and rough.

“And the sweet thing has been far happier for it, you said so yourself,” Fandral laughs. “I cannot help when your toys like me better than you, Thor.”

Thor snorts a laugh at that. Steve scowls at the floor, leaning harder into Thor’s leg, but the conversation moves on.

If it’s a relief to have any respite from the interminable boredom of being left alone all day and petted quietly all evening, sitting at Thor’s feet to fetch and be put on display isn’t any better. Steve drifts, jerking awake with an anxious start when Thor raps the top of his head or he can feel eyes on him.

Except once when Steve blinks awake, neck stiff where he’s been leaning against Thor’s knee, the two men on the divan are kissing, right there in front of everyone. Thor and Fandral just keep on with their game as though they don’t notice, bickering over a horse race, and the lady Sif leans into the two men kissing, scratching nails down the dark haired one’s back and murmuring something in his ear.

Steve stares. He can’t not. It’s rude but he stares anyway, because—they’re right there, like no one gives a damn. Not as though Steve didn’t know that men could—kiss, but—

Suddenly conscious of where he is, Steve can feel Fandral watching him, and despite himself glances back. Steve drops his look as soon as they make eye contact, panicked and hating himself for the sudden rush of adrenaline, like he’s just realized he’s walked into a fight.

Thor throws down the last of his cards with huff, slumping back in his chair. “You would appreciate me right out of the throne, Fandral,” Thor says, taking a long drink of his beer and pulling Steve against him.

“I would not, my liege, because I would not appreciate it as well as I appreciate the gifts of the office,” Fandral says with a smile, and Steve’s ears burn. “You and your brother are more suited for the burdens of the throne. I merely enjoy its trappings.” The fabric of Thor’s trousers is rough but Steve rests his cheek against his knee anyway, leaning into Thor’s hand in his hair more than he would otherwise. If Steve had been smart, he’d have realized this was a possibility and worked harder to make Thor want to keep him to himself. Bad as Thor is, Steve knows how bad he is and there’s only one of him.

Thor grunts in answer, short and sardonic as he drums his fingers on the table. Steve can feel Thor frowning down at him and keeps his head down. The whole conversation is dangerous, their attention is dangerous. Steve can practically feel Rumlow in the room with them, looking over Steve’s shoulder.

“What does your master Schmidt want?” Thor asks suddenly, tugging Steve’s hair so he has to look up at him.
“He’s not my master,” Steve says churlishly. Fandral laughs at that, giving Steve a sideways smile even as Thor raps Steve on the top of the head with his knuckle.

“What game does Schmidt play?” Thor demands. “What does he want from Asgard?”

Steve licks his lips, considering. “He wants magic, weapons,” Steve says, an idea taking shape, how he can do something with the dangerous attention, how he can do his part even trapped and dressed up like a doll. “He’ll try to bargain for what he wants and steal it if he can’t.”

“The tesseract,” Fandral says, glancing at Thor with a worried look.

Thor waves him quiet. “And if he cannot steal?” Thor says to Steve.

Steve pushes forward and doesn’t even think it’s a lie, even if he doesn’t know for certain it’s true. “He’ll bomb and invade if he thinks he’ll win, when he thinks the super man program and the bomb program is strong enough.” After all, no one thought the Nazis would bomb China and Russia both until they did. Why not Asgard too?

“As though Midgardians could ever cross the bridge on their own,” one of the men on the divan scoffs. Sif and the other one watch Steve now too, the whole room focused on Steve, and it’s too much attention after Rumlow’s men.

Steve swallows, glancing back at Thor, who watches him intently. “There’s a rocket program. Schmidt and Zola don’t have to cross the bridge, they just have to wait for it to open and then destroy the gate,” Steve says, repeating half-understood Ahnenerbe nonsense spoken over his head. “They think if they can send through a bomb big enough, an atom bomb like the one they dropped on Detroit, it’ll keep the bridge open for their super soldiers to get through.”

Thor sits back in his chair, the silence in the room heavy as the rest look at each other.

Then he dismisses Steve with a snap of his fingers, sending him to the darkened bedroom while the others talk in hushed tones. Steve sits in the dark, straining to hear, but he can’t catch most of it.

Steve fills up the sketchbooks with still lifes of junk left around the suite, drawing Thor’s boots, a stack of books, the chess set, a bowl of fruit from every angle. He does not draw the chain still coiled neatly under the bed, or the heavy, thick hinges of the door, or the divan where Thor pets his hair every night.

The chess set is near the only thing that changes in the sprawling set of rooms except for dinner and dirty laundry, black sending letters with his moves every few days and Thor watching Steve move a white piece in skeptical silence. Steve makes himself crazy over thinking the moves, trying to guess like he used to with Bucky. Black plays slippery, all feints and pushing the center, but Steve thinks he can checkmate, if he doesn’t get drawn into a trap himself.

Steve’s curled on the divan, drawing the chess set for the ninth time, when Thor throws the door open wide, a thunderous look on his face as he slams it behind him. Steve scrambles, moving before Thor flips a little table near the door, smashing it against the wall as Steve all but falls off the divan trying to get away, bruising his elbow and tailbone where he lands hard.

The fine little fountain pen goes flying, ink spattering as it clatters on the stone. Thor stalks across the room and Steve pushes himself into the corner between wall and bookcase, heart hammering.

Thor brushes right past him, though. He nearly steps on Steve’s pen, paying it and Steve no attention.
as he goes to the long windows, leaning on the stone. Steve can see just enough of his face in profile
to know that he doesn’t dare move, breathing shallow and trying to pretend he’s invisible. Just within
reach, the fountain pen leaks, brown ink puddling on stone.

“If Schmidt sought to steal something,” Thor says finally, “how would he go about it?”

“He’d—“ Steve starts. The ink soaks into the knees of his trousers, sure to stain as it spreads over the
stone. “He’d make it serve more than one purpose. Test your reaction, test his Ubermensch, make it
look like his enemies did it if he were caught at it. Set up a trap to make you do something, the way
your brother plays chess.”

Thor gives Steve a sharp look, making him flinch back against the bookcase. One of these days,
Steve’s going to say something he regrets.

“Tell me about Schmidt’s Ubermensch,” Thor says, turning to face Steve, but he stays where he is.

Steve fills up the sketchbooks with pictures of himself, his hands, his feet, himself sitting in front of
the big mirror. In brown ink, mostly, because he still can’t stand to touch the rich paints which go
unused in their neat little glass jars. He doesn’t draw himself in his other body or himself in his Army
uniform, focusing instead on the minute detail of the strangeness he finds himself wrapped up in
now.

Steve’s first trip out of the suite is just down the corridor, jogging after Thor to an airy, quiet
courtyard. Steve gawps like a hick anyway, stumbling over himself staring at the high, bright walls,
darkened arches leading off elsewhere. It feels less momentous than it should because the courtyard
feels like an extension of the suite. There’s nothing between it and the suite but a short, empty
corridor, wide enough to drive four cars down and not a sign of life except for closed doors and the
same three men who tumble into the courtyard to meet them and wrestle Thor.

As a break in routine goes, it’s not much of one. The days stretch out, Steve dragged along to fetch
beer and pick up shed clothing when they wrestle in the sandy courtyard every few days.

Steve brings his sketchbook and pen to the courtyard when he realizes that Thor doesn’t give a damn
what he does so long as he comes when called, and uses it to commit to memory the archways
leading away from the round courtyard. Half the courtyard is bare wall, half a covered portico, all
warm gold stone like the rest of the place, radiating so much heat that Steve learns to leave off his
stockings and woolen shirt if he knows they’ll be spending the afternoon there.

Hogun and Volstagg are the kissing ones, Fandral the dangerous one. The lady Sif joins them
sometimes, surprising the hell out of Steve when she easily throws Thor and Volstagg both to the
ground one after another, and he misses Peggy more than ever. They come from different directions
of the portico every time, all the archways looking the same to Steve, never close enough to tell
where they go.

They’re none of them bad looking men, wrestling barefoot and shirtless in the sun while Steve sits
with his back to the wall in the shade, having learned his lesson from his first quick sunburn. Steve
chews his lip and draws quick little figure studies; Thor’s beautiful scuffed and sweating, hair wild,
even Steve can admit that, but it still feels too dangerous to draw any of them in any detail, not the
men and definitely not Sif, who Steve can feel looking him over every now and then. Not as often,
or the same appraising way Fandral looks him over, but still.

The saving grace is that they ignore him like furniture otherwise, laughing and scuffling with each
other until Thor calls for beer or water. Clasp of hands, a scuffle of sand as they toss one another, and noisy arguing over who plays the winner. Thor loses as often as he wins, and he rests his hands on his hips the same as Bucky used to after a match, huffing and radiant.

“Steven! Come!” Thor calls, and Steve sets the sketchbook aside to get the jug. As jobs go, it’s not a bad one, even if the jug is heavy and brings him far too close to Fandral, who hasn’t moved to touch him yet. “Let us see how well the warriors of Midgard can fight,” Thor says, and Steve stumbles to a stop.

Thor, Fandral, Hogun and Volstagg watch him expectantly, laughing to themselves. Steve recognizes that laugh. He sets down the jug carefully, but there’s nowhere to bolt to.

“Come, come, we grow old waiting,” Thor says, and underneath it Steve can hear the threat. He drags his feet, as though dawdling the few feet between himself and certain humiliation will save him. “You eat like a man and scheme like a weasel, let us see how you fight. Undress and face me.”

“You’re being cruel,” the lady Sif says, arms crossed over her chest as Steve hesitates with his hands on the clasp of his jacket.

The men scoff and Thor laughs. “My beautiful betrothed, my lady wife to be—“

“Do not flatter,” Sif snaps at him, Steve looking between them, even more wary of her attention now.

“You are too tender hearted,” Thor says. “I will not hurt him.”

“It’s cruel,” she repeats, but doesn’t otherwise intervene. It almost stings worse, compounding the others sniggering that she’s so certain he’ll be humiliated but not bothering to stop it.

Steve carefully folds his jacket and shirt, laying them on the sun warm stone to delay the inevitable. His ears ring by the time he steps out of his shoes, intensely conscious of the thin collar and bracelets at his wrists, marking him out even more than his pale skin and narrow chest.

The sand of the courtyard shifts underfoot when Steve finally makes himself step out on it, warm and coarse. Thor claps him on the back with a smile, sweat stinging under his hands already. Steve’s stomach feels like it’s trying to crawl out his throat as Thor takes his hand and positions them, crouched comically to bring himself down to Steve’s level.

He pulls Steve off balance almost immediately, tumbling him ass over teakettle onto the hot sand as the others laugh. Except Sif, who looks away disgusted.

“Best two out of three,” Thor says, standing over him with a smile and his hand outstretched as Steve pushes himself up on an elbow. He’s charming as Bucky when he wants to be, down to the crooked, self-deprecating smile.

Steve staggers to his feet without Thor’s help, Fandral and Volstagg laughing at Thor’s mock offense as Steve dusts himself off.

“Perhaps I will let you win this one,” Thor says as they take hands again in the center of the courtyard.

Steve sets his jaw; he can feel the bright blush creeping down his chest and back, cheeks hot. The engraved bracelet on his wrist is almost blinding bright in the sun, making Steve’s wrist look even more tiny and delicate compared to Thor’s.
Thor moves to pull him off balances again, but this time Steve’s ready, using the momentum to spin out of his reach. The others laugh as Thor grabs at nothing, Steve dancing back on his toes. He might never have a chance to win but that doesn’t mean he has to let himself be humiliated.

Thor circles him like a mastiff, stalking Steve slowly as Steve dances back from his reach, trying to keep himself from being cornered. Thor feints at him and laughs as Steve nearly trips over himself trying to get away, only to stumble as Thor feints the other way. There’s no winning and Thor knows it.

Steve knew how to do this, once, for the few weeks at Lehigh when they thought he was going to be a real soldier and Peggy taught him how to fight hand to hand. It’s all mixed up with Bucky’s boxing lessons before that, though, reactions and reflexes from another body and a lifetime ago, making him clumsy and awkward as he scrambles to stay out of reach. He was never any good at boxing anyway.

Then Thor rushes him and Steve’s mind blanks, acting on reflex as he tucks his shoulder into the center of Thor’s mass, ducking under his reach to roll Thor over his shoulder like Peggy showed him.

Thor goes down flat on his back, a loud *oof* as he lands hard and the air goes out of him.

There’s a surprised silence, Steve rooted to the spot until Thor pushes himself up on his elbows and the others burst out laughing.

“I told you, the rabbit is stronger than he looks,” Thor laughs over his shoulder at them. He turns back to Steve, holding his hand out to be helped up even as Steve’s heart hammers. “Come, surely even Midgardians have manners,” he says with an easy smile.

Steve goes, back stiff as he drags his feet. Thor’s hand in big and warm, wrapping Steve’s almost completely.

Steve tucks into it as Thor jerks him off his feet again, rolling his weight and bringing his knees up as Thor tries to pin him, using the momentum to plant his feet in the middle of Thor’s chest and push his weight off. They go rolling across the sand, Thor trying to use his weight and reach to get Steve pinned on the sand.

Steve slithers out of his grip, bouncing to his feet and dancing away as Thor rights himself. Thor rounds on him and this time there’s no measured stalking, no time to think as Thor rounds on him with full force.

Steve ducks under one swing, not daring to block. There’s nothing he can do to counter unless he wants broken bones, Thor not bothering to pull his punches this time. All that’s left for Steve is to try to dance in and out of reach, ducking without thinking about it so he can’t trip himself up.

Except that Steve’s not fast enough to out run him forever. Thor tries to kick Steve’s feet out from under him, sweeping Steve into him because it’s all over if Steve gets within his reach.

Except Steve’s done this before, in a bigger body, a lifetime ago. He uses the momentum to jump, swinging wildly to push himself up and away, spinning backwards.

Steve lands on his hands and rolls, bouncing to his feet just in time to see Thor bring a hand up to his bloody face and stagger backwards, sitting heavily.

The silence in the courtyard is thick and palpable, loud enough to drown out even the sudden hammering of Steve’s heart in his ears. He stumbles back, first one step and then two, trying to put as
much distance between himself and Thor as possible, as if it makes any difference.

Steve trips, sending himself sprawling in the shadowed far corner of the courtyard, pushing himself into it as small as possible. Thor watches him blankly, like he still hasn’t realized it was Steve that did it.

“You said best two out of three,” Sif says, watching with her arms crossed as Fandral hands Thor a handkerchief.

“I did,” Thor says slowly, dabbing at the blood. At distance, Steve can’t tell if it’s his nose or his mouth that’s bleeding, but there’s enough of it that even Steve can see it dripping down onto his bare chest. Steve breathes shallowly, trying to disappear into the wall. “Steven, come,” Thor says finally. “Come,” he snaps again, when Steve hesitates.

Steve doesn’t think the shaking in his hands is visible as he stands, but he can feel it every step of the way, back ramrod straight and chin up. He’s never been hit by a man Thor’s size before, but Rumlow was nowhere near Thor’s size and twice as creative, and Steve lived through that.

Steve tries not to think about that he wouldn’t have lived through Rumlow this size, because it doesn’t bear thinking about it.

Thor unfolds himself when Steve stops just out of arm’s reach, standing slowly while the others watch. Steve looks him in the eye, suddenly cold in Thor’s shadow.

“A good fight and fairly won,” Thor says, clapping Steve on the shoulder with a smile. “You are a very entertaining disappointment.”

Steve takes a shuddery breath, for what feels like the first time since Thor dragged him into this. Thor gives Steve a gentle shake and releases him, sending him to gather up their things with a pat on the ass.

The others have their backs turned as Steve gathers up cups and discarded shirts, relieved for once for the familiarity of it, and for the chance to peer down the corridors leading elsewhere. There’s a set of stairs down a far corridor, leading down if Steve squints at it.

He’s distracted, then, when he reaches for his sketchbook one handed, looking elsewhere until he tries to pick it up, and turns to find an unfamiliar man holding it down with the toe of his boot.

Steve stares, unwilling to abandon the sketchbook but also unwilling to crouch there in front of an unfamiliar Asgardian. The man gives him a cool look up and down, neat as a Nazi in his dark coat despite the heat.

He finally looks away from Steve when Thor notices them, and Steve takes the chance to snatch his sketchbook and back away.

“So this is the toy you’ve been distracted with, brother?” the man says to Thor, cool.

Thor comes up behind Steve, clapping a hand on his shoulder to move him out of the way. “Indeed. Welcome home, Loki,” Thor says, embracing him bare chested. “Come, we have much to discuss,” he says when they pull apart.

Thor dumps his dirty shirt in Steve’s arms as the others disperse, leaving Steve to jog after Thor and Loki back to the suite. When they arrive, Loki takes one look at the chessboard and moves a black piece, taking the white pawn Steve had set up to start his check mate.
After Thor changes shirts and Steve pours drinks for the two of them, Steve’s dismissed to the darkened bedroom to try to eavesdrop. All he catches is Schmidt, doodling as he tries to play out the check mate in his head.

Steve does not draw Peggy, or Brooklyn, or Stark, or Phillips, or any of the pretty USO girls. He doesn’t draw his mother, or the Barneses left at home, or Arnie or Roy or any of the rest of their art school class. He draws Bucky, obsessively, filling up pages with him, like trying to chase every bare memory of him will bring him back from the dead.

Chapter End Notes

I thought there was going to be porn this time, but the rest of this rambled on much longer than expected. I’m laid up sort of sick this week, so I might get to the next bit soon depending on how I feel <3 <3 <3
Chapter 6

Steve sleeps tucked against Thor’s side, sticky hot as the weather gets warmer. Bored as Steve is, the comfortable routine is something of a relief after long years of boardinghouse winters and sweltering New York summers, to say nothing of finally eating enough after Hydra starved him half to death. Steve can feel the weight and bit of muscle he’s put on, with nothing to do all day but pushups and sketch.

It’s an odd thing, to wake up not in pain for the first time he can remember, and hate it as soon as he’s awake enough to appreciate it.

Thor wakes him up slowly, rubbing his beard along Steve’s shoulder, trailing fingers down Steve’s back and thighs. Even in just lacy panties, Steve feels burning hot waking up by degrees, cock stiffening where it’s trapped between his belly and the mattress.

Thor plays with the lace edging of Steve’s panties, kissing down Steve’s neck, his mouth warm and soft along with the prickle of his beard. Steve’s traitorous cock goes fully hard, anticipating more long hours of being teased nearly to tears, and Steve makes a frustrated noise into the sheets as Thor pushes the panties down just far enough to palm his ass.

It might not be so bad, Steve thinks muzzily. Thor’s been gentle enough with him otherwise, and he doesn’t talk. If Steve keeps his eyes closed it might not even hurt too much, if he just Pretends it’s—

“Are you ever going to fuck me?” Steve asks, hating himself that he has to know. The pain would be bearable; the waiting’s not.

Thor laughs against his shoulder, biting at the curve of his neck, just enough for Steve to freeze like a rabbit even though it doesn’t really hurt. “So impatient,” Thor says, mouthing at the bite mark. The hurt-not-hurt is enough to make Steve feel like he’s vibrating out of his skin, because it’s not an answer and it’s not a threat, but it’s not not a threat either.

Thor tugs Steve over to lie on his side, propping himself up on an elbow to bite down Steve’s side and stroke his cock through the silk panties stretched tight. When Steve shivers ticklishly, he catches both of Steve’s wrists in one of his big hands and pins them to the mattress. It’s not fair, but it doesn’t hurt either, just enough for Steve to shudder between Thor’s cock pressed against his ass and where he palms Steve’s cock roughly, nothing like Rumlow.

That Steve has just enough room to think he can fight back almost makes it worse, because Thor could so easily roll him onto his belly and hold him down. Worse still when Thor leans down to bite Steve’s nipple, sending an electric shiver through him straight to his cock, Thor tonguing the ring back and forth slowly even as the bite mark throbs. Thor’s mouth is lazy and warm as the rest of him, wholly unfair in how good it feels.

If it only hurt, Steve could fight until he couldn’t see through the pain like he did with Rumlow, but Steve’s a coward, trying to behave so he can get out of the suite, trying to be obedient so he can pretend to himself that he has control over whether Thor hurts him.

Thor shimmies out of his drawers, the head of his cock slick when he curls against Steve’s back, still holding his hands in place. Steve can feel the metal beads of his piercing, cool and heavy when Thor takes his cock in hand to rub against Steve’s ass.

“Still impatient?” Thor murmurs against Steve’s shoulder.
Steve has just enough time for a shuddery breath before Thor pushes his cock between Steve’s thighs, catching his ankles between Thor’s knees so that Steve’s thighs close tightly around his cock. Steve shudders, overwhelmed between Thor’s hand on his cock and the need to get away, held down without any pain and nearly blind with the combined relief and anxiety of the huge, wet head of Thor’s cock pressed against Steve’s balls. Thor strokes him through the flimsy thin fabric of the panties, tight and damp where they’re still pulled down under his ass.

Thor nips at his neck as he plays at fucking Steve roughly, but there’s still no pain even though Steve feels like he can’t breath, shakily trying to push down the urge to fight. He feels strung tight as a piano wire, breath shallow and fast as Thor pulls Steve back against him. Thor finally shoves the panties down so he can wrap a big hand around Steve’s cock, stroking him dry and fast as he bites a bruise just over Steve’s narrow collar. The head of his cock looks huge and obscene against the base of Steve’s, the cool beads of his piercing catching the light when Steve dares to glance down.

Thor bites his shoulder and Steve comes with the blinding bright pain, shuddering back against the broad furnace heat of Thor, who strokes him through it. It’s nearly too much, overwhelming with Thor holding Steve back against him to fuck as Steve comes into his hand. His cock’s as hot as the rest of him, the tip dragging wetly between Steve’s thighs as Thor uses Steve’s slick come to stroke him.

Steve arches his back and twists in Thor’s hands as Thor pinches his nipple, twisting the little ring. The hurt-not-hurt crosses wires in Steve’s head, all shuddery bright with Thor mouthing at the throbbing bite marks on his shoulder and chest. Steve turns his face down into his shoulder as Thor comes, the hot pulse of his cock between Steve’s legs and the slick drag of his piercing mixed up with the static electric chills of Thor twisting his nipple.

Steve shudders despite himself as Thor pumps his cock slowly between his thighs and thinks he might be able to do this, if this is as bad as it is.

Thor takes pity then, petting Steve’s sweaty side as he rubs his beard against Steve’s shoulder, and Steve can finally breath. It’s over; it didn’t hurt. That Thor didn’t really fuck him nags, but shaky on adrenaline and Thor’s blunt fingers tracing over his shivery sides, Steve decides not to borrow trouble for once.

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Steve shudders despite himself as Thor pumps his cock slowly between his thighs and thinks he might be able to do this, if this is as bad as it is.
It’s—not so bad, after everything else. Steve sleepily lets himself be fed slices of plum, content to be ignored as Thor props a book on his other knee. There’s part of Steve that knows he should hate it, cheek pressed to Thor’s thigh, the smell of him overwhelming, but the cowardly, exhausted part of Steve needs this, needs to pretend that if he plays obedient and has Thor’s affection, Thor won’t hurt him or give him to anyone else. If all Steve has to do for it is be humiliated and petted, he can do that.

The next time Thor feeds him a piece of fruit, Steve licks his fingers and tries ignore the nervous flutter of his stomach when Thor makes a surprised, pleased noise.

The bruises darken over the next few days, but Steve mostly doesn’t notice them, not like the ones Rumlow gave him. The one on his chest he even forgets about, a bright, livid purple around his right nipple when he goes to wash, and it only hurts if he presses it.

The one on his neck, even though he can’t see it, is harder to forget. Fandral’s eyes linger on it when he and Thor play cards, Thor tracing idle fingers over the bruise where the open collar of Steve’s jacket frames it. It doesn’t exactly hurt, but leaning with his cheek against Thor’s knee it feels like the promise of hurt.

If it does hurt, it’s worth it if it means Thor doesn’t intend to share him. Thor hooks a thumb into the collar of Steve’s shirt, playing with his pierced nipple through the fabric, and despite the blush Steve can feel creeping up from his collar, he leans into it, angling so he’s sure that Fandral has a clear look at the bruise.

Though Steve thinks he might have miscalculated when he risks a glance at Fandral, who looks more intrigued than sour.

Thor’s brother is less sanguine.

“Really?” he says to Thor a few nights later, giving the bruise on Steve’s throat a distasteful look as he sits down to the chessboard.

“Not all of us have ice in our veins, brother,” Thor says, mild. Loki makes an annoyed noise, moving a piece to dodge the checkmate Steve has been setting up for weeks. Steve pours beer for them both, setting the jug down carefully after pouring Thor’s cup.

“Not all of us flaunt our vices in the midst of war,” Loki snaps when Thor pulls Steve into his lap. Steve blushes hot but doesn’t dare pull away, Thor’s hand huge and hot on his hip.

“I flaunt nothing and Svartalfheim is no challenge,” Thor says, fingers stroking the inside of Steve’s thigh as he moves a piece, undoing all of Steve’s work the past few weeks. “Even without the promised Midgardian warriors, they will fold soon enough.”

“That is not the war I meant and you know it,” Loki says sourly, pushing the center with his next move.

“What do you think, little rabbit?” Thor says to Steve, ignoring that. He taps Steve’s chin. “Should I send you to fight svartálfar as planned?” Steve scowls at the floor and says nothing to that, feeling Loki’s skeptical look on him as Thor moves a piece. Not the move Steve would have made.

“Perhaps if you were less distracted with Midgardian toys, the Midgardians would not be such a problem,” Loki snaps. He takes one of Thor’s pieces and Steve’s hand twitches.

Thor pats Steve’s thigh, moving a piece right into Loki’s trap as Steve shifts uncomfortably.
“Distractions are not always such a bad thing, brother,” he says. Steve chews his lip, sure he shouldn’t say anything about the game. “I thought that was why you returned to the summer court.”

“I returned at your request”—Loki snaps, moving his piece to close the trap—and opening himself up for check. “Damn,” he breathes, sitting back in his chair at the same time that Steve sees it.

“Check,” Thor says, moving a piece to box in Loki’s king like he hasn’t a care, even though even Steve can hear how pleased he is. “Fetch supper,” he says to Steve, sliding him off his lap.

“How did you do that?” Loki says sharply, watching Thor with narrowed eyes as Steve goes to get the platters the steward laid out earlier, trying not to be relieved. Thor laughs, resetting the board.

“The Midgardians overestimate their resources and our patience,” Thor says, putting the pieces back in order as Steve lays out food. “Now that you are back to the summer court, they will look to curry favor with one of us against the other.”

“Indeed,” Loki says, giving Steve a long look up and down. Steve sits at Thor’s knee, same as every other night, and if he can feel Loki’s attention on him, it’s a wholly different kind of attention from Fandral.

Loki says almost nothing the rest of the evening, listening as Thor lays out Steve’s plan to destroy the Ubermensch program; first the camps, then Zola’s labs, then the super soldiers themselves. Steve holds his breath and tries to pretend he had nothing to do with either the chess game or the plan.

Steve’s afternoon of pacing and trying not to confuse the slant of Bucky’s jaw with Thor’s in his sketches is interrupted a few days later when the Nazis do just as Thor said, the steward depositing a box of junk in the front room as Thor sweeps in behind him. Steve peeks from his table in the alcove, not sure if he should go without being called.

He goes, because there’s a phonograph, an actual, real life phonograph, even if it’s smaller and slicker looking than the big cabinet sized one Bucky’s folks had. Steve stands in the arch between rooms and watches Thor spin it up, chest tight with how bad he wants to hear the suitcase-sized thing make a sound.

“Your Midgardian masters have sent another broken gift,” Thor says, looking up from the silent phonograph spinning idly.

Steve crosses the room despite himself, because the phonograph’s the most familiar thing he’s seen since Rumlow blindfolded him all those weeks ago. Thor watches as Steve lifts the tonearm and puts it in place, the music finally swelling with a hiss and a scratch.

“Primitive,” Thor says after a minute, frowning at the phonograph. Walkürenritt—Wagner—Das Reichsorchester, the record says. “You may have anything you like, the rest will be sent away,” Thor says with a wave of his hand at the box by the phonograph. He goes to his desk, leaving Steve there to scowl at the Nazis’ diplomatic gift.

Reichsorchester, Reichsorchester, Reichsorchester. The box is full of Nazi records, all Beethoven and Wagner and Wesel. Steve puts those aside and wonders if he dares ask for a Helen Forrest or Irving Berlin record. Even if he got it, it might hurt too much to think of Bucky and Peggy every time.

There’s a Bible, in German, and Mein Kampf, and other Nazi propaganda books. Steve takes the Bible and tosses the rest back. Das siebte Kreuz; Steve doesn’t know enough German to recognize anything but Kreuz, like the Ritterkreuz medal Rumlow was so proud of for capturing Captain
America. It goes back into the box with *Jeder stirbt für sich allein*, tossed haphazard.

That last one lands on its face where Steve tossed it, back cover up, and it catches Steve’s eye despite himself.

*Dritte Edition 1949*, it says.

1949. Steve stares at it. It’s a—product number or serial number, has to be. By the tally Steve keeps in his sketchbook, it’s about August 1945.

Steve takes the Bible and leaves the rest, trying not to think about the alternative.
Chapter 7

seb demanded more beardburn post-haste, so here's what was supposed to be the second half of the previous chapter before it all got much too long <3 <3 <3

It’s halfway comfortable, waking up slow and easy with Thor’s half hard cock pressed against his ass every morning. Steve knows how it goes, a little half-awake groping, beard burn and maybe a new bruise or two bitten across his shoulders. Easy and comfortable, and then Steve’s left alone to feel like he’s going to chew his fingers off if he doesn’t get out of the suite.

That’s how it’s supposed to go, anyway. Thor wakes him up slow, rubbing his beard over the fading bite mark on Steve’s shoulder, big hand cupping Steve’s ass through the slippery silk of the panties. Steve sighs into it even as Thor all but fingers him through the panties, the rough pads of his fingers smooth through the thin fabric as he presses gently.

It’s not so bad, after everything else. It’s been weeks and Thor hasn’t hurt him yet, hasn’t let anyone else hurt him. Steve arches his back into it when Thor slides the panties off him, cock eager even if the rest of him isn’t. If it were Bucky, if they were at home—

Thor covers Steve with his weight, bracketing Steve in to drag teeth across his shoulders and rub the hot, heavy line of his cock against Steve’s ass. The weight of him is suddenly suffocating, the metal beads of his piercing blood warm where the slick head of his cock presses against Steve’s ass, threatening.

Then he—tugs Steve’s hips up, pressing his cock between Steve’s thighs again.

“You’re not gonna fuck me?” Steve says, trying to keep his breathing even where his face is pressed against the sheets.

Thor rolls off him with a huff, slapping Steve’s ass. “You are far too willful for your own good,” he says. Steve dares a glance at him; he’s reaching for something Steve can’t see, distracted.

And then there’s—a little vial of oil, and the wet sound of Thor slicking his cock, Steve knows that sound, his stomach flipping. Steve twists his fingers in the sheets, squeezing his eyes shut and trying to keep his breathing even. He just has to be—obedient and quiet, even if it hurts. Just long enough to get out of the suite and look for a way home. Steve can be obedient and quiet, he just has to keep his eyes closed and wait for it to be over. Steve’s lived through worse.

His breath catches in a stuttery, jagged gasp when Thor tugs him close, fingers still oiled. “You wish to be fucked,” Thor says, pulling Steve over to straddle him. “Now you may have your wish.”

Steve swallows, looking down at Thor and himself. He can’t not. Thor’s cock feels bigger than ever standing to attention with his piercing gleaming cold and wicked, Steve’s cock laughably small and softening by the second as Thor lies on his back, hands nearly circling Steve’s waist.

“I grow old waiting,” Thor says, reaching up to pinch Steve’s nipple.

Steve takes a deep breath and sets his jaw. His legs aren’t shaking when he lifts himself up, but his
hands sure are when he reaches behind himself to steady Thor’s cock.

He never—even Rumlow never made him do this, and Steve never thought he’d rather be thrown on
his belly and fucked until he bled. It’s not fair, that Thor makes him do this, like Steve wants to be
fucked. Steve squeezes his eyes closed again, making himself get it over with.

“Slowly,” Thor says. He runs a hand up Steve’s chest, absurdly gentle as Steve forces himself down
on the tip of his cock.

It doesn’t hurt right away, not like it did with Rumlow. Steve tries to make himself go slow like he
was told, the blunt hot tip of Thor’s cock huge and awful even slippery slick as it is. Steve braces
himself with hands spread on Thor’s broad chest, trying to keep his hands from shaking.

One breath, two, and then Steve pushes himself down again, trying to ignore the hot stretch and burn
of the head of Thor’s cock pushing into him. It doesn’t hurt, not exactly. Steve winces anyway,
when the metal beads of Thor’s piercing ease into him with a pop that makes Steve’s stomach flip.
He feels bigger than Steve thought he would, almost split open with the slick tip of his cock barely
in.

Steve breathes shallowly, trying to steady himself. It doesn’t hurt as bad as the last time he was
fucked, but it hurts bad enough as he eases himself down, trying to ignore the dull sick pain inside
him and the aching, traitorous pain in his thighs as he tries to make himself go as slow as Thor told
him. He just has to be obedient and quiet long enough to get through this.

“You are shaking,” Thor says, smoothing a hand down Steve’s thigh. “Do you hurt?”

Steve freezes with his eyes squeezed shut, shoulders hunched. He shakes his head sharply, trying to
push himself down further on Thor’s cock, trying to take it while he still has some illusion of control,
even though the pain stabs up through his belly and chest.

Thor stops him, both big hands on Steve’s face. “Open your eyes,” Thor snaps.

Steve does, and regrets it. Thor’s face is dark and Steve’s sure Thor can feel him shaking now, knees
and thighs shivering where he tries to hold himself still, worse the more Steve tries to push it down.
His chest hurts, so tight he can barely breathe.

“You have only ever been fucked by Rumlow,” Thor says, voice dark as his mood, the kind of
question that isn’t a question.

“And—his men,” Steve says, hating himself for how shaky it sounds, that it comes out sounding like
a question, but Thor knew that from the start, Steve never hid it. It’s not fair, that Steve knows he’s
done something wrong but doesn’t know what, just trying to be obedient. Steve never said he was a
virgin, never lied about it.

Thor makes an annoyed noise. “You are too tight,” Thor says, rolling Steve off, pushing him over
onto his belly, and Steve has just a bare second of relief at the absence of slick pain to realize what it
means. Steve tries to push himself up, but Thor holds him down with one hand in the center of his
back, keeping him in place without even trying.

Steve’s chest tightens, bracing for the pain, waiting to be suffocated face down in the soft sheets. It’s
not fair, that Thor means to punish him for this, like this, but it’s Steve’s fault for thinking he’d be
any different from Rumlow, for thinking it might not be so bad. Just because the prison cell is prettier
doesn’t mean that Thor is any better.

Ass in the air, Steve’s hands clutch uselessly at the sheets, like if he just holds on tightly he’ll be
somewhere else. He should be fighting while he still can, but there’s a small, cowardly part of him that wants to believe that if he’s just obedient enough, quiet enough, good enough, Thor won’t hurt him too badly.

Thor nudges Steve’s knees apart, absurdly gentle for as hard as Steve’s shaking. Steve doesn’t even try to hide it because it’s too late, Thor running a big, callused hand over Steve’s back and down his thigh, brushing a thumb over Steve’s hole. He’s still slick with oil and that’s almost the worst part. Steve jumps, Thor’s other hand tightening on the back of his neck in warning. Every muscle in Steve’s back aches, strung tight waiting for it as Thor rummages for something, dropping a heavy, cool weight on the bed to roll against Steve’s calf.

And then Steve has just a half second to register Thor’s warm breath against the back of his thigh before he realizes what’s happening. Thor licking a long stripe from just behind Steve’s balls to nearly his tailbone, making him shiver and jump even worse at the hot, wet shock of it. Thor huffs a laugh against the back of Steve’s thigh, nipping him as he drags his rough beard down the sensitive skin of Steve’s thigh and gives him a swat on the ass.

Steve feels like there’s static across every inch of his skin as Thor sucks little bruises down the back of his thighs, alternating with teeth as Thor brushes lips and the rough prickle of his beard over Steve’s burning skin. It’s like having his frayed nerves scrubbed raw, Thor scraping teeth over Steve’s skin with blunt fingers digging into his hip to keep him in place.

He’s nearly used to it when Thor licks into him again, wet and vulgar, circling his tongue over Steve’s ass while his beard prickles Steve’s hot skin. Steve squirms helplessly, sure he’s supposed to want to get away even though his traitorous cock doesn’t want to, hands twisted uselessly in the sheets. Thor’s tongue nearly pushes into him, hot slick pressure, and Steve moans into the sheets as Thor puts both hands on his ass to pull his cheeks apart. Thor laughs dirilly against Steve’s skin, nipping sharp little bites across the burning skin of his ass as Steve shudders through it.

Thor backs off just enough to fumble with the cool, heavy thing resting against Steve’s leg, picking it up. “Warm this up,” he says, pushing the thing into Steve’s mouth before leaning in to lick teasing little circles around his hole again.

Steve moans around it, so hard he’s leaking onto the sheets, Thor’s broad hand on his hip keeping from getting any friction on his aching cock. The thing in his mouth is cool and smooth, heavy like glass or metal, but too small to be a gag. Hot, shameful chills race over Steve’s scalp and back as Thor licks him with the flat of his tongue, relentless.

Thor pushes the tip of one finger into him and licks around it, biting Steve’s thigh when he shudders. The press and stretch is familiar but it doesn’t hurt, Steve shivering and tense as he waits for the usual burn and tearing, but it never comes. Thor teases him relentlessly, fucking Steve with just the tip of his finger, sucking bruises across the backs of his thighs and ass. It’s not fair, Steve’s cock throbbing like Thor intends to make him beg to be hurt.

It’s almost a relief when Steve hears him open the vial of oil again, shockingly cool when he pours it directly onto Steve’s ass, dripping slowly down Steve’s ass and balls.

“You are very pretty like this,” Thor says, voice rough as he rubs the head of his cock against Steve’s ass, wet and slick, “with your little ass so pink.” He slaps Steve lightly, squeezing the cheeks of Steve’s ass around his cock and pumping his hips gently. “When you are not so skittish, I will slap you bright red and then make you beg to be fucked,” Thor says, low, and Steve can’t help moaning around the thing in his mouth, so close to coming he hasn’t got room in his head to be scared. He can feel the metal beads of Thor’s piercing rub against his hole, so shivery sensitive he wishes Thor would just fuck him and get it over with.
But Thor doesn’t take pity, thrusting against Steve’s ass, the sound slick and obscene until Steve thinks he’ll nearly die of it. Thor squeezes Steve’s ass, pulling Steve into him in a steady rhythm. Steve feels like an out of tune radio, buzzing static along all his nerves, shivery electric-hot under Thor’s hands.

Steve feels it first, Thor coming in thick pulses across Steve’s back and ass, the head of Thor’s cock nearly pushing into him as he comes. Steve moans, half relief and half frustration that Thor won’t just get it over with already even as Thor groans quietly, pumping his hips slowly against Steve’s slick ass.

“Like that, do you?” Thor breathes, giving Steve’s ass one more lazy squeeze before pushing two come-and-oil-slick fingers into him.

Steve moans for real this time, Thor done with teasing as he fucks Steve relentlessly with his fingers, stretching him open. The stretch and burn is familiar but there’s still no pain even strung tight as Steve is, trying to push himself up and away, held down by one of Thor’s broad hands sticky-slick on the back of his neck. Steve arches his back in frustration, jaw sore from sucking the think in his mouth, closer to coming than he’s ever been with someone fucking him, even if Thor still isn’t really fucking him.

The pressure is nearly unbearable, Steve’s cock jolting as Thor hooks his fingers, making Steve rock into it like he wants to be fucked. It’s not fair, Steve panting around the thing in his mouth as Thor spreads his fingers, pulling Steve back with one hand on the nape of his neck, to keep him in place and keep him where Thor wants him. It’s too much and it’s not fair, overwhelming and slick and good when Steve just wants it to hurt.

Thor finally takes the heavy thing from Steve’s mouth, black glass and slick with spit. It’s smaller than Steve thought, blinking at drunkenly as Thor takes it, the thing only as long as Steve’s palm and maybe wide as three of his fingers, two at its narrowest point.

What Thor means to do with it is suddenly, blindingly clear as he rubs the body-warm thing against Steve’s ass, pouring more oil over it as he teases Steve’s ass with the blunt tip of it. Steve tries to push himself up, only to be shoved back down again, Thor’s hand heavy in the center of his back.

“Hush, it is very small,” Thor says, smoothing a hand over Steve’s sweat-prickled back and his burning thighs, rubbing the thing through the cooling come and oil on Steve’s ass.

But as Thor presses into him it feels huge and blunt, even slick as it is. Steve swallows and hides his face against the mattress, shivering under Thor’s hand on his hip. “Be still, you’re doing very well,” Thor shushes him and Steve shudders. The thing pressed into him eases in a little further, bigger and bigger by degrees. “Very pretty,” Thor says, petting Steve’s back and thighs as he presses it in. Steve’s cock jumps at the praise despite himself, still heavy and throbbing because it doesn’t hurt, even if it’s hot and shameful, because there’s something wrong with him.

“Only a little more,” Thor says, easing the thing back out and then pressing it in again, fucking Steve with it slowly. It feels bigger each time, opening Steve up. Steve shivers minutely, can’t help it, hot sweat prickling down his sides with the effort of trying to be still and obedient and good. Thor shushes him even as he fucks Steve with it relentlessly.

And then it’s—in, sliding in completely, the heavy weight of it pressed into his ass, Thor’s fingers brushing over the base of it in Steve’s ass. Steve gasps against the sheets, feeling like his cock’s being pressed harder from the inside like Thor did with his fingers, trying to spread his legs and get away, close enough to come just from the pressure of it.
“Very good,” Thor says, voice gentle for all that he grabs the base of Steve’s cock, hard, fingers circled around it so Steve couldn’t come if he wanted to. “You are almost pretty enough like this to make up for your willfulness,” he says, giving Steve’s cock a gentle stroke that makes him shudder and moan against the sheets. It’s not fair, the way he pushes Steve nearly to the edge and then grabs the base of his cock again, keeping him from coming so that Steve’s strung tight, twisting with his ass in the air and clenching around the plug.

“This will stay in for the rest of the day, except for necessity,” Thor says, tracing the base of it with his other hand. “You will be patient,” he says, stroking Steve’s cock slowly for emphasis, “and you will be obedient,” another, slower, “and you will not remove it until I decide to fuck you, understood?”

He stops with his fingers circled hard around the base of Steve’s cock again, Steve nodding frantically against the mattress. “Say it,” Thor says, pulling Steve up by the hair.

“I—yeah, yes, I understand, I’ll be good, yes—“

“Yes what?” Thor says, giving Steve’s aching cock just enough of a stroke to make his mind blank but not enough to let him come.

Steve pants with his head bent back by the hair, tears standing in his eyes from frustration as he racks his staticked mind for what Thor could possibly want from him. It’s not fair, caught between Thor’s hand in his hair and on his cock, and shivering with the impossibility of it he can’t think—

“Yes master,” Steve says miserably, and Thor finally takes pity, letting Steve hide his face in the sheets as he gives Steve’s cock a few perfunctory strokes.

Steve comes hard, body tightening convulsively around the plug as Thor holds him steady with one hand on the back of Steve’s neck and one hand on his hip, every inch of Steve’s skin throbbing. Thor’s hands are gentle as he eases Steve down to the sheets to lie curled on his side, petting him as Steve’s breathing evens out.

“So very good,” Thor says, tugging Steve against his side gently, and Steve goes, shivery and oversensitive to his lightest touch, fingertips tracing along Steve’s shaky side and down over the raw, bruising skin of his inner thighs. “I do not wish to hurt you.”

Steve lets himself be petted, curling against Thor despite himself. Cuddling, if he’s honest with himself. It’s at least more honest than will not hurt you, and Steve’s grateful for it. Thor’s hurt him, but it’s been incidental, a side effect of something else like the piercings or making him obey. Steve doesn’t trust it, exactly, but it’s better than being promised something he knows isn’t true.

Steve’s almost asleep when Thor moves, making a sleepy noise of protest despite himself. Thor shushes him, rolling out of bed and leaving Steve there to sleep curled up in the center of the bed.

“Up,” Thor says, swatting Steve on the ass, minutes or hours later. Hours, from the look of the light sliding across the floor. “Today you get your wish. Hurry, or I shall leave you here for the day.”

Steve pushes himself up on his elbows to squint at Thor groggily, still muzzy, until he registers what Thor means. Then Steve’s scrambling out of the bed like it’s on fire, wincing at the uncomfortable, unfamiliar weight of the plug in his ass.

Thor taps him on the top of the head as Steve’s hopping into his trousers, not bothering with stockings. “Wash first, you stink like a whorehouse,” Thor says. Steve can’t tell if he’s being laughed at or not.
Face on fire, Steve practically trips over himself stripping on the way to the bathroom. Not like he asked to be fucked, or left like that. He scrubs down doublequick, rubbing down with soap and a damp washcloth, trying to get the smell of come off his skin even with the plug pressing his cock to half-hardness as he moves.

Even so he can still smell come and oil on himself when he staggers into clothes, hopping to step into his shoes and buttoning his shirt cuffs as he hurries after Thor to the door, snapping his fingers at Steve. Thor dumps an armload of papers on Steve when he’s still got one shirt cuff unbuttoned and his jacket undone, but when he strides out the door and Steve goes after him, there’s no hot static of resistance. For the first time, they walk away from the sandy courtyard, towards a set of stairs Steve’s only caught glimpses of.

That he has to jog after Thor with the uncomfortable weight of the plug demanding his attention every step of the way is even worth it.
Steve’s nearly panting by the time they come to a stop, between gawping like a tourist at the massive columned promenades, trying to keep up with Thor, and trying desperately to juggle his armful of papers without thinking too much of the slick plug keeping him open. He’s still got one shirt cuff unbuttoned when they pause in a little ante room, stewards or administrators or whoever taking the sheaf of papers from Steve without a word.

“Chin up, shoulders back, eyes down,” Thor says, tipping Steve’s jaw up with a finger under his chin and smoothing the line of Steve’s jacket over his chest. “Be silent or you will be chained back to the foot of the bed. Though perhaps you would like that too much,” Thor adds, conspiratorial-whisper loud, ducking his head to give Steve a little wink that makes him blush to the tips of his ears.

He combs fingers through Steve’s hair one last time, and then sweeps him through a low door into the next room.

Not the massive gaudy throne room, but a smaller—hall, Steve supposes, even though it’s bigger than any dance hall Steve’s ever seen. Steve gawps for all of two seconds before Thor snaps fingers under his nose, then his attention’s entirely taken up by keeping his eyes on the floor and not stumbling with the thick plug.

The floors are pink veined—marble, maybe, Bucky would know—polished slick enough to turn an ankle if anyone did try dancing on them. Too many people for dancing anyway, a flutter of activity around them as Thor ascends the low dais at one end of the hall, Steve and a handful of administrators at his heels.

Loki’s already there, standing to one side of the throne, barely more than a sturdy chair atop the dais. Steve risks a glance at him as Thor waves him to the other side, earning a cool look back from Loki and a stern look from Thor before Steve gets his eyes back on the floor.

Then Steve all but fades into the background, forgotten by everybody as some kind of official business gets underway. The harvests of Vanaheim, trade with the Nidavellir, negotiations with Jotunheim, people and places Steve doesn’t recognize.

Steve’s startled out of staring at the blue, nearly naked giants in the crowd by a snap of Thor’s fingers, put to work bringing Thor papers and scrolls from the pile the administrators shuffle through. They acknowledge him just enough to hand off sheafs of paper, all of it moving smoothly as Steve’s sent to fetch this and carry that back and forth.

It’s easy enough, nearly the same kind of fetching Steve did the summer of 1940 working as a mailboy. Not so different even from being on stage for the USO, making sure not to trip over himself, and easier since he’s got no lines.

Between errands Steve shifts from foot to foot, the skin of his inner thighs feeling hot and nearly incandescent, still rubbed raw by Thor’s beard. The pressure of the plug against the base of his cock from the inside makes it impossible to concentrate on anything but keeping his face absolutely neutral as it moves every time he shifts his weight.

Even worse when he brings Thor a scroll and gets a bemused look and a gentle pat on the ass, Steve
blushing so bright he’s sure he’s just going to burst into flames if he doesn’t die of embarrassment first. It would be a kinder death, at any rate.

It’s hours long, Steve numb to everything but the nearly aching heaviness of his cock as groups flow in and out of the room after the initial shock of newness wears off. Steve feels halfway bad for Thor, if this is what he sits through every day before he comes back to the suite to eat like a starving man and pet Steve’s hair.

Thor leans on one arm of the low throne, radiating boredom as some Asgardian official goes on and on about the unfairness of aqueduct infrastructure permits, Steve’s eyes glazing over.

Thor glances at Steve, mouth hidden by his fist. “Perhaps you are not the only one with something shoved up his ass today,” Thor says sotto voce, and Steve nearly chokes. Thor gives him a little sideways smile, behind his hand so Steve’s the only one who can see.

Loki’s not so pleased, shooting Thor a dirty look before Steve gets his eyes back on the floor. They look nothing alike, almost reverse images of each other, and Steve knows nothing good will come of drawing attention to himself or getting himself caught the tension hanging between the two of them. If Thor’s a lion, lazy and huge and dangerous all the same, Loki’s a cobra, beguiling and silent and even more dangerous.

Steve’s attention is pulled away from that thought, back going tight as the next group enters—humans, but Nazis all of them and Rumlow right in the midst of them. He sees Steve right away, giving him a pleased look up and down and a wink when he notices Steve watching him. The rings in Steve’s ears and the collar suddenly feel much heavier.

Rumlow looks—older. Sharper, harder, and older. Four years older than the last time Steve saw him, Steve can’t say, but definitely older.

_Dritte Edition 1949_, the worried, paranoid part of Steve says. It’s not possible. It’s September 1945 at the latest.

Steve takes a deep breath, suddenly shaky on the conflicting urge to barrel down the dais to break Rumlow’s teeth and get as far away as possible. From up on the dais, with Thor between them, Rumlow’s not so frightening even in his black SS uniform. He doesn’t loom as large as in Steve’s nightmares even though Steve would barely brush his shoulder now, more breakable than when Rumlow had him.

He’s just a man, and he can’t touch Steve anymore.

“Your majesty, a pleasure,” the older man in front says, the only one of them not in a Nazi uniform. He makes a crisp bow that doesn’t rumple the lines of his elegant gray suit, the glint of a little SS pin on his lapel and a white cross medal resting neatly over his tie, like the one Lindbergh got in thirty-eight. He’s charming and smooth and Steve might even trust him if not for the company he keeps.

“Get on with it, Pierce, I care not for pleasantries unless you bring news of your scientists,” Thor says, just one side of curt.

“My lord, the Fuhrer and Herr Schmidt have carefully considered your request and I’m afraid—”

“It was not a request, ambassador,” Thor cuts him off. “It was a demand, and your Fuhrer tries my patience.”

The ambassador takes that in stride with a little smile, pausing for a breath and just the briefest of glance at Loki. Enough to be incidental, but the hair on the back of Steve’s neck stands up.
“Just so, your majesty,” Ambassador Pierce says. “But the programs you wish us to shutter are essential to the security of the Reich, and the Übermensch program has been shuttered since our rather embarrassing failure,” he says with a dismissive wave at Steve. Behind him, Rumlow smiles smugly, running his tongue over his teeth. “If it’s any assurance, I have here a letter from the Führer himself.” The ambassador produces a folded letter from his breast pocket, absurdly normal like he’s standing in an office in Manhattan instead of the soaring, gilded hall on Asgard.

“Go,” Thor says, snapping fingers at Steve.

Steve blinks at him, but the look on Thor’s face is enough to shake him out of his hesitation. No way out but through; Steve’s done harder things before, and he just has to stay obedient enough to not get locked in the suite again.

It’s nearly the longest walk of Steve’s life, what feels like miles carefully picking his way down the steps like he hasn’t got a thick glass plug in his ass.

Steve doesn’t bother keeping his eyes down for this, memorizing the ambassador’s face and doing his best to blot out Rumlow from any pretense of acknowledgement. Men like Rumlow want to be remembered, to be someone’s whole world; Steve won’t let him.

One foot in front of the other, Steve somehow gets himself to the ambassador, who doesn’t even deign to acknowledge him as he hands Steve the letter. His shirtcuffs are crisp white, like he’s never gotten his hands dirty in his life. It’s almost over; Steve turns on his heel to go.

Then, in front of God and Thor and everybody, Rumlow pats him on the ass, fingers grazing the base of the plug. Worse still the way Steve’s already half-hard cock jolts at the movement of it.

Steve makes himself walk; one step in front of the other, with not the shadow of a doubt that Rumlow felt the plug. Even less when he climbs the dais with his back stiff and his face bright red, and turns to find Rumlow looking like the cat that got the canary. Steve’s jaw aches from clenching his teeth so hard.

Thor takes the letter from him without a word, giving Rumlow and Pierce a sour look. “This means nothing,” Thor says without even glancing at it. It’s in German, all harsh angles Steve can’t read. “I grow old waiting on your assurances, ambassador. Envoys will be sent to Midgard to inspect your camps and your rocket installations. You will have nothing from Asgard until you return with your scientists as proof of your word.”

“Your majesty—” the ambassador starts.

Thor dismisses them with a snap of fingers, shuffled off into the watching crowd while Steve’s left up there on dais for display. He can’t see Rumlow in the crowd, but he can feel the weight of his attention the rest of the morning.

Steve’s jaw and back and ass ache by the time the audience is over, every muscle in his body tense. Doesn’t help that he spends the whole morning half-hard, hands clasped in front of him to at least try to hide what the swept-back cut of his jacket doesn’t.

Loki leaves as the audience hall begins to empty, a heavy, dark presence on the bright dais as he moves behind Steve. There’s something uncanny about him that prickles along the back of Steve’s neck even when Loki’s not looking at him, like half-hearing a noise in the dark.

Thor has no such pity, sweeping Steve down the dais with him to wend his way through the crowd. Steve stays at his heels, hating himself for the nervous way he presses close to Thor as he gladhands
his way through the crowd. It’s no different than when Steve signed autographs for the USO, but
Thor’s a natural at it in a way Steve never was, and everyone in the crowd is taller than him besides,
sparing him no attention as they bump him out of the way to get a word with Thor.

Steve gets separated and immediately regrets it. He can still see Thor, but there’s more and more
people between them even as Steve tries to shoulder his way closer, certain his chance at not being
locked back in the suite is slipping further away. It’s not fair, that all Steve wants is to get away from
Thor, but trapped in this sea of people he’s got not a chance of gaining anything except getting
chained back over the foot of the bed, maybe still with the plug in his ass.

Steve catches up just when he’s sure nothing could get worse, running nearly headlong into Rumlow
in his black SS uniform. Steve jerks back, trying to get himself out of arm’s reach, but the crowd is
too thick.

“Long time no see, Cap,” Rumlow says, reaching out to pat his cheek.

Steve knocks his hand away. “Go to hell,” Steve says, voice less shaky than he feels, and he’s almost
glad when Rumlow raises one black-gloved hand to slap him.

Thor materializes before Steve can so much as take a breath, wrenching Rumlow’s hand up. “Do
not,” Thor says to him, putting himself between Rumlow and Steve, the crowd around them holding
their breath. Steve glares around Thor, not about to look like he’s hiding behind Thor’s skirts.
“You’ve already damaged my property enough.”

Rumlow smiles nastily, jerking his hand out of Thor’s grip. “Pain is the only kind of order
Untermensch understand, your majesty.”

Steve bristles, held back by Thor’s hand on his chest. Thor looks Rumlow up and down like
something scraped off the bottom of his shoe.

“Pain is a weak man’s tool,” Thor says, snapping his fingers for Steve to follow without waiting to
see if he does.

Steve hesitates; he can finish his own fights, but hesitating now means disobeying.

In the end, he goes. Steve already got the last word, and the sour look on Rumlow’s face is almost
worth jogging at Thor’s heels as he sweeps out of the room.

“Don’t even need a leash,” Rumlow says to Steve’s back.

It rankles; of course it rankles. Steve turns it over in his head like a jagged stone as they walk, a
niggling pain in his shoe that wouldn’t be worth so much of his thought if he’d just been able to deal
with it himself.

Steve pushes it down, or tries to, anyway. He’s traded away his dignity before; this is no worse than
wearing tights for the USO. He just needs to be useful enough that Thor won’t give him back to the
Nazis, and obedient enough to find his way home.

“He’s lying to you,” Steve says as soon as they’re alone, trotting after Thor to keep up. He’s pink
cheeked with the weight of the plug rocking back and forth with every step, uncomfortably slick
even as Steve can feel his cock thicken at the pressure. Worse when Thor glances down at him with
a bemused look.

“You know this how?” Thor says, voice all business. No pity as he keeps up the brisk pace.
“Rumlow thinks you’re stupid,” Steve says, and gets a sharp look for his trouble. “It’s all over his face, he runs his tongue over his teeth when he thinks he knows something you don’t. They haven’t closed the Ubermensch program and they think you’ll take their word for it because you took me.”

Thor makes a non-committal noise, sweeping Steve along in his wake.

Steve spends the rest of the day jittery on edge, seeing Rumlow in every corner and expecting to be fucked. But if he thought Thor making him wear the plug all day was prelude, he just gets a little pat on the ass before supper when he’s told to go take it out, and spends the evening kneeling trying not to think about the absence of it.

Thor gives him liberty to leave the suite alone the next day, waving Steve out indulgently with the warning to be back before sunset.

Though not before bending him over the desk and fucking him open with the plug again, Steve almost close enough to come when Thor pushes it in fully and tells him to get dressed with a swat on the ass. It’s not fair, and even less fair that all Steve can think about the first hour he’s out of the suite is whether he dares find somewhere private enough to jerk off.

He doesn’t; beyond the corridor to Thor’s suite the place is crawling with people, and even if Steve could find somewhere, it’s like looking for a private corner in Grand Central, busy even if he thinks he’s momentarily out of sight. Nothing for it, then, but to take deep breaths, try to will it away, and try not to think about how badly he needs to come from having his ass worked open slow and methodical for someone else’s amusement.

No one pays him any attention, busy with whatever it is people who work in a castle do, hurrying past him like Steve’s a sparrow that flew in a train station. He does his best to stay out of the way, knowing better than to draw attention to himself by gawking too much or appearing to pry.

He watches around himself warily, though, on his guard for Rumlow or other Nazis after he recognizes a group of blue giants from the previous day’s audience. No sign of Nazis, but Steve catches sight of Fandral and Volstagg down a crowded corridor and quickly walks the other way, walking like he has somewhere to be in the hopes that they won’t catch him out here, with no protection from Thor.

In his hurry to get away, Steve runs up against the limits of his liberty by walking face-first into a sparkling barrier across a broad stairwell, others flowing around him with sideways looks. It doesn’t exactly hurt, but it’s like walking into a glass wall run through with static electricity. Steve rubs his nose, annoyed.

He does it again a few minutes later, before he learns to walk with one hand out unless he knows where he’s going. He runs into another, and another, all trying to get to lower floors, until he’s finally run up against the limits of his enlarged prison cell still some miles above street level.

Bucky read him enough snippets of dashing adventure nonsense to keep him from giving up, though. Asgard is a pulp nonsense sort of place; pulp adventures have secret passages and hidden corridors, so Steve just has to find them.

There’s plenty of little alcoves and niches, though none of them with secret levers that Steve can tell, feeling foolish creeping around trying not to attract notice. Thor surely has to know that Steve would try to get out as soon as he was given any sort of liberty, so looking for a way out when the most direct paths down to street level are blocked to him feels like a fool’s errand.
Steve ends up in a terraced garden as sunset approaches, peevishly trailing his fingers over the sparkling barrier in the air. It’s a fair bit lower and around the opposite side of the tower from Thor’s suite, but it’s no more helpful than the balcony. His first day out of the suite is nearly over and it’s been a waste, the limits of his cage just a little larger now.

The sun dips low enough to throw the garden into chill shadow, and that’s Steve’s cue to start the long climb back up to the suite. He thinks about pushing the limits of his liberty a little further by staying out until Thor’s forced to look for him, but decides he doesn’t dare risk it until he’s exhausted his other options.

But if his luck was good enough to keep him from crossing paths with Rumlow or Fandral all day, it’s not quite enough to keep him from running into the person he third most doesn’t want to be alone with. Steve runs headlong into Loki as he turns to go, caught up short as he runs nearly face first into his chest.

“Don’t you have somewhere to be?” Loki says. If there’s one thing Steve misses about his other body, it’s never being snuck up on because of his bad left ear. “On your knees? Bent over something, perhaps?”

“Your brother gave me leave,” Steve says sullenly, looking Loki dead in the eye with his chin set. “My lord.”

There’s a heavy silence as Loki looks him up and down, unnerving.

“Why did Schmidt send you, of all his creatures?” Loki says finally, crisp enough to almost make Steve flinch.

Steve makes the mistake of glaring up at him, knowing he’s being needled. “I’m not Schmidt’s creature,” Steve says. “I’m American.”

“I care not what Midgardians call themselves or each other,” Loki says, circling Steve slowly, like he’s being fitted for a suit. Or a coffin. The garden’s too quiet, Steve painfully aware of what a bad idea it is to be alone with an Asgardian like this, even if he doesn’t know exactly how it’ll go. “You were never a warrior, no matter what Pierce or my brother say,” Loki says, stopping in front of Steve to put a cool hand on his face.

Steve pulls out of his grip, face snapped back before he knows it, stinging where Loki slapped him across the face.

Loki grabs him again, vicious this time, thin fingers digging into Steve’s jaw.

There’s—light, or dark, Steve can’t tell which, suddenly blind like he’s being turned inside out. A tiny part of him sees the whole thing from outside himself like during the worst of Zola’s experiments, Loki holding him up easily with one hand, Steve’s feet kicking uselessly at the ground. The rest of him twists around—a jumble, images of his mother, of Bucky, of Thor, all twisted up together, until he feels like he’s being peeled open raw to get at the center of him. He’s hit with the full weight of everything he’s ever thought about himself, everything he’s ever been too scared of to admit to himself, every guilty, terrible thing he’s ever thought about Bucky, like being smothered to death.

And then it’s done, and Steve’s back in a garden on Asgard as Loki drops him like a rotten fish.

Steve collapses on the gravel path at Loki’s feet, gasping like he’s just run a marathon. “Tell your Midgardian masters to send someone more challenging next time,” Loki says, nudging Steve in the
ribs with his boot before turning on his heel, leaving Steve there trying to gather himself.

Steve hurries back to the suite like his ass is on fire, though it’s sore enough by the time he makes it back just after full sunset, the warm light of the suite glowing as he hurries in. He finds Thor at his desk, leaning back in his chair to frown at a sheaf of papers in his hand, paying Steve no mind. Steve crosses the room before he thinks better of it, steeling himself to gamble on Thor’s affection protecting him against Loki’s accusations.

Thor gives him a bemused look as Steve kneels between his feet. “You are very tardy,” Thor says, putting his papers aside to lean on one elbow. Steve has the feeling that if Thor had glasses, he’d peer over them like a disappointed schoolmarm. “Perhaps you enjoy being spanked after all.”

Steve swallows hard, resolve wavering now that Thor’s eyes are on him. But Steve needs to play the ingenuer, or at least enough innocence to give himself a chance. Thor likes eagerness and blushing; the blushing comes naturally, and Steve can fake the rest. He bites his lip in a way he hopes looks coy and not just clumsy, and reaches for the lacing of Thor’s trousers.

Thor catches his hands, huffing a laugh. “Why is your cheek red,” Thor says, putting a hand on Steve’s chin to turn his face and get a look at it. Steve blushes, the slap mark throbbing with the sudden heat.

Steve’s mouth twists. “Your brother slapped me,” he says finally. Thor was going to find out one way or another; better to gamble that boldness will gain him something than let Loki use it against him.

“What did you do to deserve that?” Thor says placidly, sitting back in his chair.

Steve opens his mouth to argue. Nothing is on the tip of his tongue just as he thinks better of it. He might not be able to out maneuver Loki, not like this, but there’s no reason to walk into the trap that’s obviously been set for him. “I told him I’m not Schmidt’s—creature. He didn’t like my tone,” Steve says. Not exactly what happened, but Steve needs to be entertaining, not honest.

Thor laughs at that, short and surprised. “I’m sure he didn’t. You will have to learn to watch your tongue,” Thor says, leaning forward to comb fingers through Steve’s hair. “Well, get on with it then,” he says, and sits back with his knees spread. The meaning’s clear enough.

Steve takes a deep breath and throws himself into it; this is what he wanted, Thor amused and fond and distracted. He can feel Thor getting hard as Steve undoes the laces of his trousers, Thor petting his hair absently. The smell of him, warm and heavy, is enveloping.

Steve risks a glance up, Thor watching him lazily. “I’ve—never done this before,” Steve says. Thor’s been gentle enough with him otherwise.

“I find that hard to believe,” Thor says, reaching out to drag a thumb over Steve’s bottom lip, making him blush deeper. It’s nothing no one’s said about him before, in Brooklyn when he looked like Bucky’s fairy or right before Rumlow nearly broke his nose for trying to bite, but it’s different now that he actually has to do it. “You thought it would please me to have you gag and choke inexpertly because you were tardy?” he says, and tugs on Steve’s hair just enough to make him shiver at the threat.

“Yes,” Steve says, without hesitation. Bluntness has gotten him this far.

Thor laughs, short and surprised again. “It is very brave or very foolish to throw yourself at something you fear so much,” he says. He cups Steve’s chin, but gently this time.
When he lets Steve go, he says nothing as Steve takes his time getting Thor’s half-hard cock out. He’s bigger up close than he feels rubbing against Steve’s ass, Steve’s fingers not meeting around the base of his cock. Sitting back in his chair, he’s not so threatening, even as his cock throbs lazily in Steve’s hand.

Steve closes his eyes and doesn’t think about it as he leans in to suck the tip. Nearly jumps back when Thor’s cock pulses dangerously, just the head of his cock huge and heavy in Steve’s mouth. But it’s just warm skin, salty and clean smelling as the rest of him, and except for the cool piercing on the back of Steve’s tongue, it could be Bucky.

Not as though Steve didn’t think about it often enough, even if he’d never dared do anything about it. Bucky had laughed it off every time someone said Steve looked cock-sucking pretty, but Steve had thought about it, about what it would be like if he was everything people said he was. He’d have gotten on his knees for Bucky, would have even asked Bucky to fuck him if he’d thought Bucky would ever say yes.

But Bucky would have never, so Steve never.

And here he is now, everything people said about him true and Bucky gone.

Steve doesn’t think about it; doesn’t think about what this would be like if he were down on his knees for Bucky, instead of bargaining away his dignity for Thor. He concentrates on getting his hand slick enough to stroke Thor’s cock slow the way he likes, hoping if he does well enough Thor won’t hold him down and fuck his throat like Rumlow tried.

Steve startles back nervously when Thor puts a hand in his hair. “Hush, I merely wish to see your pretty face,” Thor says, smoothing hair out of Steve’s face. Steve swallows and dares a look up at him, wondering how much he dares push the limits of Thor’s patience.

Thor licks his lips, cheeks pink above the gold hair of his beard. “You are very pretty like this,” he says as Steve leans in to tongue the metal beads of his piercing, the big head of Thor’s cock dragging against Steve’s lips.

It’s a heady rush, almost like being in control as Thor watches him with hooded eyes. He keeps a hand on the back of Steve’s head but doesn’t shove him down or pull his hair, letting Steve go slowly.

Steve circles his tongue over the big head of Thor’s cock, trying to pick up a rhythm as he strokes the thick length of him. It’s manageable, even if Steve’s jaw already aches just sucking the head of his cock, but maybe Thor will let him get away with just that this time. Next time, Steve doesn’t want to think about. He can suck cock if it means more days to spend looking for a way out.

When Steve backs off enough to take a breath and lick the little bead of come pearling on the tip of Thor’s cock, of course it’s not the first time he’s ever tasted come, but it’s the first time he’s done it willingly. Thor watches him, blunt fingertips scratching over Steve’s scalp to make chills chase down his back. There’s something wrong with Steve, that he’s almost fully hard between the plug in his ass and Thor’s fingers in his hair, wondering if he dares put a hand on his own cock.

Thor makes a low noise as Steve tongues the slit of his cock, doing his best to take him even as his tongue and jaw start to ache. He’s too big to take very far, Steve’s throat hitching in warning when the piercing brushes too far back on his tongue. Thor doesn’t seem to think anything of it, the muscles of his thighs tense when Steve rests a tentative hand to keep his balance, trying to make up with his hand what he can’t do with his mouth.
Steve presses the base of his own cock through his trousers, trying to ignore it even as he throbs harder at the taste of come in the back of his throat. The wires in his head are all crossed, his cock anticipating finishing after sucking come off Thor’s fingers so many times. In the back of his mind he knows it ought to be humiliating, but when he risks a glance up at Thor, he doesn’t seem to mean it to be humiliating, petting Steve’s hair like he does every night and not trying to gag or hurt him.

Though Steve gets a hot stab of fear all the same when Thor sees his hand on his own cock, jerking Steve to his feet. Steve shies, bracing for the hit that doesn’t come as Thor holds him in place with a hand on his waist. Thor’s hands are rough and unsteady as he shoves Steve’s jacket off, and if Steve’s belly weren’t so tight at the thought of getting fucked over the desk, he’d be almost triumphant that he did that, controlling a man like Thor, even if it was just for a moment. The idea that Steve might be able to do it better next time is a heady rush even as Thor pulls Steve to him roughly and starts unlaceing Steve’s trousers.

“No, I shall not fuck you,” Thor says as he tugs Steve’s shirt over his head. “You will know when I intend to.” Then he’s shoving Steve’s trousers, stockings and panties off him with rough hands, until Thor tugs Steve to straddle him, petched naked and skinny in his lap with Thor still fully clothed.

He trails fingers down Steve’s back and thighs, light and almost ticklish in the cool room. He stops with his hands cupping Steve’s ass, kneading the muscle as his fingers brush the base of the plug. “Good,” Thor says, voice low as he squeezes Steve’s ass around it, making him shudder and arch his back. “You are at least obedient, even if you are still too bold for your own good.”

His fingers work the plug out slowly, Steve shivering as he tries to relax and let it happen. It’s slow and agonizing, Thor biting along his collar bone and shoulders as he tugs at the little ring with his teeth and sucks on the bruise already there, beard prickling across Steve’s chest.

Against Steve’s, Thor’s cock looks even bigger, dark and slick with spit as Steve rolls his hips experimentally, Thor making a pleased sound against his shoulder as his fingers play with the curve of Steve’s ass. Steve swallows and takes them both in hand, pushing through on boldness.

Thor grabs his ass, pushing fingers into him as Steve thrusts against his thick cock. It doesn’t hurt and Steve feels nearly giddy on it, Thor’s blunt fingers in him slick as Steve pushes back against his hand. Setting the pace with one hand on Thor’s broad shoulder to keep his balance, it’s almost good, like Steve could imagine himself wanting to be fucked, if it were like this.

That that might be the point occurs to Steve a half a second later as Thor pushes two fingers into him and makes Steve rock himself further down on his hand. After everything else, it’s not so bad, Steve chasing the sensation now that he’s loose and slick enough for it to not hurt and close enough to not care. Thor’s cock throbs against his, close too, and Steve thumbs his piercing, trying to keep time with the pace Thor sets rocking Steve against him.

Steve brings him off by leaning forward to let Thor finger him open wider, tipping his head down against Thor’s shoulder and moaning like he’s close as Thor comes across his belly and chest. It feels close enough to a win that Steve doesn’t care that he follows a moment later as Thor bites his
shoulder, his come sticky and hot as Steve strokes his cock and Thor’s together. Steve’s a mess by
the end, literally and figuratively, striped with his come and Thor’s and mottled pink and red with
new bruises.

Thor nudges Steve to sit back, trying not to get come on his clothes even his fingers still slowly
pump in and out of Steve’s slick ass, making him shiver and squirm. “You are very entertaining, if
nothing else,” Thor says finally, angling his fingers to make Steve’s softening cock twitch before
wiping his fingers on Steve’s thigh. He gives Steve a slap on the ass, hard enough to sting. “Go wash
and fetch dinner, before I change my mind and spank you for your tardiness.”

Steve slides off his lap, watching Thor sideways through his lashes as Steve gathers up his clothes
and Thor tucks himself away. Thor gives him a fond, lazy look, watching with hooded eyes as Steve
goes to wash. It might not be so bad, if Steve can just use this to keep Thor between himself and
Loki and Ruml and Fandral long enough to find a way home.

Chapter End Notes

shoutout to merismoth for nudging 'someone finds out about the plug' over from hmm
maybe to yes definitely

also I PINKY SWEAR that Bucky's going to show up soon
Heads up, some more intense dubcon and noncon than usual at the very end of the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It’s not so bad, waking up draped across Thor’s chest, even sticky hot as it is.

With the lash marks across his back healed, it’s nearly pleasant to let Thor knead the sore muscles of his back, pressing out the stiffness of sleeping tangled up trapped under his heavy weight. Thor pets him gently with one hand and digs into the knots of Steve's back with the other. It's easy enough to curl into it, Steve's cheek pressed to Thor's broad shoulder as he wakes up. It's not so bad, all things considered.

Steve works up his courage to skim a hand over the flat plane of Thor's stomach, breath shallow as he watches the muscles of Thor's stomach jump. Thor hums into Steve's hair quietly, kneading his sore left shoulder as Steve trails fingers along the line of Thor's plain linen drawers. It's not so bad, Thor shifting to pull one of Steve's legs across his. He's predictable enough and easy to please if Steve just pretends like he wants it, and if Steve was never a good actor it doesn't much matter if the alternative is being held down and forced.

Not even that hard to pretend if he just imagines like it's Bucky, even if Bucky was never this broad chested, never this thick.

He shouldn't think about Bucky, not like that, but he'd never be able to look Bucky in the face after all this even if Bucky were still alive, so what's it matter if it gets him through this.

Steve hates himself for plenty else anyway.

Like that he can't help getting hard where his cock’s pressed against Thor’s thigh, worse still when Thor cups his ass, still pressing the knots out of Steve’s back with his other hand. At least lying draped across his chest, Thor can’t pinch Steve’s nipples, hard as they are already. There’s something wrong with Steve, that all it takes to get him hard any more is Thor running fingers across his lips or over his ass, pinching his nipple or putting a broad hand across the back of his neck.

Steve’s heartbeat picks up as Thor’s big cock thickens, throbbing where it’s trapped by his drawers. Thor pets him slow and lazy as Steve works up his courage to skim his fingertips over the line of Thor’scock, which throbs to meet his hand. Steve’s stomach flutters with nerves, but he pushes through on boldness as he shoves Thor’s drawers down.

His breath catches when Thor tightens his arm around Steve’s shoulders and moves, sure he made a wrong move, but Thor just kicks out of his drawers and settles again, petting Steve’s hair against his chest. It’s halfway comfortable as Steve starts to stroke Thor’s cock where it lays against his flat belly, Thor scratching blunt fingers across Steve’s scalp and down his neck, other hand pulling Steve’s leg across his to make Steve grind into his thigh. Even without Thor pushing them down, Steve’s panties are half down his ass, his cock hard enough to peek up over the lace band keeping his cock pressed to his belly.
Thor all but promised he wouldn’t fuck Steve any time soon, so there’s no reason for Steve to be so jittery skittish as he wraps a hand around Thor’s cock and starts to stroke him slowly. It’s easier than sucking cock and better than being fucked, even if it’s complicit in a way Steve can’t pretend about like he can with sucking cock. Thor slips a hand down the back of Steve’s tight panties to play with his ass but doesn’t otherwise move, leaving Steve to try to intuit what he wants.

If it were Bucky, if it were them lying in bed on a Sunday morning skipping church, if it were back home in their little apartment, it wouldn’t be so bad. Bucky would have never teased him like that, pads of his fingers rough and dry, but Steve tries not to think about it, thumbing Thor’s piercing back and forth.

He finds a rhythm when Thor arches his back into it, beautiful as Steve rubs the pad of his thumb through the slick precome at the tip of his cock. His cock’s too big for Steve to get his fingers all the way around, but he does his best, harder than the way he imagines Bucky would want.

Doesn’t matter anyway, because it’s not Bucky and Steve can hardly forget it when Thor comes into his hand, hot and thick. Thor pulls Steve onto him as he finishes, grinding up against Steve’s belly to smear come between them as he bites Steve’s shoulder just below the collar. Steve tries to get away, caught with Thor squeezing his ass to pull Steve against him, making him squirm and pant he’s so close.

Thor doesn’t take any pity, though, rolling Steve off him and giving him a little slap on the ass. “Bottom drawer. Fetch the second one,” Thor says, snapping his fingers at the wardrobe.

Steve pads across the room, glancing through his lashes at Thor languid and radiant on the bed, trying not to think about how hard he still is, uncomfortable in the tight panties cupping his cock.

Worse still when he kneels to open the drawer, the panties half down his ass and hiding nothing. The drawer is long and shallow, felt-lined like a silverware drawer. Fitted neatly to cradle a set of black glass plugs, in graduated sizes. Steve’s stomach flips, the one he’s been wearing the past few weeks obviously the smallest of the set, all the way up to the largest bigger around than his fist.

“Fetch it quickly, or you shall have a much larger one instead,” Thor says from the bed.

Steve grabs the second smallest one, stomach fluttering. Thor sits up on one elbow as he brings it back, watching him lazy and predatory.

He grabs Steve by the collar as soon as he’s close enough, hooking two fingers under the collar to pull him close.

“You do as you’re told when you’re told,” Thor says, quiet and even.

Steve nods sharply, not daring to hardly blink. Thor laughs and releases him, smoothing Steve’s hair out of his face before shoving Steve’s flimsy panties off him. Thor yanks him close, pulling Steve bodily into his lap. It’s not so bad, Thor pushing them back up to the bed as Steve tries to just keep his balance with one hand on Thor’s broad shoulder and one hand around the plug to warm it up.

Thor reaches for the little vial of oil when he’s settled, and it’s not unpleasant when Thor pushes two oiled fingers into him without preamble. Steve bites his lip and hopes it looks coy, arching his back into it as Thor fingers him roughly. Thor gets it over with quicker if he thinks Steve’s close, trying to get the plug in him before Steve comes.

This time Thor gives him a wicked smile, though, sitting back to oil the plug and hand it back to Steve.
“You know what to do,” Thor says placidly when Steve just looks at the thing. He watches Steve with hooded eyes, and Steve knows this is a test.

The plug’s still shockingly cool when Steve presses it gently against his entrance, slippery slick as he tries to line up the blunt tip. Thor watches him, kneading the muscle of Steve’s ass with big hands and pulling his cheeks almost painfully wide as Steve tries to put the thing in. His stomach’s tight but he makes himself relax, closing his eyes and hanging his head as he pushes down on it.

Thor pulls his head back by the hair, though, making Steve gasp even as he keeps his eyes stubbornly closed. Thor wants him to want it, and he wants to see Steve’s face. The plug’s too thick to think of anything else, all of Steve’s attention taken by trying to relax around the thing as Thor watches him. Steve’s cock jumps as Thor tugs his hair sharply, making him arch his back as the plug finally slides all the way in to the base.

Then, before Steve can think of anything but the heavy weight pressing his cock to aching hardness, Thor yanks him up the bed to straddle his chest. Before Steve even knows what’s happening, Thor takes his cock to the base, his mouth shockingly hot as the plug had been cool. His beard rubs Steve’s thighs raw just like before—when he—Steve’s mind skitters away from the thought of Thor licking him out, blinded by how close he is.

Thor draws back with his teeth scraping along the length of Steve’s cock, squeezing his ass around the plug as he licks back down. It’s too much, the pressure and stretch of the plug all mixed up with the wet suction of Thor’s mouth, and Steve feels like he’s been punched in the gut as he doubles over the headboard and comes in Thor’s mouth.

Steve’s tumbled over onto his belly with his ass in the air before he’s even finished, Thor slapping him sharp across the ass. The muscles of Steve’s ass contract around the plug, making his cock pulse and leak even as Thor slaps him again. Bracing for it just makes him tighten around the plug worse so Steve lets go, tipping forward with his face in the sheets to try to just take it as Thor’s broad hand layers marks across his ass.

“Next time you will wait on my permission,” Thor says, yanking Steve’s hair as he lands a hard slap. Steve nods as much as he’s able, oversensitive cock throbbing as Thor makes him arch his back. “Then you will learn some patience.” Thor releases him, letting Steve collapse forward in a shivery heap as Thor pets his back and ass.

It’s not so bad, even shuddery over sensitive as he is with Thor gently squeezing his ass. It’s a dull, pleasant sort of ache, like punch taken in a fair fight, stinging bright as Thor smooths a rough hand over Steve’s hot skin. It’s not so bad, Thor leaving him to curl in the center of the bed as he cleans himself up and starts to dress.

Steve watches him with heavy eyelids, sleepy and punch drunk as Thor pads around the room and pulls on trousers. It’s not so bad, Thor petting him absently when he comes back to sit on the edge of the bed half dressed.

Thor finger combs his hair, fishing a ribbon off the little table by the bed to start braiding his hair. Ribbon in his mouth, he puts his arms akimbo over his head to start separating the hair into equal pieces just like the USO girls. If the USO girls were three times as broad in the shoulders.

Steve licks his lips, considering. He braided the girls’ hair plenty between shows. Thor likes it when he’s eager and not so skittish. At the very least, Steve can make himself inconvenient to hurt, more useful if Thor doesn’t hurt him. He doesn’t think Thor would ever break his fingers like Rumlow did, but there’s no way to be entirely sure.
"I can do that," Steve says before he thinks better of it.

Thor stops what he’s doing, giving Steve a look with raised eyebrows. He takes the ribbon from his mouth and hands it to Steve without a word, turning his back.

It doesn’t seem like such a good idea once he has to do it, kneeling up to comb Thor’s gold hair back. Up close he smells like sex and clean sweat, not so threatening or massive with his back turned. His hair’s darker at the roots, like it’s only that color because he works in the sun, like Bucky’s went gold at the tips the summer he worked painting houses. Thor’s got freckles across the tops of his shoulders too, golden brown under his even tan. The intimacy of it is strange even after all but fucking, and Steve tries not to think about it.

Steve works quickly, doing his best to do one neat braid like Thor had started. He’s clumsy with the ribbon, used to the girls’ elastics, but it doesn’t look so bad once it’s done. Thor runs a hand down his braid when Steve sits back, giving Steve something like an amused look before he gets up to finish dressing.

It’s not so bad, sketching in the evenings while Thor works at his desk. Steve sits with his back against the leg of the desk where Thor can pet his hair every once in a while, drawing his shoes kicked against each other just for something to do with his hands. The scratch of Steve’s pen and Thor’s is halfway companionable, like sitting with Bucky reading in the evenings except there’s no radio.

His hair’s long enough to hang in his face until he flicks it out of his eyes, the longest he’s ever gone without a haircut. Even when money was tight, Mrs. Barnes could spare time for it; Steve doodles Bucky in the barber’s chair, chin tipped up for a shave.

The ache of thinking about Bucky is blunt and dull these days, enough that Steve almost wishes for the bright sharpness of it back, because what if one day it doesn’t hurt at all and Steve forgets about Bucky all together. Then he’ll be stuck here, alone in all this strangeness just to do what he’s bid with no way home.

“Do not,” Thor says, interrupting Steve’s morose train of thought.

Steve looks up; doesn’t even know what he was doing.

“Cease your bothersome noise,” Thor says slowly. Taps Steve on the forehead with his pen for emphasis.

Steve blinks at him. Hadn’t even realized that he was flicking the hair out of his eyes, but hadn’t Bucky getting annoyed been most of the reason he’d ever gotten haircuts. Bucky had pomade, Steve had Bucky getting annoyed three times a year.

Thor smoothes Steve’s hair out of his face and goes back to his work.

Steve tries to be quiet, he really does. Sits hunched with his left hand pushing his hair back, trying to be still and invisible. If he thought Thor’d let him, he’d sit in the other room, but every time he shifts, Thor pulls him back within arm’s reach.

But his shoulders and back ache trying to sit hunched like that for long, and Steve knows the instant he does it when he flicks his hair unconsciously again.

Thor sits back with an annoyed noise. “Fetch the knife from my belt,” he says, pointing at the leather belt he’d left draped over a chair with his cloak.
Steve hesitates. It could be nothing; it could be to use on Steve.

“I will not tell you again,” Thor says. Mild, but enough to make Steve’s stomach flip.

Steve puts his sketchbook down and goes; he’s mostly, if not entirely, sure that Thor doesn’t mean to cut him in punishment for such a small thing, but one day Thor is going to finally decide to punish him for something, and the longer it takes, the worse it will be.

The blade alone is longer than Steve’s hand, the whole thing traced with intricate filigree. It’s too big for Steve’s hands but it’s nearly delicate in Thor’s when Steve passes it to him handle first. Thor snaps his fingers for Steve to sit between his spread knees, laughing when Steve tries to kneel to suck his cock.

Steve ends up sitting on the floor with his back against the chair, heart hammering as Thor tips Steve’s head against his knee to expose his throat. Then Thor combs fingers through his hair and neatly slices away the hair across the side of Steve’s head.

It falls across his shoulders and the floor, and Steve tries not to gawp. The sections Thor cuts away are almost eight inches long, ridiculous as Thor trims his hair back nearly to skin. He tips Steve’s head to the other side and forward but leaves the top long, setting aside the knife to braid a little section from the front and down one side, doing up the whole thing with a little ribbon in the back.

“There,” Thor says when Steve’s head is cold and bare and his hair’s not in his eyes anymore. “Now you look like a proper warrior.” He snaps his fingers for Steve to clean up the hair left lying on the floor, and the look Steve gets of himself in the mirror when he goes to dispose of it is strange and foreign as nearly everything else in this place.

It’s not so bad, having his days to himself. He still hasn’t gotten anywhere, but if he takes his sketchbook he can pretend to himself that he’s trying to find a way out, making sketches of what secret niches go where.

There’s not many, though, Asgard bereft of the kind of secret passageways Bucky’s pulp novels promised. Steve pretends he’s looking for a way out, but mostly he ends up moping as he retraces the same routes, as though the shimmering barriers to the lower floors will have changed.

Then he sees Fandral and turns to walk the other way.

“Steven!” Fandral calls, before Steve gets even two steps away. Bucky always said moping staring at his shoes was going to get him in trouble, and it looks like today’s that day. Fandral bounds up the stairs towards him, two at a time. “I was hoping to see you,” Fandral says, slightly out of breath and Steve even more on his guard. “You look quite nice today.”

Steve scowls at the floor, keeping his eyes down after learning his lesson with Loki. He can feel the tips of his ears pink, feeling ridiculous with his head shaved and his little ponytail tied up with a bow. “My lord,” he says finally, and it sounds sullen even to him. Sir worked fine in the Army.

“I’m not a lord, you may call me by my name,” Fandral laughs.

Steve says nothing, frowning at his shoes, wishing Fandral would just get on with it. He could just—walk away, and risk the consequences. He can feel Fandral looking him up and down like Rumlow used to, that kind of measuring, weighing look as he contemplates Steve’s sins.

“Are you—hm. Are you busy?” Fandral says, and Steve’s back goes tight.
Steve crosses his arms over his chest, eyes still on his shoes. Knows he’s hunching his shoulders but can’t help it. “My—master is expecting me,” Steve says, trying to think of a reason he can’t go anywhere, can’t let himself be alone with someone.

“Oh!” Fandral says brightly, and Steve knows he jumped wrong. “You must be lost, I’m headed that way now. May I show you back?”

Steve takes a sharp breath, caught in the lie. He shrugs tightly; at least if Thor is at the suite, Steve can put him between Fandral and himself.

Fandral sweeps them away from the steps, a grand, imperious gesture to match Thor’s even if he doesn’t touch Steve yet. “How do you find Asgard?” Fandral says, taking the lead away from the steps, away from Steve’s goal. He walks slower than Thor, glancing down at Steve.

Steve shrugs tightly as they walk; there’s no right answer. He drags his feet, trying to stay out of arm’s reach, but Fandral just slows to match his pace as other Asgardians flow around them.

“Midgard is quite pretty in some places, I’ve found. Where is it you’re from?”

Steve glances up through his lashes, uncertain where this is going or how it could be used against him. Hydra had his files, but what good it would do Fandral Steve can’t guess, and distrusts it even more because of it.

Fandral frowns down at him when Steve says nothing, looking like he’s thinking something over. What to tell Thor about Steve’s rudeness, probably. “Brooklyn,” Steve says, hating himself for his nervous worry.

“Is that quite a warm place?” Fandral says. “I confess I’m not familiar with—ah, here we are,” he says, pausing at a blank stretch of wall, decorated like a doorway.

Steve stares at him, baffled, until Fandral presses his hand to the stone and it falls away.

“After you,” Fandral says, waving Steve into what looks like—what can’t possibly be—a dim elevator. All it lacks are buttons, a fancy gilded cage like the one Bucky operated at a hotel for a few months.

No way out but through. Steve presses himself into the far corner, on edge in such a small space alone with Fandral. One thing to be alone on the stairs or in the suite, another thing entirely to be trapped in such a small place.

“I suppose it must be much warmer in Brooklyn, for you to be so chilled here,” Fandral says as the elevator moves. “Have you got—how do you call them—palm trees there?”

Steve stares at him, stomach unsettled with the questions and eerily smooth movement of the elevator, without a word or touch from Fandral. It’s not magic, but it sure looks like it, worse than the tarted up lightbulbs. Steve hasn’t got the first clue how to explain about palm trees and Brooklyn or how palm trees could possibly be used against him.

In the end, he shakes his head mutely, dropping Fandral’s look nervously when he frowns like Steve’s said something wrong. The elevator’s still moving, no way of knowing how close they are without floor numbers, and Steve’s heart races the longer Fandral stands there frowning at him.

“Right, well, have you read this?” Fandral says, fishing something out of a pocket. Steve nearly recoils back when he sees what it is. Das siebte Kreuz.
Steve shakes his head sharply. Sets his jaw, even more determined to never get himself alone with Fandral again. He's blond and blue eyed as any Aryan; no wonder the Nazis like Asgard so much.


“No,” Steve says, maybe a little too sharp. It's a heady, queasy rush saying no, Steve's stomach twisting over the possible consequences.

“Really? It's very moving, you seemed—”

“I can't read German,” Steve snaps. Anything to get this Nazi less interested in him. Not that it exactly stopped Rumlow.

“Oh!” Fandral says. “If that's all, I could teach you, it's not a difficult—”

Steve shakes his head, back pressed into the corner of the elevator to get himself as far out of reach as possible. Being locked back in the suite might even be worth hitting back if Fandral tries to touch him, if it means not being caught alone with the Nazi again.

The elevator comes to a smooth stop, and Steve all but bolts out as soon as the stone doorway falls open on the familiar empty hallway leading to the suite. Fandral follows at his heels, Steve hurrying back in the hopes that Thor is there to save him from this.

The suite is pitilessly empty, though, Steve hesitating in the doorway. “Hm,” Fandral says, pausing in the doorway behind him. “Thor said he would be back by now. I don't suppose you mind if I wait until he returns?”

Steve shrugs tightly again; what’s he supposed to say to that? It’s not as if what Steve wants matters one way or the other, and he doesn’t want to risk Thor finding out Steve told his guest to leave when they’ve clearly arranged to meet.

Fandral hesitates a moment longer in the doorway, but finally closes it and moves to sit on the divan. Steve hovers, dancing back out of reach with his hands tight and sweaty around his sketchbook, not sure what to do with himself. The steward hasn't been to lay out the evening meal yet, so there’s nothing to offer. Thor has Steve sit at his knee if he’s going to be sitting for very long, but Steve wouldn’t sit at Fandral’s feet even if he were told, so he just hovers there awkwardly, hoping to be dismissed.

Instead, Fandral holds out a hand towards him. “Thor says you're quite good, may I?” Fandral says.

In the moment it takes Steve to realize what he means, his stomach drops. Bucky never looked in his sketchbooks; Thor hasn't yet. Steve's mouth twists. He’d been stupid to think he could keep something private.

“If you'd—” Fandral starts, and Steve hands it over to keep from hearing the rest of his threat. Stands there as exposed as Thor stripping him down to stockings and panties, hoping that's not next. His ears go pink standing there watching Fandral page through his life, slow and appraising.

“These are really quite good,” Fandral says, leafing through. “Did you study, or—who's this,” Fandral says holding open two pages of Bucky, turning the book towards Steve so he can see the sketches betraying what a wicked sinner he is.

Steve doesn't dare look at Fandral’s face, or at the sketches of Bucky, shirtless and beautiful and happy. “He's very pretty,” Fandral says, turning the book back to himself again to page slowly
through more sketches of Bucky. “A companion, or?”

“A friend,” Steve says, voice rougher than he wanted. He keeps his eyes on the floor, chest tight. This is somehow worse than feeling turned inside out by Loki, because that was taken, but the sketches he put down thinking no one would see them but him. Bucky, the way he looked the last night Steve saw him. Bucky, the way Steve always wished he’d look at Steve. “He died.”

“Oh,” Fandral says. There’s the sound of him shutting the sketchbook, putting it down on the divan. “I’m sorry.”

There’s a long silence, Steve’s heart beating faster as it stretches out. Fandral doesn’t move, just looking him up and down. Steve watches through his lashes where Fandral rests his hands on his knees, wary for any movement.

“You must not like it here very much,” Fandral says after a long minute.

Steve glares through his lashes before he thinks better of it; it doesn’t sound like a joke, but how could it not be. He’s got no reason to like being trapped here, and it’s a cruel joke to pretend he might.

It must show on his face, Fandral frowning and looking away. Steve never could hide what he was thinking as well as Bucky could. If it were Bucky, he’d be able to charm whatever he wanted out of this Nazi.

Fandral coughs delicately, standing. “I’m sorry, I should be going,” he says.

Steve gets out of his way, doesn’t even care about the consequences. Better to be hit than needled and mocked like this, letting some stranger rifle through his life.

But Thor chooses that moment to return, pitiless in this as in all things as he startles Steve and Fandral both throwing the door open. He kicks the door shut behind himself without sparing a glance at Steve or a moment’s thought why the two of them are standing there awkwardly.

“You’re late,” Fandral says, Thor walking him backwards with a hand on his chest.

“I am here now.” Thor grabs him by the chin like he does Steve and kisses him roughly, pushing Fandral’s coat off him as they go.

Steve gets out of the way as they disappear into the bedroom, making for the door as fast as he can.

Not fast enough. “Steven! Come!” Thor calls, just as Steve’s turning the doorknob. He could just—leave, pretend he didn’t hear, pretend he was already out the door. But Thor’s not angry with him yet, and Steve’s never disobeyed him so blatantly yet. He’s weak and cowardly, more scared to find out what Thor will do to him than he is to do what he’s told.

Steve goes to stand in the archway to the bedroom, jittery nervous with his palms sweating. Thor leans over Fandral on the bed, the both of them half naked already. Steve twists his hands in his jacket; just because Thor doesn’t mean to fuck him yet doesn’t mean there aren’t still a dozen humiliating things he could be made to do. Just because it’s not so bad sucking Thor’s cock to get what he wants doesn’t mean it won’t be so bad being made to perform for Fandral.

Thor snaps his fingers impatiently the longer Steve hesitates, and that decides him. He should have bolted out the door when he had the chance, but he can’t be made to pretend eagerness. Steve’s stomach flips but he stays where he is even as Thor’s face darkens. He might not have a choice in it, but he’s not going to go willingly.
Fandral puts a hand on Thor’s face just as Thor opens his mouth to say something, Fandral pulling him close to murmur something in his ear. They both look at Steve sideways, Fandral appraising.

Thor’s face softens, whatever Fandral said to him.

“You are tender hearted as Sif,” Thor says fondly, leaning in to kiss. “Out,” he calls over his shoulder.

Steve doesn’t have to be told twice, grabbing his sketchbook as he nearly runs out of the suite.

Steve gets as far away as fast as he can, but they’re still fucking hours later when Steve’s belly gets the better of him and he creeps back to the suite. Steve still hasn’t yet found a kitchen or pantry and he can’t get the magic elevator to work for him, so his belly makes the decision for him to sit and wait for the steward, hoping Thor or Fandral won’t come looking for him.

The steward brings supper after a while, giving Steve a look where he’s still sitting against the wall by the door.

“He’s busy,” Steve says.

The steward doesn’t say anything to that, shouldering the door open with the trays.

He’s back out in less than a minute, bright red as he rushes out. He doesn’t say anything else to Steve, but he does drop a blanket on the floor and shove a hunk of bread and cheese into Steve’s hands before hurrying away.

Steve wakes up groggy and sore to Thor and Fandral kissing in the doorway, some time in the middle of the night, if the low light in the corridor is anything to go by.

“My apologies,” Fandral says when Steve sits up, and Steve hates himself for the way he can’t help cringing away with Thor and Fandral’s attention on him. They’re both half dressed and bed rumpled, Fandral carrying his coat over one shoulder. Steve can feel Thor’s mood shift, all but darkening the lamps in the corridor once Fandral turns to go.

Thor hauls Steve up by his collar, shoving Steve before him into the dark suite as he kicks the door closed behind himself. Steve stumbles, going down on hands and knees on one of the plush carpets.

He stays where he is, not hardly daring to breath as Thor circles around him in the dark, pausing to pull Steve up by the collar so that he’s kneeling at Thor’s feet, neck craned back to look at him. Steve’s breath comes shallow and fast, bracing for the hit he knows is coming. Fandral put it off and he’ll probably expect Steve to be grateful, but Steve tries not to think about that now.

“I do not wish to hurt you, but I will have you obey,” Thor says. Still quiet and even, no hint of a threat even as he runs a thumb over Steve’s lips and holds him in place by his collar.

“I don’t want to fuck anyone but you,” Steve blurts. It’s close enough to the truth; he can pretend to be eager, can pretend that he wants it, if it’s just Thor he has to pretend for, and gambling on boldness and Thor’s affection has gotten him this far.

Thor’s face softens, but he doesn’t say anything. Steve opens his mouth to suck Thor’s thumb, trying to be pretty enough to get what he wants.

“I do not care what you want,” Thor says eventually, fond as he fucks Steve’s mouth with his thumb.
“You will do what you are told, when you are told.”

Steve’s heart races when Thor pulls his wet thumb away, but it’s just to undo the laces of his trousers, working himself to half hardness with a few short pulls. Steve doesn’t hesitate this time, pretending eagerness if this is supposed to be his punishment.

Thor doesn’t bother being gentle this time, hand in Steve’s hair to fuck his mouth roughly. It hurts as Thor yanks the ribbon out of Steve’s hair, but Steve tries not to think about it, trying to concentrate on getting this over with as quickly as possible. Steve gags around his cock as Thor’s cold piercing brushes the back of his tongue, but Thor doesn’t give him room to get away, fucking his throat as Steve chokes around him. He couldn’t bite if he wanted to, eyes watering as Thor holds him in place by the hair. It doesn’t hurt, not at that moment, Steve trying to remember to breathe through his nose as Thor’s cock pushes into his throat, bitter and too big.

It’s mercifully short, almost a relief when Thor comes in his mouth and Steve gags against the bitter salty taste. Thor doesn’t let him go until he’s completely finished, making Steve swallow around his thick cock or choke, eyes streaming. Finally done, he lets Steve catch his breath leaning against Thor’s thigh, drunk on the smell of him and lightheaded with the sudden rush of air.

When Thor undresses him and folds him into the center of the bed, Steve’s throat is raw and his eyes stinging, but his cock’s hard anyway, because there’s something wrong with him. Thor settles around him, weight draped over Steve.

It’s not so bad, compared to the beating he was expecting.

It’s not so bad, once he kicks Rumlow in the teeth. Steve thrashes, disoriented to be suddenly back in his bigger body, but the satisfying way Rumlow’s head snaps back more than makes up for it. Right before he throws Steve to the concrete, cheek scraped raw against the rough floor and worse when he grinds his boot against Steve’s face to keep him down. Hands tied, Steve tries to shove himself up and just gets kicked in the head for his troubles.

He presses something into Steve, blunt and huge and awful, steady and inevitable until Steve’s body suddenly gives way, slick in the half a second before the raw pain registers and he tries to kick away. Rumlow just laughs low and dirty, fucking Steve with the thing as he gets his cock out. “What’s the matter, Cap? Thought you liked this,” Rumlow says, quiet and intimate.

Steve can hear him spit on his palm and slick himself up, the sound turning Steve’s stomach because he knows it’s mixed with blood from kicking Rumlow in the teeth and he wants to laugh at the absurdity of his own delicate sensibilities.

Rumlow pulls the thing out of his ass and knocks him across the back of the head, throwing it away before pulling Steve close with thumbs dug into the unhealed cigarette burns down the back of his thighs. It hurts, it hurts so much Steve can’t even separate the pain of being fucked from the pain of the cigarette burns splitting open, blind with it as he kicks away and gets himself flipped on his back trying to get away.

Except it’s not Rumlow, it’s Thor even though Steve’s still in his bigger body and no more a match for him than he was before. Thor keeps him pinned easily even though his hands are all the sudden no longer tied, yanking Steve’s hands over his head as he pulls Steve’s knees up over his shoulders.

He pushes into Steve in one motion, the pain unbearable after Rumlow, searing hot and tearing him open further. It’s slick and steady because there’s still blood, Steve knows it without having to see it, trying to kick away.
“Be still,” Thor snaps. He backhands Steve across the face, flipping him over to yank his hips up roughly. Even untied and in his bigger body, he’s no match, held down pathetically easy with one big hand in the middle of his back. He’s nearly Thor’s size and useless anyway, blind with the pain and his chest tight like he can’t breath, the heavy weight of his own fragility pinning him down no matter what size he is.

He wakes up smothered face down in the sheets, held down, and he kicks away before he’s fully awake. He thrashes free, panicking as he’s tangled up in sheets and his own desperation, trying to get away from the hands grabbing after him.

Steve scrambles back, heart in his throat as he kicks away. He falls off the bed ass over tea kettle and keeps pushing himself away until he’s backed against the wardrobe, trapped with Thor coming after him hair wild and knife in hand.

Thor wakes up more quickly than Steve, catching up at the edge of the bed with one look at Steve cowering against the wardrobe. He tosses the knife onto the little table by the bed with an annoyed noise.

“Come here,” Thor says, voice rough with sleep.

Steve squeezes his eyes closed, trying to swallow around the knot in his throat. He's not going to cry, not over this, not in front of Thor. He didn't cry for Rumlow, he's not going to cry now.

“Please just fuck me,” he says finally. Hates himself that it comes out thready and weak as he feels, strung tight.

He can feel Thor watching him in the dark, heavy and predatory. Slow and lazy because it doesn't matter what Steve does, like a cougar with a mouse. The silence stretches out, Steve hating himself for letting himself be spooked so easily, for letting himself be used like this, for letting himself end up here in the first place. “No,” Thor says finally. “You wish to be hurt, so that you may nurse your resentments and justify your defiance. Come here.”

Steve squeezes his eyes closed briefly, but makes himself stand shakily. His knees threaten to give out from under him, jittery with the urge to run and the knowledge of just how bad it will be if he does.

He goes, because what other choice does he have? He’s got no way out, dependent on Thor’s good graces to keep what little control he has over how he’s hurt.

Thor pulls him back into the center of the bed, not gentle, but not overly rough, either. Steve can feel himself shiver despite his best efforts and the heat, breath shallow as he waits for Thor to punish him for waking him up, for his disobedience, for being a broken, disappointing toy.

But Thor tucks Steve against his chest, rubbing circles between his shoulders until some of the tension drops out of Steve’s back.

It’s not so bad, considering the alternative.

Chapter End Notes

So I lied about this nonsense showing up this chapter, but! Soon!
I'm sorry this is basically the longest one finger two finger three finger dick ever written.
Chapter 10

A shorter chapter this time because it didn't break nicely with the next chapter otherwise.

Thor notices in the morning, because of course he does.

Steve brings him his breakfast like usual, stumbling heavy and tired because he slept fitfully. He sits at Thor’s feet but shies away from Thor’s hands in his hair, picking at his breakfast. He misses coffee, and chocolate, and sleeping alone in his own bed, sore from sleeping curled up in the doorway and exhausted from waiting for Thor to change his mind.

Steve can practically hear him thinking it over, the weight of his look heavy on Steve’s bowed head. Steve can hardly eat, what little honey and bread he does manage to eat heavy on his stomach. He doesn’t look up when Thor puts his cup down.

“You think I will beat you for your night terrors,” Thor says.

Steve hunches his shoulders, exhausted. Better to have it all over with, but he’s so tired he can barely keep his head up, let alone fight back, but maybe that’s the point.

“Rumlow is a fool,” Thor says. “Come here.”

Steve gets to his feet unsteadily, feeling drunk and clumsy with exhaustion. It’s not that he didn’t sleep, but that he did, just waking to real and phantom pains where he slept pinned by Thor’s weight all night. Thor tugs Steve up onto the divan none too gently, but he tucks Steve against his side, all but cuddling with Steve's knees drawn up. “My poor skittish rabbit,” Thor says, lying Steve's head against his shoulder as he goes back to his reading.

It’s bizarre, and comfortable, and Steve hates himself for the few seconds it takes him to drop into an exhausted sleep against Thor’s shoulder.

Thor keeps Steve on a short leash all day—not literally, thank god, at least not yet. He keeps Steve at his heels all day, through an interminable meeting about tariffs and imports that Steve doesn’t half understand and doesn’t try to. He’s not told to do anything, just leaning against Thor’s weight where he sits at the head of the table, drumming his fingers and occasionally prodding the conversation along.

Steve fades into the background, unremarked upon and invisible to everyone but Thor, who keeps Steve's head tipped against his knee to pet his hair. It's nearly a relief, to be secure in Thor's benign neglect all day after the uncertainty of having no control over how he could be hurt when he’s on his own. Steve dozes, eyes heavy with the safety of being ignored, lulled by Thor's blunt nails scratching through the stubble on the back of his head.

“You see?” Thor says in the evening, when Steve’s curled in his lap in just stockings and panties. “You are much happier when you forget to be willful.”
Steve doesn’t say anything to that. Happy’s not exactly the word for it.

Steve’s routine of moping and doing his best to avoid everyone but Thor is interrupted by a flurry of activity one morning, the steward tumbling in with a small army of porters, hairdressers, and launderers behind him.

One of them—human. Or, not Asgardian, the first person he’s seen who isn’t a Nazi, though she’s blond and statuesque enough she could be. She zeros right in on Steve, and it’d be unsettling if he had any attention to spare for it.

As it is, the steward sweeps her and Steve along with him into the little alcove off the balcony. Thor gives Steve a significant look as he’s fussed over by a hair dresser and a barber and a laundress laying out clothes, Steve’s stomach sure nothing good will come of any of this.

There’s a little flurry of activity as a low table the size of a cot is set up, and when the steward throws a cloth over it and leaves Steve alone with the woman, he knows it’s meant for him.

“You can get undressed,” the woman says, in an accent he can’t quite place. She sets out little pots and boxes on his table, arranged in neat little rows alongside all the paints he hasn’t made himself use.

She’s dressed like an Asgardian, soft drapes of grey cloth around her like a statue at the Met, but she’s too short for an Asgardian, even if she’s still a head taller than Steve. She’s got a collar the same as Steve, though on her it looks like a necklace, setting off her fine collarbones and throat.

“What for? What’s your name?” Steve says, fiddling with the hem of his shirt. They’re just out of view enough that Thor might not hear him balk over the noise of all the people fluttering around the suite, but not enough for Steve to be sure he won’t have to undress in front of a strange woman and everyone in the other room besides.

“Oh,” the woman says, turning a too-bright smile on him. “Dottie. And you’re Steve. I’m supposed to get you ready.”

“How long’ve you been here?” What he wants to ask is if she knows what year it is, but that sounds—crazy. Even to him, and he hasn’t talked to anyone who isn’t Hydra or an alien for more than a year.

“They sent me the same time they sent you,” Dottie says, not pausing in her work. “I was supposed to be where you are except, well, his majesty likes boys.”

“Oh,” Steve says weakly, his stomach twisting up. She gives him a considering, pitying look, and he can’t help wondering what he’d do if their positions were reversed. If he’d even know she was up here, if things had gone according to plan and Steve was sent off to fight in Niflheim. The guilty, weak part of him wishes that’s how it had gone, because it wouldn’t be so unnatural as this even if it were foreign and strange, and Steve hates himself for wishing Dottie in his place.

“Do you need a hand?” Dottie says, an obvious subject change.

Steve swallows and starts to take off his jacket, to get what ever this is over as quickly as possible.

Dottie takes it from him and folds it neatly, brisk and all business as Steve pulls his wool over shirt off.

“Did he do that?” Dottie says, reaching out to touch the bite mark just visible under Steve’s shirt.
collar. “Does he hurt you?”

Steve shies away from her hands. “It doesn’t hurt.” She’s relentless though, gesturing for him to pull off his shirt.

“I mean,” she starts, helping him out of his shirt, and then the fading bruise around Steve’s nipple and the little piercings are clearly visible. “Everyone knows what his majesty likes boys for,” she says, kneeling to briskly undo the laces of Steve’s trousers. He blushes hot, stepping out of them even though she’s clinical as a doctor. Steve’s just never been to a lady doctor, and even if he did, he wouldn’t go to an appointment in lacy black panties. “If he did hurt you, you could tell me,” she says, touching his shoulder gently.

Steve shakes his head sharply. “He hasn’t—” Steve stops. Can’t make him say such a coarse thing in front of a lady. “He hasn’t done—that, yet.”

Dottie gives his lacy panties a sharp look, making Steve blush to the roots of his hair. Worse still when she pushes them off him, so Steve’s standing there stark naked in front of a beautiful gal who’d have never given him the time of day before all this. He tries to cover himself with his hands, desperate to keep her from seeing the thick glass plug.

“Lie down,” she says, pushing him towards the low table.

Steve sits heavily, stomach trying to crawl out his throat as he realizes how this is going to go, even if Dottie’s brusque coolness is something of a comfort. Her disinterest and the sour, panicky feeling in his gut is almost enough to make him forget he’s naked.

Laying out in the brightly lit alcove where he keeps his sketchbooks and the unused paints is nothing like Zola’s lab, but his body doesn’t know that, pulse racing as she pushes him gently to lie back, exposed. There’s no restraints; there’s no needles; there’s no bright lamp blinding him. Just Dottie’s cool hands applying hot wax to what little hair he has at the base of his cock.

For what purpose, he can’t even imagine, until she presses a little strip of paper or cloth to it, and rips it away in one motion.

“This might sting a little,” Dottie says, giving him a bright smile as she turns to get more wax and Steve tries to blink tears out of his eyes.

“Where’re you from?” Steve says, desperate for anything to think about besides how much it hurts as she applies more wax.

“Dubuque,” she says, and rips another strip of hair off him.

“Where’s that?” Steve gasps. He thinks he maybe did a show in Dubuque once, but a lot of them blended together. Hours on the train or bus, the frenetic energy of getting ready for the show, supper in the dressing rooms with the girls and then back on the train to get to the next stop over night. If he was in Dubuque, he didn’t see much of it.

“Iowa,” Dottie says, putting more wax on him, other hand on his narrow chest. She strokes his sternum absently, fingernails ghosting up and down.

She’s brisk and efficient, not even pausing when she has him pull his knees up and she sees—has to see—the base of the thick glass plug in his ass. Steve never thought he would be so grateful to have the hair ripped off his balls to distract him from something even worse, but there it is.

After, she presses a cool cloth soaked in what smells like witch hazel into his hands, helping him sit
up as he presses the cloth to his sore crotch. Not how he’d hoped his first time naked with a woman would go.

“What’s he like?” Dottie says, setting out a little mirror to face him. She moves around behind him, taking the ribbon out of his hair and gently combing her fingers through.

Steve shrugs tightly, or as much as he can naked and so exposed. “Fine, I suppose.”

“He must like you very much.” She puts a little pomade on her hands, working it into his hair.

“I-- I guess,” Steve says, watching her hands in the mirror. She starts to braid a little section of his hair, working quickly to twist it around itself before setting it aside to do the next one.

“Doesn’t he?” Dottie says. “Up here with all your pretty clothes and your little paints and things.”

Steve closes his eyes for a second. “I suppose. I wish he didn't. I just want to go home.”

“Hmm,” Dottie says, combing a section of his hair to stand up. “It could be worse, though, couldn’t it?” she says. “It's not so bad, you just have to look on the bright side.”

“I know,” Steve says, and how petulant does he sound, when he doesn’t know how bad she has it. “I just—don't you worry you'll never see any one again, your friends, your family?”


“Oh,” Steve says. Even a million miles from home and he can't talk to a lady without tripping over his own feet. “I'm sorry. Neither have I, except for—a girl—a woman I knew, but I don't suppose she misses me much.”

“Pretty little thing like you?” Dottie says, plaiting his hair like Bucky’s sisters with their dolls. “I'm sure she does. What's she like?”

It’s nearly a comfort, talking about Peggy. Less like the ache of thinking about Bucky because he can talk about her without hating himself, how smart and pretty she is, how brave she is still fighting the good fight. Steve rambles as she braids his hair, Dottie laughing at the story of Peg punching Hodges until he gets to Phillips dressing her down.

“Agent Carter?” Dottie says sharply, going still as a strange little series of emotions flickers over her face.

Steve breath catches. “You know Peggy?”

“Sure,” Dottie says, her expression ticking over into her sunny smile. “We roomed together in London for a while. Peggy's swell.”

“I hope she's okay,” Steve says.

“Peggy always comes out on top,” Dottie says.

“How’d you get here?” Steve asks as she finishes with his hair. He barely recognizes himself in the mirror, hair braided and twisted high like a little rooster, and she’s barely started.

“Hmm?” Dottie says, distracted as she sets out little pots of makeup. Then she focuses on him, her eyes rolling towards him oddly as another series of emotions flicker over her face like she’s trying them on: amusement, a little smirk, and finally a wide-eyed innocent look. “I applied for a typing pool position.”
Steve bites his lip and looks away, ashamed of himself. At least he knew what he was getting into when he let Hydra take him alive.

She takes his face in hand, tipping his chin up to start lining his eyes. Steve stays still like he watched the USO girls do, letting her take the pencil to his eyes and smudge the dark mark around them. Tries not to look at himself in the mirror as she dabs pink on his lips.

Then the earrings; Dottie sets out a little jewelry box and holds a couple different sets up to his ears, lips pursed as she decides. One set’s a gaudy, heavy sort of thing, dark blue drops set in gold that make Steve’s ears ache just to look at; another set’s little pearls on a chain; another’s just a set of shimmery gold. She decides on a set of shimmery gold chains mixed with little blue drops, and Steve’s just relieved that they’re light enough to only swing a bit when he turns his head. She puts another little blue drop in his right ear, but leaves the other rings in.

She at least takes enough pity on him to hand him the next set of jewelry out of her box, Steve wanting to die when he realizes what it is. Two sets of gold rings, one just big enough to fit behind the head of his cock, the other a complicated thing with chains and beads and a polished jewel. He gets the first on with no trouble but turns the other over in his hands, no idea how to even start.

Dottie takes it from him then and Steve wishes he could just throw himself out the window. Her hands are cool and brusque, the second time a woman’s ever touched his cock, and it’s to fasten one thin chain around his balls and one around his cock, the jewel settled right at the base of his cock. Another connects the chain around his cock to the chain around his balls, Dottie making sure his balls are safely to either side before she clips it all in place.

The only small mercy in the whole thing is that he doesn’t get hard—or, at least, not any harder than he was before because of the plug. There’s something wrong with Steve, that he’s naked in front of a woman for the first time and desperately grateful that he’s not hard, clumsily trying to cover himself even though she’s had her hands all over him.

Dottie doesn’t seem to think anything of it, though, and that’s almost worse, dressing him brusquely in the flimsy thin black cloth, held in place with a delicate gold chain low on his hips. A loin cloth, like Tarzan in the movies. It sits so low the base of his cock is nearly visible, narrow enough that his ass is almost entirely uncovered, flimsy thing enough that it’s got to be see through.

“You sure he hasn’t hurt you?” Dottie says once he’s as dressed as he’s going to get. She pushes him down to sit on the little table again, getting out more makeup.

Steve shrugs uncomfortably as she dips fingertips into blue paint and starts to paint him with lines across his face, chest and shoulders. She saw the plug. Thor hasn’t—hit him, yet. The rest is too coarse to say in front of a lady, and it doesn’t really count if Steve all but wanted it. “I’m not a fairy,” he says, his voice rough.

Dottie doesn’t say anything to that, just going on painting his face with a non-committal noise.

“Tell me about Iowa?” Steve says. She does; it sounds like something out of a radioplay. Fake like a storybook, almost as unreal as Asgard but comforting anyway, letting Dottie’s voice wash over him as she works.

By the time she’s done, he’s painted and jeweled head to toe, unrecognizable in the mirror. First she painted him with blue war paint, spiraling designs over his thighs, chest, shoulders, back and face, and then she piled more jewelry on him. His lined eyes look big and strange even to him, and the long earrings making his face look sharp and fey.
She clipped a thin chain between his nipple rings, layering a fine mesh collar draped over his shoulders to drip down his back and chest like a parody of Thor’s armor. Another set of fine chains around one of his thighs, clipped to the thin band of his loincloth to keep it up, and a set of arm bands and ankle bracelets to match his collar and bracelets. By the time she’s done, he’s wearing more gold than he’s ever even seen in his life, probably worth more than he’d ever earn in his life.

After Dottie pronounces him fit for consumption, Thor looks him up and down from where the steward’s arranging the folds of his red cloak neatly. Thor’s as dressed as Steve is naked, hair braided back and wearing his full armor like he does for court sometimes.

“Today you get your wish, my pretty rabbit,” Thor says, stepping away from the steward to run a hand down Steve’s jaw and shoulder. He runs a thumb over Steve’s pined lips, Dottie making a displeased noise.

“My wish?” Steve says, stomach gone cold, hoping this all hasn’t been a prelude to Thor fucking him in front of all these people.

“You have been looking for a way out of the keep all these weeks. Tonight we celebrate the Midgardians’ latest gifts, and show off my very pretty war prize.”

Steve, he realizes with a sinking stomach, is the war prize.

Chapter End Notes

Dottie Underwood, world's most terrifying aesthetician.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Some alcohol related dubcon this chapter.

If not for the leash in Thor’s hand, Steve would have stumbled to a stop, tripping over his little gilded sandals.

The keep opens out into a broad courtyard with the city and water beyond, nearly more people packed into the courtyard than Steve’s seen since he shipped out from New York. People—Asgardians and people both, a little black knot of SS just visible through the crowd, but not close enough for Steve to make out if any of them are Rumlow. Some of the humans have collars like Steve and Dottie, moving silently through the crowd with platters and trays, nearly invisible from the way the Asgardians treat them, but then there’s some humans without, dour looking men and a few women who give Steve distasteful looks and avoid the clot of SS uniforms.

Thor gladhands through the crowd, radiant and enormous in the setting sun. He’s larger than life, broad in his armor and cloak with incongruous flowers braided into his hair, and Steve can’t help staring at him wild-eyed in the gold light. He is beautiful, and if Steve weren’t half naked and a million miles from home, he might even appreciate it.

Head up, shoulders back, eyes down, Thor had said again as they made their way down through the keep, and Steve blanches to be caught gawking when Thor glances back at him. But Thor just gives him that pleased, predatory look, wrapping the thin chain connected to Steve’s collar around his hand. It’s a threat or a promise, and Steve swallows hard.

No one but Thor pays him much mind, all the humans but the servers giving them wide berth as they make their way through the crowd. There are long tables throughout and musicians playing somewhere, and Steve’s stomach twists as he realizes how the evening is going to go.

If no one pays Steve much mind, Thor more than makes up for it with the way he can’t seem to let Steve out of his sight for a moment, pulling Steve close to run absent fingers down his back or arm. Steve goes on clumsy feet, conscious of his own fragility barely brushing Thor’s shoulder. Once, Thor pulls him close by the leash and Steve stumbles into him, catching himself with a hand on Thor’s hip just below his armor, shocked to be standing so close with his thumb all but hooked into the band of Thor’s trousers where it’s just hidden by his heavy cloak.

Steve looks up, pulse racing as he opens his mouth to apologize, but Thor looks at him like he does in the evenings sometimes, heavy and warm as he puts a hand on Steve’s face, thumb tracing over his painted lips. Even frozen still as he is and conscious of the crowd moving around them, the gesture goes straight to Steve’s cock, Thor parting Steve’s lips and watching his mouth. Steve’s suddenly, painfully aware again of the ring around the head of his cock and the chain around the base of his cock, nearly visible through the flimsy fabric of his little loincloth.

And then Thor turns away before Steve can get embarrassingly hard, Volstagg pressing a cup into Thor’s hand as he moves past them in the crowd. Face hot, Steve stumbles after them as Thor follows. One of the servers, a man about Steve’s age with blond hair and a dark beard, presses a delicate glass into Steve’s hand, and he drinks it without looking at it, the burning liquor almost a
comfort. At least if he’s drunk he won’t have to think about any of this so much.

Because it’s clear enough that he’s going to be on display at Thor’s feet all night, a low dais framed by the opening of the courtyard, Loki already sitting in one of the three chairs on it. They’re equal in height, low tables set out below where Volstagg, Hogun, Fandral and others are already sitting down to supper. Steve blushes hot when Thor takes Sif’s hand and she gives Steve a cool look up and down, making their way to the dais where Thor takes the center chair.

Steve presses close to Thor once he’s seated at Thor’s feet, hating himself for trying to hide, but the urge is overwhelming with being on display in front of so many people. Worse than court, worse than being on stage, because Steve’s never been so naked and he can feel Fandral, and the SS, and everyone else looking at him where Thor runs a hand over the back of Steve’s head and down, trailing fingers through the sparkling collar draped down his shoulders and back. The earrings and collar are suddenly much heavier than they were before.

“Really?” Loki says under his breath, pointedly not looking at Steve.

“Midgardians love a show, brother,” Thor says.

“You love a show,” Loki snaps back.

“Enough,” Sif says, and the both of them nearly snap to attention, a steward stepping forward to begin introducing the dour men and women who step forward to make stiff bows. Loki puts a smile on, fast as Bucky snapping at Steve and then putting a smile on for their dates.

The introductions drag on, unfamiliar German and French and American and Japanese names Steve doesn’t try to pay attention for, concentrating on Thor’s hand on his head and the little glass of liquor which gets refilled for him occasionally. He can feel Sif frowning at him, hunching his shoulders against it because he doesn’t know what else to do, until she snaps her fingers for water and a server brings a clay cup for Steve.

Steve drinks it greedily, drunker than he thought on an empty stomach. He leans his head against Thor’s thigh, sleepy and pliant as Thor strokes his hair absently.

There’s more introductions, seemingly unending with so many more humans than Steve’s seen since finding himself on Asgard, and he’s too shamefaced to want to know who any of them are. Better to just be able to fade into the background, even though he knows he was painted and dressed up to do exactly the opposite.

Thor, Sif, and Loki eat between introductions, talking over Steve’s head and to the Asgardians at the tables around them. If his stomach weren’t so twisted up with anxiety, Steve would have been hungry before, but the smell finally does it, big roasts and platters of food brought in and out as the servers start pouring big jugs of beer. Steve watches a plate carried away, not caring that he can feel Fandral watching him.

Thor finally glances down at him then, laughing short at Steve watching the servers covetously. He tears off a little piece of bread to dip in honey, holding it down in front of Steve, and the meaning’s clear enough; Steve balks.

“You will have nothing tonight but from my hands,” Thor says quietly, tucking a strand of Steve’s hair back with his other hand, intimate and gentle for all that it’s both a threat and a promise. From the tone of his voice, it could be just the two of them, not on stage in the middle of a crowd with Fandral and everyone else watching.
Steve looks up at him and knows exactly what he looks like, to Thor and everyone else. Eyes lined, lips pink, and mostly naked, he already looks like a fairy even if no one but Thor knows about the thick plug in his ass.

Not breaking Thor’s look, Steve parts his lips and allows himself to be fed. His pulse picks up, but Thor wants him obedient and eager, and Steve can pretend at both of those. Thor’s face softens, watching Steve’s mouth linger on his callused finger tips.

The steward breaks Thor’s attention with a short cough. “Herr Doktor Arnim Zola, Majesty,” he says, and Steve’s heart nearly stops.

Zola makes a curt bow, little beady eyes assessing Steve like something under a slide as the steward introduces the rest of his entourage, faces Steve half recognizes from being jabbed and measured and strapped down with blinding lights in his eyes. He presses himself to Thor’s thigh before he realizes he’s doing it, but then Zola’s gone, shuffled off into the crowd like the rest. Loki doesn’t miss Steve’s reaction, giving him an unreadable look while Thor pets his hair absently.

Steve makes himself breathe evenly, closing his eyes against the rest of the introductions. Zola’s here because Steve won. The humans getting introduced are all Herr Doktor, Frau Professorin, Doctor this and Professor that, hostages even more than Steve is because Steve told Thor it would cripple the Nazis’ atom bomb and super soldier projects; no wonder they all look so dour. It’s a little like winning, even if it means Zola looking him over like a dissection project.

The evening wears on, the interminable introductions of the Nazi scientists finally over as they disperse into the crowd and supper finishes. Steve tells himself he’s fine, eating from Thor’s hands and put on display like a trophy. That being Hydra’s trophy got him into this position and he was able to use it against them is only a small consolation.

The introduction of the hostages finally over, the crowd starts to move out through the city. If Steve had a moment’s relief that the whole sordid ordeal might finally be over, it doesn’t last long. Thor pulls him to his feet and they move with the crowd, Steve stumbling through the massive gates of the keep on unsteady feet, pulled along on his pretty little leash though the dark city.

Full dark as it is, he can’t see much but the bowers of climbing flowers growing up over doorways and the neat streets winding away in every direction. It feels almost like the little villages of Italy, with their cobbled streets and flowers everywhere, but broader and older. Thor walks with one hand on Steve’s shoulder and Fandral, Sif, and the rest walk around them, so there’s no bolting for it, if Steve even thought he had anywhere to run in his thin little sandals. The only mercy is that the night is warm enough for even Steve to not freeze, just goosebumps when they make it to the harbor’s edge and Thor settles them in a pavilion, Steve nearly in his lap.

There’s boats out on the water, low and dimly lit as Steve tries to disappear with Thor trailing fingers up over the back of his thighs and ass, right there in public like Sif isn’t right there. That Hogun leans into kiss her neck and Volstagg pets her thigh is beside the point, Steve blushing before he pointedly turns his attention to where Fandral and Thor are bickering over a horse race again while more food and beer is served.

One of the human servers—the same blond one as before—gives Steve a half second’s appraising look and then shifts his attention to Thor, looking him over. Steve can see him make the decision, putting on the kind of bedroom eyes girls used to make at Bucky when they were out dancing, and Steve feels suddenly just as small and invisible as he did then, even though he’s still got Thor’s hand on his thigh.
Thor scans the crowd, and Steve makes a decision. He leans into Thor, draping himself across his lap, putting on what he hopes is bedroom eyes as Thor gives him a bemused look. He wets his parted lips like the chorus girls did and he feels Thor’s attention really snap to him then, Thor putting a big hand along his neck to trace a thumb over his lips. “You are being a wicked distraction,” Thor murmurs in Steve’s ear, making him blush hot as Thor turns back to Fandral like nothing happened.

The crackle and hiss of fireworks saves him, the low thunk of a mortar being launched from one of the boats in the harbor making Steve startle until Thor tucks him more tightly against his side. Fandral and Thor talk through it, and it’s halfway soothing and familiar, like watching fourth of July fireworks with Bucky, if Steve tries to forget about Thor’s hand on his ass. It’s dark enough that he nearly can, if he also tries to ignore Sif, Volstagg, and Hogun kissing to the other side of them, or more than kissing if Steve doesn’t ignore them hard enough.

The crowd swells after the fireworks are over, even facing away to the harbor it’s not hard to tell. There’s music picking up faster behind the pavilion, the sound of laughter and maybe dancing as Fandral finally excuses himself.

Tucked against the hard armor over Thor’s chest, Steve feels the most secure he has all night, safely ignored in the dark until Thor’s attention starts to shift to him, trailing fingers down the back of Steve’s thigh and up the inside of his knee. At the other end of the pavilion, Steve thinks Hogun has just knelt between Sif’s knees, but Thor keeps him from looking anywhere. Thor just pets him as the blond server who’d been making eyes comes to refill Thor’s beer, the server lingering significantly until Thor waves him away.

“What do you think of that one?” Thor says, leaning in. His breath is hot against Steve's ear as he strokes the soft skin of Steve's inner thigh. “Pretty, no?”

Steve swallows, not sure what’s alcohol and what’s nerves and what’s his cock getting traitorously hard. He is—pretty. Lithe, muscle defined like an artist's model even if the unruly mop of bleached hair makes him look younger than he probably is.

“You would make a pretty pair,” Thor says, hooking a thumb into the chain between Steve's nipples to tug. Steve shifts nervously, cock stiffening even though they’re in clear view of anyone walking along the harbor and Steve all but naked. Thor’s lips are hot against his ear, holding the chain painfully so that Steve has to arch his back. “He has a pretty mouth,” Thor murmurs, so quiet it makes Steve’s stomach flip, intimate and low in the middle of the crowd. “Do you think you could come from him licking you open?” Thor says, and Steve’s breath catches, because he probably could. “Perhaps I will have him make you open and slick for me to fuck, and then you will be allowed to come.”

Steve swallows hard, making another decision. He shifts and Thor lets him go, watching him with hooded eyes as Steve moves to kneel between his spread legs and looks up at him with big eyes. Steve can imagine how he looks, mouth swollen and pink from the makeup and Thor’s fingers, thin shoulders framed by the draped jewelry and Thor’s knees, lined eyes and the earrings and his braided hair making him look delicate and fey.

Looking up at Thor, where Steve can see exactly how hard he is, it suddenly doesn’t seem like as good an idea, Thor massive and broad with the firelight reflected off his armor. Steve licks his lips and pushes on anyway, breath shallow as he reaches to undo the laces of Thor’s trousers. No one’s paying attention to them, so many other people fucking around them it won’t matter that Steve’s sucking cock here where anyone can see. Thor likes it when he’s eager and just a little willful.

Thor cups the back of his neck gently as Steve bows his head to suck the tip of his cock, slow and lazy. It’s easy enough to block out everything else, world narrowed down to Thor’s cock filling his
mouth and his hand on the back of Steve’s head, firm and heavy. Not enough to fuck his mouth but
enough to keep him in place now that he’s there, no backing out.

Steve goes slow, hand around the thick base of Thor’s cock as he tries to take the head of his cock in
his throat. The piercing brushing the back of his tongue makes him gag, but he just backs off and
tries again, choking around it once until his throat settles and he swallows around Thor’s cock.
Thor’s fingers go tight in his hair, ruining Dottie’s hard work. He’s close, if Steve knows anything
about him, thighs tense under Steve’s hands.

Steve picks up the pace, taking Thor’s cock deep enough his nose is nearly pressed to the hair at the
base of his cock, drunk on the smell of him before backing off to circle his tongue over the head of
his cock.

“Slowly,” Thor says, tugging his hair in warning, and Steve takes it as a challenge. He hollows his
cheeks, determined to make Thor do what he wants for once.

Thor pulls him back by the hair, but Steve’s teeth on the head of his cock stops him. Steve tongues
his piercing slowly back and forth, teeth caught just behind the ridge of Thor’s cock.

“You are very wicked,” Thor says, voice rough.

Steve holds his look, willful as he dares, playing with Thor’s piercing.

Thor groans and shoves him back down, fucking Steve’s mouth with a hand in his hair to set the
pace. He’s not rough, but he’s not as gentle as he was either, holding Steve down with one heavy
hand as he comes in thick pulses, Steve trying to swallow around him even as he can feel some of it
slip down his chin. There’s something wrong with Steve that he’s nearly hard enough to come from
just that, nipples aching with the weight of the chain and skin hot under Thor’s hands.

“Stay,” Thor says, hand heavy on the back of Steve’s head as he tries to pull away.

Steve closes his eyes, head resting against Thor’s thigh. It’s nearly comfortable, not having to think
about anything, not having to worry about anything but keeping his jaw loose and sucking Thor’s
softening cock. Thor strokes his hair, hand heavy on Steve’s head and neck, halfway affectionate if
Steve’s jaw didn’t ache. He smells like sex and leather and woodsmoke, so overwhelming Steve
almost doesn’t want to think about anything else, floating on the sensation of Thor’s hands in his
hair.

Steve stiffens at the sound of movement and tries to pull away, but Thor twists fingers in his hair and
doesn’t let him. Volstagg, Hogun, and Sif, staggering to their feet, it sounds like. They murmur their
goodnights like Steve hasn’t got his mouth full of cock trying to will himself into the harbor, and then
there’s the telltale sound of Sif and Thor kissing. Steve wants to die, closing his eyes against the
humiliation, and doesn’t know what to do with himself when Sif pets his hair gently before they go.

Steve doesn’t get long to think about it, Thor pushing him away as soon as they’re gone to fuck
Steve’s mouth with two fingers. He’s still hard, or hard again, cock still stiff as he watches Steve’s
mouth around his fingers. It’d be scandalously vulgar, if Steve weren’t so hard from sucking his cock
he can hardly breath.

Thor pulls Steve up with the leash, yanking the flimsy thin fabric away as he settles Steve in his lap.
It doesn’t tear but it’s a close thing, the paint over Steve's thighs and chest smearing under Thor's
hands after Steve spent all night being so careful. Even in the dark he’s beautiful, broad as Steve is
skinny and vulnerable, kneeling over him so Thor has to tip his head up to look at Steve and run his
hands up his narrow chest. Thor tips him forward so Steve has to catch himself with hands on Thor’s
armored shoulders, ass spread wide open as Thor starts to work the thick plug out of him.

Steve turns his face into Thor’s neck, so hard he can barely think but still intensely conscious of the sound of the crowd all around them. Thor laughs breathlessly, fucking Steve with the plug as he draws it out until he’s teasing Steve with the widest part of it, pushing it in and out so Steve can feel how slick and loose he is. Steve whimpers against his neck, determined to not beg but desperate enough to imagine it.

Thor tosses the plug aside at that, big hands on Steve’s hips as he pulls Steve down into his lap. And then, before Steve really knows it's happening, Thor's cock pushes into him, slow and easy. He's so slick and open from the plug and Thor fucking him open it goes easy, no pain as Thor's piercing catches and pops in, slow and steady as Thor pushes Steve down on his cock almost gentle. Steve tries to take deep breaths and let it happen, fingers twisting uselessly in the fabric of Thor's cloak like that'll save him.

He's too big, impossibly big as Steve tries to adjust, thicker and thicker as he sinks down on Thor's cock. It doesn't hurt, not yet, but it's just a matter of time. Thor's hands are heavy and calloused on his ass, thumbs in the hollow of his hips. Inch by inch Steve feels like he's being split open, Thor's cock hot and slick. It just keeps going, and Steve tries not to think about how it looks but can’t not, his jaw still sore from trying to take his cock down to the thick base where Steve’s fingers didn’t meet.

And then it's over. Or, not over, but Thor's cock is fully in his ass, Steve in his lap shivering with the tension of trying to make himself relax, desperate for any measure of control over how much it will hurt. Thor pets his back, tipping Steve forward to lay his head against Thor's shoulder. It's halfway comfortable, halfway comforting, if Steve didn't have a cock up his ass just waiting for it to hurt.

“You are very pretty when you are so shy,” Thor says quietly, petting Steve's hair and trailing fingers down over his back and ass. His fingers linger where Steve's stretched open around his cock.

Steve shivers, can't help it, waiting for Thor to decide what to do with him. But Thor just keeps petting him, stroking Steve's hair and back until he relaxes despite himself. He tells himself it’s the alcohol, making him loose and pliant, but it’s nothing like he’d thought it would be, just hot slick pressure making him want to squirm in Thor’s lap.

“You will wait on my permission,” Thor says, wrapping a hand around Steve’s leash and pulling it up so he has to tip his head back and arch his back. He watches Steve with hooded eyes, and tipped back like that Steve can’t help having to see himself, delicate and naked in Thor’s lap, desperately riding Thor’s cock without Thor moving him now. Thor tugs on the chain between his nipples again, hand still on the leash so Steve has to arch his back as he fucks himself, nipples pulled painfully taught every time he rolls his hips.

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Steve breathes shallowly, trying to will himself to not come, a broken moan escaping him as Thor slaps his ass and makes him tighten around his cock. “Do not,” Thor says, voice low and warning as he spanks Steve again.
It’s not fair, and Steve comes with a broken gasp across Thor’s armor. He’s tight and shuddering on Thor’s cock, the steady pressure and slick heat as Thor fucks him through it making him feel like his strings have been cut. “I’m sorry,” Steve gasps, trying to hide himself against Thor’s chest. “I’m sorry, I tried, please don’t—“

Thor shushes him, big hands gentle on his back even as he cups Steve’s ass in his hands to keep fucking him slowly. “Hush, you are too pretty like this to punish.”

He undoes the clasps of his armor even with Steve shivering oversensitive in his lap, shuddering at every tiny movement. If being spread open on his cock was too much before, it’s unbearable after coming, Steve’s nerves feeling hot and electric as Thor’s cock moves in him. Thor shucks his armor off, wrapping a thick arm around Steve’s waist to pull him close and give him a few sharp thrusts to make Steve gasp against his neck again.

Thor picks him up then, and it’s all Steve can do to cling for dear life, arms around Thor's shoulders and legs shaky weak trying to wrap around Thor's waist. Thor digs fingers into his thighs hard enough to bruise, lifting Steve like he weighs nothing to bounce on his cock. It's too much, Thor using his weight to make Steve take his cock even deeper.

The sensation of being filled so full is too much to think about, ass tight even if he’s still slick enough for it to barely hurt. There’s a small part of him still aware enough to know he’ll be sore in the morning, rim already swollen and sore from Thor fucking him open with the plug and fucking him roughly, but it’s hard to care when he’s so oversensitive he’s not sure if he’s going to come again, or still riding out the aftershocks of the last one, or just a shivery mess as Thor handles him roughly.

Thor answers that for him, finishing in him with sharp strokes, grinding up into him as Steve shudders at the feeling of Thor’s cock pulsing in him and come leaking around him. Held tight against Thor’s broad chest he feels shivery and weak, fucked loose and open as Thor gives him a few slow, lazy thrusts, kissing across Steve’s shoulder to mark him with bright beard burn.

Thor lays him out on the divan gently, Steve loose-jointed and limp as he goes where he’s put. Thor leans over him, kissing down Steve’s chest, pausing to bite here and there, his mouth hot on the bruise around Steve’s nipple. “You are very lovely,” he says, leaning over Steve as he pushes two fingers into his slick, loose ass, and it’s almost sweet enough to be a distraction from the way he hooks his fingers up and makes Steve gasp and twist on his fingers. He fucks Steve gently, pushing the come leaking out of him back in until Steve’s half hard again, working the plug back into him slowly.

There’s no rest for the wicked, Thor bullying Steve to his feet as soon as he’s as dressed as he’s going to get again. Steve has a hot flash of resentment until he realizes that Thor’s walking them back towards the keep, and then he pushes it down and lets himself be herded.

Thor tucks Steve against his side, the leash in one hand and his other arm over Steve's shoulders. It could be halfway comfortable, like walking home from the bar with Bucky, except for the slick plug, the way Steve's legs shake, and the smeared paint over bruises telling everyone who glances their way exactly what happened. Steve keeps his head down, trying not to think about it and hanging onto the scrap of gentleness that Thor didn't go out of his way to hurt him.

Hard to concentrate on anything but keeping his feet under him, anyway, even worse when he catches sight of Rumlow, Pierce and a little knot of SS in the crowd, a black blot in the shimmering crowd. Thor pays them no mind, gladhanding through the crowd blithely as they make their way back to the keep. Steve's jaw hurts from the force of keeping himself moving under the weight of Rumlow's smug look, determined to not give him any attention.
Except for the tall shape of Loki at Pierce's elbow; anything else is impossible to see before Thor sweeps Steve along in his wake.

Steve's sore and exhausted by the time they make their way back to the keep, wending through the thinning crowd as Steve stumbles drunkenly in his little gilded sandals. Thor puts a broad hand on the back of Steve's neck and kneads the sore muscle as they walk, halfway affectionate and Steve leans into it despite himself. They catch sight of Fandral leaning against a wall with his hands in the pretty server’s blond hair, but Thor just snorts a laugh and keeps going.

Back in the suite, Thor's clothes and Steve's jewelry get dumped in a jumble on the floor, Steve thinking numbly that he could pocket an earring and buy a car if he ever gets out of here. Wear enough jewelry home and he could retire on it.

Steve scrubs paint off as best he can, falling into bed next to Thor to be wrapped up in his broad arms with Thor's cock throbbing harder against his ass like he could go again.

In the morning, Steve takes a deep breath and puts on the least elaborate of the earrings from the box Dottie left. He lines his eyes, trying to think of it no different from the stage makeup he wore for the USO. Just a costume, to do a job.

He knows he guessed right when Thor takes one look at him and bends him over the desk to fuck slow and gentle. It's just a costume to do a job, even if that job is to keep himself in Thor's good graces.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Brief mention of a dead animal in this chapter, in the context of cooking.

Thor gives him leave to stay in the suite until he's sent for and doesn't even make him wear the plug. Steve doesn't have to pretend to be grateful, thighs and ass sore from being fucked. It's a dull, pleasant sort of ache, but Steve's tired and more than a little hung over, and if Thor tells him to stay in the suite for the morning he doesn't have to worry about who'll see him with his lined eyes and his earrings.

“I'm here to get you ready,” Dottie says, waking Steve towards mid-morning where he'd fallen back to sleep on the divan. She pats his cheek as he sits up groggily, and he realizes he's got the outline of one of the long earrings pressed into his cheek where he slept on it.

There's no table and wax this time so his balls are safe, Dottie sitting him down in front of a mirror to braid his hair. “Did you have a nice time last night?” she says, combing fingers through his hair. “I only saw you a few times.”

Steve glances at her in the mirror. “I—yeah, it was okay,” he says, because it was. It didn't hurt and he finally got out of the keep, so it went about as well as it could have. “I hadn't seen the city before.”

“You should come visit me, I'll show you the city. The harbor's very pretty,” Dottie says.

“You can leave whenever you want?” Steve says, nearly twisting around to look at her until Dottie pinches him and makes him face forward again.

“How else would I do the shopping?” Dottie says, keeping at her work of braiding his hair. “Who do you think went to get all your paints.”

“Oh,” Steve says weakly, because he hadn't given it any thought beyond that the steward might have, but the steward is busy with Thor's errands. That Dottie might also have gone to buy the stockings and panties, or worse yet, the set of glass plugs, is a little more than Steve wants to think about.

Dottie finishes his hair briskly, braiding in little black and red ribbons before lining his eyes and painting his lips. No blue paint this time, and she doesn't make him strip. She does get out a needle, piece of cork, and little gold ring, though, and Steve eyes them suspiciously.

“Orders,” she says, in what seems like she means it to be an apologetic tone, but she doesn't look sorry at all. She watches him too closely, and Steve closes his eyes so he doesn't have to think about it as she leans in and takes his bottom lip between her fingers, waiting for the numbing ointment.

But she just stabs him through the lip without bothering, and it hurts like a son of a bitch when Steve jerks back from the hot pain of it. “That hurt,” he says, eyes watering from the pain after she's done pushing the little gold ring through his lip.

“I know,” she says as he tongues it, sore and strange. The nipple piercings and earrings he can
mostly forget about except when Thor plays with them, but this is inescapable, right there every time Steve licks his lips nervously.

“Come on,” she says, putting the makeup away briskly as Steve’s still pressing his tender lip. “You’ve got some time before court.”

“For what?” Steve says as she moves away, crankier than he ought to be. She takes a little pot of pale face powder to Thor’s desk and starts rummaging through papers, looking for something. “What are you doing?” Steve hisses, looking over his shoulder like someone’s going to come in any minute.

“This,” she says brightly, laying a sheet of paper out face down on the desk. She uncaps the little pot of powder and leans down to blow it over the sheet of paper. She holds it up in the light, tilting it back and forth like she’s looking for something, and Steve can just barely make out the shape of Thor’s hand before she flips it over and presses it to the surface of the desk, her hand spread to match the outline of Thor’s through the paper.

An outline of the keep springs up over the desk in shimmering blue light, Steve nearly jumping back from it until Dottie grabs his hand and presses it to the desk beside hers. The outline of the keep shivers, the top few floors turning green. The extent of where Steve can get before running into the barriers across the stairs.

“Now you can come visit me,” Dottie says, tracing a finger down through what has to be the elevator and waving her hand through the bottom few floors of the keep so they turn green. “The kitchens, and my room,” she says, pointing them out.

“Won’t we get in trouble?” Steve says, glancing over his shoulder at the door again, taking his hand from the desk. Dottie gives him a wounded look, pressing her hand to the desk where Steve’s had been and then quickly waving it through the outline of the keep so it all turns green before sweeping it all away.

“Only if we get caught,” she says, voice worried. “You’re not going to tell on me, are you, Steve?” Steve shakes his head sharply, sick with himself that she’d think that. “Good,” Dottie says, flicking the paper to shake the makeup powder off it before replacing exactly where it had been in the untidy stack.

She puts the powder away with the rest of the paints on the little table in the alcove where Steve keeps his sketchbooks, the box of makeup nesting next to the little box of jewelry and rows of paints. Then she takes his hand and bullies him out of the suite, Steve trying not to look over his shoulder every three seconds like he’s got something to hide.

Dottie gives him a conspiratorial look when they get to the elevator, and it opens for Steve just as easily as it did for Fandral, the stones rolling aside like something out of a fever dream. Steve does look over his shoulder then, but the corridor’s empty, and then Dottie’s tugging him into the elevator.

He staggers against her as the elevator drops, worse going down than it was going up, and faster besides. She catches him with a little laugh, Steve blushing to beat the band.

She takes his hand again when it stops, pulling him out into an open rotunda busier than Grand Central. Steve balks but Dottie’s hand around his is worse than Thor’s, tugging him forward with no room for argument.

It doesn’t matter anyway, none of the Asgardians paying them any mind as Dottie weaves them through the bustling crowd. Asgardians and humans go by with massive baskets of laundry, carts loaded with barrels, a couple of live, squawking chickens, and all of it loud, fast moving, and totally
indifferent to Steve. It's overwhelming and a relief all at once, like being back on the streets of New York if it weren't all so undeniably foreign.

Dottie pulls them down a broad corridor towards what must be the kitchens, if the small groups passing them with baskets of produce and the smell of baking bread is anything to go by. It's as beautiful as the rest of the keep, tall vaulted ceilings and tiled walls dotted with doorways leading to work rooms, store rooms, and further corridors. Steve gawks, trying to keep up with Dottie and memorize all of it.

“Dottie, my friend, how—” a male voice says behind them, and Dottie stops dead in her tracks so suddenly Steve nearly runs into her.

“What do you want, Pietro,” she says before she even turns around, voice as cold as Steve's ever heard her.

The pretty server from last night stands behind them, hands spread wide with an insouciant smile despite Dottie's tone. He is pretty, with the kind of smile Bucky used to charm his way into and out of all kinds of trouble. “I just want a word with my good friend,” he says, gesturing at Steve.

Dottie gives Steve a doubtful look. He shrugs; he doesn't need to hide behind her skirts.

“Alone, maybe?” Pietro says, and Steve's hackles rise. Dottie gives him another look and he nods tightly. He can handle himself.

“I'll be in the kitchens,” Dottie says, giving Pietro a pointed look before she disappears in the direction they'd been headed.

“Does he fuck you?” Pietro says as soon as she's around the corner.

Steve balls his fists at his side. “I'm not a fairy,” he spits, ready to prove it if he has to.

“That is okay,” Pietro says, putting a hand on Steve's chest to push him backwards into the little storage room. “I am,” he says, closing the door behind them.

Steve's gotten too used to being pushed around where Thor wants him, he just goes where Pietro pushes like he's boneless. And then he's got another problem entirely, because Pietro drops to his knees with a wicked smile and starts undoing the laces of Steve's trousers.

“I am very good,” Pietro says, all bluster and bravado as he pulls Steve's cock out.

“What—what are you—fuck,” Steve gasps, bent double over Pietro's bowed head because he is good, sucking Steve's cock like there's nothing else in the world.

Pietro hums around him and Steve can't tell if he's being laughed at and doesn't have the room in his head to care, Pietro stroking him slowly as he sucks the head of Steve's cock. His mouth's feverish warm and wicked, his tongue teasing at the underside of Steve's cock just enough to make Steve's breath hitch and catch.

The wall behind him is hard against Steve's back, cool counterpoint to Pietro's warm mouth. The only sound in the dim room is the obscene, wet sound of his mouth, Steve's knees weak despite himself. It's like something out of a dirty paperback, like the bathhouses Steve knew better than to visit, because he always wanted something like this more than he should, more than he can even now stand to admit to himself. At least with Thor he can pretend he doesn't want it; with Pietro leaning back to flick his tongue over the head of Steve's cock and look up at him with big eyes, it's impossible to pretend he wants anything but Pietro's mouth, even in a cramped little storage room
that smells like dusty soap and old tinctures.

Steve's hands are on the back of Pietro's head without his realizing it, and it's a heady rush, having his fingers in someone's hair, just the thought of twisting his hands in Pietro's bleached blond curls even if Steve's too polite to do it.

It's a heady thrill, too, the thought of kissing Pietro after, of sucking someone's cock and not being scared of them, and more than anything that makes Steve shudder. Pietro swallows around him, hands warm and steady on Steve's thighs as he rolls his tongue along the underside of Steve's cock.

“I can't—I'm gonna—” Steve says, tugging on Pietro's hair harder than he should, close and all the wires crossed in his head after Thor's threat to make him learn some patience.

Pietro hums around him again, taking Steve's cock deep and swallowing around him. Steve comes in his mouth with his fingers twisting in Pietro's long hair, knees gone weak if not for Pietro's long hands around his thighs pressing him back against the wall. Steve pets his hair artlessly as Pietro swallows, licking along the length of Steve's cock with swollen lips.

Pietro sits back on his heels to wipe his mouth with the back of his hand as Steve's trying to gather his wits to think how to return the favor now that he's got the piercing making his lip sore. He's already thinking about next time, about how to arrange to meet Pietro somewhere they'll have more privacy, more time. “You will tell him that was good?” Pietro says.

Steve blinks at him, still catching his breath. “What?”

“Thor,” Pietro says, standing with a crooked smile. He's taller than Steve, good-looking and confident in a way Steve has never been. “You will tell him I am good at this, yes?”

“Sure,” Steve says. He pulls himself together as fast as he can, keeping his face turned down to hide the shamefaced blotchy blush he can feel pinking his ears and cheeks. “Sure, yeah,” he says, shouldering out the door past Pietro so he can go back to hiding behind Dottie's skirts.

Stupid to think that anyone would want him but Thor anyway.

Steve finds Dottie in the kitchens, sharpening a little penknife and cleaning her make up brushes at a low table to one side of the huge space. It's easily bigger than movie theaters Steve's been in, arched with massive windows overlooking a courtyard garden and full of people. It's practically big enough to park a train in, separate spaces for ovens and deep fire places and the loud noise and steam of washing dishes at the far end. Steve gets shouldered aside by a pair of humans speaking Russian, hauling what looks like a half a slaughtered cow to a fireplace set up with a roasting rack.

Dottie puts her brushes aside and tucks her penknife into her belt when she sees Steve hesitating in the doorway, out of place with his earrings and lined eyes even though there's more humans moving around the kitchens than he's seen except for the previous night, and the handful of Asgardians paying them no mind. The humans are all dressed like Dottie, the same style as the Asgardians but plainer, nothing like the delicate embroidery and fussy jewelry Steve's wearing, and he feels more painfully conscious of how he looks than ever.

Dottie comes to take Steve's hand in hers as she shows him around, and even though every other human they see has a collar just like his, he can't help but feeling marked out with the way they stare or pointedly don't acknowledge him. No one says anything to him but Dottie, her chin up defiantly like she knows she's being seen with a fairy.

*That's Captain America,* someone whispers as Dottie walks him through the kitchen gardens, Steve's
shoulders hunched wishing he could just disappear. She squeezes his hand and doesn't say anything when Steve excuses himself to run back to the familiar misery of the suite on the thin excuse that Thor will expect him soon.

The flimsy little excuse for an outfit is still laid out on the bed where Dottie left it, and Steve undresses with numb hands. It's just a costume to do a job. Just like the USO.

Steve walks to the grand hall with his chin defiantly high, but it's a hollow, empty sort of defiance with no one paying him any mind, the Asgardians he passes ignoring him even though he's near naked and his shoulders are so stiff his back aches. In the side chamber, the steward clips the delicate leash to Steve's collar and checks his makeup before handing Steve the leash, and it all feels like being back stage before a show except he's got nothing to tape his lines to.

The hall's packed, Thor already seated on the throne, and he's scanning the milling crowd when Steve starts to pick his way towards the dais. As soon as he sees Steve, he smiles broadly, like Steve's the only person in the room.

And Steve, before he thinks better of it, smiles back. Drops it as soon as he realizes he's doing it, eyes on the floor as he blushes, ashamed of himself. It's just—been so long, and Steve's pathetic enough to be grateful for anyone happy to see him. Only Peggy ever looked at him like that, and she wouldn't if she saw him now.

Bucky wouldn't even give him the time of day like this.

Thor runs a big hand up Steve's thigh as soon as he's close enough, making him shiver in the cool room. It's nearly too much, after everything else, and Steve tries not to think about it. Pushes all thought of Bucky, Peggy, and everything else about the life he's trying to go back to out of his mind.

Except Steve smells it before he sees them, chocolates set out on a low table at Thor's elbow. Steve hesitates, eyeing them until Thor snaps his fingers.

Thor takes the leash from him, and isn't that a thing, handing over his own leash and folding to his knees obediently when all he wants is to put his face in the plate of chocolates. They're the fancy department store kind, like Bucky got his ma one year at Christmas filled with cherries in liqueur or nuts. Steve doesn't even care if they're the terrible nougat kind no one wanted to eat, he'd eat them all until he made himself sick. It's been more than a year since he had anything but Rumlow's terrible anise penny candies and right then he'd have killed for a strip of red licorice and a Hershey's.

Thor takes one from the plate, looking at it contemplatively as Steve follows it in his hand. Steve practically taste it, he wants it so bad. “You have been very good of late,” Thor says, still looking at the chocolate. It's melting on his fingers, and Steve would lick his fingers clean gladly just for that. Thor gives him an indulgent smile like he knows exactly what Steve's thinking. “Perhaps you deserve a little reward,” he says, and holds out the chocolate.

Steve leans in to eat it from his hands, looking up at Thor with big eyes as he watches Steve lick his fingers clean. It's just a costume to do a job, and Steve tries to ignore the nagging part of him that's bothered by how desperately he wants the chocolate, trying to enjoy what part of this he can. It's not fair, but none of it has been.

Thor gives him an indulgent smile, petting his hair and tipping Steve to lean his head against Thor's thigh as he closes his eyes to let the chocolate melt. It's as good as it smelled, solid all the way through, and Steve pushes away wondering what he'd have to do for another one. Thor traces his lips, lingering at the sore piercing, and Steve makes himself be still. It's just a costume to do a job.
Any thought of chocolates is swiftly gone, the doors at the far end of the hall opening to admit Pierce, Rumlow, and the rest of the little coterie of resident Nazis in their SS black. The crowd parts lazily, and it's clear enough what this session's been called for as Pierce makes his way directly to the dais.

“Majesty,” Pierce says as he takes his place at the foot of the dais, giving Thor a gracious bow and Steve a brief, disdainful look. “I see you have received our little gift of thanks for last night's welcome to our scientific envoy.” So that's what the Nazis called the hostages, trying to save face.

Thor picks up a chocolate, giving Pierce a contemplative look. “They are acceptable, though I cannot say I enjoyed the celebration last night as much,” Thor says, holding the chocolate down for Steve to eat, and Pierce's eyes jump down to Steve and back up, not quite able to cover his flash of annoyance.

Steve hesitates, unwilling to be used so publicly as a prop. One thing to be put on display like a trophy, another to be used to demonstrate Thor's disdain.

Thor gives him a pointed look, any trace of indulgence gone. It's not fair, but none of the rest of this has been, and what's a moment's humiliation against the possibility of losing his newly expanded liberty. Steve leans in and eats the chocolate from his hand as delicately as he can, conscious of Pierce and Rumlow's eyes on him.

“Ambassador, as fine as your gifts are, there was a conspicuous absence among Asgard's new guests last night,” Thor says, the chocolate tasting like ashes in Steve's mouth as Thor pets his hair. Steve tries to remind himself that this is what he wanted, that he's using Thor to destroy the Nazis' plans as much as Thor is using him. “I thought you understood my interest in Herr Schmidt's Ubermensch program.”

“Majesty, as I've told you before, the Ubermensch program has been shuttered and the other programs are all essential to the security—”

“You misunderstand me, Ambassador Pierce,” Thor says, wrapping Steve's leash around his hand. Steve leans away as much as he dares, stomach cold because he doesn't know how this is going to go, but it's not going to go well. “I did not request a gift from a brother, I demanded tribute from a thrall seeking vassalage.”

“You seem to like our other gift well enough,” Pierce says coolly.

“You promised a warrior and sent a rabbit,” Thor snarls, jerking Steve up by the chain.

Steve's hauled up kneeling, choking as he tries to claw at the collar cutting into his windpipe. Pierce gives him a flat, cool look up and down as Rumlow looks smugly over his shoulder, and Steve has just enough breath to hate them both even as black spots sweep in from the sides of his vision.

“All right,” Pierce says, smooth and cold as the marble Steve's cheek is pressed to. Steve closes his eyes, trying to be anywhere else. “We shall have it ready on your return from the winter court.”

“Up,” Thor says later, nudging Steve in the thigh with his boot.
Thor tucks Steve against his side as they walk back to the suite, leash in hand and running a callused hand up and down Steve's chilled arm and side. Affectionate, if Steve couldn't feel the ring of bruises darkening around his throat.

Back in the suite, Thor sits on the end of the bed and gestures for Steve to get his boots, running a hand through Steve's hair as he does. Steve bites his tongue, keeping his face turned away so he doesn't borrow more trouble.

Thor tips his face up, thumbing the piercing in Steve's lip, a sore ache in counterpoint to the bruising around his throat. Steve shies from his hands, leaning away as much as he dares and turning his face away.

“You are not a disappointment,” Thor says, combing fingers through Steve's hair. “You are very charming, and more than a little advantageous.” He puts a hand on Steve's chin to make him look up.

Steve jerks away, but Thor grabs him before he can get away. “Do not,” Thor says, hand hard on Steve's jaw. “Why must you sulk after you did so well? You may ask for any little reward you like, if it will cease your petulance,” he says, like Steve should be grateful getting stripped naked, strangled and used as a prop.

“I want to go home,” Steve says, and it sounds sullen and petulant even to him.

Thor lets him go, sitting back. The silence is heavy as Thor looks him over, Steve bracing to finally be hit. Steve's eyes sting and his throat is tight as he glares at the floor, face turned away.

“Well, you may not,” Thor says finally. “You wish to destroy Schmidt, do you not?”

Steve balls his fists on his thighs, squaring his jaw as he glares up at Thor. He knows how he looks: eyes lined, hair wild, half naked, pierced and decorated like a little toy kneeling at Thor's feet. He looks ridiculous, still hanging onto his useless defiance. But even if he can't fight Thor, he can still fight. “You know I do,” he says. It hurts to talk.

Thor stands then, so he's looming over Steve, and Steve braces to have his mouth fucked again. It'll hurt with the new piercing and the bruising around his throat, but he's mad enough he doesn't even care, no matter how hard his heart is beating.

But Thor unclips the leash and bends to pull the chain out from where it's stayed coiled under the bed all this time, and that's somehow worse than being hit. He clips the chain to Steve's collar and tips his chin up with a light touch. “You may have your willfulness or you may have your liberty. Cease your willfulness and Schmidt will regret ever sending you here.”

Then he just—leaves Steve there, going to have his supper in the other room. Steve can hear him moving around, getting his supper, pouring a beer, and settling with a book just out of sight. Steve's suddenly, painfully aware of how little he's eaten, how cold he is, and how much he'd rather be tucked against Thor's side, petted and warm.

He takes his jewelry off with shaking hands, putting it aside neatly. It's just a costume to do a job.

The last earring he throws across the room.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

More food issues and some sad in this chapter.

Thor throws a blanket at him when he goes to bed but doesn't otherwise acknowledge Steve, who sleeps curled up at the foot of the bed, cold and sore.

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Thor leaves him there in the morning, not giving Steve so much as a glance as he dresses quickly and leaves Steve there still shivering in the flimsy little loincloth and blanket. And despite his growling stomach, Steve's too prideful to say anything even when he smells the fresh bread of Thor's breakfast in the other room, too mad at Thor and himself to do anything but pull the blanket sulkily around himself and pretend he doesn't care when Thor leaves him there for the day.

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Steve yanks the braids out of his hair around mid morning, destroying all of Dottie's work. It hurts, because he can't see what he's doing and doesn't care, and the moment's satisfaction of having done it is gone as soon as he shakes the last braid out because it got him nothing. He wonders if she notices he hasn't come looking for her today, or if she'll come find him like this later, makeup smeared and chained to the foot of Thor's bed with bruises around his neck.

He can feel them darkening even if he can't get to a mirror, his throat sore and tender under his jaw as he prods at the crescent of bruises. It hurts to swallow, Steve sitting with his head in his hands so he can pull his hair to distract himself from it.

A small, traitorous part of him says he should have expected this, that there's no way out of any of this even if he can get out of the keep, because where would he go. Even among the humans he's marked out before he even gets into the city and the bridge beyond it, and except for Dottie, who could he ask for help. Bucky would despise him like this, painted and broken and useless, just like all the humans but Dottie despise him. That's Captain America, alright.

An even smaller, quieter part of him worries that he might never even make it that far, stuck here forever until Thor gets tired of him. Because even if he made it back to Earth—That's Captain America. People would know, with his pierced ears and his pierced lip, even if he could take them out and cut his hair, people would know. Even if he managed to make it back, even if he managed to somehow not get picked up by Hydra again, Rumlow, Pierce and the rest of the SS detachment know what Thor's done to him and wouldn't hesitate to put it out over the wireless. That's Captain America.

Steve's been deluding himself thinking he can have his fairytale ending and escape back to a normal life instead of trying to make the best of a bad job he's got no way out of.

He doesn't mean to cry about it; large, fat tears drip down onto his bare knees before he thinks better of it, and then it's too late and he's crying harder at the stupidity of it, gasping horrible, ragged breaths in case the steward comes in and hears. Even left alone as a punishment and he doesn't dare pretend he's actually alone, because what if Thor came back and found him like this. Steve pulls his hair, hating himself for being so vulnerable and weak.
It's a long time before he can get his breathing under control, the light sliding across the floor. Steve tips his head back against the bed and makes himself take deep breaths, watching clouds skid across the sky through what small sliver of window he can see. The weather's turning cool and crisp, Steve trapped here long enough for spring to turn to fall, and he's gotten nowhere but chained right back to the bed where he started.

Despair is a sin, and an unforgivable one at that. Steve fishes an earring out of the neat little pile of jewelry, the one of the pair he hadn't petulantly thrown across the room. He counts out the little pearl drops with shaky hands; ten, with a final larger drop. He hasn't prayed his rosary in more than a year, since well before Hydra sent him here. He dries his eyes with the back of his wrist, smearing makeup over his face, rubbing the little seed pearls of the earring between his fingers as he thinks about it.

Thor pays him no mind when he comes back late in the evening, not even giving Steve a glance as he tosses his cloak over a chair and pulls off his boots to change for thick stockings.

“Can I have supper?” Steve says, his voice rough. He's gotten soft since Hydra had him; he never begged Rumlow for food. But now his head hurts and he can feel the lack of last night's dinner, like a fever pressing behind his eyes, threatening to make him cry again.

Thor looks at him then, coming to stand over him and tip Steve's chin up to look at his puffy eyes and the makeup running down his face. Steve lets him, doesn't resist, but he can't make himself look Thor in the eye like this, pathetic and exhausted as he is. His mother always told him he didn't know how to pick his battles, and now he can't even do that, tired from the effort of making himself complacent.

“You are a mess,” Thor says finally, unclipping the chain from Steve's collar. “Go wash and you may eat.”

Steve stumbles into the bathroom on unsteady feet; he is a mess. He's so hungry he could chew his own fingers and cold enough he can barely feel his toes, but he washes his face with cold water to make the puffiness go away, combing fingers though his hair to make it less wild before dressing and lining his eyes carefully.

Thor's not in the bedroom when he peeks around the doorjamb, so Steve goes to fish out the other earring from where he threw it under the wardrobe, and doesn't hesitate when he puts them in and dabs pink on his lips. By the end of it, he's faint and shaky on the smell of food in the other room, but he takes the time to clumsily braid his hair along one side, tying it all back with a ribbon the way Thor likes.

Thor gives him an approving look over when Steve goes to stand by the divan for inspection, folding gratefully to his knees when Thor snaps his fingers without saying anything. Thor hands him a bowl of thick stew and a chunk of bread, letting Steve eat in blessed, ravenous silence at his feet as he goes back to his reading.

And then the real test, when Steve picks his head up enough to look the platters over and wonder if he dares try his luck for seconds. Thor sees him looking, tugging his head back by the hair so Steve's bent painfully back, head tipped against Thor's thigh with his bruised throat exposed.

“You will not be so petulant again,” Thor says, quiet and low as he tugs Steve's hair for emphasis.

Steve swallows, painful with the collar of bruises, keeping his eyes closed and his shoulders loose. “No, master,” he says.
Thor tugs on his hair again, sharper. “And you will cease your willfulness.”

“Yes, master.” The words are ashy and thick in his mouth, but he says them anyway.

Thor releases him at that, giving Steve an indulgent wave at the food set out. The department store chocolates are on a little plate in the center, but Steve avoids them, eating his fill of meat and bread until Thor tugs him up to lie with Steve's head in his lap. It's better than the alternative, and Steve tries not to feel like he's being forgiven.

Thor keeps him close the next few days, Steve staying at his heels or at his feet through meeting after meeting about preparations for the winter court. Steve doesn't know what that means and doesn't pay attention enough to find out except to know that it means Loki is always at the head of the table with Thor, the two of them bickering like schoolchildren over everything.

Steve tries not to betray himself every time they pass the stone elevator; he'd only borrow a different sort of trouble even if Thor never found him out. It's not an escape route and Steve has to make himself stop thinking of it as one.

Steve keeps his eyes down when Fandral, Sif, and the rest pile into the suite to play cards and eat, trying to stay out of the way and be as invisible as possible. He can feel Fandral looking him over with raised eyebrows, eyeing the dark bruising under his jaw. Steve hunches his shoulders against the weight of his look and Sif's because nothing good will come of it.

Sif and Thor argue about him afterwards, voices quiet in the other room when the rest are gone and Steve's dismissed to sit in the darkened bedroom, but it ends with Thor kissing her hand goodnight.

“Fandral will have you tomorrow night,” Thor says a few days later, and Steve knows it's a test of his obedience. He draws his knees up to his chest where he sits in the center of the bed. He tries not to wonder if it's because Fandral saw the bruising around his throat, tries not to remember the way Fandral's eyes lingered on the bite marks across his throat before.

Thor undresses in the quiet, ignoring Steve's sullenness. He doesn't want another day and night chained to the foot of the bed, so he tells himself it won't be any different than being fucked by Thor. Fandral hasn't gone out of his way yet to humiliate Steve, even if he looks too long at Steve's bruises, and Thor and Fandral both want to think of themselves as good men who wouldn't force someone. They're both liars, worse than Rumlow, but if Steve plays along they might not hurt him. Fandral's nowhere near as big as Thor, but he could still hold Steve down without trying.

Steve goes when Thor pulls Steve to him, letting himself be rolled onto his belly as Thor covers him with his weight. His heart races, but Thor hasn't hurt him yet, propping himself up so he doesn't crush Steve, just pinning him in place with his cock huge and hot pressed against Steve's ass.

Thor pins his wrists over his head, and between that and Thor's teeth scraping down his neck and shoulder, it's enough for Steve's traitorous cock to thicken where it's trapped against his belly. He breathes shallowly into the sheets, trying to will it away. If he just hated this too he could just—be miserable and stop hanging onto this illusion that Thor is ever careful or affectionate with him, like he didn't strangle Steve because he was a convenient prop.

But Thor's relentless, rolling his hips into Steve's ass so he can feel the slick head of his cock and his cold piercing sliding against his ass, threatening to push in. Steve shudders at the thought of it, of how hard he came the last time Thor fucked him, and Thor huffs a laugh against his shoulder.
He hauls Steve up with one arm around his waist, wrists still pinned down to the mattress so that Steve has to arch his back and press his face into the sheets as Thor pulls his ass up. Steve bites back a whine, cock throbbing as Thor nudges he knees apart so he's spread open with Thor's thick cock against his ass.

“Patience,” Thor says, smoothing a hand down the line of Steve's back, rubbing the head of his cock against Steve's oil-slicked ass like he's got all the time in the world. Steve shivers under his hands, remembering Thor's threat or promise to slap him red and fuck him hard, and wonders if that wouldn't be better than this careful gentleness.

Then Thor pulls Steve back onto his cock, slow and steady but with no room to resist. Thor releases his hands, wrapping an arm around Steve's chest to pull him into his lap as Thor sits back on his heels and takes Steve with him, spread open with no leverage to do anything but let his weight be used to push him down on Thor's cock until his ass is in Thor's lap. Thor just holds him there, running light fingers up and down Steve's chest and thighs.

He avoids Steve's cock, standing up so hard Steve can feel it leaking slick come against his belly. Thor trails callused, blunt finger tips up the inside of Steve's thighs and over his waxed smooth balls, making Steve pant and twist on his cock. With his knees spread wide over Thor's and his hands hooked backwards around Thor's neck to keep his balance, Steve doesn't even have the leverage to fuck himself on Thor's cock like he wants, useless to do anything but shiver under Thor's hands and vulnerable to his wandering hands.

Thor nips along his neck, beard rubbing Steve's shoulder raw. He feels hot and electric, trying to grind into Thor restlessly and just make Thor fuck him. Thor pinches his nipple to make him be still, biting his shoulder hard enough to bruise. Between the bruising around his throat, the hot, lancing pain of Thor twisting his nipple, and Thor's cock filling him completely, he feels like he can't breath, desperate for any friction or relief. His balls are painfully tight when Thor finally cups them, tugging gently to make Steve writhe on his cock.

He's close enough to come and Thor knows it, mouthing along his neck as he rolls both of Steve's nipples between his fingers. It's worse than having them pulled by the little chain, because that was sharp and constant, but this is unbearable, Thor twisting the little rings and backing away, soothing the soreness with the pads of his thumbs before pinching again, until he has Steve whimpering just from having his puffy, swollen nipples touched.

“Please,” Steve says finally, because he's far gone enough that begging is better than being punished for coming without permission. And Thor likes him eager and obedient, so he might even take pity. “Please, master, please,” he gasps, barely caring what he's saying. Thor wants to hear it, and that's all Steve can make himself care about.

Thor makes a pleased, possessive sound in the back of his throat, squeezing Steve's ass in his hands as he starts to finally fuck him. His lips are hot against the bruising over Steve's throat, pressed below Steve's ear as he rolls his hips up into Steve's ass. Steve's fingers tighten in his hair before he knows he's doing it, trying to grind back on Thor's cock even desperately full as he is, and Thor nips his neck in warning. Steve clutches at his broad shoulders as best he can, bent backwards as Thor's hands flex on his narrow hips to move Steve how he wants.

Steve's just curled a hand around his aching cock, just to relieve the pressure, just for a brief respite, when Thor yanks his hand away and moves them again. “Do not,” he growls in Steve's ear, pulling his hands up over his head as he lies on his back with Steve still in his lap, wrapping an arm around Steve's chest to pull him back. Steve's got somehow even less leverage than he did before, helpless with Thor holding his hands above his head and Thor's hand on his ass, cock deep in him as Thor
fucks him slow and relentless.

Steve pants raggedly, arching his back as Thor's hand on his thigh holds him steady. He turns his face into Thor's neck, trying not to whine as Thor begins to fuck him in earnest. Steve feels spread open wide like this, cock leaking against his belly as Thor fucks him in short, sharp little strokes, finally releasing Steve's hands to pinch his sore nipples.

It goes straight to Steve's balls, and he can feel himself tighten on Thor's cock so close he has to bite his lip to hold it back. He keeps his hands over his head without being told, trying to keep his wits enough to remember to not pull Thor's hair, even though he can feel Thor watching his cock bounce as Thor fucks him.

"Please," Steve says again, near blind with how bad he needs it. He feels tiny and fragile like this, Thor's hands around his waist, Steve bent back against his broad chest. "Please, I can't, please—"

"No," Thor growls, fucking Steve harder, putting both hands on his thighs to bounce Steve on his cock.

Steve bites his lip harder, trying to focus on the pain. He's so hard he can't even remember baseball stats, his mind slipping past everything but how desperate he is to be allowed to fuck himself on Thor's thick cock. He almost brings a hand down to stroke himself off, because it would either end this torture or make Thor flip him over and spank him until he came anyway, but he keeps his hands where they are on the desperate hope that Thor will be pleased.

Thor comes in him with a shuddered breath, cock pulsing thick and hot in Steve's ass as he digs fingers into the hollows of Steve's hips and grinds up into him, cock buried deep even as Steve can feel slick come pulsing out around his cock and smeared across his ass as Thor grinds into him. Steve shivers with the tension of trying to keep himself from coming, panting for it as Thor gives him shallow, lazy thrusts, dragging it out without giving Steve enough to finish.

Thor kisses along his tender throat and pets Steve's hair, still pumping his hips and filling him with come without letting him tip over the edge. Steve twists in his hands, trying to roll his hips, but Thor makes him be still and Steve nearly wants to cry wondering if Thor will just leave him like this, hard and needy and not letting him finish even if Steve begs for it.

He thinks that must be the case, Thor petting Steve's shivery thighs and shushing him even as Steve turns his face into Thor's neck to whine despite himself. Thor trails light fingers up his thighs, chest and neck, making Steve shiver just enough to keep him on the edge even as Steve tries to calm his breathing and will himself back from the edge. He tries not to wonder what Thor would do now if he came without permission, if he would flip Steve over his knee and spank him raw, or fuck him open with the biggest plug and leave him panting over the foot of the bed, or worse that Steve can't even imagine.

"Now," Thor murmurs in his ear, and Steve's gasping in relief before he's even finished saying it, coming across his belly and chest. He'd curl in on himself if not for Thor's cock in his ass and Thor's hands on him, too drunk on it to be ashamed that he came at Thor's word. Thor makes a pleased noise as Steve twists on his cock, nipping at the raw skin of Steve's neck and shoulder, playing with his nipples idly as Steve gasps and shudders through it without Thor once touching his cock.

"Very good," Thor says when he's mostly done, trailing fingers over Steve's thighs and softening cock, making him twist where he's still spread open on Thor's cock. He can feel come leaking out of him but Thor doesn't feel like he's softening, content to torture Steve like this, making him shiver and squirm lying back against Thor's chest so he can't get away from the thick cock in his ass. "So you can be obedient after all," he says, cupping Steve's balls and pressing the heel of his hand to Steve's
It's enough to make him gasp and twist up into Thor's hand, not sure if he's trying to get away or get more. He can't come again, he's sure of it, but his cock twitches in Thor's hand, and between Thor's fingers rolling his smooth balls, pressing the sensitive skin behind them, and Thor's cock throbbing in him, it feels like he might even if he can't get hard.

It's too much, Steve's thighs shaking as Thor puts a hand around his thigh and starts fucking him again, slow and inevitable. Thor pushes Steve's knee up so he can press a knuckle hard into the soft skin between Steve's balls and his stretched, slick ass, Thor pressing up into him as Steve gasps and writhes against his chest. It doesn't hurt, not exactly, but the pressure is unbearable, Steve's cock twitching feebly even though he's all but boneless from already coming once.

Steve comes in little gasping shudders, nearly painful as come wells up from the slit of his cock and pools on his stomach, a thin, steady stream as Thor kneads the skin behind his balls and fucks him slowly. Steve twists in his grasp, near tears with how frayed his nerves feel, but Thor shushes him gently and fucks him through it until he's coming too, thick and messy as Steve feels his cock pulse in his ass. Thor pets Steve through it until he's done, lips and beard rubbing the tender hot skin of his bruised throat even though Thor's being gentle with him.

Thor eases Steve down to lie curled against his side, going easy with him even as Steve winces at the sudden empty absence of his cock and the loose, wet sensation of come leaking out of him. It's not as bad as with Rumlow, but twice in a row and it's more than a little unpleasant, wet and vulgar as it drips down Steve's smooth balls.

Thor tucks Steve against his side, Steve's head on his broad chest and one of Steve's legs over his so Thor can trail his fingers through the slick mess of come and oil. Thor fucks his loose ass with two fingers, lazy and indolent as Steve shudders through it. It's not fair, but it's better than the alternative, even if Steve's face is hot feeling how easily Thor spreads fingers in him despite how swollen and sore he is. He wonders if Thor means to fuck him again, but once Steve's almost sure he could be made to come again, Thor wipes his fingers on Steve's thigh and settles, pulling Steve close.

“You are very good when you wish to be,” Thor says against Steve's hair. Affectionate and fond, if Steve didn't have a ring of bruises across his throat.

Steve turns his face down against Thor's chest, broad and sticky warm. He curls a hand on Thor's chest, trying not to think about how delicate his wrist looks, thin metal cuff warm in the dim light. “Can I still ask for my reward?” Steve says. If he has to play obedient, he may as well get something out of it.

“You may,” Thor says, petting his hair with his clean hand.

Steve licks his lips. “I want to learn to read. Asgardian.”

“No,” Thor says.

Steve pushes himself up on his elbows. “But why—“

Thor pushes himself up just barely, cutting Steve off with a look. “You are already too clever and willful for your own good, I do not wish for you to be moreso.”

“But—“

“No.” Thor makes Steve lie down again, head against his chest as Steve bites his tongue in frustration. Bucky would be able to charm his way through this, think of all the reasons that would
convince Thor to let him do whatever he wanted, but all Steve can think to say is that it's not fair, if it's supposed to be a reward. And anyway, Bucky would never be in this position to begin with, head on someone's chest begging for scraps.

“Can I have a Bible?” Steve says after a long minute. All he's got to lose is another day chained to the foot of the bed.

“You already have one,” Thor says.

“It's in German, I can't read—”

“Go to sleep,” Thor says, hand tightening on the back of Steve's neck in warning.

The walk to Fandral's rooms is near the longest of Steve's life, even though he wishes it were further just to put it off longer. Even with the thick plug Thor put in him, the biggest one yet, Steve chews his lip and thinks about dawdling, just walking aimlessly and pretending that he got lost, but it would only put off the inevitable and make Thor and Fandral angry besides. He hesitates at the door, telling himself to stop being such a coward. Fandral will just want him grateful, obedient, and quiet, same as Thor.

Fandral opens the door before Steve's barely knocked, the pleased smile on his face faltering when he finds Steve scowling at the floor.

“Well,” he says, stepping aside for Steve to move past him. “Supper's just arrived, if you'd like, or there's wine—”

“Are you going to fuck me or not?” Steve says as Fandral closes the door, not quite able to keep his voice as flat as he should.

“Oh,” Fandral says, mouth hanging half open, scandalized. Steve feels a vicious little thrill at making him uncomfortable, at calling his bluff about exactly what this is. “Ah—well,” Fandral says, recovering. He flutters past Steve uncomfortably, moving to a chair near the fireplace like he's trying to get away. He sits heavily, looking Steve over. “I hadn't thought to, no. You seemed rather—uninterested. Thor said you're quite good at chess, I'd thought to ask if you would teach me a thing or two, so I have half a hope of winning against him one day.”

Steve crosses his arms over his chest. There's a board set out, and two plates at a table near it, like Fandral doesn't expect him to sit on the floor. The phonograph is set up in one corner, a neat stack of records in the bookcase beside it. Steve glances around the room, suddenly nervous of a trap.

“Or I've American records, if you'd rather,” Fandral says, following Steve's look to the phonograph. He plucks a record off the top of the stack and passes it to Steve.

*RCA Victor*, the record sleeve says. *Elvis Presley, That's All Right*. Steve turns it over in his hands. *July 1954. Blue Moon of Kentucky*. It's not real, but how can it be anything but real, Steve's holding it in his hands.

“Brooklyn is in America, is it not?” Fandral says. “I asked the ambassador for an American record, but there are others if it displeases you so.”

Steve swallows, stomach unsettled. He looks up at Fandral, making himself set his jaw. “What if I don't want to do anything?” Right then he'd prefer to crawl under a rock and not think about the unsettling, impossible thing in his hands.
Fandral sits back in his chair with a dismayed laugh. “Well, Thor will be cross with me sending you back so soon after pestering him so long, but you can have your supper and draw, or read, or whatever you like alone, and I shall send you back in the morning.”

Steve tongues his lip ring, considering. Thor won't be pleased if he finds out, but he'll already be angry if he hears anything about Steve's rudeness. But Fandral doesn't seem inclined to take it poorly, and he might never say anything about it to Thor.

“I don't know how to read,” Steve says finally. In for a penny, in for a pound. “Would you teach me?”

“Oh!” Fandral says, standing to hunt through the bookshelf. “Of course. What do you like? Histories, romances, poetry?”

Steve watches Fandral through his eyelashes, considering. “Romances.”

They spend the night on the divan, Fandral sitting a proprietary handspan away from Steve. He doesn't move to touch Steve even when he fetches a wax tablet for Steve to practice letters on, and Stevepretends to not feel sick to his stomach when Fandral puts the record on and he doesn't recognize anything about the music. It's halfway companionable, if Steve pretends he's not too homesick when Fandral asks him what Brooklyn's like.
“You can read?” Dottie says, pausing with her hands in Steve's hair. They're sitting in her little room off the kitchens and Steve still looks over his shoulder even though there's no windows and only the one door. It's just small enough for a chair and the Dottie's little bed; there's no one there. She's teaching him how to braid his hair, doing a section and then undoing it so he can copy her.

“I—not well,” Steve says. He shouldn't have said anything about it, because what if it gets back to Thor, but he's just so relieved to be able to hide in the kitchens and pretend he's making some kind of progress. He's only got a vague plan that if he knows how to read, he'll at least be able to figure out the city before trying to make a break for it. But then he got stupid and mentioned Fandral.

There's nothing else to talk about; he already told her about the bruises, and what else is there in his life? He can't tell her about the record, doesn't know what to say. Steve can barely believe it himself, even though he sees the damn thing every time he's sent to Fandral and they muddle their way through poetic nonsense about stolen horses and tragic romances. It's been long enough for the bruises around his neck to fade to a mottled green, but he still can't read quickly, or well. He never had Bucky's head for things, his ease at picking up Latin and grammar and algebra.

“You should see if there's anything helpful. To send to Peggy,” Dottie says carefully, watching him in the mirror.

“Peggy?” Steve says, gone dead still under her hands. “What's Peggy got to do with it?”

“She's still fighting Hydra for the SSR,” Dottie says, just as careful, and there's something about her voice that makes Steve's stomach clench. “It might help her, if we got her word about what Asgard's planning with them.”

“You can get messages over the bridge?” Steve says, twisting in his little chair. “How?”

“Not right now, but we could figure it out,” Dottie says, cagey as she makes him sit forward on the chair again. She goes back to braiding his hair, Steve shaky on the possibilities.

She doesn't trust him. She already asked if he was going to give her away. She can get out into the city and she has a way of getting messages across the bridge that she won't tell him about; Steve has to get her to trust him.

Steve won't trust him either, pampered and petted up in the keep while everyone else works down here. He can feel it in the air when he comes down here, people watching him suspiciously like he's there to spy.

Thor will already be displeased if he finds out Steve's gone behind his back, but even if Steve can't fight Thor, he can still fight Nazis. Steve just thought he wanted to learn to read so he could find himself a way out of the city; he might never get back to Earth if Thor caught him at it.

Steve follows Dottie's instructions as she shows him how to re-braid his hair, chewing his lip and thinking it over.

He's still thinking it over as he makes his way back to the elevator, so lost in thought he doesn't
notice Pietro coming up after him in the busy corridor.

“Did you tell him about me?” Pietro says, jogging after Steve.

“I—yeah,” Steve lies, glancing at Pietro with the little beads Dottie braided into his hair clicking softly. He hasn't even had time to think of Pietro, and he wouldn't tell Thor about him anyway even if he did. He keeps walking.

Pietro puts a hand on his elbow, trying to get Steve to turn towards him, maneuver him into another storage room. “I can give you something else to tell him about,” Pietro says, bold as brass even with all the people moving around them.

Steve shakes him off. “I'm busy, I can't—“

“I am very fast,” Pietro says, snaking an arm around Steve's shoulders with an easy smile.

“I said no,” Steve snaps, shoving him away.

“Haven't you learned to take a hint yet, Pietro?” someone else says behind them, smug as shit.

Steve and Pietro both turn; blond guy, average height, New York accent familiar as hell and Steve hates him instantly for it.

“You looked taller in the movies,” the guy says to Steve.

The guy is one Steve's run into before. Not this guy specifically, but guys like him are everywhere. Steve got beat up by this guy, Rumlow is this guy, Steve knows the type. He's good looking, confident because he's got a couple buddies to back him up, and out to prove something by beating up a smaller guy.

“This is not your problem, Jack,” Pietro says, eyeing Jack's two buddies. They're both broad even if three against two was already bad odds.

“You get tired of sucking alien dick, Pietro?” Jack sneers.

“Mind your own business and leave him alone,” Steve says.

“Think it is my business, the social climber and the traitor getting all cozy,” Jack says, circling around. His buddies move to flank as a crowd starts to form around them, blocking the corridor in both directions.

Jack reaches out to flick Pietro's ear and Steve reacts, knocking his hand away, and then it all goes to shit. Jack takes a swing at Steve, his buddies moving in to grab Pietro, the crowd swaying back and then pushing in to watch the fight.

Pietro moves almost faster than Steve can see, taking out first the guy on the right and then the guy behind Jack. Steve takes a wild punch, earrings swinging, but Jack just dodges with a laugh and catches Steve with a sharp clip to the side of his face.

Steve staggers back, hand on his eye but unwilling to back down even with the crowd thickening around them. Jack cracks his knuckles at Steve as one of his buddies drops to his knees, the other staggering after Pietro as he dodges.

Jack comes after Steve with a wild swing, and Steve only barely manages to dodge it when the crowd parts, Dottie wading through. She goes straight after Jack, shoving Steve behind her and
hauling Jack up by the neck like he weighs nothing. She throws him back against the wall, the crowd rippling around them. Jack's buddies are both on the ground.

“Stop it,” Dottie says, absolutely cool. She lets him hang there for a second, his face going red, and then she drops him. She turns back to Steve, her expression flat like she didn't just haul a grown man up with one hand. She's terrifying and more than a little beautiful.

“C'mon, Dot, we were just having a little fun,” Jack gasps when he gets his breath.

“Don't touch him again,” Dottie says. She takes Steve by the hand to take back to her room; Steve casts around for Pietro, but he's gone.

“You're going to bruise,” Dottie says, dabbing at his swelling eye.

“I know,” Steve says, wincing.

Dottie smoothes his hair back and gets out a little pot of makeup to start covering the bruise. “I'll fix your hair before you go,” she says. She wraps his hands around the little pot of makeup when the bruise is as covered as it's going to get; it's the same powder she used to get Thor's handprint.

Steve's careful, keeping his face turned down when Thor looks at him, checking his makeup for the rest of the day. But his eye's too swollen to hide it with make up, and by the next morning it's impossible to hide when Steve kneels at his feet for breakfast. It hangs over Steve's head as he eats, but he keeps his head down and eats what he can, in case it's his last meal for the day.

“What happened,” Thor says finally, voice flat, already displeased when he tips Steve's face up to inspect.

“I ran into a door,” Steve says, and knows it's not a convincing lie.

Thor's hand tightens on his chin. “Did my brother hit you, or Fandral?” he says, and Steve half-considers switching lies. But it would be even worse to be caught in that lie than in this one, and lose whatever good will he has from Fandral.

“I ran into a door,” Steve says again, resigned to another day and night chained to the foot of the bed. He's not going to get someone in trouble to save himself, even an asshole like Jack, and Steve has no doubt what would happen to Jack if Steve gave him up.

And, selfishly, if everyone but Dottie already thinks him a traitor, how much worse would it be if he gave Jack up. Steve keeps his mouth shut and his eyes down.

Thor sits back in his chair with a heavy sigh, like he's the one who's put upon in this situation. “You know I will find out the truth, and you know it will go poorly for you when I do,” Thor says.

Steve glances at him through his lashes, suddenly unsure. If it were only being chained back to the bed, Steve could take it, but this—Steve sucks his lip ring, uncertain.

“There was a fight,” Steve says, picking his word carefully. He can't give away where he was, or who was involved, but honesty got him through the confrontation with Loki unscathed. “A—friend was going to get hurt, I tried to stop it.”

“And this happened,” Thor says, leaning forward to press a thumb to the swelling bruise under Steve's eye.
Steve winces but doesn't try to pull away. “Yeah.”

Thor sits back again, giving him a considering look. Steve keeps his eyes down, trying to look meek and obedient. He's never been a good actor.

“So you lie to protect your friend as well as the one who hit you,” Thor says finally. Steve nods, mouth gone dry. He can't read Thor's tone.

“Undress,” Thor says, snapping his fingers for Steve to get up, and it's nearly a relief. If it's just fucking, even if it hurts, at least it'll be over. Steve stands to undo his jacket and pull off his shirt, wondering what's wrong with him that he's almost grateful it's only this.

Thor stops him when he's down to stockings and panties, and that gives Steve pause. He pushes Steve down to lie in the center of the bed on his back, Thor still clothed and his face unreadable. Then Thor pulls his wrists up to the headboard, clipping them together in a way Steve can't see. He tries to pull away then, too late, now that he can't get away.

“Hush,” Thor says, hand heavy and gentle in the center of Steve's chest. “You will have your punishment this evening when I return,” he says, brushing Steve's hair out of his face affectionate and fond. “I do not care that you wish to protect your friend, or even the one who hit you, foolish though your bravery is. But I will not have you lie to me.”

“Yes, master,” Steve says, trying to sound meek and contrite as he turns his face into Thor's hand. Thor gives him a fond smile, carding fingers through Steve's hair.

Then he gets up and goes to the wardrobe, opening the bottom drawer with its neat felt lining, and takes out the largest plug. Steve's belly goes cold and then hot; it's nearly the size of his fist.

Thor sits on the bed beside him, following Steve's look as he starts oiling the giant thing. “As I said, you will have your punishment this evening. I do not wish to hurt you.” Steve nods shakily, trying to steady himself now that he knows how this is going to go. Thor just means to leave him with a plug in his ass all day and then fuck him rough; Steve's had worse.

Even so, he shivers as Thor pulls his panties down his thighs and starts to work his ass open with oiled fingers, pushing two and then three in to spread. Steve's cock thickens against his belly, Thor giving him a fond look as Steve bites his lip and strains where his wrists are cuffed to the headboard. Thor pushes a fourth finger in, twisting his hand until Steve thinks he can feel Thor's knuckles, the pad of his thumb brushing across Steve's smooth balls. It's slick and slow but it burns anyway, the pressure making his cock throb as Steve bites back a whine.

The glass plug is still cool when Thor finally presses it to him, the narrow tip pushing in easily except for the way it just keeps getting wider and wider. Steve pants, trying to relax around it, trying to be meek and obedient so he doesn't make this worse.

Thor shushes him, petting Steve gently like this isn't supposed to be his punishment. Steve arches up into his hand, sweat standing out across his chest and sides as he gives Thor a pleading look. “Please,” he breathes, not even sure what he's begging for.

He almost thinks he guessed right, Thor giving him a hungry, dark look like he might just forget about the plug and fuck Steve right then. Steve whines, trying to make himself even more needy and begging than he already is, spreading his legs like he needs it. Thor's hard, he can see it, and Steve thinks if maybe he just shows how obedient he can be Thor won't go through with the rest of it.

But then Thor pushes the plug the rest of the way into him, the thing heavy and huge in Steve's ass.
He shudders and arches off the bed, cock throbbing like he might just come from that alone as Thor stands and undoes the laces of his trousers with rough hands. Steve pants and tips his head back, mouth open greedily because he'll certainly be able to come with Thor's cock in his mouth, even with his ass filled and his panties twisted around his thighs.

Thor strokes himself roughly, one hand planted on the wall over Steve's head as he leans over the bed, one knee on the mattress besides Steve's head. Steve tries to arch up, tries to catch the tip of his thick pierced cock in his mouth, but he can't quite with his hands caught over his head. Thor watches him, stroking his cock just out of Steve's reach, and Steve whines for it. He could be so good if he just had the chance and Thor knows it, Steve's cock leaking against his belly as his ass tightens around the plug and he watches the huge head of Thor's cock disappear into his hand.

Thor comes across his face, hot and bitter where it lands on his cheeks and mouth. Steve licks his lips, mouth swollen from biting his lip, and Thor watches his mouth as he finishes, cock jerking in his hand. Steve tips his head up, close enough to beg to be allowed to lick him clean if Thor would just let him finish.

But Thor just rubs the head of his cock across Steve's lips, letting him lick just the tip, before pulling away and putting himself back together.

“'If only you always behaved so well,’” Thor says, pulling Steve's panties up over his hard cock and leaving him there with come on his face.

It's better and worse than the time before; Steve knows what's coming and knows it'll be over soon, but it's worse because he can't think about anything but the huge plug in his ass and how hard he is.

He tries to twist against where his wrists are cuff ed to the headboard, but he can't flip himself over to even try to rut against the sheets. All it gets him is the heavy, thick weight of the plug moving in his ass, the panties rubbing over his cock just enough to keep him hard but not enough to let him finish. He's going to ruin the lacy panties, soaked wet with precome as Steve tries to fuck himself on the plug.

He chases it, biting his lip despite the dull pain of the piercing and the taste of Thor's come, so close as he arches his back and tries to grind on the plug. Legs spread wide and blush spreading down his chest, he looks wanton and debauched but can hardly bring himself to care, hands flexing uselessly against the headboard as he gets closer.

He comes like it's been punched out of him, sudden and overwhelming as his whole body jerks and clenches around the plug. It feels bigger than ever, Steve's body spasming as his cock jerks in his panties, soaking them through. He feels wrung out, arching off the bed like he can get away from the plug in his ass only to collapse back, shuddering and oversensitive.

Steve dozes, but poorly, sticky hot in his ruined panties with Thor's come drying on his face.

If the day goes slowly with Steve's fevered imagination obsessively cataloging every possible way Thor could fuck him and half hard from the plug despite the sticky discomfort of his ruined panties, as soon as the door clicks open in the evening Steve wishes it would drag on twice as long. His cock gives a traitorous little throb at the sound of Thor's heavy boots in the other room, Steve biting his lip as his heart starts to race. Thor hasn't hurt him yet, but Steve has to remind himself that this is supposed to be a punishment and he shouldn't be getting so hard anticipating it.

Thor gives him a long look when he comes back to the bedroom, Steve flushing hot with shame.
because it's obvious he came just as Thor left him, chained to the bed and spread open on the huge plug. Thor drops his cloak and a little package on the chair, undressing without much acknowledging Steve, and Steve wonders if this is going to be his punishment instead, being ignored while Thor teases him to tears all night.

Though Thor's already half-hard himself, even if he ignores Steve as he pads into the bathroom and draws a bath, making Steve listen and wait. Steve tries not to think about it, tries not to imagine Thor stroking himself close and coming to fuck Steve rough and fast.

Thor's dressed when he comes back out, in just trousers and a sleeveless undershirt so Steve can see just how thick around his arms are as he dries his hair. He's everything Steve wished he could have, before, when he couldn't have it, and even now Steve wants him. In another life, in another place, without the rest of it Steve might have even wanted this. Steve's breath comes fast and shallow because there's something wrong with him, that he's already this hard just from Thor ignoring him.

Thor's more than half hard himself as he eyes Steve thoughtfully on the bed, though, adjusting himself in his trousers and the line of his thick cock clearly visible. Whatever he plans to do, he means to take his time, and the thought makes Steve's cock strain against the ruined fabric of his panties as Thor watches him.

Steve swallows thickly, watching as Thor pads around the bed to take the knife from his belt and the little package from the chair. The bed sinks as Thor sits beside him, opening the package. So close, Steve can smell him, clean from his bath and Steve stinking like sweat and come. Steve bites his lip, trying to hide his face from the shame of it, but Thor shushes him and smooths a big hand up Steve's thigh.

In the package is a ginger root about the size of Thor's palm. He cuts one long knob off neatly, setting the rest aside. Steve watches him work as he begins to peel it, uncertain again as the sharp smell of it fills the room.

When it's peeled smooth, a round little thing with a narrow notch and a thicker base, Thor sets it aside on the table beside the bed. He reaches over and finally unclips Steve's wrists from the headboard, letting Steve roll his stiff shoulders before he hauls Steve over his lap and binds his hands again, this time behind his back. Ass up over Thor's lap, Steve can feel how hard Thor is, his own cock throbbing where he tries not to grind against Thor's thigh. Worse still when Thor pushes his panties down and palms his ass, squeezing his cheeks around the plug as Steve swallows and tries to hide his face against the sheets.

Thor draws the plug out of him slowly, Steve panting against the sheets. His cock jerks, leaking on the rough fabric of Thor's trousers, and Thor gives him a sharp slap on the ass for it. Thor takes longer drawing the plug out than he did pushing it in, Steve spreading his legs wide and trying not to just rut against Thor's thigh like he wants. He's so far past embarrassed he can't even find the will to care that he should be ashamed, arching his back and pushing his ass up into Thor's hands as he twists and pulls the thick plug out of Steve's ass.

Thor sets it aside, scratching fingers over Steve's scalp and down his back, making him settle across Thor's lap again. It almost feels good, if Steve weren't so slick loose and empty he almost wants to beg Thor to fuck him, on edge with the uncertainty of it all. If his hands were free, he'd twist them in the sheets, but instead he opens and closes them behind his back, more nervous because Thor can see his nerves.

“I do not care if you wish to protect your friends with your foolish bravery,” Thor says, quiet and almost gentle as he pets Steve's hair. “You would not have been punished if you had not lied.” He smooths a big hand down Steve's ass and back, making him shiver.
Steve—knew that. Thor's been fair enough with him otherwise. If he'd thought more than a few steps ahead, he'd have known that.

“This will hurt, but it will not damage you. I wish you to remember this if you contemplate lying to me again,” Thor says, the cool, wet tip of the ginger root pressed to Steve's ass.

Steve nods against the sheets as Thor starts to push it in, slick and easy after the huge plug. Pain he can handle, but it's so small it doesn't hurt, doesn't hardly feel like anything after being so stretched open all day. The cool, round nub of it presses in until Steve's ass closes around the base of it, like the glass plugs but smaller, smaller even than the first one Thor made him wear. Steve almost wants to laugh, if that's all it is.

“Do not let this come out,” Thor says in a warning tone, stroking the soft skin around Steve's slick hole, and maybe that's the point of this, stretch him out and then make him hold a tiny thing as Thor spanks him. Steve can do that.

Steve's barely just nodded when Thor slaps him hard across the ass, making him jerk and flinch against his thigh. It's harder than Thor's ever slapped him before, hard enough to bruise with his full strength behind it, and Steve hardly has time to process it before another blow lands on his other cheek. Steve flinches away from the blow, clenching around the ginger root in his ass trying to keep it in and get away from the hit, he hardly knows which.

It's agonizing, hot pain as Thor slaps him without pause, the sound of it sharp over Steve's ragged breathing. His cock doesn't know any better, hard and leaking as Steve twists against Thor's thigh trying to get away. Thor tightens one hand across the back of Steve's neck in warning, holding him down as Thor slaps him again.

Steve gasps against the sheets in the pause between blows, his ass stinging from more than just Thor's burning handprints. His hands clench so hard his nails dig into his palms; it's the ginger root that stings, more the longer it's in. Thor slaps him again and Steve tightens around it before he thinks better of it, the little ginger root burning more now than Steve's throbbing skin.

It's all he can do to remember to breathe and keep it in, all his attention focused down on keeping his stretched ass tight enough to keep it in without clenching so hard around it that it will burn worse. Steve grinds against Thor's thigh without hardly knowing it, trying to get away from the burn, but it only makes his cock throb uselessly harder, all mixed up between the pressure of the plug making him hard all day, the hot throb of the slap marks as Thor rubs a callused hand over Steve's ass, and the burning of the ginger root making him twist and rut against Thor's thigh.

He can feel just how hard Thor is from this, his hard cock pressed against Steve's belly, and there's a little part of Steve that's pleased that Thor's as frustrated by this as he is, Steve panting and writhing in his lap without enough friction to get him off. Not pleased enough to make up for how much his ass hurts, throbbing hotter by the second as Thor pauses to squeeze his ass roughly, fingers grazing the back of Steve's balls.

Steve pushes up into his hand, hoping if he's willful enough Thor will just get it over with and fuck him already. Thor slaps him for it but laughs, breathless and pleased as he roughly palms Steve's ass to make him clench around the burning ginger. He curls fingers around Steve's balls, tugging without any gentleness, making Steve jerk and groan against the sheets.

Thor rolls Steve's balls in his hand, keeping him still with one big hand wrapped around Steve's linked wrists and rocking Steve against his thigh like he means for Steve to come like this. The need is almost overwhelming, the burning of the ginger root passing through pain to an almost unbearable urge to be fucked, the tiny little thing too small and unsatisfying even as it makes him twist restlessly
to grind against Thor's thigh. He wants Thor's cock, or the plug, just something to fill his ass and fuck himself on instead of the aching, uncomfortable need without relief.

Thor finally gets his cock out then, shuffling Steve gently off his lap to undo the laces of his trousers. Steve goes gracelessly, no balance with his hands behind his back and his legs spread wide because of the ginger, face pressed to Thor's thigh as he pulls his cock out. He's hard and leaking, pulling Steve up by the hair to let him artlessly lick the slick come from the tip of his cock.

He doesn't tease this time, letting Steve's hair go so Steve can swallow around him as much as he's able with his hands tied. The lip piercing hurts in a dull, distant way, but under everything else it barely registers. Thor reaches around to play with his ass as Steve chokes himself on Thor's cock, moaning as Thor twists the ginger root.

Steve licks up the length of Thor's cock sloppily, leaning with his face against Thor's thigh and hands behind his back. He sucks desperately, close despite or because of the pain, rocking back into it as Thor roughly squeezes his ass.

Thor puts a hand on the back of Steve's head, keeping him in place with his mouth against the base of Thor's cock as Thor slaps his ass with his other hand. Steve flinches, moaning against the base of Thor's cock as Thor raises his hand again, trying to brace for the next blow and forgetting to not clench around the stinging ginger root.

He comes with the sharp crack of the next slap, hips jerking as his ass tightens on the ginger, moaning against Thor's cock. It burns but he's coming too hard to do anything about it, muscles spasming around the ginger so the longer he comes the more it burns. Thor starts to stroke his own cock then, Steve letting himself be pulled back by the hair to open his mouth for it. Thor doesn't last any longer than Steve, come striping Steve's cheeks and face as he tries to sloppily lick his lips and Thor's cock. Steve closes his eyes against the shame of it, shuddering when Thor lets him lie with his sticky face on Thor's thigh and suck the head of his cock as he finishes.

Thor pets him gently, smoothing hands down Steve's shivering and sweat-slick sides as he focuses on the heavy weight of Thor's softening cock in his mouth. His ass and thighs ache, still leaning against Thor's lap with his legs spread and his ass in the air, but it's far away and hard to care as Thor unlinks his bracelets and pets his hair.

Steve shudders when Thor finally pulls the ginger root out of him, the burn lingering as Thor eases him down to lie, Steve still licking his cock clumsily. He's going to be sore in the morning, his hole puffy and swollen from the huge plug and the ginger, skin hot and throbbing from the spanking, but it's a distant problem right now.

“If that was not a sufficient punishment, I shall find something else,” Thor says quietly, tugging Steve's hair. Steve shakes his head against Thor's thigh, nearly too wrung out to do even that.

It must be sufficient; Thor lets him go, letting Steve curl into himself in the center of the bed as he gets up to pad around the room. Thor wipes Steve's dirty face and body with brisk hands and a cool cloth, Steve bonelessly going where he's moved until he's more or less clean.

Thor pats Steve's thigh when he's done, pointing at the wardrobe. “Second drawer from the bottom, fetch the smallest one.”

Steve totters off the bed on shaky legs, his first time standing all day and trying not to wince at the slick, empty feeling of his ass still burning from the ginger. He kneels unsteadily to open the drawer; it used to hold extra socks.
It's been fitted with another neat felt lining, two metal cages to one side, and on the other a set of thin metal rods and a curved hook with a ball and open loop on each end. Steve grabs the smaller metal cage without hesitating or thinking about the rest of it, conscious of Thor watching him from the bed.

Thor bullies Steve to lie down again, kissing and nipping little bites down his chest as Thor opens the metal cage and fits it to Steve's soft cock. It's barely the size of Steve's palm and it fits neatly, the cool sheath just big enough with his cock soft but not big enough for him to get hard in.

“This is not your punishment, you merely need to learn some patience,” Thor says, fastening the thing around Steve's cock and balls. His cock looks smaller than ever, soft and vulnerable behind the cool metal, his smooth balls swollen from Thor's hands and the way the hard cuff of the cage circles them, pulling them away from his body.

Thor finally relents and lets Steve lie down then, head pillowed in Thor's lap. “You are very charming despite your disobedience,” Thor says, smoothing Steve's sweat-damp hair out of his face, carefully avoiding Steve's bruised eye. He settles with Steve's head in his lap and a sheaf of letters on his knee, feeding Steve supper from his hand. The cool metal of the cage warms so it doesn't demand so much of Steve's attention, the ginger a distant burn with Thor petting him and scratching blunt nails through his hair.

Steve blinks sleepily, allowing himself to be fed and trying to memorize what little he's able to make out from Thor's letters.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry the updates came so fast and thick this week, as it were. Got the figging written on the big East coast snow day and wanted to get it all cleaned up and posted. This is prob the last chapter for a few weeks.
so I lied about no new chapter for a while! had to get to the part everyone's been waiting for, Steve actually getting something he wants for a change ;)

Steve'll lie more often, if it gets him this. Thor keeps him close again for the next few days, and it's nearly pleasant even if it means Thor sometimes squeezes his bruised ass or cuddles him close in the evening so Steve's draped over his lap in panties and stockings to be fondled, so Thor can see the bruises. He even lets Steve stand behind his chair during meetings, so he doesn't have to sit or kneel with his ass aching from the bruises. If it itches along the back of Steve's neck, that Thor's so pleased with the mottled purple and blue bruising he gave Steve, he tries not to think about it. Steve earned it, and Thor didn't do the same with the bruising across his neck, so it's fine. Steve decides not to be bothered about it.

It's not so bad, and Thor doesn't even fuck him while he's still sore and aching from the plug and the ginger. Halfway pleasant, if Steve doesn't think of the heavy weight of the metal cage on his cock.

By the third day of it, Steve's balls ache in a dull, distant way that he tries not to think about. Whether from the constriction or the irritation he can't tell, Thor catching him at cupping his cock once to relieve the pressure enough to make Steve hot faced with shame and determined to never get caught at it again. So he doesn't think about it; he's good at not thinking about things.

Or, he would be if Thor only let him. Walking to a meeting about—fuck only knows what, because halfway there Thor pushes him into a hidden alcove and down to his knees, and Steve can't concentrate on anything else the rest of the afternoon after Thor fucks his mouth and leaves his heart racing and his cock aching, swollen and unable to get hard.

Thor's enjoying it, Steve can see that much in his face the next morning, once they're both dressed and Thor pushes Steve down over his desk with one big hand in the small of his back and a sly smile. Steve's nearly shaking with how bad he needs it by the time Thor shoves his trousers down. Thor runs a big hand down the tender, mottled skin of Steve's ass, making him goosebump in the cold air as Steve hangs his head.

The reports strewn across his desk are—minutiae. Embassies and harvest reports and tariff negotiations, all the same nonsensical legalese that goes over Steve's head sitting at his knee in meetings, and impossible to concentrate on besides as Thor spreads Steve's ass wide and licks into him.

Steve squirms and whines, trying to shove back desperate against Thor's hands but held where he is until Thor bites his bruised skin and makes him jump. The rasp of his beard over skin bruised raw is nearly unbearable even as he licks Steve open, Steve's heart hammering as his cock gets dangerously swollen in the cage. It doesn't hurt, exactly, but he can't get all the way hard even as his cock throbs, maddening and overwhelming as Thor's tongue pushes into him, filthy like he intends to tease Steve to tears like that.

Except it's worse, so much worse when he straightens and fumbles a vial of oil from a desk drawer and barely slicks himself up before starting to fuck Steve in short, teasing little strokes. Just with the
head of his cock, which feels huge and hot as the ridge of it pushes in and out of Steve's ass, the tip opening him up without giving him enough to be satisfied with. He's too used to the whole thick length of Thor's cock in him when he comes, or the huge plug, desperate for Thor to just fuck him so he doesn't have to think about how bad he wants it and how desperate he is just to have Thor's cock in him.

Thor doesn't take any pity, huffing a laugh at Steve's frustrated noise and the way he tries to struggle under Thor's hands pinning him to the desk. He doesn't even give Steve time to try to come just from being fucked, only pushing fully in so that Steve can feel him come deep in his ass, twisting against the feeling of it as Thor holds him down with one big hand in the middle of his back. Steve shudders and makes an annoyed sound as Thor keeps him in place to work a glass plug into his ass after, not even bothering to fuck him with it and only letting Steve up once it's in place.

“Pack your things,” Thor says, giving him a slap on the ass. “We leave for the winter court this afternoon.”

“We—why?” Steve says, staggering to his feet holding his trousers up one hand and barely able to think straight with his cock throbbing hot in its little metal cage. “Where?”

“My brother rules during the winter court and I during the summer court, lest we kill one another trying to share or control the throne.” Thor says it light, like it's a joke, but Steve's seen them bicker, seen Loki making nice with the Nazis, and he has a hot stab of fear worrying what might happen to him if Loki and Pierce decide Thor's no longer convenient. Getting home would be the least of Steve's worries then.

“Go, put aside what paints and jewelry you would like the steward to pack, I will not tell you again,” Thor says. He pats Steve on the ass, more or less gentle.

Where is obviously a trip and a half, the steward and dozens of other staff piling into the suite to pack clothing and books and everything else as Steve clutches his sketchbooks and favorite pen to his chest trying to stay out from underfoot. How long is less clear, what looks like the whole suite being packed into trunks and taken away in such a flurry Steve doesn't even have a chance to ask.

The one time he tries to sneak away to tell Dottie, in case it's months instead of weeks, Thor catches him at it and drags him out of the suite to fuck in an empty room down the corridor. He takes the plug out just long enough to fuck Steve to frustration again, sloppy and wet from getting fucked that morning, and then pushes the plug back into him so the second round can't leak out either.

So Steve's stumbling on shaky knees by the time they make their way to—an airplane hanger, essentially. A big, cavernous space down in the lower levels of the keep filled with what look like boats to Steve's eye, ornate scrollwork hiding whatever motor they might have. Bucky would be able to figure the things out, same as Stark's disastrous hovering car, but Steve's got no head for it, baffled and overwhelmed with the flurry of staff moving around them, piling trunks and packages into a small fleet of the things.

Sif and Volstagg and Hogun have gone before them, Steve gathers, and the steward and other staff will follow after. Steve hopes that means Dottie as well, uneasy at the thought of being whisked away for weeks or months and isolated as much as when he first found himself here.

Fandral is meant to travel with them, though, and he starts to give Steve a broad smile until he takes in his bruised and swollen eye, smile going flat as he cuts a look at Thor. He doesn't say anything of it though, going to toss a bag into one of the boats.
Loki is the still point around which all the chaos rotates, coming to send them off with a pleased, satisfied look. It makes the hair on the back of Steve's neck rise, just the way he moves through a room. He and Thor hug without either of them looking exactly pleased about it, Loki giving Steve one last cool, flickering look before he's gone and Thor is bullying Steve into one of the low boats after Fandral. Fandral vaults into the thing gracefully, but Steve has to be lifted in like a child, Thor picking him up so Fandral can haul him the rest of the way in undignified as a wet cat.

It's about the size of Bucky's parents' car, except low and open like the little cigarette boats they saw on the East River sometimes. There's only two seats and a few bags piled in back, Steve obviously meant to sit with the baggage. He clutches his little satchel of jewelry and sketchbooks to his chest, eyeing the broad opening of the hanger suspiciously as Thor settles into one of the seats and Fandral into the other. A shivery, teeth-grating noise goes through the body of the boat as it comes to life, an electric barrier coming up in the air over them like the ones across the windows so it's just the three of them in a warm little bubble of quiet air.

The damn things fly. Steve presses himself to Thor's leg, disoriented at the quiet, smooth movement of it, nothing like the roaring cumbersome cargo planes or Stark's unsteady two propellered toy Steve's been in before. Steve's stomach lurches at the thought of how disastrously his last flight ended, parachuting in to try to save Bucky and finding himself strapped down to a table in Zola's lab instead.

Steve pushes the thought from his mind, concentrating on Thor's hand in his hair and the view whisking away below them. The land shifts under them, what had been rolling hills in late autumn giving way to rocky foothills covered in snow, Steve more uneasy by the minute. He presses his head to Thor's thigh, swallowing against the thought of his slim chance at escape slipping further and further away. Thor pets his hair, the flyer leveling out as they skim over snowy trees.

"Why did you hit him?" Fandral says to Thor over Steve's head, sharp, like Steve's not sitting right there. Steve turns his face away to hide his scowl, annoyed at the implication that he did something to deserve it. Thor and Fandral both, assuming that if someone's hit him it's his own fault.

"I did not," Thor says archly.

"I ran into a door," Steve says, churlish even though Thor snorts a laugh and gives his hair a warning tug. Fandral's already been in his sketchbooks, Loki's been in his head, Thor can do whatever he wants to his body, but Steve doesn't have to give up anything unless they make him.

Fandral gives him a long look, but Steve turns his face into Thor's knee, hating the feeling like he has to defend Thor. He spends the rest of the flight on edge, watching the landscape become more harsh and alien around them.

The winter keep is a sprawling hunting lodge, more or less, dark stone fading into the side of a craggy hill with mist curling all around it. The snow falls heavily as they land, dampening all sound until Thor jumps over the side of the flyer in one smooth motion and gestures for Steve to come. He lifts Steve down like a child, hands under his armpits to hoist him down as Fandral tosses bags over the side and follows in a smooth jump.

The snow's been broken by dozens of feet tramping back and forth, the staff hauling trunks into the dark lodge in the remains of daylight filtering through the heavy clouds and falling snow. Steve casts around anxiously, feeling exposed in the open air after so long in the keep, tall pines looming dark at the edges of the grounds.

As open as the exterior is, the inside of the lodge is warm and dark, all warm wood, dark stone, and
fires banked high once they wade through snow up to Steve's knees and stamp it off in the dark entry way.

Steve jumps back at the sound of dogs barreling down the grand hall towards them, startling back so hard he nearly knocks Fandral over. Fandral steadies him with a warm hand on his shoulder as the biggest dogs Steve's ever seen careen into Thor, huge, long-legged, nightmare things with shaggy gray coats, nearly as tall at the shoulder as Steve. The only dogs Steve's ever seen are Mr. and Mrs. Pujokowski's blind poodle Fifi and the SS's vicious Schäferhunds, and these are more like the attack dogs with their long, blunt muzzles even if they slobber all over Thor happily.

Steve flinches back when one of them rounds on him, trapped shaking against Fandral as it licks his face and they both laugh at him. That's all the dog does, though, sitting when Thor snaps fingers at it, even if Steve's shaky as Fandral squeezes his shoulder and Thor leads him back to the suite.

Another keep, another sprawling set of rooms, and Steve trapped all over again. A little reception parlor to keep the cold air of the great hall out, divided by a door from a low, warm study lined with books on the walls and furs on the floors, a massive bed hung with curtains, and all of it facing massive windows overlooking the vast, blank plain of snow.

They're only one story up, low enough that in his other body Steve could have just jumped out the window and landed softly, and the windows have none of the shimmering electric barrier in the air when Steve dares to open one. There's nothing stopping him from simply walking away into the cold except for his own fragility and the absolute impossibility of making his way back to the bridge.

Thor fucks him slow and lazy the next morning, curled in the center of the big bed with the fire banked low in the hearth. Even if he doesn't get to come it's pleasant, wrapped in Thor's furnace heat and the blankets heavy over them as Thor's cock pulses in him hot and slick.

Pleasanter still when Thor gives him leave to spend the day how he wants, dressing in rough hunting clothes as Steve watches him. Fandral turns up once Steve and Thor are both decent, the two of them getting ready to go hunting, laughing and stupid as Steve watches. Thor pets Steve's hair where he sits on the floor by the fireplace, fond and affectionate as he goes to piss before they leave.

Steve can feel Fandral's attention on him in the quiet and he doesn't know why, suddenly uneasy after the past few weeks of easy quiet when Steve's in his rooms. Steve draws his knees up to his chest, keeping his face turned down under the scrutiny where Fandral contemplates him from the divan.

“I could ask him for you, when he tires of you,” Fandral says after a moment, watching after Thor.

That gets Steve to look up, trying to process it. “When he—?”

Fandral gives him a sad smile, leaning in to brush hair out of his face. “It may take me a while to convince him, but he always tires of new toys eventually.” he says, like it'd be doing Steve a favor. Magnanimous, like Thor giving Steve permission to call him master.

They both want to feel like they're being kind, generous like Steve should be grateful to be treated like a treasured pet.

“Sure,” Steve says. Being agreeable and grateful. “Thank you.” His stomach's cold on the rest of it, though; he's only given passing thought to what would happen if he were stuck on Asgard, the very idea of it like trying to avoid chewing on a broken tooth. Painful and raw even if he doesn't prod at it.
Because if there's anything worse than the thought of being made to sit at Thor's feet forever, it's the thought that one day Thor might decide he's too old, too stubborn, or too boring, and get rid of him.

Before Steve can lose himself in that morose thought, Fandral leans down and kisses him, slow and gentle. He cups Steve's jaw, fingers light, like Steve always wanted to kiss Peggy. It's—almost everything he wanted his first kiss to be, if it weren't here, if it weren't a stranger, if it were Peggy or Bucky.

Steve pulls back, his eyes stinging as he tries to blink the thought away. Peggy and Bucky would never kiss him, not after all this, being fucked and used by Thor and Rumlow and everyone else.

It's a stupid thing to cry over, so he won't.

"I'm sorry," Fandral says as Steve touches fingers to his lips, trying to swallow away the knot in his throat. "I shouldn't have—"

Steve cuts him off, climbing into his lap to kiss him, clumsy and awkward. It's no worse than anything else he's done to keep Thor's affection.

Fandral makes a pleased, surprised noise against Steve's mouth, hands tightening on Steve's thighs. He's not as broad as Thor but his hands feel just as strong, hot on Steve's thighs even as he tips his head to kiss Steve gently. It's—nearly pleasant, soft and slow enough Steve can almost pretend it's Bucky if he doesn't think about Fandral's neat beard and mustache.

Thor coughs behind them, making Steve and Fandral both startle back and Fandral going bright red like they'd been caught fucking. Thor gives them both an indulgent smile, petting Steve's hair as he slides off Fandral's lap.

"Ready?" Thor says, laughing at Fandral as he stands and straightens his clothes.

"As ever," Fandral says archly and then they're gone, leaving Steve to chew his lip and try not to dwell on it as he goes to sift through the papers on Thor's desk for anything useful.

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Thor comes in from the cold later alone, pink cheeked and radiant with the dogs baying down the hall going to be fed. He crosses the room to Steve in three steps, hauling him up bodily with a dark look that Steve recognizes a beat late as intending to fuck him fast and rough. Steve's cock in its cool metal cage throbs hot at that despite himself, staggering as Thor shoves Steve's jacket off him and yanks his over and undershirts off.

Stripped down to stockings and panties on jittery feet, Steve shivers back from Thor's cold hands on his ass until Thor yanks him back by the collar. Not hard, not enough to hurt, but enough to make him go boneless as he stumbles on unsteady knees. Thor gives him a hungry, appraising look and twists both cold hands in the fabric of Steve's inky blue panties, ripping the flimsy fabric at one hip apart. The sound and the feel of it go straight through Steve's belly and his restrained cock, hot and sharp as Thor tears the other side and yanks the ruined fabric away before lifting Steve up, bruised ass cupped in his cold hands.

Steve goes, wrapping his skinny legs around Thor's waist as Thor bites along his shoulder and undoes the laces of his trousers with rough hands. His clothes are still cold but the skin of his neck is hot, Steve turning his face in to press his nose to Thor's warm throat and pull his shirt collar open wider as Thor spits into his hand and slicks his cock with just that. Steve blows out a breath as Thor's cock pushes into him, hot and thick as the rest of him is cold and solid.

It hurts, but in a dull, distant way, the slide of Thor's cock in him rougher than usual and not entirely
bad as Steve shudders on his cock. Thor fucks him in sharp little strokes, hands flexing on the tender hot skin of Steve's bruised ass as he uses Steve's weight to bounce him on his cock. Steve scrambles to hang on, fingers grabbing at his broad shoulders and restrained cock and balls pressed to the rough fabric of his cold hunting coat as Thor fucks him.

Steve bites him, sucking dark bruises across Thor's throat and shoulder. Thor twists fingers in his hair and pulls, but not enough to pull him away, just to send a little frisson of danger down Steve's back and scalp as he bites the thick muscle of Thor's shoulder.

Thor laughs when Steve bites him again, deep in his chest as he walks Steve to his desk and all but throws him down, chest against the desk and ass in the air. He gives Steve one sharp slap across the ass, just enough to make him arch back into it and light up the dull ache of the bruising, before he fucks into him again in one motion, huge cock buried in Steve's ass and balls pressed to the back of Steve's thighs.

Steve's just moaned and tried to push back against him when the outer door to the parlor clicks open, and Thor goes dead still.

“Hush,” Thor says, putting a broad hand over Steve's mouth.

“My lord—” the steward calls.

“A moment!” Thor yells back, fucking Steve slowly. Steve huffs against his hand, annoyed and trying to squirm away against the desk.

“My lord, your brother just sent word—”

Thor makes an annoyed noise, grinding his hips against Steve's ass to keep him in place. “I shall be there in a moment,” he says. Steve knows better than to make a sound, but he struggles anyway, trying to get Thor to fuck him. Thor tightens the hand on his hip in warning, using his weight to hold Steve against the edge of the desk even maddeningly close as he is. Held still like this, Steve can feel Thor's cock pulse in his ass, thick and hot.

He licks Thor's hand.

“Yes, my lord, but—”

“It can wait,” Thor says sharply over his shoulder, and pulls out to flip Steve over bodily on the desk as the steward finally retreats. Thor gives him a wicked look and Steve nearly panics, but Thor just wipes his wet hand across Steve's cheek, like Bucky would do.

Steve laughs despite himself, tipping his ass up eagerly as Thor pulls Steve to the edge of the desk and pushes into him again. Thor hauls Steve's knees up over his shoulders, Steve's ass in his hands to pound into him fast and ragged. Thor tries to keep a straight face, Steve can see it, trying to be gruff and serious, but he huffs a laugh when Steve sucks his lip ring and pinches his own nipples.

Even with the cage Steve feels like he might come, cock straining and swollen as he twists the little rings in his nipples, splayed out on the desk with Thor's hands digging into his hips to keep him in place. The sound of Thor's cock in him is obscene, wet in the quiet room.

But Thor takes no more pity than he ever has, leaning down with one hand on the desk by Steve's head and his other behind Steve's knee to nearly fold him in half, fucking him roughly with his eyes on Steve's swollen lips. Steve tongues the lip ring, watching Thor's eyes go dark and then nearly regretting it as he feels Thor come in hot, thick pulses, grinding into Steve's ass as he hangs his head to finish. Steve reaches up with tentative hands to trace the little red bite marks he left across Thor's
shoulder, Thor breathing a smile into Steve's wrist as he rolls his hips into Steve to drag it out, cock hot and slick in the mess of come leaking out around him.

Thor picks him up and carries him to the bed with his cock still in Steve's ass, and lays him down gently. Doesn't pull out, though, draping his weight over Steve still clothed, grinding into him and nipping little bites down his throat and chest. Steve half thinks he means to go again, Thor's cock throbbing in him as Steve squirms under him, trying to be willful enough that Thor will try to fuck some obedience into him again. Even if he just spanked Steve, it might be worth the new bruises if he could only come from it.

Thor knows what he's doing, though, pinning Steve's hands over his head to rear back and roll his hips into him slowly with a dark look. “You are a wicked distraction,” he says, and Steve can feel him give the little metal cage around his cock a long look. “Not all of us can laze around so prettyly begging to be fucked.” He pulls out of Steve then, keeping his wrists pinned as he reaches for the glass plug on the side table.

Steve shudders as Thor pushes it into him, not bothering to slick it with all the come already making him wet and loose. “Later?” Steve says, arching his back into it and straining against Thor's hand on his wrists. Feels like he could come at the touch of a feather, but Thor just pushes the plug into him and brushes rough fingers up the inside of Steve's shivery thigh. “Please?”

Thor laughs at him, finally letting Steve go to do up his trousers. “If you are very good,” he says. Steve makes a frustrated noise when he gets up, but Thor only goes to get his book, coming back to the bed to pull Steve over to lie with his head in his lap, which is better and worse.

Mostly worse, because Steve can hardly keep still with the smell of Thor's cock so close and his cheek on Thor's thigh, squirming because he can hardly think past the slick plug in his ass pressing him harder and the cage preventing him from getting hard enough. Thor pinches him, laughing at the frustrated, needy way Steve cuddles against him and tries to nuzzle his cock hard again just so Thor might fuck him.

The steward puts a stop to any thought of that, returning once Steve's mostly given up and wrapped himself in the sheet to press the heel of his hand to the base of his cock, trying to will the pressure away.

“My lord, your brother sent urgent word asking for your return to the keep,” the steward says, giving Steve not half a glance as he strides in to hand Thor a letter. “It's about the Midgardians.”

Steve reads it with half-lidded eyes, trying to look sleepy and absent as he reads Loki's neat, careful handwriting. . . . embassy . . . move in your absence . . . divided loyalties and internal dissent . . . resistance to be crushed . . . Steve blinks at it, trying to parse that last bit and suddenly hot with worry for Peggy.

They pile back into the flyer, Steve and Fandral and Thor, Steve dressed hastily and clutching his sketchbook to his chest as the staff fluttered repacking everything to follow after them. The flight is tense and quiet, Thor and Fandral trading tight words as the flyer clips close to cliff walls and skims rivers, more reckless than the leisurely flight out.

Fandral disappears when they land at the keep some hours later, Thor hustling Steve through the keep at a pace that leaves him huffing and out of breath by the time they reach the side chamber of the audience hall. The room's packed with staff, administrators with sheafs of paper for Thor's attention and a junior steward ready with Thor's armor and cloak for court as he shucks off his casual hunting clothes in the center of the room, like there aren't twenty people fluttering around the room.
Dottie gets Steve ready with quick hands, helping him step out of his clothes in a corner of the busy side chamber and shielding him as much as possible until he's as dressed as he's going to get in his flimsy court clothes. She doesn't say anything or even acknowledge the cage, and Steve's too unsettled by the flurry of activity around them to care much. The dark bruises across his ass catch her attention, but she just frowns tightly and doesn't say anything about those either.

“What's going on?” she murmurs as she tips his face up to line his eyes. Her attention's clearly on the room behind her even as she carefully does Steve's make up, tracking everyone without taking her eyes off Steve, and Steve wonders not for the first time how she actually got here since it wasn't from any typing pool in London.

“Don't know,” Steve breathes, trying to be unobtrusive even as he feels Thor glance his way. “Hydra tried to do this without Thor knowing, something about putting down resistance. They're working with Loki, I think.”

Dottie makes an unconcerned noise at that, but the corners of her mouth tighten and Steve's heartbeat picks up with worry for Peggy again.

Then Thor's snapping his fingers for Steve, the flurry in the room picking up to fevered pace as Dottie hurries after Steve hurrying after Thor, Dottie trying to fuss over his hair even as Thor clips the delicate leash to his collar. It really is like being backstage with the USO, and Steve wants to laugh at the absurdity of it except for the nervous worry twisting in his gut.

Loki's seated on the low gold throne when the door finally opens, Thor leading Steve up the dais so he can feel every ounce of Loki's smug look on his bare shoulders. Thor moves to stand just to the left of the throne, pushing Steve down to sit at his feet as he exchanges an unreadable look with Loki. It's unsettling, a reversal of how things should be, and Steve leans against Thor's knee to steady himself. Thor cards fingers through his hair, absent minded as he frowns out over the crowd in the audience hall.

Steve sees the ripple go through the crowd before he sees the cause, the clot of Nazis in their SS black ragged around the edges as they make their way towards the dais.

They drag—or are dragged—by the shape of a—man, for lack of a better word, snarling and feral at the end of two rigid leads like dog catchers' poles. Pierce walks serenely ahead of it all, the creature at his heels a heavy, dark presence made worse by Pierce's easy confidence. The SS guards aren't so serene, Rumlow snapping orders as they fight to keep the thing under control, all of it so quiet even Steve can hear the ragged breathing of the SS guards and the feral thing through the mask over its nose and mouth. It's the feverish, terrible sort of nightmare creature Schmidt and Zola were working to make Steve into, broad chest barely restrained by a tight leather combat vest and the cold metal of its left arm bright in the warm light. Even Thor seems unsettled, shifting uneasily on his feet.

As they draw closer to the throne, Steve can see the thing's wild gray eyes under shaggy long hair catch on him, the plates of its metal arm shifting restlessly.

Steve flinches back against Thor's leg even far above as they are, because Pierce's monster on a leash is barely leashed, lashing out at the SS guards around it until Rumlow steps in to crack the back of its skull with a baton. It goes to its knees heavily, head bowed under the weight of the two SS guards pushing their poles down at an angle like it's a rabid dog. Its hair falls in its face but its shoulders rise and fall heavily and its hands flex on its thighs, like it's just waiting. Packed as the hall is, the crowd goes dead silent, breath held.

Pierce gives Thor and Steve an annoyed glance before turning his attention to Loki on the throne. “Your Majesty,” he says to Loki, pleased. Gives the feral thing at his feet a nudge in the thigh with
one polished shoe, making it jerk and snarl behind the mask. “The Fist of Hydra.”
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

I blame @feanor for the bit about the bit ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“That is your Ubermensch,” Thor says, voice dripping with disdain. “The thing is feral.”

“Apologies, my lord,” Pierce says smoothly. No more majesty for Thor. “I thought you enjoyed the process of domestication,” he says, and Steve bristles at Thor's feet.

“A weapon is only as good as the man who wields it,” Thor says archly.

“One day,” Loki mutters under his breath, so that only Steve and Thor can hear. “You made it one day, and you weren't even here for the first, brother.” Thor gives Loki a chastened look before they both turn their attention back to Pierce and the monster.

“Perhaps a demonstration, majesty?” Pierce says. Loki waves a hand, and Steve doesn't like the hungry, avid look in his eye as Rumlow moves to unclip the creature.

It rises in one easy motion, on its feet before the Asgardian guards are even moving. The Nazis fall back, like they planned this, Pierce looking pleased with himself as the monster stalks forward towards the throne, eyes on Steve.

The room erupts in chaos, people boiling out of the way as the creature casually knocks guards aside on its way up the throne. One goes flying into the crowd, Hydra's monster inhumanly strong and focused on its goal.

Thor shoves Steve behind him, sending him sprawling on his ass across the cold stone of the dais, scrambling to get away as the creature makes its way methodically towards Steve. It doesn't make any sense, the thinking part of him says, but the cornered animal in him is panicky as Steve tries and fails to get his feet under him and hide behind Thor. The Nazis are barking orders at the monster like something's not going according to plan but Steve doesn't catch what they're yelling.

More guards pour into the grand hall as the monster makes its way up the dais, the guards' weapons drawn, but the creature is too close. Thor puts a hand in the air, the stink of ozone and electricity crackling around them as Steve's heart stutters in his chest, sure the Ahnenerbe nonsense he's seeing can't possibly be real. The monster makes the dais, not twenty feet from them as a hammer flies to Thor's hand like they're in the movies.

Thor throws the thing at the creature, hitting it in the center of its chest with the massive weight of the hammer. Monster and hammer go flying backwards off the dais, landing on the cold stone floor below with a sickening crack. Breaking ribs or stone, Steve can't tell.

The hall goes quiet, hushed and holding its breath. The monster lies still, and Steve can't see well enough to know if it's even still breathing.

Until it begins to stir weakly, clutching at the hammer on its chest. The guards draw in, circling around it as the creature strains against the weight on its chest. Loki leans forward, watching avidly,
and that more than anything makes Steve's stomach cold with dread.

A shocked ripple goes through the crowd as the creature heaves at the weight, finally tipping the hammer off its chest, the hammer falling to the cracked stone with a ringing sound.

The monster staggers to its feet as the guards waver uncertainly, and Loki finally stands.

He slams the creature to its knees with a gesture, the shock wave of it a physical thing in the air as the monster's knees crack against the stone. Steve finally gets his knees under him, clutching at Thor's cloak for the illusion of safety. The guards sweep in then, wrestling the thing to the floor to cuff it with massive, thick pinions behind its back, the monster staring up at Steve until it's forced down on the floor.

“A worth demonstration, Ambassador,” Loki says in the silence. “Asgard is pleased to accept your gift.”

Pierce smiles tightly as the little clot of Nazis reforms, and Steve can't tell what he's thinking. “Excellent, majesty. We hope you can make good use of the Winter Soldier's talents.”

“Send it to Niflheim and have done with it,” Thor says, he and Loki walking so fast Steve struggles to keep up, tugged along on his leash like the Pujokowski's little toy poodle. Hydra's monster stalks behind them, arms still pinioned in place and marched along by half a dozen guards.

“I asked you back from the winter keep for your advice, not your orders,” Loki snaps back.

The monster is quiet now, complacent in its heavy cuffs, but Steve can't help glancing back at it uneasily. It's not staring at him anymore, the weight of its look on his narrow shoulders, but Steve can feel its attention even with its head down and its eyes hidden. They still haven't taken the dark muzzle off it and Steve wishes they would.

“Then I advise you to put it down like a rabid dog, majesty,” Thor snaps back, voice rising. Steve wishes he could disappear, unwilling to be caught in the middle of this but unwilling to draw enough attention to himself to make Thor send him back to the safety of the suite.

Their destination is on the opposite side of the keep, facing the mountains as Thor's faces the harbor. Loki's suite, from the looks of it, strewn with possibly even more books than Thor's rooms and scattered with objects Steve can't guess the purpose of. Models of planets, some of them, or ships, the others unfathomable to Steve's eye but vaguely scientific in a way Bucky would love.

“I told you what would happen if the Midgardians were no longer in awe of us, but did you listen,” Loki says as the guards chain the monster to a stone column, out of reach of everything. Loki's suite gets evening light the way Thor's gets morning light, the space flooded with blood-red sunset as the guards filter out of the room, leaving only Steve, Thor, Loki, and the monster. “You were too soft for that and look at what it got you,” Loki snaps, gesturing at Steve. “We should raze New York, Paris, and Berlin, burn all of them to the ground, and then the rest will fear us again.”

“Even you do not think that is a good idea,” Thor says as Steve bristles. “Schmidt does not rule all of Midgard and he does not fully control the parts he rules.”

Loki waves that away, striding past Steve to pass into what looks like a study. Thor follows after him without a look at Steve.

“Stay,” Thor says with a snap of his fingers as he passes, pointing at Steve like he's a dog. Disappears into the study behind Loki, closing the door behind them.
Leaving Steve alone with the monster.

Steve creeps around the edges of the room, uneasy even if the monster isn't looking at him, feeling exposed in his flimsy little loincloth. It should be the least of his worries, but the cock cage is nearly visible, a hard outline that makes him look half erect. If he gets murdered, it's going to be in the most embarrassing way possible, half naked and wearing a leash.

Steve edges towards the study door, casting around for anything useful, but there's nothing obvious sitting out. Loki's neater than Thor, his books in precise piles without the sheafs of letters and reports drifted everywhere. Steve creeps to sit near the door, eavesdropping and on edge for the sound of footsteps.

“Even you cannot control a weapon you do not understand,” Thor says, voice muffled through the door.

“I do not intend to control it, I intend to break it open and learn how they made it,” Loki snaps back. The monster shivers back to life at that, like it could hear from its place across the room. “If they have made one, they have made others.”

“The creature is a liability,” Thor says. Steve watches the monster warily, sure he wouldn't be able to outrun it if it broke its chains.

“And yours is not? I told you, from the very first, that he would deceive you at every opportunity but you would not listen—”

“They are trying to divide us,” Thor says, both of them going quiet. Steve presses his good ear against the door, but without both of them yelling they're too muffled to make out what they're saying.

Hydra's creature strains against the giant metal cuffs behind its back, but even it can't break them. Can't pull the chains against the column, even if Steve can hear them creak, they don't break. The monster must realize it too, collapsing back against the column with its chest heaving, casting around the room with its head low, like it's looking for something. Its look finally settles on Steve, eyes so wide Steve can see the whites all around its gray irises.

Scared, like Steve had been when he first found himself here, only the monster's strong enough to try to do something about it. Still unnerving, the way it focuses on Steve like he's the key to getting out of all this.

Steve watches the monster warily, sucking his lip ring. “Are you okay?” he says finally. Hates the way it comes out, making him sound just as weak and fragile as he looks.

The monster sucks in a ragged breath behind its muzzle and Steve almost flinches back. He doesn't even know if the thing speaks English, or if it even speaks at all. He doesn't know what else to say, anyway. *They won't hurt you and it'll be okay* are both lies even if Steve doesn't know it for certain, and what other empty platitudes does he even have.

There's no water set out, even though Steve can see the creature sweating in the cool room. It's been in that heavy leather combat vest for hours now, its breathing ragged and its skin clammy pale. It has to be in pain, chest crushed by the hammer and the blow of landing on stone hard enough to crack.

Steve casts around, looking for anything. In the dark bedroom, if he leans around the corner to peer into it, there's a carafe of water and wooden cup sitting out on a side table. Steve sucks his lip ring, glancing between the closed door, the monster, and the cup.
He pushes himself up and crosses the room before he can think better of it, leash dragging at his heels until he picks it up and winds it around his hand lest Thor hear it. The bedroom is bigger than he thought, and Steve's heart is racing by the time he makes it to the carafe, nervous of the consequences if he's found out. He pours clumsily, wiping a spilled drop with his hand and jittery enough to worry he'll spill the cup as he pads back into the other room.

The monster looks up at him, eyes flicking between Steve's face and the cup. Sits up as much as it can, straining forward as Steve brings it the cup. It's just a man, made into whatever horrible thing Schmidt and Zola were going to make Steve into.

“But what do they want?” Thor says, with the sound of footsteps crossing to the door as Steve scrambles away from the creature, frantically casting around for a place to hide the full cup. He sits heavily and shoves it behind a stack of books, pushing himself back away from the monster like he can hide his guilt that way.

“One way to find out,” Loki answers, and then they're walking into the room.

Steve tries to pretend he's not guilty as sin, keeping his eyes down and watching the room through his lashes. Thor gives him a long look, like he knows Steve was listening at the door, but he just picks up Steve's leash and drags him over to kneel next to Thor's chair.

Loki crosses the room to the creature, putting a hand on its face like he did Steve as it jerks back away from him, and Steve nearly strangles himself on his collar. “Don't,” he says, Thor dragging him back harshly as Loki does whatever he did to Steve, the monster twisting in his grip, breathing harshly like it's being tortured.

“Control your creature,” Loki snaps over his shoulder at Thor, who forces Steve back down on the floor at his feet. The monster moans, low, back in its throat, head tipped back painfully as Loki forces his way into its mind.

“You're hurting him,” Steve yells, trying to pull away from Thor's hands.

“Be quiet,” Thor says, shaking him. He twists Steve around to put a hard hand on his chin, angry enough that Steve thinks Thor might finally hit him, and Steve squeezes his eyes shut against it. Behind them, the monster makes a terrible noise, high and wounded.

And then Loki finally releases the creature, letting it drop in a crumpled pile at his feet, and Thor's attention snaps away. The monster makes a low, weak noise where it's curled on the floor, and Steve's chest hurts in sympathy.

“Nothing,” Loki says, voice disgusted. “Its mind is nothing but mush, the Midgardians have done something to it.”

Thor frowns at the creature, trying weakly to leverage itself back up sitting against the column. His hand squeezes dangerously on Steve's shoulder as he leans toward it without thinking, like he'd be stupid enough to go help the creature up. “Can you make anything of it?” Thor asks finally. “Sift anything out of what is there? All the more reason to find what the Midgardians are hiding, if they do not want us to find it.”

“It will take weeks, if not longer,” Loki says, frowning at the monster, which has finally leveraged itself up and sits tipped forward breathing heavily, hanging its head again.

“Tell me when you find anything,” Thor says, rising and taking Steve with him. Leaving Loki there with his monster for the night.
Thor says nothing as they walk back to the suite, but Steve can feel it in the air that he's going to regret saying anything. If he's lucky, it'll only be the ginger again, though Steve shivers at the thought.

Whatever it is, Thor intends to leave it until morning. He lets Steve change into his soft white night shirt but then chains him to the foot of the bed and throws a blanket at him so Steve knows he's displeased.

Steve's too exhausted to care, dropping into an uneasy sleep at the foot of the bed. He wakes up in the night drenched in sweat and breathing heavily, not sure if he dreamt he'd been turned into the monster Zola and Schmidt had made of the creature, or if he'd dreamt the creature being sent after him, wide gray eyes focused and hunting him down like prey.

“I told you to watch your tongue,” Thor says in the morning, mild as he fits Steve with—a bit, essentially, like the show ponies at the circus. It's thin gold and delicate, just wide enough for Thor to secure around the back of his neck with a silk ribbon tied in a bow. Steve doesn't fight him, cheeks hot when Thor sits back in his chair to admire his handiwork and Steve unwilling to make it worse by simply reaching up and untying it.

That's the point, maybe, that he could just take it off if he was willful enough, but the alternative would be so much worse. He could still talk around it, clumsily, but just the feeling of it is a reminder that Thor wants him quiet and obedient.

Thor makes Steve ride him after, twisting his pierced nipples painfully as Steve fucks himself on his cock and pants around the bit. By the end of it Steve's balls are swollen and sore, Thor laying him out on the desk to fuck open with one of the bigger plugs and rolling Steve's balls in his hand. Steve whines and arches his back for the plug but doesn't beg; he hasn't come for nearly a week and Thor said only if he was good. He doesn't want to think about how much longer Thor will leave the cage on if he's petulant or disobedient.

If the bit itself is bad enough, the humiliation of walking at Thor's heels wearing it is even worse. Steve can practically feel everyone staring, especially the humans they pass, even though he keeps his head down and doesn't look at anyone. He knows Fandral gives Thor a tight look when they cross paths but Thor doesn't pause to let him argue about it, sweeping past imperiously on their way back to Loki's rooms.

The creature is—dressed in clothes that don't fit it, but still muzzled and chained by a collar like Steve's, but thicker and silver. Not in Loki's clothes, because he's taller and slimmer than the monster, but maybe in Thor's or someone else broad. The creature swims in the sleeveless undershirt and loose trousers despite the breadth of its shoulders, looking almost comical if it weren't deathly pale above the muzzle.

Thor and Loki disappear back into the study, leaving Steve to shift foot to foot with the monster watching him. Its eyes are slightly glazed, tracking Steve as he glances after Thor. He didn't tell Steve to stay this time, but he'll be annoyed if Steve follows and Thor didn't mean him to. The bit is humiliating but it doesn't hurt.

The monster watches as Steve takes one unsteady step towards it and then another. Its hands are free, folded in its lap, the metal one loose and turned up just like the other. The intricate plate of the arm are almost beautiful. It's foolish to get so close to a thing he saw nearly kill a dozen men the day before but he can't not, like finding a tiger uncaged at the zoo. Beautiful and compelling even if Steve knows it'll kill him.
Close enough and Steve can smell the rank fever sweat on it, shivering minutely except for the metal hand, which stays dead still. Steve wonders if anyone's bothered to feed it, or give it water, or if Loki just intends to torture it to death. He turns to look for the water carafe and the cup, but freezes like a rabbit when the monster moves.

Loki's creature reaches a hand out, the metal one, and touches Steve's cheek just below the bit. The metal is—warm, warmer than body temperature even, but it just skims smooth fingers across Steve's cheek gently.

He shies away when the creature reaches to undo the ribbon for the bit, shaking his head. Not worth the risk. The monster skims a hand down Steve's shoulder and arm, circling his wrist easily with one hand. Its hands are nearly big as Thor's, able to break Steve's wrist without even thinking about it even without the terrifying metal arm, but it just holds Steve's bony wrist like it's trying to remember something.

Steve startles when Thor comes back to frown in the doorway, the monster letting his wrist go as soon as Steve flinches back.

“Come,” Thor says, snapping his fingers at Steve.

Steve goes, watching the creature fold back in on itself against the column. He nearly thinks of defying Thor and going to it, watching it shake and sweat in the other room and wondering what Loki did to it.

“You were very good despite yourself,” Thor says when they're back in the suite at night, undoing the bit. “I know Loki's creature unsettles you, it will be gone soon enough.”

Steve shakes his head but doesn't say anything; his mouth still aches from the bit and he's coward enough to not want Thor to put it back on him. But by the time they left, the monster was sweating profusely, curled in on itself. More pitiful than ferocious, no matter what Schmidt and Zola had done to it.

Steve lets himself be petted, lying on the divan with his head in Thor's lap. He falls asleep wondering if anyone's bothered to ask the monster's name.

Chapter End Notes

Bucky's just going through some drug withdrawals, I PROMISE Loki's not torturing him. And I'm probably not going to be able to keep up this frequency of updates, just so everyone's expectations are realistic, I've just had some time on my hands lately.
Chapter Notes

No Bucky this chapter or next chapter, but then Bucky'll get a whole chapter almost entirely to himself. A little more dubcon than usual this chapter.

The weather turns bitter cold, snow sweeping down from the mountains so heavy Steve can no longer see the bridge stretching out to the harbor. It might as well be as far as the winter keep, for difficult as it would be to get to the bridge now. The steward brings Steve a heavier coat, dense sweaters, and a little pair of knee high boots, for all the good that it would do him if he tried to run for it.

Steve does his best to be obedient and quiet, even if he cranes to catch a glimpse of Loki or his creature whenever Thor lets Steve out of his sight. But there's no sign of them; even Dottie hasn't seen the monster, although word of it is all the kitchens can talk about it. She frowns when Steve tells her about its metal arm, the red star on it, and the way the monster shivered and sweated, but she doesn't know anything about it.

Or, tells Steve she doesn't know anything about it, at any rate.

Thor doesn't say anything about the creature for days, to the point that Steve starts to work up the courage to ask him about it, trying to gauge his mood. Thinks he's found a good day to risk it when Thor wakes him one morning to kiss down Steve's chest, idly playing with the rings in his nipples until Steve's awake enough to try to twist and squirm away. Thor huffs a laugh against his skin, dragging his beard against Steve's belly and shoving Steve's knees up so he can scrape teeth over the sensitive skin inside Steve's knee.

Steve shivers under his hands even with the fire radiating from the hearth; at more than a week without being able to come, he's even more sensitive everywhere else. Thor makes him suck a couple fingers and then presses them into Steve's ass, watching Steve shudder as Thor bites down the inside of Steve's thigh.

If he thought the shivering tension of being made to lie on the divan with his head in Thor's lap as Thor teased him to frustration was bad, it's nothing compared to this. Thor drags lips over Steve's swollen balls, licking wetly before he takes one almost entirely into his mouth. Steve makes a high, needy sound in the back of his throat as he tips his head back against the mattress, trying not to beg.

Thor doesn't take any pity, licking and sucking as he presses up into a little spot behind Steve's cock that makes him gasp. It feels like the need to pee and the need to come all at once like when Thor made him come twice in a row, Steve's cock thickening despite the metal cage. His balls draw dangerously tight like he's going to come even though he knows he can't with the cage.

"Please," Steve finally gasps. "Please let me—"

Thor hums against his thigh like he's actually considering it, even though Steve knows he's not. He keeps circling his fingers in Steve's ass, the pressure almost unbearable. “Would you like this off?” he says, leaning in to bite the soft skin at the juncture of Steve's cock and thigh.
“Yes,” Steve says, arching off the bed.

Thor laughs at him. Not unkindly, but he doesn't stop working his fingers in Steve's ass either and it's so much Steve thinks he might almost pass out from it. But then he wouldn't get to come at all, so he bites his lip and tries to grind down on Thor's fingers, getting another laugh and Thor's other hand pinning him down to the bed.

“This was meant to teach you patience,” Thor says, biting a dark mark on the inside of his thigh. “I will take it off, but you must come like this first.”

“That's not fair,” Steve whines, trying to twist like he's trying to get away, even though they both know he's not going anywhere.

“No,” Thor agrees. “It is not.” And just keeps right on kneading that little spot, watching Steve with fond eyes as sweat stands out on his sides and chest.

Steve makes an annoyed noise, trying to fuck himself on Thor's fingers despite Thor's hand on his hip and just gets Thor's fingers digging into him for his trouble, bruises on his thigh and fingers curled up in his ass.

Then Thor's moving them, hauling Steve up onto him bodily, but ass up in the air and facing the foot of the bed so Thor can lick into him again. Thor spreads his ass with both hands, fucking Steve with his tongue as Steve shudders helplessly. Steve spreads his knees and tries to grind back into it, so far past caring about anything but being allowed to come that he barely notices the way Thor digs fingers into his ass hard enough to bruise.

Thor's cock lays against his belly, flushed and hard with precome slicking the tip and his piercing bright in the dim light. Steve tries to bend to suck his cock but he can't reach with the angle, Thor holding him in place to lick his ass and rub his thighs raw with his beard so Steve can only squirm and make a frustrated sound against the inside of his knee. He bites the inside of Thor's thigh, trying to push himself back so he can at least suck Thor's balls or make Thor actually fuck him.

Thor finally complies, relenting to yank Steve up to straddle his chest, finally letting Steve suck his thick cock. Steve can't swallow him all the way down with the unfamiliar angle but he tries anyway, trying to bring Thor as close and frustrated as he is.

“Do not get distracted,” Thor says, swatting Steve on the ass to make him startle. The bruises are mostly gone, but it's enough of a reminder to make Steve moan around his cock as Thor presses fingers into him again.

He does his best to be good, to be obedient enough that Thor won't take it away now that he's mostly gotten what he wanted, sucking the head of Thor's cock and slicking his hand because he can't swallow far enough to take the rest. Thor's piercing feels odd against the roof of his mouth but if he backs off a little he can tongue it back and forth the way Thor likes.

Thor makes a pleased noise, biting Steve's thigh one last time as he fucks up into Steve's mouth, pressing fingers to the little spot behind Steve's cock that makes a jolt run up his spine. Steve tries to concentrate, closing his eyes to lick down the length of Thor's cock and tries not to just fuck himself on Thor's fingers, as bad as he wants it.

Steve shudders as he—comes, suddenly, but without any of the pleasure of it, only the unsettling sense of pressure relieved as his cock leaks all over Thor's chest and belly. Thor bites his thigh and keeps fucking Steve with his fingers as Steve's cock throbs in the metal cage and just keeps leaking fluid.
Steve makes a whiny, needy sound despite himself against Thor's thigh as Thor just keeps working his ass open with that steady, constant pressure that forces come out of him. Thor doesn't relent, putting a heavy hand on the back of Steve's head to force him down to swallow around Thor's cock. Steve fights him, struggling against the unfairness of it as Thor fucks his mouth and won't let him come, but Thor just laughs at him and Steve ends up rocking back on his fingers.

Steve almost chokes on it when Thor comes, hot and bitter in the back of Steve's throat as he tries to swallow around Thor's cock and fails. It's wet and messy as Thor finishes in his mouth, still fucking Steve with his fingers through it past the point where just having his balls emptied is a relief and now it feels like he's being drained, the thin stream of come pooling on Thor's belly as Steve moans around him.

Thor doesn't relent until he finally allows Steve to collapse bonelessly across him, pulling his fingers out to wipe on Steve's sweaty thigh and patting Steve's ass gently. Steve shivers, head pillowed on Thor's thigh and keeping his jaw loose with Thor's cock still in his mouth. The come is tacky and uncomfortable between them, more than Steve's sure he's ever come before, and the cage is uncomfortable even now that he's not so unbearably hard, but it's only a distant, annoying unpleasantness underneath the contented buzz across his skin. His eyelashes are damp from choking around Thor's cock and his face is smeared with come but he's finally not half hard for the first time in more than a week. Thor makes up for not letting him come by petting him gently, allowing Steve to lay there and suck his softening cock.

Steve makes a sleepy, displeased noise when Thor finally pushes him away, rolling him off to lie on his back.

“That wasn't fair,” Steve says, feeling completely boneless as Thor lays him out on the bed and removes the cage. His cock feels almost bruised, limp and tender where it lays against his thigh.

Thor gives him a fond smile, carding fingers through Steve's sweat-damp hair. “No, but you do suffer very prettily,” he says. He takes the oil and a plug from the side table, a big one, and starts to slick it, watching Steve lazily.

“Again?” Steve says as Thor works it into him, because hope springs eternal.

Thor just laughs at him, seating the plug and using the sheets to wipe off his belly and hands. “Perhaps later, if you behave.”

If Thor intends to fuck him later, he means to do it with the cage back on. Steve only gets a reprieve long enough for Dottie to come up to the suite and wax him bare again once they're both cleaned up, Thor watching with half an eye as the steward trims his beard. Not enough to get Steve hard, thank god, but it's a near thing when the steward finishes with Thor first and he kicks his feet off to watch Dottie very efficiently manhandle Steve's balls. Then as soon as she's gone Thor puts the cage right back on him.

It's unfair and Thor intends to make it more so when Fandral turns up in the afternoon to play chess. With Sif and the others still at the winter keep and Loki consigned to the interminable meetings that used to take up all of Thor's time, he has nothing left to do but fuck Steve and play cards with Fandral. A fact that Steve regrets when they sit down to the chess board and Thor snaps his fingers for Steve to sit on his lap.

Fandral catches him first, hooking an arm around his waist to pull him close.
“First you steal my favorite horse and beat me at the races, now you intend to cheat at chess—” Thor starts.

“You wouldn't thrash an unarmed man, would you?” Fandral says with a laugh, pulling Steve into his lap. Steve goes bright red, hoping he won't feel the cage.

“Nor would I give him such an unfair advantage,” Thor says. But he stays in his seat, lounging and easy as he watches Steve in Fandral's lap with hooded eyes. Steve squirms, cheeks going hot at the thought of Thor watching Fandral fuck him. It wouldn't be so bad, Fandral's long hands easy on his thigh; Fandral's probably not as big as Thor, and he might even ask Thor to take the cage off. Steve would fuck almost anyone for that, at this point.

Thor gives Steve a lazy, predatory smile like he knows exactly what Steve's thinking.

“You may have the advantage, but if I win, I want my prize mare back,” Thor says with a wave of his hand. Steve swallows thickly, leaning forward to move his first pawn.

Thor counters; he's seen Steve play against Loki by letter enough by now that he knows exactly how Steve will move, and Steve hasn't yet seen him play a game except to finish what Steve's started. It's not fair, but Steve's never been a fair match against Thor.

“And if we win?” Fandral says. He's warm and solid against Steve's back, not so looming and dangerous as Thor.

“If you win, I will take it off,” Thor says. Steve nearly thinks he misheard, and then his heart nearly stops.

“Off—” Fandral starts, and Steve thought it couldn't get any worse. “Oh,” he says, hand tightening on Steve's thigh. He shifts so Steve's not sure, but Steve thought he felt Fandral's cock throb against his ass at that. “I thought that was for you,” Fandral says to Thor, and Steve's face goes even more blotchy red. There was the larger cage in the drawer. Steve tries not to wonder what the two of them do together.

Thor just laughs, moving to block Steve's preferred opening. If he hadn't won against Loki in a very long time, it's pretty obvious he could win against pretty much anyone else he ever played, and easily at that.

“What news from your brother?” Fandral says, changing the subject as Steve goes on the offensive. He tries not to think of it as a kindness even though it patently is, Fandral letting him save what little dignity he still has.

Thor makes a displeased noise, whether at the mention of Loki or at Steve's attempt to flank him Steve doesn't know. “The creature is ill,” Thor says, bringing his queen into play already. Steve sucks his lip ring; he might be able to goad Thor into something foolish, but he risks overplaying his own position. “Pierce offered to have his creature Zola sedate the thing, but Loki fears they will try to poison or control it.”

Steve tries not to shudder at mention of Zola or the absent way Fandral's fingers trace the seam of his trousers on the inside of his knee. It's innocent enough, but it's enough like the way Thor teases him to tears that Steve's half glad he's got the cage.

“Does he plan to send it to Svartlheim if it lives?” Fandral says, watching Steve move and Thor counter attack.

Thor snorts a laugh. “He wishes to keep it at court if it can be tamed,” Thor says, reaching across the
board to chuck Steve's chin. “He thinks to follow my good example.”

Steve's ears heat and he tries to keep his attention on the board, playing out Thor's next few moves in his head like they're not talking about him like an alley cat brought in from the rain.

“Why not there?” Fandral says when Steve makes the next move, leaning forward to point at a space and his breath warm on Steve's ear.

“Because he fights like a weasel,” Thor says. He gives Steve a smug smile as he counters, like he knows exactly what Steve's thinking. “Slippery and evasive until cornered, and then he sinks his teeth in.”

Steve loses, miserably. Distracted by his traitorous cock, Fandral's hand on his thigh, and Thor giving him that look. Like he just knows, and maybe he does, he knows Steve better than anyone at this point. Better than Peggy or Bucky ever did, because they never saw Steve beg for anything and Steve can lie to Thor even less than he could to Bucky.

So maybe he does know.

Steve nearly tries to fling himself off the balcony when Thor and Fandral tumble into the enormous tub and take him with them, but even naked and throwing soap at each other they don't seem likely to fuck. Steve tries desperately to pretend he's invisible, not knowing how to hide both the plug in his ass and the cage, but they both ignore Steve to bicker about the horse and scrub down briskly. Fandral doesn't bat an eye at the little cage on Steve's cock and doesn't move to touch him even after Thor grabs Steve's bruised ass, and then they're striding out of the suite in nothing but towels wrapped around their waists and Steve following behind.

He's worn less in public, of course he has, but it was at least the semblance of clothing instead of a towel he had to hold up around his waist while Thor propels him forward with a hand on his shoulder. Thor and Fandral talk over his head as they walk towards the courtyard, arguing over who lost the last wrestling match while Steve looks over his shoulder on high alert for anyone to see the three of them nearly naked like this.

Steve balks when they really do mean to go out into the courtyard stark naked. A little path has been shoveled through the thick blanket of snow to a little shed that's been set up, smoke rising from its chimney. Thor lets Steve balk in the portico, striding ahead through the falling snow as Fandral dawdles with Steve.

It's balls-shrivelingly cold and the metal of the cage only makes it worse, but Steve drags his feet anyway, trying not to hop from foot to foot because he can guess how the day is going to go, even if he doesn't know what's in the little shed.

Fandral won't hit him, he's pretty sure of that, but Steve can't read well and risks never getting better if he loses Fandral's good will. Sitting next to him on the divan getting his pronunciation corrected is one thing when Steve's the one getting something out of it, but it's another thing entirely if Fandral actually believes all of it and Steve has to pretend to like getting fucked by him, if this afternoon goes the way Steve thinks it will.

“You don't—really believe all that stuff, do you?” Steve finally asks. Fandral's too nice to be a Nazi, as much as Steve hates to even think it. Rumlow was charming enough when he wanted to be; Pierce wouldn't be out of place anywhere in New York before the war.

“Which stuff?” Fandral asks amicably.
“All that—*siebte Kreuz*, the books the—Midgardians sent,” Steve says.

“Why wouldn’t I?” Fandral says, and Steve's heart sinks. Up ahead, Thor pulls a few pieces of chopped wood from the stack beside the shed and puts them in its little furnace. “It was very compelling.”

“It’s not—it’s not true, those books,” Steve says. Tries to not make himself cringe. No matter what Thor and Fandral do to him, he has to at least say it.

“It's not?” Fandral says, incredulous. Stops to stand and stare at Steve, the two of them looking ridiculous wearing towels in the snow. “I saw the camps, we found settlements for the survivors—”

“What,” Steve says, completely taken off guard.

“It’s terrible, what Schmidt and your Fuhrer have done,” Fandral says, frowning at him. “Do you mean your—how do you call them—novels? Are fiction?”

Steve glances between him and Thor, waiting for them impatiently.


Fandral gives him a sunny smile, putting a hand on his shoulder as they start to walk again. “Like a saga,” he says. “The emotion’s all true even if the people are not. Though I don't understand why Schmidt's people sent something that reflected so poorly on his government.”

“I grow old waiting,” Thor calls across the courtyard, Steve trying to figure out that one.

The little shed is—a bathhouse, basically, without the bath. Thor waves Steve into the steamy little room with a pat on the ass, he and Fandral following. It's small, almost the size of Thor's big bed, lined with wood and benches up the walls on two sides. Thor lifts Steve up to put on the top bench, setting him gently enough that the plug in his ass only jolts a little, then follows after him.

As cold as the snow was, the little shed is steamy hot, Steve's face flushed between the cold and the heat. Fandral sits to the other side of Thor, and Steve tries not to count his blessings too much. It wouldn't be so bad, if they both wanted to fuck him; Fandral's kinder than Thor.

And then, if Steve weren't bright pink enough from the cold, they both open their towels so they're sitting naked as anything. Steve glances away, his face hot. He's—more or less used to Thor, big and broad and muscled, enough to forget his own knock knees and pigeon chest most of the time, anyway.

But he's suddenly shy and self conscious with Fandral there, even though Fandral already saw him naked in the bath, because why would anyone want to look at him when the two of them are—good looking, Fandral lean and trim in the same way Bucky was, muscled like a dancer or a boxer. Steve can feel the ugly blotchy blush spread down his narrow chest as he hunches his shoulders, trying to wish himself invisible like he did whenever he made the mistake of letting Bucky talk him into going to the boxing gym or the beach.

“What about that Mandela fellow?” Fandral says, like he's just picking up a conversation.

Thor leans over Steve to pour water on the hot rocks, making a noncommittal noise. Steam billows around them, Steve breathing carefully to see if his lungs will cooperate. Thor plucks Steve's towel open with a little sideways smile, sitting back to put a hand on the back of Steve's neck and enjoy his discomfort.
Fandral pays them no mind, just going blithely on. “Or Bandaranaike. Set both of them up with a portal and give them the tools to push back against Schmidt.”

Thor snorts, kneading the muscle of Steve's neck and shoulders like when he wants Steve sleepy and pliant. “By all means,” Thor says, digging his thumb into a knot. It hurts, but in the way that make Steve's eyes nearly roll back in his head it feels so good. “And get them killed like the others. Did you learn nothing meddling with Castro and Mao?”

“Then we protect them this time,” Fandral says. “Send a detachment of warriors to keep them alive.”

“His majesty the winter king will not like it,” Thor says.

Fandral hums thoughtfully. “No, I suppose not.”

They talk over and past Steve, Thor casually petting him as they all sweat in the steam. Even though they don't talk to him, it's less ignored than he felt at dance halls and Bucky's boxing matches, because at least with Thor's broad hand kneading the tension out of his shoulders he's not pointedly left out like Bucky's girls and work friends elbowing him out of the way.

He should hate it, but it's hard not to.

Even when Thor and Fandral tumble out of the little steam room, Thor carrying Steve out squawking under his arm naked as the day he was born to toss in a pile of soft snow. It stings, making him gasp and curl in on himself. Thor and Fandral roll in it right along with him, throwing fist fulls of snow at each other and scrubbing down with handfuls of snow before tumbling back into the steam room shaking snow out of their hair.

Steve runs ahead of them, gasping by the time he flops down on one of the benches, Thor and Fandral laughing as they climb back up on the high benches. Steve smiles dopily up at Thor despite himself, high on the rush of adrenaline and letting Thor reach down to muss his damp braids.

They jump in the snow twice, maybe three times more before they dash back to the suite, towels slung over shoulders and naked as jay birds when they collapse in a pile on the furs in front of the fireplace. Steve lays huffing against Thor's leg, letting himself be rubbed down briskly with a dry towel as Thor and Fandral kiss and rub each other down. Steve doesn't even mind, sleepily watching them kiss as Thor's cock starts to thicken.

So he's expecting it when Thor tugs Steve's hair to move him, half sleepy and half buzzing and loose-limbed like he's had a couple of beers just on the hot-cold of the steam room. Steve goes easily, laying his head on Thor's thigh as he takes Thor's cock in his mouth. He tastes clean and salty, the warm smell of his skin enveloping as Steve closes his eyes. It's only the three of them, and Steve leans into it when Fandral traces tentative fingers over Steve's bare shoulder. Thor pets his hair gently and Steve floats on the easy affection of it.

They're kissing over him, slow and lazy, Thor's hand in Steve's hair just keeping him in place and not rushing him. Steve's cock aches with the cage, but it's far away, not so pressing as it was that morning. Fandral pets him too, half distracted with Thor's other hand occupied. Stroking him off, maybe, or pulling him close; Steve keeps his eyes closed and focuses on Thor's cock in his mouth, listening to them kiss with his heartbeat loud in his ears.

Thor twists fingers in Steve's hair as he comes, Steve swallowing around him. Easy and affectionate, Thor's hand heavy on the back of his neck to keep him in place.

When Thor lets him up to breathe, Fandral's hand is wrapped around his own cock, close and
leaking even as he gives Steve an apologetic look. Thor gives Steve a gentle nudge and Steve goes easily, but Fandral hesitates, glancing at Thor.

Steve sucks his lip ring, shuffling over to kneel for Fandral, doing his best to look willing. It's not so bad, if they only mean to trade him back and forth like this for a lazy afternoon, and better than risking Thor fucking his mouth to show him his place again. Fandral's not so bad.

Fandral opens his mouth to say something, and Steve leans in, hands on Fandral's knees. “Please,” Steve says, and Fandral shudders.

“I told you he is very good,” Thor murmurs in Fandral's ear as he finally lets Steve lean in and suck his cock, Thor's hand heavy on the back of his head. It's easy and comfortable; Fandral's big, but nowhere near as big as Thor, and Steve swallows around him easily. Thor scratches fingers across Steve's scalp, and with his cock caged and soft the sensation is nearly overwhelming, sending chills racing down Steve's spine.

Fandral's predictable enough. He likes his cock licked slow and delicate, nothing like the eager sucking Thor likes, and he must have been close anyway. His breath hitches as Steve circles the tip of his cock with his tongue without even having to let Fandral fuck his throat like Thor likes. It would have been easy enough without the piercing. Thor makes a pleased noise, tracing fingers over where Steve's lips are stretched around Fandral's cock.

Thor twists fingers in his hair, more forceful now that Steve's not sucking his cock. Steve takes Fandral's cock to the base, nose pressed to the fine gold hair at the base of his cock and ass in the air as Thor starts to work the plug in and out of him, twisting it to fuck him with it. They're still kissing, Fandral's hands on his shoulder and Thor's thigh as Steve swallows around his cock. Thor finally tosses the plug away, only to replace it with his thumb.

Thor teases Steve mercilessly, pulling at the rim of his ass, fucking him with the pad of his thumb without ever quite giving him enough. He slaps Steve, hard, when he tries to rock back into it, trying to make Thor just fuck him already. Steve shudders, moaning around Fandral's cock, holding him in place by the hair as Thor moves to push both thumbs into Steve's ass to pull him wide.

Steve shudders again, choking when he tries to whimper, overwhelmed by the thought of being fucked by both of them at the same time, rocked between them. Fandral pauses, letting Steve up to catch his breath, but Thor pushes him back down.

Then Thor's moving, and Steve braces for it. He's still loose and slick from the thick plug, but Thor's never fucked him in front of anyone else or actually given him to anyone else, and Steve hardly knows whether he wants to get away or if his traitorous cock wants it despite himself. It might not even hurt if they both fuck him. Fandral's not as big as Thor, and he'll be slick with come once Thor's done with him.

But instead of his cock, Thor spreads Steve wide with his hands and licks into him, messy and vulgar. He laughs at the way Steve shivers, backing off just far enough to slap his ass. Steve whines as much as he can around Fandral's cock, annoyed and needy as Thor leans in to bite his thigh.

Steve spreads his legs for it anyway, trying not to choke on Fandral's cock even as desperate for Thor to fuck him as he is, shuddering and twisting as Thor licks into him again. It's not nearly enough, Thor swatting him again when he tries to rock back into it. Even if his balls aren't as swollen and tender as that morning, his cock still knows that he hasn't come for more than a week even if he can't really get hard.
“Do you want to fuck him?” Thor says, conversational as he sits back to wipe his mouth with the back of his hand. Casual, like he's asking if Fandral wants to play cards.

“Please,” Steve says, pulling off his cock before Fandral can say anything. “Please, just fuck me—”

Thor cuts him off with a slap across the ass and a breathless laugh. “What did I tell you?” he says, grabbing a handful of Steve's ass, and it's not clear if he's talking Steve or Fandral. Steve shudders at both the threat and the thought that Thor told Fandral that Steve was desperate for it and hardly minds because it's true.

Fandral just hums in answer, but he gently tugs Steve up to straddle his lap. Steve goes eagerly, arms around Fandral's neck and Fandral giving him an easy, fond smile—until Steve leans in to kiss him.

Fandral turns his face away, stopping Steve with a gentle hand on his shoulder. “Kissing is for—married people,” he lies, cutting a glance at Thor. Who snorts a laugh, stroking his cock.

Steve frowns. He knows it a lie, he's seen Fandral and Thor kissing, not to mention everyone else, but he can't figure out why Fandral would lie about it. Thor distracts him from it, putting a hard hand on Steve's shoulder to keep him in place as he presses two oiled fingers into him without preamble.

Thor kneads his fingers against that little spot, making Steve gasp and twist, trying to fuck himself back on Thor's fingers or get away. He can feel Fandral's cock leak, pulsing against Steve's thigh as Thor plays with him. It's not fair, that Steve can't even get hard and the both of them are going to fuck him all afternoon.

“Please,” Steve says, turning his face into Fandral's neck, pushing his ass back in Thor's hands. Fandral's weak to begging and pretty eyes, he might ask Thor to take the cage off just to make him come.

Fandral's hands tighten on his ass, Thor leaning in to bite Steve's shoulder as they share a look. Steve pushes for boldness and takes a breath to beg again.

Thor cuts him off before he can get that far, yanking his head back by the hair. Fandral leans in to kiss his exposed throat, delicate and gentle as Thor is rough, and Steve can see them still exchanging looks like they've planned this out. He swallows thickly, bent with his back arched, his cock throbbing dangerously at the thought of the two of them talking about how they'd fuck him together. Steve spreads his legs as much as he can, sucking his lip ring.

Thor grazes teeth along his throat, following it with a brush of hot lips and his beard.

Steve pants against Fandral's neck, trying to think past the impossible pressure of his cock, his balls heavy and swollen as Thor stretches him and kneads that hard little spot.

Then Thor's crowding against his back, a hot, immovable wall as Steve realizes that they don't just both mean to fuck him, they mean to fuck him at the same time.

Steve freezes, wanting to bolt but trapped between them. Fandral feels him go rigid, making soothing noises as he strokes Steve's shoulders and back. Thor's not so sympathetic, his hand hard on Steve's thigh as he lifts him up and presses the tips of both their cocks against Steve's ass.

It's too much, Steve squeezing his eyes shut and turning his face into Fandral's neck to hide. Together they're bigger than the biggest plug, and if it doesn't quite hurt it also doesn't feel right, hot and stretched thin with the promise that it could be worse.

“I can't.” Steve pants, one side of whining. His chest is tight, almost panicky, breath coming shallow
Fandral shushes him gently, kissing across his shoulders at Thor strokes his shivery sides and back. It's too much, good and nearly painful and too much all at once and they're barely in him yet. Steve feels close to tears for all that he was sleepy and languid earlier, trapped and fragile between them with his skin suddenly hot and too tight.

“Hush,” Thor says, gentle and his hands soft as he strokes the hollow of Steve's hip with his fingertips. Steve's legs shake and he clings to Fandral even though all he wants is to get away. His whole body shakes, not the kind of electric shiver that runs down his spine when Thor teases him to tears, but a continuous, full body shudder he can't stop.

He's helpless as the night before he landed in Asgard, when Rumlow and his men—even if there's only two of them—

“Take a breath,” Fandral says, smoothing a hand down Steve's neck. Steve tries to obey, face turned into Fandral's shoulder and trying not to sniffle. They might stop if he cried, or they might not, and he doesn't want to find out either way. So he takes a deep breath and then another, trying to calm himself down as Fandral makes soothing noises against his neck and Thor pets him gently. They're nothing like Rumlow, hands slow and steady as Steve calms himself down.

“Good,” Thor says against Steve's hair, quiet and soft as Steve blows out one breath and then another, trying to believe that they won't hurt him if he doesn't fight. He can almost believe it, Fandral murmuring sweet nothings as Thor combs fingers through his hair the way he knows make Steve melt.

He lets himself relax by degrees, easing into Thor and Fandral's hands on him, pretending he's safe between them. It hurts as his shaky legs start to give out and he's eased down on their cocks, Thor kneeling behind him, but it's a dull, distant ache of being spread too wide instead of the sharp burn of being torn open.

They're not Rumlow and they won't hurt him if he's just obedient and quiet. Steve repeats that to himself over and over, even if he's not entirely sure it's true.

“So very good,” Thor says against Steve's shoulder, kissing his hot skin and starting to fuck him slowly. They're both warm and solid and Steve lets himself float on the hazy fantasy that they would just stop and pet him like this if he cried.

Fandral kisses along his shoulder, but then he tips Steve back, looking over Steve's shoulder like he's displeased. Steve tries not to cringe, certain he's done something wrong. Not eager enough, too weepy, too clingy, any number of things.

“Take it off,” Fandral says to Thor, thumbs in the hollows of Steve's hips.

Thor grumbles but does so, tossing the cage aside. It's a relief but Steve's nowhere near hard, cock soft on the pain or the anticipation of pain, he can't even tell which. He's slick and open, their cocks sliding easily, but his back is so tense it hardly matters, just waiting for it to change.

“You are so very pretty,” Fandral says, wiping Steve's wet eyelashes with his thumb. He leans in to kiss Steve on the mouth, brief and chaste if he wasn't being fucked by both of them.

Thor doesn't like it, pulling Steve back by the hair and fucking him in short, sharp little strokes. Fandral gives him an annoyed look over Steve's shoulder, but then they're kissing and Thor lets Steve lean forward against Fandral's chest again. Steve turns his face into Fandral's neck, safely
ignored between the two of them as they fuck him faster. Thor's hands tighten on his hips but his attention's all on Fandral.

Steve loses track of how long they fuck him, floating on the safety of being ignored until suddenly Fandral's coming in him and Thor's fucking him through it, erratic as Fandral curses softly into Steve's hair. Thor's fingers dig into Steve's hips, bruising and sharp enough to drag Steve back from the pleasant haze he'd been floating on.

It feels disgusting and sloppy, Steve's cock still soft despite the pressure and the relief of finally having the cage off, and Steve wants to squirm away when Thor finally comes. It's thick and hot and he drags it out, Fandral petting Steve as he shivers through it.

Thor hauls him up easily, Steve wincing at the way come leaks out of him as he tries to stand weakly. His legs haven't been this shaky since the first time Thor fucked him and everything feels wrong, empty and wrong. They herd him to the bed, Thor cleaning him up briefly, humiliatingly bent over the side of the bed before Thor lets him tumble into the center of the bed to curl into a ball and try to disappear.

Fandral pulls Steve to him, wrapping arms around him as Thor climbs into bed on the other side. Steve lets himself be tucked against Fandral's chest, safe and warm with Thor behind him.

“Thank you,” Steve says. To Thor or Fandral, for taking the cage off or just not hurting him, he doesn't even know. Fandral pets his hair and Thor tugs him close, Steve tucked safely in the middle of the bed between them.

He drops into an exhausted sleep, trying not to think about how raw and broken open he feels.
“You're too harsh with him,” Fandral says, quiet against the top of Steve's head.

“And you spoil him, so it comes out even,” Thor says.

Steve's still sandwiched between them, Fandral curled against his back and Steve curled against Thor's chest. They're both half hard and Steve's cock throbs against Thor's thigh despite himself, trying to keep his breathing steady and pretend he's still asleep so they might wait a bit longer to fuck him again. He still feels shaky and raw, the cotton wool muzzy feeling like he's coming out of a fever making him feel like everything's slightly unreal. Fandral pets his arm absently, fingertips light on Steve's elbow even if Thor's hand is heavy on his thigh.

“I just don't understand why you won't send him back to his people,” Fandral says, quiet. Steve does his best not to react, trying not to hold his breath. Steve'll get fucked however Fandral wants if he'll help get him sent home. “He's proved himself with what he said of Schmidt and he's so obviously miserable.”

“Schmidt is not yet broken and I do not intend to give him back his little spy,” Thor says. Steve's breath catches but he makes himself breathe evenly. He's never given Thor any reason to think he's spying for Schmidt, even if he is spying for Dottie now.

“And yet you've never had any proof of it,” Fandral says, sharp. His hand tightens on Steve's arm before pointedly relaxing. “You treat him harshly on a suspicion only.”

Thor snorts, petting Steve's thigh. It's claustrophobic, Steve's nose pressed to Thor's broad chest and wrapped up in the smell of him as they bicker about him. “I treat him as well as he deserves and no better. You would not be so fond if he lied to you so often.”

“He has not lied to me at all, and he has only lied to you because he fears you,” Fandral snaps. It's true enough, except that Steve has lied to Fandral by omission.

“You are too fond of Midgardians,” Thor says. He keeps on petting Steve's thigh, like he does sometimes when he wants Steve to wake up to fuck, but Steve stubbornly keeps his eyes closed in the hopes that he can just keep putting it off. It has to be getting on towards evening and he's hungry enough that they must need to get up for supper sooner or later.

“Just tell me you'll consider it,” Fandral says. “It would be useful to have a Midgardian on the other side of the bridge who we knew would serve our interests.”

Thor makes a non-committal noise, petting Steve idly. “I will if he is ever obedient enough to warrant it,” he says, and then they go back to bickering about the traded mare.

They let him pretend to sleep for a while longer, Fandral kneading the tense knots out of Steve's back when it finally feels safe enough to stir. Steve tips his head against Thor's chest, trying to hide his face as Thor takes Steve's cock in hand and starts to work him to hardness once he's fully awake. Steve's breath comes fast and shallow, not sure if it's fear of being fucked again or the prospect of finally getting to come for real for the first time in weeks.
But Thor just takes Steve's cock in hand with his and Fandral arranges them so his cock's between Steve's thighs and keeps kneading his back like they don't mean to really fuck him. Steve relaxes under their hands, more grateful than he ought to be that they treat him like glass even pressed between them, boxed in with no room to escape if he wanted to. But Thor's hands are gentle and sure, and Fandral kisses along his shoulder like they don't mean to hurt him.

Steve comes with a shuddery, shaky breath in Thor's hand, so short and sudden that it's hardly worth the past few weeks with the cage. They finish with him so slow and gentle Steve can almost pretend this is how Bucky would fuck him, if Bucky could even look at him like this.

The thought hurts too much so Steve pushes it away, trying to pretend to himself that he's strong enough to not lean on the memory of Bucky to get himself through this. When really he's just a coward.

They help him stagger to the bath after, Steve shaky and sore like he's been fucked by ten men and not two. Fandral gives him a worried look when Steve stumbles, but they leave him alone to wash when Steve lies that he's fine. He's just tired and petulant; he'll be fine once he's had some time to himself.

Steve dresses alone, Thor and Fandral in the front room eating from what he can hear. The steward brought food at some point, and even if it smells good, Steve's stomach can't decide if it's hungry or nauseous. He casts around for his sketchbook, to keep his hands occupied and his head down if they ignore him for the rest of the evening like he hopes.

It's under Thor's hammer, set down beside the bed like he intends to keep it close even if Loki's monster is ill. Steve tries to pull the sketchbook out from under it, but the thing's massive, too heavy with as little of the sketchbook as Steve's able to grab, and Steve lets it go for fear of tearing it. The hammer is nearly too heavy too, Steve's arms burning as he starts to lift it aside. It's practically made of lead, almost Steve's weight from the feel of it, and his arms are shaking by the time he pulls it up and off his sketchbook, setting it heavily to one side. He's huffing when he kneels to get the sketchbook, trying to catch his breath.

When Steve stands, Fandral's standing in the archway to the other room watching him like he's been caught at something.

“Did you lift that?” Fandral says, looking at him oddly. Thor comes to stand behind him, his expression unreadable and his eyes on the hammer at Steve's feet.

Steve's hands go clammy on his sketchbook and he resists the urge to back himself against the wall. Thor never told him not to touch it, there's no reason for Steve's heart to be hammering like it is. “Yes?” he says, hating that it comes out like a question. Thor doesn't look like he means to punish Steve for it, but that doesn't mean anything. “I just wanted my—”

Thor cuts him off with a wave of his hand. “It is very heavy. Come eat your supper,” he says. Steve goes, trying to ignore the odd look Thor and Fandral exchange over his head.

“You are very strong for such a small rabbit,” Thor says later, when Steve's picking at his supper, like Thor's been thinking about it the whole time.

If Thor doesn't say anything over the next few days about letting Steve go home, he's at least gentler than he has been, letting Steve have liberty of the keep again and feeding him the last of the chocolates in the evenings. It's halfway pleasant, Steve trying to absorb the affection even if he doesn't want the chocolates.
Thor doesn't even fuck him or make him wear a plug, just letting Steve suck his cock and petting his hair gently, and Steve tries to be grateful even if he still feels tender and and split open a few days on. Steve's pathetic enough to hold out hope that if he just proves he's obedient enough Thor might really consider sending him back to Earth.

Steve's got his head down and his eyes on his feet days later when they're walking somewhere, nearly running headlong into Thor when he comes to an abrupt stop. They're on a second story portico overlooking a courtyard, the wind chill enough despite a sweater and jacket that Steve lets Thor pull him against his side for warmth, finally looking up to follow Thor's look.

If the monster was ill, it's not any more, spinning through what looks like practice fighting a dozen guards in the snowy courtyard below. It's got a dancer's grace despite the heaviness of the way it moves, like the arm and its bones are made of lead, flat on its feet even as it moves gracefully through the guards. Loki stands off to one side in a heavy cloak, watching dispassionately as the monster tosses one guard after another.

The monster itself is half clothed despite the cold, still muzzled even if it's shirtless and wearing nothing but dark trousers and boots. The ruined mess of its shoulder is even worse than Steve thought, a mass of corded scars where metal meets flesh like the arm was welded onto it. It's unreal, a nightmare, artificial thing even though it must have started out as a person.

It catches sight of them watching up in the portico, knocking a last guard out of the way to turn and stare at them. Steve huddles against Thor despite himself, feeling like he's pinned under a spotlight with the way the monster looks up at them, focused like there's nothing else in the world. With its hair up in a tight bun like a gal, it's even easier to see its flat gray eyes, the same color as the snowy sky. Its ears and nipples have been pierced like Steve's, but little silver studs instead of gold rings.

"Heel," Loki snaps from across the courtyard, striding to the monster's side as it drops to its knees like its strings have been cut. The guards watch them warily, but the monster leans into Loki's hand on its shoulder, eyes still on Thor and Steve.

"Care for a turn, brother?" Loki calls up to them with a sardonic smile, petting the monster's hair. "Or perhaps we should test the Midgardians against one another and see which is better tamed."

Steve stiffens, but Thor just folds his cloak around Steve and keeps him pulled close. "Unnecessary," he says, mild. "Is the thing obedient?"

"More than yours, at any rate," Loki says. It's true enough, the monster perfectly still with its hands on its thighs, even if it's practically vibrating where it kneels. Steve frowns down at it, unsure what the uneasy feeling in his gut is.

Thor just laughs at that and sweeps them out of there, but Steve can feel the weight of the monster's attention even once they're out of sight.

Thor's kinder than he needs to be, gentle even when he starts fucking Steve again and Steve doesn't have the energy left to hate himself for being grateful. It could all be so much worse, if Thor really does suspect him of spying for Hydra, and Steve tries to pretend he's obedient and honest.

Still, his gut's all twisted up when Thor lays him out on the bed a few days later, thoughts chasing around too loud in his head even as Thor fucks him gently with two fingers and mouths along Steve's cock as it thickens against his belly. It's not so bad, and that's the problem with it.
“Why do you bother?” Steve says, staring up at the ceiling. It would be better if Thor really was harsh with him, if Steve could just be miserable and not hold out hope that Thor might ever let him go home if he decided Steve was loyal or obedient enough to trust. It's exhausting, pretending he'll ever be able to escape on his own and trying to keep himself from trusting Thor's kindnesses. He knows he shouldn't but without the reminder of the bruises across his throat it's too easy to pretend that Thor doesn't really mean to hurt him.

Thor makes an vague, questioning noise, humming against Steve's thigh. “With what?” he asks against his skin when Steve says nothing. “Licking you open to make you beg so prettily?”

“Being nice. Not like you gotta seduce me,” Steve says, blushing.

Thor looks up at him, brows raised. “Would you prefer to be ravished?” he says, rising up between Steve's bent knees, huge and looming as Steve's heart starts to hammer in his chest. He hoists Steve's legs up over his shoulders, Steve's skinny ass in his big hands. “Perhaps I should finally take you like a trophy, fuck you hard and dry?” He thrusts lazily against Steve's ass, his face dark like he's really threatening it even though Steve's already slicked up. Even if Thor did fuck him mean and rough, he's stretched and loose enough from his fingers that it's not a real threat.

Steve swallows and makes himself hold Thor's look, if he's finally going to do it. Better anyway, if it finally makes Steve remember that Thor's affection is entirely false.

“Or perhaps you would like to fight as I hold you down,” Thor says, folding Steve nearly in half to pin him and haul his wrists up over his head. His breath's hot on Steve's neck as he squeezes Steve's wrists, teeth threatening. Steve's breath comes fast and shallow as he forgets not to fight, struggling against Thor's hold as Thor's weight crushes him into the mattress. His thighs hurt, spread too far apart as Thor rolls his hips against Steve.

“Do you think you can get away?” Thor says, an idle question because Steve can hardly move, trapped by his weight and the angle and he feels like he can hardly breathe. He shouldn't have said anything, should just have taken what little scraps of kindness he could get.

Just as Steve's breath starts to come panicky fast, Thor puts an arm around his waist, flipping them so Steve's straddling his lap. He's still got Steve's wrists but he puts his own hands up over his head. And then he gives Steve a sly smile like this is a joke, Steve leaning over him pinning his wrists.

“Oh no,” Thor moans, writhing so melodramatically under Steve's hands with such a shit eating grin even Steve has to laugh. “Oh dear, whatever shall I do, please be gentle.”
“I won't, even if you cry prettily,” Steve says, more sure of himself and trying not to laugh as he squeezes Thor's wrists in one hand, reaching behind himself to steady Thor's cock as Steve sinks down on him.

It feels good despite his nervousness, Thor's cock slick and hot in him as Steve controls the pace and the angle like it really does matter what he wants. If Steve's honest with himself, he does like it, being filled with Thor's thick cock and feeling Thor come in his ass, as filthy as it makes him. After all the time wearing the cock cage it's even worse, shivery sensitive everywhere but his cock, which got too used to being ignored.

His cock leaks against Thor's flat belly as Steve fucks himself on Thor's cock, cheeks pink at the sight of Thor spread out under him and pretending helplessness. Steve sucks his lip ring, enjoying the fantasy of it, of someone as big and broad as Thor letting Steve push him around, doing what Steve says.

“Oh woe, you Midgardians are so cruel and heartless,” Thor says, punctuating with slow, lazy thrusts as his cock slides into Steve's ass.

“It'll go easier for you if you behave,” Steve says, really laughing now. He rolls his hips into it, grinding on Thor's cock. His heart beats fluttery fast in his throat, but from the fantasy of it instead of nervousness now, and Steve wishes he didn't enjoy the fantasy as much as he did. In another place, without the rest of it, he might actually enjoy all of this, and what's that say about him.

Thor can barely make himself not smirk through the whole thing, fucking Steve lazily even as he pretends to be held down. “Make me,” Thor says, and that's a real challenge, not play. He tips his chin up, daring Steve to do it like Bucky goading him onto a carnival ride he knows he'll regret later. It's stupid and dangerous and Steve loves it, high on the risk.

Steve squeezes his wrists one last time and lets go, lifting himself up so he's got both hands on Thor's broad chest as he starts to fuck himself on Thor's cock in earnest.

“Your weak Midgardian tortures will never work on me,” Thor says. Even though his cheeks are a deep pink over his beard and he keeps his wrists crossed over his head, watching where his cock is buried in Steve's ass as Steve rides him.

“I—don't care for willfulness,” Steve tries, doing his best to imitate Thor while riding his cock. It's thick and so good, better than Steve wishes it was, trying to ignore the niggling little worry in the back of his mind.

Thor barks a laugh. “Oh, please master, please let me come, I am ever so bad and willful,” Thor says, a deep, breathless imitation of Steve, and Steve laughs despite himself.

“No,” Steve says, breathless as he fucks himself on Thor's cock. He leans down over Thor, pretending to press his wrists to the mattress again and trying to make his face gruff and serious. “You will wait on my permission or you'll have the ginger.”

“Oh no, anything but that,” Thor says, tossing his head in mock distress. “Please, I like it too much, I can't wait for it—”

Steve laughs even though he shouldn't, at the absurdity of it all. Thor surges up then, breaking Steve's pretended hold and wrapping an arm around his waist to bounce Steve on his cock, fast and relentless. Thor wasn't lying, he is close, nipping at Steve's shoulder as he lifts Steve's ass in his hands and Steve's still laughing, giddy and reckless on it.
Thor comes first and Steve rides him through it, putting his hands on Thor's shoulders to fuck him even faster, wild and daring enough to twist fingers in Thor's hair. Not daring enough to pull, but Thor shudders under him as Steve finishes without pausing, pushing Thor as much as himself through the oversensitive shivers of it as Steve comes across his chest and both their bellies, nipping little bites across Thor's shoulders and down his neck like Thor does him. Steve shouldn't like it as much as he does, but a secret little part of him enjoys the thought of marking Thor as his, even if, or because, Steve's so much more visibly marked as his. Fair's fair, even if none of the rest of it is fair.

Steve lets himself be petted, rolling his hips with his legs wrapped around Thor's waist just to feel his slick cock in him and the come leak out around him. Thor's never hurt him, and Steve just has to convince him that he'd be loyal and obedient enough to send him back home. Steve can do that, even if he was never a very good actor.

“Are you going to punish me?” Thor says, his voice a deep rumble where Steve's ear is pressed against his chest.

Steve moves so Thor's cock is no longer in his ass, come sloppy and wet on both of them. He settles back against Thor's chest, hand spread over his broad shoulder to idly trace his freckles. It's—not so bad. In another place, in another life, it could even be nice.

“No,” Steve says, pinching Thor's nipple. “You'd like it too much.”

Thor laughs, delighted and breathless. Steve smiles against his chest despite himself, skin buzzing with what almost feels like contentment.

Thor pushes him back to get a look at him, hands on Steve's face as he smooths hair away, and things feel like they're settling back to normal. Thor gives him a fond, affectionate smile, tracing Steve's lips with his fingers. “You are so very charming,” he says, voice soft.

Steve leans in and kisses him sleepily.

Thor slaps him before he even knows it's happened, Steve tumbling off his lap.

Steve tries to scramble back, heart hammering with sudden panic, but Thor pins him to the bed, a heavy hand on his chest.

“No,” Thor says, voice low and hard, his hand so heavy it nearly presses the breath out of Steve. “Kissing is for equals. Just because Fandral is stupid with you does not mean I am.”

“I'm sorry,” Steve gasps, hands on Thor's until Thor shakes him. “I'm sorry, I didn't know—”

Thor's dark look softens at that, sighing exasperated as he lets Steve go. Steve swallows thickly but doesn't dare to move. “I know,” Thor says finally. “I have been far too lenient with you and Fandral has spoiled you.”

Steve gulps huge, shuddering breaths, trying to calm himself now that Thor's anger is broken. He got complacent, it's his own fault. He lets Thor pull him back into his lap and pet him, Steve trying not to shiver with tension. Thor only hit him because he was stupid; it won't happen again if Steve just remembers to not confuse the limits of his affection and Fandral's.

“I know you try to be good,” Thor says, petting him and cradling Steve against his chest. “Even if you are spoiled and willful.”

Steve nods shakily. His cheek throbs worse than when Loki hit him because he's been waiting for it so long he forgot to expect it. He'll be as good as he has to be to convince Thor to send him home.
Chapter End Notes

A little more sad this chapter; we're starting to head into the chapters where things go worse for Steve, so heads up, but Steve and Bucky will get their reunion soon. <3
Steve’s sitting against the leg of the desk with Thor’s hand in his hair, sketching his own tiny, over-decorated boots kicked over next to Thor’s sturdy, utilitarian ones one morning when Thor tugs his hair. Steve glances up at him, but he’s not looking at Steve, he’s frowning down at a letter in his hand and another half started on the desk in front of him.

“Your Midgardian masters wish to send another gift,” Thor says. “Is there anything you would like from Midgard?” Thor’s still been absurdly gentle, even since slapping him, and Steve half wonders if this is an apology. Or if it’s like the paints, only a kindness because Thor doesn’t care what Steve wants, generous because any little kindness to Steve is so insignificant on the scale of what Thor normally deals with it doesn’t even matter.

Steve turns his face into Thor’s knee, trying to pretend gratitude. “A Bible?” Steve says. “In English?” What he really wants is cigarettes, or a newspaper, or Peggy, but the thought of asking Rumlow and Hydra for any comfort is galling.

“Yes, yes, I have already asked for your bible,” Thor says, combing fingers through Steve’s hair. “Anything else?”

Steve chews his lip. The phonograph is unsettling; books would be too much of a reminder of how much else he can’t have. “Can I send a letter?” Steve says finally. Peggy’s out; he can’t risk leading Hydra to her if things are as bad as Steve thinks they are. But he might be able to send a letter to the Barneses; if Steve were a POW, the Red Cross would send it for him. As is, he knows Hydra’ll see anything he writes, but just telling Mrs. Barnes he’s alive they can’t use against him or the Barneses.

“If you are very quick,” Thor says. “Letters to our ambassador on Midgard leave in a few hours.”

Steve tears a page from his sketchbook, trying to organize all the little pieces that flutter through his head, of what he should and can’t tell Mrs. Barnes. That he misses them, yes; where he is and why, not really. Nothing suspicious that might catch attention if Thor already thinks he’s a spy.

In the end, he doesn’t actually write much. That he’s alive; that he’s healthy; that he prays for Bucky and the Barneses when he can. There’s no one else to pass hellos on to and Mrs. Barnes doesn’t need to know the sordid details. Between what he can’t say to Mrs. Barnes and what he doesn’t want Hydra to read, there’s not much else.

Steve fills the rest of the page with a sketch of his breakfast to show her he’s eating well, and folds the paper in half for lack of an envelope, address on the reverse.

Steve waits until Thor glances down at him again to give him the folded letter. And then his stomach goes cold when Thor opens it.

Thor reads the letter, Steve trying to keep the betrayal off his face. He should have known Thor would check it, he just hadn’t thought it would be so personal with Thor reading it right in front of him. Hadn’t even considered that Thor might be able to read English, if he’s being honest with himself.

Steve sits there, rooted to the floor with his anger. At Thor, but also at himself, for not even thinking that Thor might read English, for thinking he could have any kind of privacy. Not his sketchbooks,
not his letters, not his body. He curls his hands on his thighs, wavering between wanting to rip the letter to shreds and wanting the cold comfort of hoping Mrs. Barnes will actually get it.

“Your mother?” Thor says when he puts the letter aside.

Steve blushes hot and considers lying, but then he risks Thor not sending it at all or thinking he's trying to send a message for Hydra.

“My mother died,” Steve says, feeling like he's being peeled open. First Loki in his head, then Fandral in his sketchbooks, now bargaining pieces of himself away just to get a letter sent that Rumlow will probably laugh over and throw away. “She’s a friend’s mother, the only family I have left.”

Thor gives him a long, skeptical look like he doesn't believe that, and Steve doesn't know what to say. Doesn't even know how to beg, because he's got nothing besides the truth. “Anything else you wish to send them?” Thor says, and Steve can’t read his tone.

Steve sucks his lip ring. He's got nothing else to send. “Can I—” Steve says, before he thinks better of it. “Can I send some of my earrings, for them to sell? They don’t make much, and since my friend died—”

“No,” Thor says, turning back to his desk. Cutting Steve off like he did before, but Steve should have known better. He tips his face down anyway, trying to hide his face so Thor doesn’t scold him for being petulant again. “It will be simpler to have our ambassador give them currency,” Thor says, still writing. “Will twenty thousands suffice?”

Steve blinks at him, sure he didn't hear right over the sudden ringing in his ears. Bucky made less than a thousand dollars in 1940, Steve's never known anyone to even dream of such a thing.

“Dollars?” he says faintly.

Thor glances down at him again. “They are in America, are they not?” He checks the address on the letter, like he’s making sure.

Steve swallows thickly. “Forty would be better?” he says. It's an impossible sum, but if Thor thought nothing of twenty then why not.

“Very well,” Thor says, turning back to his letter. He finishes and encloses Steve's in his, and Steve holds his breath against the thought that bargaining away little pieces of himself might have been worth it if the Barneses really do get the money. Not as though he'll ever know, though. But he can pretend that they might not despise him if he ever did make it home.

Thor writes at his desk all morning, not letting Steve away from his side except to fetch the midday meal. Smoked fish, vinegar fish, pickled onions, pickled fish, smoked onions. Steve would kill for a piece of pie or a pastrami sandwich; he half wonders if he dares ask for a pie sent all the way from Earth.

One of the letters on the desk is in Loki’s neat, clean handwriting, turned sideways as Thor scratches out a reply. Steve tries not to tip his head as he takes away Thor’s cup of beer and plate, reading over his shoulder. Schmidt’s creature is all he can catch with the angle. Move against Midgard, maybe.

Thor looks over his shoulder at Steve standing there and Steve looks away before glancing back through his lashes, tonguing his lip ring in the way he knows catches Thor's attention. Thor snorts a laugh, snapping his fingers for Steve to sit at his feet. “Later,” Thor promises, carding fingers through Steve's hair when Steve leans his head on Thor's thigh.
Steve turns his head into Thor's hand, brushing lips against his fingers in hopes that Thor will bend him over the desk and fuck him or spank him. He mouths at Thor's fingers, trying to catch his attention. But Thor just keeps on writing his response, and Steve wants to see it before it's sent away.

So he sucks Thor's fingers, slow and tentative, pretending to be coy. “You are being a wicked distraction,” Thor says without looking at him. But he's half smiling when Steve glances up at him, even if he's still working on his letter.

And he doesn’t take his hand away, tracing callused fingertips over Steve’s lips and tongue as Steve tries to get his attention. Thor plays with his lip ring, the movement going straight to Steve’s peaked nipples despite himself. As long as he isn’t stupid about it, as long as he doesn’t mistake gentleness for affection, Steve can use it. Even if he shouldn’t enjoy it as much as he does.

He bites Thor’s fingers, just a little, just enough to get his attention. It works; Thor puts his pen down to watch Steve hollow his cheeks around his fingers, Steve holding his look to make it a challenge even if Steve is the one on his knees begging to get fucked.

Thor finally laughs at him, hauling Steve up to stand between his spread knees. “You were supposed to learn some patience,” Thor says, pushing Steve’s jacket off him. With his sweater and shirt yanked up over his head, it’s suddenly not such a good idea, Steve’s pierced nipples sore in the cool room even with the fireplace roaring. “Perhaps you would like the cage back,” Thor says, undoing the fly of Steve’s trousers just enough to cup his stiffening cock through his panties.

Steve shakes his head, about to say something until Thor makes him step out of both trousers and panties, so he’s standing there in just his stockings as Thor undoes his own trousers to pull his cock out. It’s thick and half-hard in his hand, the vein on the underside standing out and his piercing catching the light at the red tip as Thor strokes himself harder. Steve makes himself drag his eyes away, blushing when Thor catches him looking and pulls him close.

Thor settles Steve on his lap, facing away from him so Steve can see the desk—and Thor's letters. Steve shudders when Thor pushes him forward over the desk and pulls a little vial of oil from a desk drawer to start fingering him open. It’s shockingly cold, and Thor slaps him on the ass when Steve hisses. “This is what you get for your impatience,” Thor says, pushing a third finger in Steve’s ass so he’s pushed forward, cheek pressed to the desk. He can’t read the letters like this, sure he’s smeared the ink on one with his palms already.

“Now,” Thor says, pulling Steve back to sit on his cock, forcing him down onto Thor’s lap in one motion. “Show me that you are obedient and patient enough to not need the cage,” Thor says, giving Steve’s cock a light stroke before picking up his pen and turning his attention back to his letter.

Steve shifts his weight, trying to get comfortable on the narrow chair in just his stockings, cock hard enough to leak against his belly just from having Thor’s thick cock in his ass.

“Be still,” Thor says, slapping his thigh without pausing on his letter.

It’s exactly what Steve wanted, if he can just concentrate with Thor’s fingers tracing up the inside of his thigh. He shivers ticklishly and just gets a pinch on the ass.

Steve makes himself concentrate, on being still, on trying to puzzle through Loki’s neat handwriting and Thor’s blocky, rushed handwriting. Fandral’s books are so much easier, with their clean lines and regular characters; puzzling through two different hands with one of them at an angle is a headache.

If he concentrates on the letters and not the tips of Thor’s fingers tracing circles inside his knee, he
can muddle his way through, slowly. Has to start over, though, when he loses his place in a sentence as Thor trails light fingers up and over Steve’s smooth balls, tracing the juncture of his hip and thigh up until he’s thumbing Steve’s nipple ring.

It’s maddeningly distracting, just enough that it’s impossible to ignore but not enough to just disobey flagrantly to fuck himself on Thor’s cock and have done with it. Thor knows it, his arm thick and broad around Steve’s waist as he plays with the little ring idly, thumbing it back and forth with a half smile as he goes on with his letter.

Steve takes steady, even breaths, blowing out slowly to steady himself. He can feel Thor’s cock pulse in his ass, can feel every minute wrinkle in the rough fabric of his trousers, but he just has to concentrate. Even if Thor’s cock feels enormous like this, the full length of him in Steve’s ass, stretching him open wide. It’s different from being fucked, because even then Steve doesn’t have to take all of it, all at once, for very long. It’s like being filled full with one of the thicker plugs, except that he can all but feel his heartbeat driving him mad.

Worse still when Thor sets the first page of his letter aside and begins another, like he intends to go about his business for hours, and Steve’s torn between wanting to see the letter finished and wanting to be willful and disobedient just to put an end to this torture. Thor’s writing about plans for Midgard, and the monster, and all Steve can think about is how badly he just wants to be thrown over the desk and fucked until his ears ring.

Not one of Steve’s better plans.

Little chills race over his skin when Thor leans back in his chair, Steve’s cock jerking like he’ll finally get fucked, but Thor just sits back to read his letter. Steve flexes his hands on his thighs and rolls his hips, just a little, just to adjust to the new position, and Thor slaps him on the ass for it. And just keeps right on reading his letter.

By the time Thor leans forward to write again, Steve’s almost finished puzzling through Loki’s letter, trying to ignore the hot slap mark on his ass. It wasn’t much, but with nothing else to distract him it feels like a burning handprint, even more when Thor rubs it absently, squeezing Steve’s ass and digging fingers into the red mark. It goes straight to Steve’s cock because of course it does, jerking against his belly and making him tighten on Thor’s cock.

“I will put you over the desk and make your ass bright red if you cannot be still,” Thor says, putting an arm around Steve’s waist to shift them both, so Thor’s cock feels like it’s pressed even deeper. Steve takes a shuddery breath. “See how well you sit still with your pretty little ass stinging and hot.”

Steve shakes his head, fighting the urge to struggle when Thor pulls him back to lean against his chest. He shivers as Thor trails fingers from his nipples down his belly to the inside of his knee, avoiding his cock even as Steve tries to concentrate on the letter he’s writing. How Thor can concentrate like this, Steve can’t fathom, because Steve’s nearly blind with the teasing. Tries and fails to repeat words to himself in his head, putting them together into sentences that barely make any sense until he reads them again.

Thor keeps him like that for fifteen, twenty minutes, Steve can’t tell, shivering with the tension of not just grinding on Thor’s cock as he finishes the letter. When Thor finally wraps a hard hand around his cock, it’s nearly a shock, Steve’s whole body jolting with it.

“If you come,” Thor murmurs in his ear, “you will wear the cage for a month.”

“That’s not fair,” Steve pants, trying to be still as Thor strokes his cock.
Thor laughs quietly in his ear. “No,” he agrees, and keeps right on stroking Steve’s cock. He finally puts the pen down, twisting one of Steve’s nipples hard enough to make his balls draw tight, like he means to make Steve fail.

That, Steve finally realizes, has been the game all along. He’s always been set up to fail, and the only times he’s won against Thor was despite it, because Thor underestimated him.

He grinds his teeth, because his body’s too close to betraying him to dwell on it. He can stew on it later, when he’s not sitting on Thor’s cock and trying to pretend he doesn’t like it.

Though he finally hears Thor’s breath catch and go ragged, because he’s not entirely made of stone himself as Steve twists on his cock. It’s a little victory and Steve takes it, leaning forward with his hands on the edge of the desk so he can fuck himself on Thor’s cock and Thor can see him do it.

Thor slaps him on the ass but doesn’t stop him, watching Steve roll his hips and leaving off stroking his cock to twist both of Steve’s nipples. It hurts, somewhere in that muddy middle ground where things are all mixed up between good and painful. Steve can just make out his own reflection in the snowy windows, earrings swinging as he rides Thor’s cock now that he’s gotten what he wanted.

Thor’s hands tighten on Steve’s hips then, fucking up into him as Steve holds onto the edge of the desk. Easier if Thor just threw him over the desk to fuck, because then Steve wouldn’t be tempted to change the angle or the pace and Thor knows it. Thrown over the desk and Steve could just wait him out, but riding him Steve can’t help but tip his ass into Thor’s hands so that the piercing drags over that little spot behind his cock that made him come even with the cage, and Thor knows that too.

But Steve wins, because he’s good at being stubborn when he has to be, grinding back on Thor’s cock and rolling his hips to make him come. If Thor knows Steve too well, Steve knows him well by now too, and turnabout is fair play. Steve arches his back in the way he knows Thor likes, rolling his hips even as Thor’s fingers bruise his hips and Steve can feel come leaking out around his thick cock.

Thor hauls him back to lie against his chest again, Steve’s knees protesting and his cock standing obscenely erect. He’s hot all over as he was chilled before, shivering with the anticipation of how much more Thor will draw this out.

He doesn’t have to wait long, Thor wrapping a big hand around Steve’s cock to stroke him hard and fast, Steve’s entire body going taut like he’s going to be able to get away. He’s not and they both know it, Thor putting a heavy arm over Steve’s chest to keep him in place, no teasing now as Steve’s pushed over to come in his hand, still trying to fight it. It’s not fair, that Steve’s set up to fail no matter what he does. He scowls at his reflection in the snowy windows, hoping Thor can’t see his expression.

“I have business to attend,” Thor says, trailing a hand down Steve’s chest, making him shiver. “You may have the afternoon to yourself.”

Thor kisses along Steve’s shoulder, gentle and affectionate enough that Steve could almost forget being slapped, but he won’t let himself. But no mention of the cock cage, though, and that’s really all Steve can bring himself to care about. He lets himself be eased off Thor’s cock, legs shaky as Thor fondly watches him stagger towards the bed.

As soon as he’s gone, Steve hauls himself up and gets dressed. Just because the deck’s stacked against him doesn’t mean he’ll lose, even if he can’t win.
“They’re going to use it,” Steve says, huffing for breath as he closes the door to Dottie’s little room behind himself. Her head snaps up, eyes snapping to the door to make sure it’s closed. “Loki’s monster,” Steve says, “they’re going to use it to break Hydra’s shield and then topple Schmidt.”

“When?” Dottie snaps. She looks like she did when she hauled Jack up against the wall, hard and focused like a spotlight, and just as flat and unforgiving.

Steve shakes his head, still gulping for breath. “Don’t know. Thor’s still trying to convince him. Loki doesn’t want to but Thor’s pushing him on it, he thinks it’ll shatter Hydra. But soon. Days, maybe a week or two.” Dottie doesn’t say anything to that, her hands tight, and Steve’s suddenly unsure at the sharp, intent look on her face. “This is good, isn’t it? If Hydra’s broken, Peggy can—”

Dottie’s face ticks through a series of emotions before she settles on that sunny, pleasant smile that always gives him the feeling that she’s telling him what he wants to hear. “Sure,” she says. “Sure, it’s swell news.”

She unfolds from her chair, graceful and deadly, and Steve feels not for the first time like a very small animal trapped with a very quick predator. Dottie gives him a radiant smile and comes to fold his hand in hers.

“Come on,” she says, pulling him out of her room. “It’s time you saw the city.”

Wrapped up in boots and cloaks, they look like anyone in the snow, except for being so much shorter. They pass other humans on the streets, Steve trying not to look over his shoulder, feeling like he’s being watched from the keep. The streets are harder to keep straight in the snow than they were in the summer. They blend together, disappearing in the blur of white, any distinctions between the houses difficult to make out and Steve aches more than he has in months for the familiarity of Brooklyn or even Manhattan. He could have and did find his way home blind drunk more than once, and the dark storefronts and windows make him feel like he’s being watched.

Which, for all that he knows, he is. If Thor only suspected him of spying before, he’ll lose all doubt when he finds out Steve snuck out of the keep to the bridge, besides everything else. Steve tries not to think about what he’ll do if he finds out Steve read his letters and passed on information.

Dottie knows her way even if Steve’s nearly lost and trying to commit it all to memory regardless, leading him by the hand through the streets just slow enough for him to try to get his bearings.

And then the harbor just—opens up. With the driving snow, the impossible disappearing edge of the horizon past the bridge is hidden; the end of the bridge itself is barely visible. Steve shivers, standing there looking at it with the wet ocean wind cutting through him. They could be standing in Battery Park, if not for the impossible stretch of the bridge out into nothing.

“You can’t cross on your own,” Dottie says over the wind. Steve casts around for anyone to overhear them, but they’re the only ones foolish enough to come down to stare at the bridge in this weather. “There’s a guardian.”

“Then how do you get messages across?” Steve says. There has to be a way across, guard or no. Guards change shifts, they have to rest some time.

Dottie gives him a long, cool look, like she’s measuring him for a suit or a coffin. Steve holds her look; she still doesn’t trust him, but he’s finally given her something at a risk.

“There’s a secretary at the embassy,” Dottie says finally. “Angie’s in charge of all the mail that crosses the bridge.”
“She works for Hydra?” Steve says. Putting aside the impossibility of him walking into the embassy to ask for anything.

Dottie gives him another one of those unreadable looks, half pity and half disdain. “Lots of people work for Hydra, Steve,” she says, like he didn’t already damn well know that.

“Do you?” Steve says, finally. He should have asked before, not that it would have gotten him an honest answer regardless. Steve holds himself stiffly in the wind, unbearably conscious of how poor a match he’d be against her after what she did to Jack. The icy water is right there.

“Of course not,” Dottie says, her expression ticking over into that sunny smile. “I work for Peggy.”

The walk back to the keep is unsettling, like the hill got steeper since they walked down, the ground shifting under foot. Dottie’s quiet even for her, like she doesn’t much care whether Steve mistrusts her or not, her mind clearly elsewhere. Though she squeezes his cold hand when they finally shake snow from their clothes and hair and Steve turns to go.

Steve walks the long way up the keep rather than using the Ahnenerbe nonsense elevator, to give him time to think before he has to be seen by Thor again. He just needs time to straighten out his thoughts so that Thor doesn’t just take one look at him and see every little deceit Steve’s ever kept.

He’s got a way out of the keep and a route to the bridge. He prods at the thought of it gingerly, the little flicker of hope unfamiliar and odd after all this time. In weather like this, he could slip out at night and make his way over the bridge without being seen, before Thor woke up to find him gone. In the snow and wind, he might be able to just slip past the guards through the portal.

And land directly in Hydra’s lap again. Steve scowls at the floor, turning that over in his head.

Bucky always said that staring at his shoes and moping would get him in trouble, and today is that day. Steve feels abruptly like he’s being hunted, aware of someone following him but unable to catch anyone when he casts around. With the weather and the hour, the keep is a bit quieter, footsteps muffled by the swish of cloaks as Asgardians pass him by without a look.

It’s the same niggling feeling between his shoulder blades as when they were out in the city, but without the overwhelming fear of being caught to explain it. Steve picks up his pace, ducking absurdly around columns and darting through a knot of Asgardians arguing over something in a pitiful attempt to get away.

There’s no getting away and whoever’s following him knows it, a serene, steady presence behind him no matter how Steve hurries. He should have taken the elevator from the kitchens, but on these middle floors of the keep he has no idea how to find it. If Rumlow were to catch him alone like this —Thor wouldn’t like it, but he’d only find out after the fact, which does Steve no good being hunted down like this.

Which is painfully, suddenly clear when Steve’s grabbed by the shirt collar and dragged into an alcove, hauled off his feet.

“Why do I know you,” Bucky snarls in his face. Pierced ears, hair in a high bun, eyes wild as that first night the fist of Hydra was hauled before the court. Without the mask, Steve doesn’t know how he didn’t see it, even if this Bucky is clearly older, taller, broader. His eyes are the same, even if they’ve still got that wild, feral look.

Steve gasps for breath, dancing on his tip toes trying to make sense of the words and the impossibility of everything else with his hands on Bucky’s fists twisted in his jacket. “Bucky, what
“Who the hell is Bucky,” Bucky says, shaking him against the wall.

“You, you are,” Steve gasps. Tries not to panic and fails, because even if he recognizes Bucky, Hydra’s monster clearly doesn’t recognize him. “We’re friends, we grew up together, I’m Steve and you’re Bucky,” he says.

Bucky scowls at him, searching his face for something as Steve goes red gasping for breath. And then Bucky drops him. Not gently, but not in a heap at his feet either, Steve staggering to catch himself.

“You don’t know me,” Steve says, bent over with hands on his knees to catch his breath.

“I remember you,” Bucky corrects him. “I don’t know you.”

Steve looks at the floor and then makes himself stand up and look at Bucky, even if he can hardly stand to face what Hydra did to him. “We met in second grade. Francis McGillicuddy stole my lunch and I knocked your front teeth out instead when you tried to pull him off me. Last time I saw you was June 1942, the night before you shipped out for Europe.”

Bucky frowns, shaking his head slowly like it doesn’t make sense, or like he’s trying to shake something into place. “You had newspaper in your shoes?” Bucky says finally, and Steve’s heart nearly gives out.

“They were your shoes, yeah. Too big for me, couldn’t afford new ones,” Steve says, and laughs shakily because it’s that or cry. The floor heaves under him like the boat he shipped out for Europe on, dangerous and shifting. He’s so goddamn selfish he could cry for gladness that Bucky’s here, that he’s alive and Steve’s not alone in this horrible pulp adventure nonsense place, even if it means Bucky had his own name tortured out of him.

“I tried to find you,” Bucky says out of nowhere, frowning at Steve. “But everything was different and you weren’t there.”

“I—yeah,” Steve says. He was probably here, by then. “When? What year was it?”

Bucky makes a short, stiff gesture that Steve doesn’t recognize. He’s all contradictions, little gestures and looks layered with pieces that Steve doesn’t recognize. The arm, the lines at his eyes, the dark coat with one arm and black embroidery down the front—it all still looks too much like what he arrived wearing.

“Fifty-one, fifty-two,” Bucky says, and Steve’s heart sinks now that he finally has to admit what his eyes were telling him all along. So it is true, then, time passes differently on Asgard; Steve’s been here less than a year. Like being stolen by the fairies. “Spent most of it sweating out the drugs they had me on but they took me back before it evened out, everything’s all—wrong. Like this, it’s all wrong, things come back and I don’t know them.”

“I’m sorry,” Steve says. For what, he doesn’t really know—all of it. His hand twitches to touch Bucky before he thinks better of it, Bucky’s eyes following the movement. Steve feels like he’s been put under glass for examination, worse than with Fandral or Rumlow or Zola, because at least he knew what they wanted from him. Bucky just scowls at him like Steve’s a puzzle he can’t figure out.

And then Bucky’s hauling him down to sit against the stone wall, metal arm over Steve’s shoulders with their knees up, like they used to sit on the fire escape. Steve holds his breath, dizzy with the familiar-unfamiliar want of it. Bucky smells different, no hair cream and cigarettes, but he still smells
familiar, even if the metal arm is uncomfortably heavier. Steve’s practically vibrating with the need to
lean into it, but it’s as bad an idea now as it ever was, if Bucky’s not disgusted just at the sight of
him.

“I missed you,” Bucky says, quiet. Steve’s breath catches, the only other sound footsteps and the low
murmur of voices as people pass the hidden alcove. “Even when I didn’t know it was you.”

Steve glances at him, remembering just in time to not look through his lashes with his chin tipped
down like he’s learned to do to get what he wants from Thor and Fandral. In the half-reflection of
himself in Bucky’s eyes, he looks almost normal, if he pretends he just can’t feel the lip ring when he
licks his lips. “I missed you too, Buck.”

Steve aches, from the cold and from sitting on the stone floor trying not to just throw himself at
Bucky like he wants. Bucky squeezes his shoulder like it’s still summer of thirty-three, when Steve
first realized that kissing was something men did but should never do.

He shakes himself, selfish and stupid when Bucky being alive is more than he had any right to hope
for. “I think I know a way home,” Steve says. With the way Bucky fights, they might even have a
chance if the other side of the portal is where Steve thinks it is. “There’s guards on the bridge, but I
can get us out of the keep. We should go soon, before they make you fight for them.”

Bucky nods, short and decisive, like he’s taking an order. Quiet and serious, nothing like the smooth-
talking, charming Bucky Steve last saw.

The vertigo of it is all too much; the idea that Bucky’s been here this whole time, and Steve half
afraid of him, is too much. All because he was too cowardly to give Hydra’s monster a cup of water.

Steve’s stomach breaks his self-pitying silence by growling, loudly. “You’re hungry?” Bucky says,
scowling like he did when Steve came home with black eyes and split lips.

“You’re hungry?” Steve says. It’s getting late, probably well past sunset for all that he wouldn’t be able to tell
with the heavy snow. They won’t be going anywhere if Thor keeps Steve at his side or confined to
the suite for being tardy. “I have to go. Find me tomorrow?”

Bucky stands first, helping Steve up with his bones creaking. Bucky’s taller than he used to be, he
has to be, towering over Steve and broader besides. It’s a little like standing next to Thor, even if
Bucky isn’t quite so tall, but the solid breadth of him makes Steve feel fragile and breakable.

“I’m glad you’re here,” Bucky says. And, for the first time, Steve’s glad he ended up in Asgard.

“You are late,” Thor says without turning from the desk as Steve closes the door quietly.

Steve swallows thickly. “I fell asleep,” he lies.

Thor turns to look at him then, one arm over the back of his chair to give Steve a skeptical look like
he could just hear the lie. He frowns and Steve braces for the worst. “Are you ill?” he says, and
Steve feels like he can breath again.

“I ran.” That part’s true at least. “I was just—tired, is all.” And he is, bone deep tired of Asgard and
all of this dancing around what Thor wants from him, but he’s also so jittery on how bad he wants to
run back to Bucky he can hardly think.

Thor’s look finally softens and he snaps his fingers for Steve to come. Steve goes on heavy feet,
feeling like he’s being pulled by a string in the center of his chest. What he wants more than anything
is to ask Thor to not send Bucky to fight Hydra, but how can he say anything about something he wasn’t even supposed to know.

Thor puts a hand on Steve’s cheek and forehead, feeling like a fever, and Steve’s suddenly aware of how hot his cheeks are from running back to the suite. His heart’s still beating too fast and he tries to slow his breathing as Thor frowns at him, lest he get confined to the suite to drink ashy tea again. “What’s going to happen to—Loki’s creature?” Steve says, stumbling over it.

“Did it harm you?” Thor says, sharp.

Steve shakes his head. “I saw him today, with his mask off.” True enough, he just has to keep straight what’s true and safe to tell Thor for as long as it takes to keep Bucky from being sent away. “He’s just a man, he still looks sick. He can talk.”

“Stay away from it,” Thor says. “I do not wish for it to hurt you. Go eat your supper, you look fevered.”

Steve hesitates, weighing how much he can argue with how much good it will do Bucky if Steve gets the bit or chained back to the foot of the bed. Thor pushes him with a little pat on the ass, and Steve spends the rest of the evening tonguing his lip ring back and forth planning how they’ll get out of there.

Chapter End Notes

Ohm this is officially the longest fic I’ve ever written and it’s definitely going to get up over 100k before we’re all done. hold me.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

An unhappy and probably unsatisfying chapter. See endnotes for specific warnings re: noncon in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It’s wrong. Steve feels scattered and hollow and wrong, so unbalanced by his own jittery nerves that Thor scolds him for his distraction and sends him to bed early. He doesn’t feel sick but maybe he is, the cottony, headachy feeling of a fever or tears pressing behind his eyes.

Waiting for Thor to come to bed, Steve lies curled on his side and chews his nails for lack of a better distraction. Alone in the dark, the unreality of it all sinks in. Even if they can leave Asgard, they’re never going home: it’s been ten years, at least, and Bucky so changed he’s barely himself any more. Steve frets on that more than anything else, the traitorous thought chasing around in his head, that if Bucky really was himself he’d never give Steve the time of day looking like this, that Steve’s taking advantage of Bucky not really knowing him, that he has to get them home before Bucky comes back to himself enough to despise Steve like he should.

It’s a selfish, ungrateful thought, and trapped alone with it Steve has to finally admit that Asgard’s made him face how much of a coward he always was. Alone with Thor he can’t even make himself pretend at bravery with no one to finish his fights for him; alone with Bucky, he’s still desperate enough to keep hiding what he really is that he’d rather run than risk Thor’s anger.

Steve knuckles at his eyes, cowardly and alone in the dark.

By the time Thor comes to bed, Steve’s stomach is in knots and he turns his face away when Thor sits on the edge of the bed nearest Steve to pet his hair and frown down at him. Steve’s eyes are red and puffy, he can feel it, skin hot when Thor makes him turn his face up to run callused fingers over Steve’s eyes and chapped lips.

Steve makes himself be sleepy and pliant when Thor undresses and climbs into bed to pull Steve against his chest, delicate like he thinks Steve’s made of glass. And maybe he is; Steve feels like he might shatter if Bucky tries to see through him like he used to.

Thor strokes blunt fingers down Steve’s back and along the lace edge of his silky panties like he means to fuck, but when Steve puts a hand on his cock to stroke him harder through his linen drawers, Thor just nudges his hand away and keeps petting him. Then he starts to press the knots out of Steve’s tight back, digging his thumb into the coiled, painful muscle along Steve’s spine and up his neck.

It’s soothing, and that more than anything makes him hate what a coward he is, for taking any kind of comfort in this instead of fighting back like Bucky would.

But Steve relaxes into it anyway, making himself pretend gratitude even with his cheek pressed sticky hot to Thor’s shoulder. With Thor asleep, the little pot of makeup Dottie used to lift his handprint is right there, papers still scattered across his desk. Steve could—do something foolish, if he could figure out how to get Bucky’s handprint to the desk. The longer they wait, the more time
passes on Earth, the longer Bucky has to realize he’d have always been better off without Steve.

Thor’s breathing evens out into sleep, his arms still heavy over Steve’s shoulder and waist where he holds Steve to him. Steve feels ill at the thought of how much time has passed for himself, for Bucky to be made into that—thing, whatever Hydra made or unmade of him. About five years for every three months he’s been on Asgard, if Fandral’s records are to be believed, a nauseous, vertiginous thought that means it’s been about fifteen years since he last saw Brooklyn, that Hydra had Bucky for fifteen years before sending him here. Steve barely lived through a few months in Hydra’s hands.

Even in his other body Steve couldn’t save Bucky or himself from them, Bucky tortured for fifteen years because Steve failed. Steve tries not to think about what will happen to them this time if he fails, now that he’s fragile and weak again.

Once he’s sure Thor’s asleep, Steve squirms out from under his arms, pretending to settle when Thor makes a sleepy, discontented noise. But he’s still asleep, rolling over to his other side as Steve pretends to tuck into the covers.

Steve counts his breaths, heart beating faster the longer he waits. He wills himself to be patient, to not get himself caught just because he’s nervous, to not throw everything away just because he’s desperate. Thor’s neither a heavy sleeper nor a light sleeper, if Steve can just make himself wait for him to be deep enough asleep that it’s safe to slip out of bed.

The plan is half-formed and he knows it, but what else has he got. If Bucky still sleeps in the front room of Loki’s suite, if Steve can slip out without waking Thor, if he can get Bucky’s handprint without waking Loki, if, if, if, they could leave tomorrow night, be home before 1960.

Steve tries not to think about it too closely as he finally slips out of bed, heart hammering so fast his hands shake as he puts bare feet on the cold floor. Even with the heavy fur underfoot and the fire banked low, the icy stone radiates chill into Steve’s bones. He grabs trousers, shoes and a shirt off the chair where he’d left them to be buried by Thor’s, hopping from foot to foot as he tries to quietly make his way around the bed to the front room.

He nearly swallows his tongue when Thor sits up on one elbow to squint at him in the dark, hair falling out of its ponytail as Thor blinks at him muzzily.

“You are ill?” Thor says, voice rough with sleep.

“I—yeah, a little,” Steve says, heart rabbit-fast in his chest with the lie. His hands are painfully tight around the pair of shoes and the clothes, hoping Thor’s still too asleep to realize what he’s holding.

Thor makes a displeased noise but settles again, facing Steve so he’s got no choice but to pad into the bathroom. Out of Thor’s sight, he leans against the wall to catch his breath, hands shaking as he sets down his clothes. Even in the icy chill air he’s sweating as he pulls on the shirt, to at least give him some reason for carrying around his clothes in the dark.

By the time Steve’s calmed down and pissed to keep up the lie, Thor’s propped up on his elbow again waiting for him to come back to bed. Steve lets himself be folded back into the covers, tucked into a tight spoon with Thor’s cock against his ass and Steve’s icy toes between Thor’s hot thighs. Thor traces fingers over Steve’s sternum through the linen shirt as he forces himself to breathe slowly. He was just impatient; he’s too tightly wound, jittery and on edge even as Steve makes himself be still and wait for Thor to fall back asleep.

It could be a half hour, it could be hours. It could be minutes, Steve driven half to distraction with the need to finally get out of this place that he can hardly stand to be still, counting the easy rise and fall
of Thor's chest against his back.

Steve's just started to work his courage up to push Thor's arm off him again when he gets that
niggling, itching feeling like he's being watched, like he did when he was out in the city, like he did
when Bucky was following him. He'll make himself crazy with paranoia if he's not careful, breathing
shallowly to match Thor's breathing in hopes he won't wake up again. There can't possibly be
someone watching him, Thor dead asleep. No one knew Steve was out of the keep, because surely
Thor would have beat him for it if someone had seen him. It's just useless, fearful paranoia, Steve's
cowardice making excuses for why he can't get Bucky and himself home.

Steve swallows and puts a hand on Thor's wrist gently to lift his hand away, but freezes as a shadow
in the far room moves. Tucked snugly under the covers, Steve freezes with sudden cold sweat
breaking out across his back and sides. But the longer he blinks at it the more he's sure he imagined
it. The heavy curtains could have moved as the banked logs in the fireplace settled, or Steve's
paranoia and cowardice could be playing tricks on him. There's nothing there, Thor tucking Steve
tighter against him and pressing his nose to Steve's hair in his sleep.

And then there's movement on the far side of the bed, a shape looming up out of the dark just at the
edge of Steve's vision and he moves without thinking. Steve yanks Thor over himself, Thor coming
awake as the knife that should have slit his throat grazes his shoulder, half awake enough to roll
Steve off the bed with him.

Thor lands on top of him, the back of Steve's head cracking on the stone floor as Thor blinks at him
bewildered just as the figure vaults over the bed and lands gracefully on its feet to take another swing
at Thor.

Steve gets shoved under the bed before he really knows what's happening, Thor rolling to his feet
with the knife he keeps under his pillow in hand. He tries to charge at the shadow figure but it just
dances out of range, light on its feet until it punches him in the jaw with one fist and nearly slices up
into his belly with the other. Steve edges out from under the bed and then promptly jerks back, Thor
nearly kicking him in the face as he staggers back from a sharp slice across his chest, the blood vivid
even in the dark.

The attacker flips the knife in its hand, bringing it down to try to stab into Thor's throat but he blocks
it, barely. Steve tries to push himself up again, thinking he should run for help, anything, but the
attacker staggers back and barely misses stepping on Steve's hands as Thor catches it with a solid
punch to the gut.

With enough space, Thor puts out his hand for the hammer sitting at the head of the bed, the air
filling with the stink of ozone like it did when he called it to throw at Bucky. But it doesn't come. It
wobbles weakly but it stays where it is, Thor and Steve and the attacker all realizing it at the same
time.

Thor dives for it, knife still in hand, and heaves at it but it refuses to budge. The attacker straightens,
Thor dropping his knife to haul on the hammer with both hands, catching sight of Steve staring wild
eyed from under the bed, Thor's look dark like this is somehow Steve's fault.

The attacker's footsteps are light, nearly silent on the fur, stalking serenely towards Thor, and Steve
has half a second to wonder if this is who was watching him in the city before they raise their knife
as Thor just barely manages to lift the hammer. Hydra's assassin or Loki's, it doesn't make a
difference to Steve who wants Thor dead because it will go just as badly for Steve no matter who
wants to kill him. Steve reaches out and wraps a hand around the attacker's ankle, jerking them off
their feet as Thor finally brings the hammer up to throw.
The sound of the hammer crashing through the bookcases and into stone with enough force to kill a
person nearly drowns out the sound of the attacker's knife clattering away under the bed as Thor
kneels on the attacker's chest to strangle them. They go rolling across the floor, Thor heavier but the
attacker more skilled, kneeling him in the crotch to get the advantage even if they can't get away.

"Go," Thor yells at Steve, the attacker trying to choke him.

Steve scrambles to his feet just as Thor rips away the dark fabric wrapping their face and blonde hair,
Dottie focused so intently on strangling Thor she doesn't even spare a glance for Steve suddenly
rooted to the floor.

He doesn't have time to think about it, doesn't have time to think about what it means for him,
because the far door to the corridor crashes open, light and sound and guards pouring into the suite
and Loki and Bucky in the midst of them. Dottie bounces to her feet gracefully at the sight of Bucky,
going straight for him even as his eyes go straight for Steve.

Thor yanks Steve to himself, shoving Steve behind him as he scoops the knife from the floor as
Dottie kicks Bucky in the chest and starts to take down guards just as methodically as Bucky did that
first night in court. They're terrifying together, the guards falling back uncertain which of them to
attack as Bucky and Dottie counter each other nearly too fast to track. Steve jerks against Thor's
hand where he grabs the center of Steve's linen shirt.

Bucky throws her into the guards, red faced and wild as she and they go down in a tumble and
Bucky rounds on Thor and Steve looking as feral as he ever did even if he's nearly naked with sleep
mussed hair falling out of his bun and cock nearly visible in the same kind of plain linen drawers
Thor wears.

"Stand down," Loki snaps at Bucky as he stalks serenely towards them, Thor's blood slicked hand
tight around the knife as he keeps himself between Steve and Bucky. "Soldat, stand down—" Loki
starts, but by then it's too late.

Bucky takes a swing at Thor, easily avoiding the knife as Thor tries to grapple him. Thor's head
snaps back, blood spattered across the wall as Bucky punches him in the mouth and drives him back
relentlessly so that Steve has to dance out of the way or be tripped on as Thor staggers back. In the
background, Loki and the guards are yelling, bloody and in disarray as they wrestle Dottie into the
same kind of oversized cuffs they put on Bucky.

Thor puts out a hand for the hammer and the bookcase shivers and groans. But Bucky drives his
metal fist into Thor's sternum before it can come to his hand, Thor going to his knees. Bucky rounds
on Steve, the wildness gone out of his eyes as he takes one heavy step and another towards Steve
backed into the far corner. He just looks worried, exhausted and worried, so much like the Bucky
Steve misses that his heart hurts.

Then Loki yells something over the din, Russian or German Steve doesn't recognize, Bucky
staggering to a stop. Loki snarls something else and Bucky drops to his knees in front of Steve, fists
curled on his thighs and his face twisted with anger but he doesn't otherwise move a muscle. In cuffs,
Dottie watches them intently as Thor stands and walks to them heavily, knife still in hand.

"I thought you said it was tame," Thor says, putting the knife under Bucky's jaw to tip his head up.
Steve jerks froward on unsteady feet but Bucky and Thor both give him looks that keep him in place.

"He is," Loki says nastily, coming up to move the knife. It grazes Bucky's throat, leaving a thin line
of blood and Bucky still glaring up at Thor with pure, undistilled anger. Loki shoulders Thor aside,
pulling Bucky up with a hand on his face. They share a look, Loki's hand tight on Bucky's jaw and Steve takes a step towards them.

Thor catches him, though, pulling Steve close again with a hand fisted in his shirt. Bucky's eyes snap to the movement but Loki pulls him back, staring Bucky down with a dangerous look. "Out," he says finally, when he has Bucky's full attention.

Then he releases Bucky, the whole room but Dottie holding their breath as Bucky glances at Steve held tight against Thor's side. Steve swallows and nods minutely, afraid to say anything to give them away, sure that Thor or Loki knowing about him and Bucky won't help anything, sure that Bucky trying to protect him from Thor will get them both killed.

Bucky presses his lips thin, as displeased as he's ever been with one of Steve's bad plans, but he goes, back stiff as he's followed out by two of the guards.

The others release a breath, Dottie taking the moment to try to surge to her feet before getting shoved back down. Thor looks her over, hand heavy on Steve's shoulder as blood flows freely from the cut across his chest and his broken lip.

"Kill her," Thor says finally. "Throw the head on the steps of the embassy."

"No," Steve says, at the same time Loki snaps, "Don't be stupid."

Thor and Loki both glare at him, Dottie finally glancing at Steve to give him a cool, amused look. Thor shakes him so hard his teeth rattle, Steve's breath coming so fast he can't think. "What do you know of this?" Thor snarls at him, the floor tilting dangerously underfoot.

"Nothing, she's my friend, that's all, she's my friend," Steve babbles, selfishly desperate to save himself as Thor shakes him. Thor could break Steve's hands or jaw or nose so easily, huge and overwhelmingly and Steve so laughably fragile in his hands.

Thor releases him suddenly, Steve staggering as Thor and Loki share a look and Thor glances at the bookcases where the hammer still sits in the wreckage. "Take her away. Find out who she works for," Loki says. As if he doesn't already know, because how else would he know to show up with such perfect timing. Dottie gives Steve one more amused glance over her shoulder as she's lead away, Thor clapping a heavy hand on Steve's shoulder as the guards filter out to leave them alone with Loki.

"You are very admirably brave," Thor says, pushing Steve ahead of him through the ruined bedroom and into the wreckage of the front sitting room.

"Do you still mistake stupidity for bravery?" Loki says nastily, trailing after them as Thor sits heavily on the divan and pulls Steve down to sit beside him.

Steve shifts uneasily between them, Loki stalking to the desk to sweep Thor's papers off it.

"And you still mistake selfishness for strength?" Thor replies, serene. He runs a hand down Steve's arm, pushing hair out of his eyes. "Were you hurt?" Thor says to Steve.

"My head," Steve says, still reeling. His mouth is dry and he feels like he might vibrate right off the divan under the tension of Thor petting him gently and Loki glaring at him sourly like he knows exactly what Steve's part in this was.

Thor cups the back of Steve's head gently, feeling the swollen knot where Steve knocked his head
even though Thor’s still bleeding himself. Thor makes Steve follow his finger with his eyes; checking for a concussion, Steve realizes a beat later.

“My poor frightened little rabbit,” Thor says quietly, pulling Steve against his side to cuddle, one arm wrapped around Steve’s shoulders. “You did very well.”

Loki’s still at the desk when an older man Steve assumes is a doctor comes in, guessing from the way he pulls a chair in front of Thor without a word and starts pulling gauze and ointments from his bag. The doctor gives Steve a cursory glance where he’s tucked against Thor’s bare chest, but Thor shakes his head.

Loki presses a hand to Thor’s desk as the doctor goes to wet a cloth and brings it back for Thor to wipe away most of the blood, the bleeding sluggish and slow now. The cut wasn’t deep, but it’s nearly the breadth of his chest and his jaw and eye will probably swell where Bucky punched him. Steve holds his breath, hoping he can talk Thor out of hurting Bucky for it.

The doctor’s just started to staunch Thor’s cut when Loki brings up the glowing outline of the keep and all the breath goes out of Steve. He draws his knees up to his chest, Thor still petting him absently as Loki flicks through different sets of symbols floating around the keep. Steve does his best to not look guilty, sure that Loki will be able to see right through him if he wasn’t before.

The doctor has Thor lean forward to wrap bandaging around his chest, wrapping the cut tightly as Loki pauses at a symbols, the outline of the keep going green like it did when Dottie waved her hand through it. Steve swallows thickly, belly cold. He tries not to stare. The doctor goes blithely on, packing up his things after he hands Thor a cloth soaked in witch hazel to hold against his swelling eye and split lip.

“She had access to the entire keep,” Loki says as soon as the door clicks shut behind the doctor. He leans on the desk with both hands, frowning at it as Thor pulls Steve back against his side. Steve goes rigidly, torn between whether he should try to get away now or later.

“Why in blazes would the steward give her—” Thor starts, hand on Steve’s hair.

“He didn’t. You did,” Loki says, giving them a distracted glance over his shoulder. “And that one too.”

Steve feels Thor go tense beside him, hands tightening on Steve’s shoulder and head as Steve tries to pull away. Steve’s pulse kicks up again, breath shallow as Thor decides what to do with him.

“I did no such thing,” Thor says slowly, like he’s weighing how angry he should be.

“Of course you didn’t,” Loki says, rolling his eyes as he turns back to the desk. “They forced your access, though it looks like only for those two. I told you your deceitful creature would be a security risk.”

“I didn’t—” Steve starts, and Thor finally pushes him away.

Thor takes Steve’s chin in his big hand, careful and cool even as Steve cringes back from him. Steve would almost prefer anger to this deliberateness, hating himself for cringing without ever being hit. “You said you knew nothing of this,” Thor says, voice level.

“I didn’t—” Steve says, voice almost breaking on it. At the desk, Loki sweeps all of Steve’s access away, the green restricted to just Thor’s suite as Steve tries to pull out of Thor’s hands. Better to just be slapped and have done with it, if he’s going to be trapped in the suite again. “I was lonely, I just wanted to be with people—I didn’t know,” Steve lies, panicking the longer Thor watches him.
skeptically. He did know, if he’s being honest with himself, that Dottie was working for Hydra, and
he trusted her because she knew how to play him, how to play his stupid desperation for any way
out. His only hope now is that Thor or Loki don’t see right through that lie on top of all the others.

The swelling around Thor’s eye makes him look tired and skeptical, but his hand tightens on Steve’s
jaw, almost painful. “Enough,” Thor says. With that, he finally releases Steve, ignoring him to go
pull on his soft robe as Loki waves away the image of the keep over the desk.

Loki gives Steve a long, cool look where he’s curled in on himself on the divan. Steve holds his
look, unable to back down from the challenge even as he feels like he’s being dissected, scraped
open raw with everything Loki saw inside him. Steve is deceitful; he lies to himself, he lied to
Bucky, he’s always lied to everyone around him trying to pretend he’s not exactly as much of a
coward as he is.

Thor comes back from the bedroom before Loki says anything, dressed in soft pants and his robe
hanging open, a thick leather belt folded in his hand. He follows Loki’s look to where Steve’s still
huddled on the divan, naked but for panties and the bloodied linen shirt. “I will deal with it,” Thor
says to Loki, laying the belt on the arm of the divan where Steve can see it.

“You should simply get rid of the creature and have done with it,” Loki sniffs, sweeping past him to
the door. Steve stares at the belt, ears ringing already. It’s the heavy, thick one that Thor wears
hunting, leather worn and scarred and the buckle nearly the size of both Steve’s palms. “I will make
you a key so your access will not be so easily forced, but there is an easier way to ensure the
Midgardians do not have a spy in your bed.”

Thor opens the door for him, Bucky standing stiffly at a parade rest in just his shorts right outside the
doors. It’d be almost funny, if not for the rest of the whole ordeal. Steve twitches with the need to go
to him, but it will only make things worse. Bucky doesn’t move a muscle even with Thor and Loki
sizing each other up like alley cats. “I said I will deal with it,” Thor says evenly. “As you will deal
with yours.” At that a little frisson of tension shivers through the line of Bucky’s shoulders, minute
enough that only Steve seems to catch it.

Loki scowls at that, sweeping out the door and taking Bucky with him. If Bucky looks back, Steve
doesn’t catch it before the door closes.

The soft click of the door latching shut is loud in the sudden quiet, Steve’s ears ringing almost loud
enough to drown out his hammering heart. Thor finally looks at him, expression flat as he looks
Steve up and down like he’s weighing how bad it will be.

“I didn’t know,” Steve says weakly. His head hurts and he feels tiny and fragile, trapped alone as
much as he ever was. Thor’s footsteps are heavy in the quiet room and Steve can’t look at him, only
the heavy belt draped over the arm of the divan.

“Then you should be wiser in your choice of friends,” Thor says, picking up the belt. The buckle fits
easily in his hand and he folds the belt in half, but Steve can’t bring himself to be grateful that he
won’t be hit with the buckle or the full length of the belt.

“I didn’t know,” Steve says again. It’s useless and pathetic, but it’s the only thing he can think to say,
his throat tight as he tries to blink his eyes clear. He didn’t cry for Rumlow, he’s not going to cry for
Thor. And not for something he knew was coming.

Thor puts the belt under Steve’s chin, tipping his face up to look at like he did Bucky with the knife.
But Steve’s nowhere near as brave as Bucky, because he can’t make himself look at Thor. The belt
is cool and smooth, nearly the width of Steve’s palm.
“Undress,” Thor says, and Steve bolts.

He’s off the divan before he’s fully thought it through, ducking under Thor’s hands and scrambling past him. Steve jumps easily over the wreckage of the bookcase, putting space between himself and Thor.

The rush of air from the corridor is icy cold when he wrenches the door open, as bone-shakingly cold as the hot static of the barrier over the door is when Steve tries to go through it.

Steve can’t breathe. He clutches at the door frame, knees gone weak under him as he glances back at Thor advancing on him, face dark and the belt still in hand. Steve only made it worse, stupid in his panic. He sinks down to the floor, arms up over his head with his heart in his throat.

Thor’s not slow and deliberate any more, hauling Steve up by the collar, angry as Steve’s ever seen him. “The only reason you and she are not both on your way to the mines of Svartlheim is because you are too foolish and guileless to deny your complicity,” Thor snaps, shaking him. Steve tries to pull out of his hands, desperate to get away with Thor huge and dark over him, but Thor picks him up easily and kicks the door shut again.

Steve thrashes as Thor carries him back to the divan, panicking more than he ought because this is how it always could have gone except that Steve thought he could flirt and play coy for Thor’s affection, but he threw all of that away. Thor dumps him unceremoniously over the arm of the divan, Steve too short to touch the ground except on tip toes and face pressed to the cushion as Thor holds him down easily with one hand.

Steve gets half a second’s brief respite to gulp a breath and push himself up when Thor moves, but it’s to fist both hands in the collar of Steve’s shirt and rip it down the back, the sound horrible and stomach turning. Thor shoves him down again, easily holding both of Steve’s wrists behind his back as he yanks Steve’s flimsy panties away. The bow at one hip gives way, a sharp tug as Thor shoves them off of Steve.

“Please—” Steve manages, just as Thor brings the belt down.

Steve’s whole body flinches, the pain hot and sharp along all his nerves. Steve gasps but manages just barely not to cry out, biting down on his lip to brace for the next one. Thor doesn’t pause the way he does when he wants to make Steve squirm and beg to be spanked, just lays another stripe of the belt across his ass parallel to the first.

Thor’s hand is tight and hot on Steve’s wrists, not bothering to clip the little bracelets together and it’s worse because Steve’s panic still thinks he can break Thor’s hold, struggling against him even up on his tip toes. There’s no possibility he can get away, trapped and held down with all of Thor’s weight, his breath hot and fast against the cushion, but the panic doesn’t know that, twisting Steve’s guts in knots. Thor lays another line of the belt and another across Steve’s ass, layered so that there isn’t an inch of skin unmarked as he starts to move down Steve’s thighs.

So he won’t be able to sit or stand without feeling it, Steve has half a second to realize, before the belt catches the crease of his ass and thighs and just barely grazes his balls. He jerks and makes a strangled sound, suddenly panicked that Thor means to hit him intentionally.

Thor nudges Steve’s thighs apart with his knee, making Steve thrash with stupid, useless panic. He takes Steve’s balls in one big hand, hard and too tight. “Be still,” he says, low and dangerous, just barely squeezing Steve’s balls to emphasize the threat. Steve freezes, heart in his throat and trying to gasp for breath without moving.
Then Thor arranges him so that his balls are safely out of the way even as Steve’s cock swells with the rough treatment, Thor ignoring it to nudge Steve’s knees back together so the belt will only hit his thighs. Steve doesn’t even have time to be stupidly grateful and ashamed of himself before Thor hits him again, the belt crossing what feels like every mark across his ass this time, making Steve finally cry out in shock and pain.

It’s worse than when Rumlow whipped him, because this time Steve brought it on himself with his stupid, desperate hope that he could trust anyone. He tries to hide his face in the cushion and block out the sting of the belt but he can’t, trapped by his own pathetic loneliness without Bucky and hating himself for throwing away the one chance he had to get Bucky and himself home.

Steve loses count of the hits, useless to do anything but bite his lip and let it happen just like he’s always been useless without Bucky to save him. His skin feels raw and broken, even if the only bleeding he can feel is his lip, bleeding around the piercing where he bite through the skin. Steve concentrates on the taste of hot copper and salt, his eyes hot and painful where he squeezes them shut against the cushion.

Thor’s swings slow, even his arm tiring once Steve’s been hit so many times he can no longer feel the individual welts, just the hot, throbbing skin that will be dark with bruises again by the morning. Thor finally tosses the belt away, the sound of his ragged breathing and Steve’s sharp and loud in the quiet room as the belt buckle hits stone. Steve lays still, too exhausted to fight against Thor’s hold on his wrists and unsure if he could even stand if he had to. Even more sure that he doesn’t want to, his traitorous cock hard against the divan despite or because of the pain and the fear, because there’s something wrong with Steve.

And then—Steve’s breath catches, wet and horrible, at what can only be the sound of Thor pulling his cock out and stroking himself to hardness. Steve struggles weakly but Thor’s still got one hand on his wrists holding him down, the knuckles of his other hand rough and painful where they graze the bruised skin of the back of Steve’s thigh. Steve hears him spit in his hand to slick his cock, the same as Rumlow.

Steve kicks when he feels the hot, blunt tip of Thor’s cock against his ass, getting his head pulled up by the hair so he chokes as Thor pushes into him. Thor hasn’t fucked him since—the day before, since before the bridge, before Dottie, and with only a little spit it’s dry and painful, worse than Rumlow because Rumlow had no patience but Thor drags it out, pushing into Steve slow and inevitable so he has to feel every inch.

He releases Steve’s hair when his thighs are flush with Steve’s hot, bruised ass, releasing his hands too so that Thor can dig blunt fingers into his hips. Steve sucks in short, sharp little breaths, trying and failing to keep his breathing under control even though it hurts so much he can barely think. There’s the sharp, painful burn of Thor’s cock stretching him open and the dull, aching pressure of taking his whole cock with nothing to ease the way, and Thor isn’t even moving in him yet.

Steve presses knuckles to his bleeding mouth as Thor starts to fuck him, hard and fast so Steve can barely breathe. Steve can’t get a hand under himself to push himself up, trapped by the angle and his own miserable fragility, in so much pain from the belting he can barely move. Thor takes no pity, digging his thumbs into the bruised skin of Steve’s ass and fingers into the hollows of this hips, jostling him against the divan so he can’t get away or think of anything else. Steve’s hard cock aches against the arm of the divan, pressed painfully in a way that doesn’t hurt enough to make it go away or enough to make him come.

Steve’s fragile grip on control and his last shreds of dignity slips away when he realizes the cushion under his face is wet. He gasps, trying to push it down, but that only makes it worse as his breath
starts to come in uncontrollable sobs. Thor’s cock feels bigger than it ever has, Steve’s skin hot and
tight with the useless need to get away, wanting to hide that he’s crying more than anything else
because what has he got left but his pride. Not even that, now. Not even Bucky, trapped in the suite.

Thor finishes in him with two more sharp, hard thrusts, leaning over Steve on the divan so Steve can
feel the heat and weight of him looming and overwhelming as he comes in Steve’s ass. It’s pathetic,
that it nearly feels like a relief after everything else, that the slickness of it eases some of the pain as
Thor pulls Steve back against him and thrusts shallow and slow like he wants Steve to feel it and be
grateful that it wasn’t worse than it was.

It’s that thought that breaks Steve, finally gasping a horrible sob against the cushion, ragged and wet.
He was stupid to think he had any control over how Thor hurt him and the thought that it could be so
much worse is almost unbearable, trapped knowing it’s Steve’s own fault he’s trapped in the suite
with no way to get to Bucky and that he threw away their one chance to get away.

He feels Thor go still behind him, pulling out with his hands still heavy on Steve’s hips but he still
can’t get himself under control, sobbing against the seat of the divan with his ass in the air. Steve tries
to get a hand under himself, to hide his pathetic crying or get away, he doesn’t even know which,
hurting and too scared of what Thor will do to him for crying to think straight.

Thor moves away and Steve stays where he is, hoping if he’s just obedient and pliant Thor won’t get
the belt, but he can’t breath for sobbing, hating himself for finally proving he’s everything Bucky
would hate if he knew, cowardly and weak.

Thor settles on the divan and—pulls Steve into his lap. Steve goes, huddled and shaking
uncontrollably, freezing when he nearly knees Thor in the balls. But Thor just arranges Steve in his
lap so that Steve can hide his face in his shoulder, arms around him and Steve hates himself for how
pathetically grateful for it he is. He turns his face into Thor’s chest, trying to hide against him, the soft
fabric of Thor’s robe wet where Steve’s face is pressed to it.

Thor rubs the stinging skin of Steve’s ass, fingers tracing the welts, but it’s just to pet and check for
broken skin. Steve gulps huge breaths, enveloped in the smell of blood and sweat and Thor’s clean
laundry, hating the comfort of it. Bucky would never be so gentle with him, and Steve feels like he
could curl up and die knowing he wouldn’t deserve it anyway.

“Hush,” Thor says quietly, petting his hair as Steve clings to him. “I know you do not have the heart
to be so deceitful of your own accord. You would not be so troublesome on your own, without
Midgardians to take advantage of your good heart.”

Steve nods against his bandaged chest, gulping shuddering breaths and letting himself be petted and
coddled even though he hates it, hates himself for needing it, hates himself for being so pathetic that
only Thor would pet and touch him like this, because Thor made him like this, dependent and needy.

The only consolation, the tiny little flicker of hope even if Steve can’t make himself stop sobbing, is
that Thor thinks he’s too artless and naive to be trouble without Dottie manipulating him. Steve’s still
got the little pot of powdered makeup in his jewelry box.

Chapter End Notes

Some blood (not during sex), painful penetration, and Thor/Steve noncon.
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

Some alcohol related dubcon this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Has she said who she works for?” Thor says, settling into a chair across from Fandral. Three days on and he still moves stiffly, his jaw and eye a livid purple that makes him look like he’s always frowning. And he usually is, snapping at Steve for nothing with the front room being put back in order and nothing for the two of them to do but try not to trip over each other.

Steve pours Fandral and Thor beer, moving stiffly between his aching ass and thighs and watching Thor from under his lashes. He feels like he can’t breathe, shivering on edge wishing he could just go hide under the bed.

“No, which means Schmidt or Pierce,” Fandral sighs, leaning back in his chair. Thor makes an annoyed gesture at that and Steve flinches back before he thinks better of it. It gets him Thor’s attention and Fandral’s, Thor giving him a sharp, irritated look like Steve’s got no reason to act like a kicked dog.

Fandral leans back in his chair, watching Steve move stiffly to put the jug down. His back aches under their attention. But neither of them say anything about it, Thor just snapping his fingers impatiently for Steve to sit at his feet.

Steve goes, trying and failing to keep himself from flinching when Thor puts a hand in his hair to make him lean against Thor’s thigh. Thor tugs his hair in warning, Steve’s heart racing.

He hasn’t been hit again but he hasn’t done anything to deserve it yet, scrambling to stay out of Thor’s way and trying to stay out from under foot as much as possible the past few days locked in the suite. He’s doing it wrong and he knows it, but he doesn’t know what else he’s supposed to do, Thor annoyed with him no matter what he does. Steve tries to stay quiet and small and out of the way the past few days locked in the suite. He’s doing it wrong and he knows it, but he doesn’t know what else he’s supposed to do, Thor annoyed with him no matter what he does. Steve tries to stay quiet and small and out of the way as much as possible the past few days locked in the suite.

Fandral glances between him and Thor, fingers tight on the arm of his chair. Steve tries not to think about it, tries to pretend everything is fine so Fandral won’t say anything and make Thor even more annoyed with Steve. Steve makes himself lean into Thor, breathing shallowly. Even kneeling without his full weight on his ass it’s hard to think about anything else, the bruises throbbing where his heels press into the muscle. Thor hasn’t fucked him again, too annoyed to do anything but make Steve suck his cock, but Steve’s still sore and jittery at the thought of the two of them fucking him again.

“She wants us to think she works for someone else,” Fandral says finally, and Steve feels like he can breathe, “but neither I nor Loki nor anyone else has been able to get further than that. Though at least we know the Midgardians still assume Loki is in their pocket.”

Thor makes an annoyed noise, drumming fingers on the arm of his chair. Steve counts the beats, strung tight as a piano wire wary of any movement.
“Have you thought about my suggestion?” Fandral says in the quiet.

“Out,” Thor says to Steve, pulling his head back by the hair.

“I have thought about it, and it is not a solution,” Thor says as Steve all but runs for the bedroom, feet unsteady under him.

Steve puts his back to the wall and slides down to sit out of view so he can tip his good ear to listen. He closes his eyes, sure Thor won’t like it if he’s caught, but also sure that whatever he’s not meant to hear is about him.

“So you’ll continue on like this?” Fandral snaps back, sharp. “Taking out your anger on something too small and weak to fight back?”

“I was nearly murdered in my bed—”

“And you said yourself you’d be dead if not for Steven,” Fandral cuts him off. “You said yourself a spy wouldn’t do that. You said yourself it wouldn’t have happened if you’d allowed him a friend without sneaking behind your back to be manipulated and used—”

“I know what I said,” Thor snaps.

“Then at least allow the poor thing a friend, or some space out from under foot, or something,” Fandral says. “You are irritable enough during the winter court without these Midgardian problems, do you think I do not know you? What good does it do to punish the creature for something you know he did not do?”

“I do not punish him for anything—”

“And you pretend to wonder about Mjolnir,” Fandral snaps. Steve’s stomach feels like it’s trying to crawl out his throat, sure that Thor will take this out on him.

There’s the sound of movement in the other room and Steve scrambles, putting as much space between himself and the door as he can. Heart hammering, he gets himself to the far side of the bed, listening for the sound of Thor’s boots on stone.

“At least allow me to have him still, even if you will not be rid of him yet,” Fandral says, annoyed under the sound of Thor pacing and Steve’s heart in his ears.

“You spoil him,” Thor says. Still pacing, but not angry.

Whatever Fandral says in response is too quiet, Steve biting his nails. Fandral hasn’t fucked him since—before, but Steve also hasn’t been sent to him since then.

Thor stops pacing, their conversation too quiet to hear without Steve closer to the door and both of them raising their voices. Steve leans against the bed, not sure what he even wants from this whole situation. He wants Bucky and he wants to go home, but he can’t have either.

Thor comes to bed later, after Fandral’s gone, and gives Steve a long look where he sits on the floor. “You are not a very good spy,” Thor says, tapping him on the head with one finger.

“I wasn’t—” Steve says, scrambling to his feet. He was, but there was nowhere he wouldn’t look like he was unless he wanted to freeze on the balcony.

“Not knowingly,” Thor says.
That stings, worse than if Thor had slapped him, because it’s true. Steve bites his tongue the rest of the night.

Steve can’t tell if Thor’s annoyed with him because Fandral spoke up for him or because Steve’s still skittish scared, the next few days dragging out with Thor pointedly ignoring him but not letting him out of the suite. It’s not fair and Steve’s stomach can barely handle it, twisted up in knots waiting for the other shoe to drop.

“Eat,” Thor says, snapping his fingers in Steve’s face.

Steve jerks back, startled out of picking at his food with his heart racing. It’s like the beginning all over again except now he knows Thor’s not pleased with him instead of just guessing it.

“I’m not hungry,” he says, glancing down at his barely-touched fish and potatoes. And he’s not, stomach twisted up from holding his breath every time Thor moves. With Loki busy doing whatever it is the king of Asgard does all day and everyone but Fandral at the winter court, Thor’s got nothing to do but be annoyed with Steve.

“I will not be pleased if you make yourself ill,” Thor says.

Steve swallows thickly, because what if he gets bronchitis like he has every winter since he was twelve. What if he gets the flu and can’t get out of bed for a week like he did last winter. What if Thor doesn’t believe he’s really sick and he just gets sicker. What if he’s stuck here knowing he’ll never see Bucky again.

He turns his face away just in time as the stupid, hot tears well up. He crosses an arm over his chest and combs his other hand through his hair, trying to hide his face. “Can I go to bed,” Steve says, making his voice as even and steady as he can. Hates himself that he’s reduced to this.

“You are being petulant,” Thor says, grabbing Steve’s chin before he can flinch back.

Steve gasps one wet, raggedy breath before he thinks better, eyes squeezed shut waiting to be slapped. He can feel the tears spill over and down his cheeks, and his stomach turns when he feels the hot, itchy tear slide along Thor’s fingers.

“Stop,” Thor snaps at him, shaking him brusquely.

Whatever Steve opened his mouth to say—an apology, or begging, or some other stupid nonsense—it just comes out as a half-strangled sob as Steve tries to cringe away and fails at even that. Thor’s hand is hard on his face and Steve’s can’t think past how much he hates himself for the stupid tears he can’t stop.

He tries to pull away, fold in on himself, hide and grab after what little shreds of control he still has but Thor shakes him again and Steve chokes trying to push down the strangling sobs that threaten to overwhelm him. Thor makes a disgusted noise and lets go of him, letting Steve curl in on himself and wait to be hit.

He’s trying not to hyperventilate and hiccup at the same time when Thor stands to get the belt. Thor hauls him to his feet with one big hand, the wood plate of fish and potatoes just barely avoided as Steve dances on his tip toes with lashes so wet he can barely see.

Then Thor—hauls him up like a child, sitting to pull Steve into his lap huddled in a ball like the other night. He tips Steve’s head against his shoulder, letting him pull his knees up for Thor to wrap big arms around and pet his hair even with Steve’s face soaking his tunic.
“Hush. You are tired and frightened,” Thor says, infuriatingly gentle when he’s the one Steve’s scared of. Chills race up and down Steve’s back, so tightly wound his muscles ache with tension.

Because Steve—is. Tired and scared. Tired of being scared. Scared that he’ll get sick, scared of his own fragility, scared that he might end up trapped here forever. Scared that this is what he is now, some sniveling little toy that cries at the drop of a hat. Scared he might never see Bucky again, scared that Bucky might see him like this, scared that the impossibility of rescuing Bucky a second time will fail worse than the first time. Scared of Thor, scared of Fandral.

Scared of Bucky, if he’s being honest with himself, a Bucky who moves like a feral thing that Steve doesn’t recognize anymore even if Bucky recognizes him. Scared that that’s not really Bucky after everything Hydra did to him.

Steve lets himself be petted against Thor’s chest, sniffling even after he’s gotten control of himself because Thor likes him better like this. Weepy, needing comfort and petting. Weak, so that Thor can feel like he’s being magnanimous. Everything Steve never wanted to be.

Thor makes him drink a cup of beer and another as he finishes his own supper until Steve’s sleepy and pliant against his chest, too drunk to be—petulant, or sulky, or scared, or stubborn, or defiant, or willful, or any of the other things Thor doesn’t like about him.

It’s just a job, being all the things Steve spent his whole life trying not to be.

Thor lays him out gently, putting a big hand in the center of Steve's chest when he tries to sit up to struggle out of his clothes. Steve's too drunk to get it at first, but then it clicks. That's what he'd been doing wrong. Thor wants to take care of him, and Steve cringing and flinching away ruins that. Steve tries to be what he's supposed to be; sleepy, pliant, needy, grateful.

Above all else grateful. Thor could—has—hurt him so easily, it could be so much worse. Steve spreads his legs and bites his lip when he's down to just his stockings and panties, arching his back clumsily as Thor runs a rough hand down his chest and thigh. This is what he was doing wrong, expecting to be hit again instead of playing coy to pretend he wouldn't be.

Thor strips, watching Steve laid out on the bed, and Steve's too drunk to worry about how dangerous this is. Knows it in the back of his mind, but it's far away. Like knowing it's dangerous to get trapped in the lion cage. Steve tips his hips up when Thor leans over him to shove his lacy panties and stockings down, Thor's cock already huge and half hard. Steve bites his lip and makes himself not flinch when Thor's callused hands brush the hot skin of his bruises, kneading the sore skin as he lifts Steve's ass to undress him. Steve's breath comes hot and fast, still sore from the last time Thor fucked him dry, but he tells himself this is better than the alternative.

It's better that he's a little drunk anyway, loose and pliant as Thor fingers him open with oiled fingers. He sucks his lip ring and tips his hips into it like he wants it, like Thor wants him to, even though he knows he's too drunk to get hard. It's better that way anyway, because he can’t keep his thoughts from catching on Bucky, on wishing it was the cool metal of Bucky’s fingers stretching him open, on wanting to curl in on himself and die for thinking it.

It hurts when Thor finally pushes into him, a dull, raw ache where he’s still sore from being fucked dry, and Thor wipes Steve’s damp face with his thumb and shushes him gently. His cock feels thick and hot, his weight overwhelming where he leans over Steve even as he tries to be gentle. Steve feels trapped, bringing his hands up to Thor’s chest where he’s bracketed in by the warm cage of his arms and broad chest as Steve’s breath catches. It’s better like this anyway, better than being held down and forced.
He keeps himself under control this time, mostly, wrapping his legs around Thor’s waist like he wants it, like he’s not trying to bury himself under the horrible weight of having wished Bucky were dead so Steve could pretend to be fucked by him and not hate himself as much as he does now. The hot shame of it, of wanting Bucky and wishing he didn’t, is enough to choke him, enough to drown out every other hurt as he presses his damp face to Thor’s shoulder and tries not to make a sound. It curls right under the surface, just under his ribs waiting for his control to slip and let it out, but Steve curls his fists against Thor’s shoulders and bites his cheeks as he’s fucked and doesn’t let it out.

Thor rolls them over after so that Steve’s curled on his chest feeling wrung limp and exhausted, Thor petting his back. Steve lets himself be cuddled, hating the weak, pathetic thing Thor wants him to be.

Thor’s mood lightens over the next few days, even if Steve’s doesn’t. He makes himself turn into Thor’s hands on him, makes himself play coy and flirty, makes himself not flinch at Thor’s every movement, wondering if Thor being pleased with him is worth how much he hates himself.

Steve could nearly scream after a few days of gentleness; maybe he really would rather Thor just beat him. At least then Steve wouldn’t have to fawn and pretend, but as it is Steve’s too much of a coward to provoke it.

So when Fandral shows up one morning asking if he can borrow Steve, Thor gives an indulgent wave of his hand that makes Steve’s stomach twist. Fandral looks pleased but Steve can’t be, too unsettled by Thor’s good mood and Fandral’s to want his first chance out of the suite in more than a week.

Because he knows without Fandral saying anything that this will all end poorly one way or another, jogging at Fandral’s heels out of the suite. “Loki’s creature is your dead friend,” Fandral says as soon as the door closes.

Steve staggers to a stop. Fandral takes a few more steps before realizing Steve’s not following and turns to look at him. “Is he not?” Fandral says, eyebrows raised.

“Please don’t tell Thor,” Steve says weakly, feeling like he’s been punched in the gut. He should—be trying to make eyes, beg prettily, anything to convince Fandral instead of just standing there naked afraid. Thor doesn’t want Steve to talk to other humans, doesn’t want Steve to have any reason to go home or any way to get there, doesn’t want Steve to have any secrets. Thor already doesn’t like Bucky, and since Bucky punched him in the face trying to get to Steve he can only imagine Thor would gladly be rid of him on any excuse.

Fandral sighs, in that way him and Thor both do, like they’re being entirely too generous. Steve swallows, waiting to find out the price of it. “I had not planned to,” Fandral says. “He would not be pleased, but I suppose you already knew that.” He puts a hand on Steve’s shoulder, just barely squeezing. “I must speak with Loki today. I thought you might come, if you’d like.”

To see Bucky. Steve glances up at Fandral, not sure how much to trust the favor after Dottie. But he lets himself be propelled along gently anyway, because how else is he going to see Bucky. Even if his stomach is twisted up at the prospect.

Bucky stands at parade rest behind Loki’s chair, the line of his shoulders and back going taut as soon as he sees Steve at Fandral’s elbow, and Steve resists the urge to fiddle with his dangly earrings just to have the excuse to look somewhere else. He looks as hard and dangerous as Steve looks fragile and delicate, the black of his coat and shirt cut to accentuate the hard lines of the arm and his hair pulled up and back. That and the earrings should make him look like a girl, like Steve, but it just
makes his face look harder, older than the Bucky Steve knew, than the Bucky Steve misses.

Steve fiddles with his jacket cuffs, ashamed of himself for the thought.

“Really?” Loki says to Fandral, looking like he smelled something unpleasant.

“Not all of us have your refined taste for danger,” Fandral says smoothly. He settles into the chair across from Loki, ignoring Bucky’s sour look to spread a set of papers across the little table between them. Steve shifts uneasily, unsure if he’s supposed to sit at Fandral’s feet like he does for Thor and unwilling to let Bucky see him like that, but Fandral puts a light hand on his elbow to keep Steve standing by his chair.

The papers are—about Dottie. Steve’s too distracted by Bucky’s eyes on him to make out much more than that, glancing sideways between the papers and Bucky.

Loki follows his look, eyeing Steve suspiciously. He sweeps the papers from the table, ignoring Fandral’s raised eyebrows. “Stay,” he says to Bucky, getting up to sweep past him imperiously. Fandral stands to follow him into the study, giving Steve a smile over his shoulder like this was his plan all along.

Steve blinks after him, feeling adrift as Bucky looks him up and down, expression tight. Steve can barely look at him, feeling caught under the heavy weight of Bucky’s look.

“The fuck happened to you?” Bucky hisses as soon as the door closes, closing the space between them in two steps. Steve glances at the door, heart hammering for fear that Fandral and Loki will hear them.

“I was sick,” Steve lies, ducking his head so he doesn’t have to look Bucky in the eye to lie to him.

“Sick,” Bucky scoffs. “He’s fucking you. That one fucking you too?”

Steve’s stomach goes cold, suddenly seeing himself as Bucky sees him: effete, eyes lined, lip and ears pierced, the dark bite marks Thor gave him peeking over the collar of his jacket, making it obvious to anyone who looks that Thor bent him over the foot of the bed that morning and fucked him from behind.

“I’ll cut my hair and take out the earrings as soon as we go home,” Steve says, a weak protest at best as he tries to pull away with his heart hammering. “It wasn’t my idea, I didn’t—”

“I’m gonna kill him,” Bucky growls, half turning away like he means to do it right then.

“No,” Steve says, throwing himself after Bucky because he knows without a doubt Bucky could do it, if he set his mind to it. If Loki wasn’t there to stop him and he had reason to, Steve knows he could do it, or at least make a good try of it. But where would that leave Steve, cowardly and alone on Asgard with Bucky either dead or sent to Svartheim or God knows what.

“He raped you,” Bucky snarls, rounding on Steve so suddenly he flinches back.

Steve blinks at him, the floor tilting dangerously under his feet.

Rumlow raped him, Steve thrashing and fighting until he was so bloody and beaten he couldn’t fight back any more, screaming himself hoarse because it hurt so bad.

Thor just—fucks him whether or not he wants it, and most of the time Steve comes from it so it doesn’t count anyway.
“He didn’t,” Steve says finally, because what’s the alternative. He can’t have Bucky do something so stupid as try to defend his virtue when there’s nothing to defend and it’ll get Bucky killed or worse. “I asked him to—” Steve swallows hard, cheeks hot and face turned away so he doesn’t have to look at Bucky to say it, doesn’t have to see his reaction. “I asked him to fuck me, I wanted it.” Asked for it for weeks.

“You wanted it,” Bucky says. Voice flat and unreadable, but Steve can see him curl his fists, the metal plates of his arm shifting and settling.

“I’m a fairy,” Steve says, still not looking at Bucky because he’s a coward. His voice sounds small and unreal, like this is all just a dream. Nightmare, more like. Better to lose Bucky because Bucky hates him than to lose Bucky because he’s dead again, but that doesn’t mean that Steve’s strong enough to face it.

Bucky paces, two short steps in one direction and then the other, the kind of coiled, tight anger he had when Steve got fired from the greengrocer’s the first spring they lived together. “How long?” Bucky demands, stopping in front of him.

Steve shrugs tightly, fiddling with his coat cuffs because he doesn’t see how it could matter how long Thor’s been fucking him. “A couple months. Since I got here.”

“How long before,” Bucky snaps. How long has Steve been lying to him, he means. Steve’s stomach drops and he wonders if he’s going to be sick. “I don’t know,” Steve says, hearing his own voice from far away, still staring at the floor. He wonders if Bucky will finally hit him. Bucky wouldn’t have, a lifetime ago, but Bucky never thought he was a coward and a liar. It would hurt less than if Bucky just walked away from him. “Forever,” Steve says finally.

“Fuck,” Bucky says under his breath. He runs a hand through his hair like when he’s deciding something, the gesture so familiar it makes Steve’s heart hurt. “Christ, Steve,” he says, and then he’s suddenly pulling Steve against his chest to hug.

They haven’t hugged since—the night Bucky shipped out. Before all of this. Before Steve was in his other body, before Rumlow had him. Bucky smells like clean laundry and gun oil, harsh and metallic over his usual warm smell that Steve always tried not to think about. He still smells like home underneath it all, despite the sharp foreignness of it. Steve hasn’t wanted to be so close to someone since—Peg, and Bucky before that, his skin crawling knowing how many people have touched him since then.

Steve holds his breath, back tight and hands curled against Bucky’s chest.

“He treat you okay?” Bucky says, all the anger gone out of his voice. He sounds as tired as Steve feels.

Steve swallows. He could just stay like this forever, feeling something like safe for the first time in months, years, whichever it’s been. “Yeah,” Steve lies, breath warm against Bucky’s solid chest. “I’m fine, he doesn’t hurt me.” Thor’s only hit him a couple times, and Steve deserved it anyway.

“Christ,” Bucky says again, squeezing him. “I thought—after the other night—I thought he beat the shit out of you, never seen you so scared before.”

“I’m fine,” Steve says again. He’ll be fine when they make it home, when Steve can bury himself in a bottle of whiskey and forget any of this ever happened.
Bucky tips his head so his cheek’s resting against the top of Steve’s head and that nearly shatters the fragile control Steve has over the ugly thing curled behind his ribs, tears threatening because that’s the fragile, weak thing Thor’s made him.

He doesn’t get the chance to embarrass himself because Loki does it for him, the door of the study clicking softly open in the half second Steve has to go tense before Bucky’s moving.

“So that was you after all,” Loki says behind them and Bucky’s shoving Loki up against the wall before he’s even finished the sentence.

“Don’t touch him,” Bucky says, voice low and mean, hardly the Bucky Steve knows at all.

Loki smiles nastily at that, even on his tiptoes with his head tipped back by Bucky’s metal hand across his throat, and that makes Steve’s stomach twist worse than anything else. Steve’s gone cold from the absence of Bucky’s warmth, a chill gone through him because Loki doesn’t look like he’s scared of Bucky one bit. And why should he be. He threw Bucky to his knees with a gesture; probably still could with a hand around his throat.

Even still, it’s unsettling the way he glances at Steve like he doesn’t give a damn what Bucky threatens. “I wouldn’t dream of it,” Loki says smoothly, eyes flicking back at Bucky like he’s found some piece of a puzzle. Fandral comes to stand in the door then, eyebrows raised like he’s not sure if he’s supposed to say something.

Bucky lets him go then, Loki straightening his coat like the cat who landed poorly and wants to pretend it meant to do that. “Please don’t tell Thor,” Steve says, hating himself for asking Loki for anything.

Loki gives him a long look up and down like he’s sifting through Steve’s head again without lifting a finger. He makes a disgusted noise after a moment and glares at Fandral, who only looks mildly embarrassed. “You are both foolish enough to deserve each other,” Loki says to him. “Get out, before I change my mind.”

“You’ll do it?” Fandral says.

“I said I shall think about it,” Loki snaps.

“I knew you were still a romantic,” Fandral says, giving him a jaunty little smile before he sweeps Steve out of there. Steve can’t help looking over his shoulder even with Fandral’s hand on his shoulder, watching Bucky and Loki size each other up like alley cats as the door closes.

“He will not tell Thor,” Fandral says as they walk, squeezing Steve’s shoulder.

“Why wouldn’t he?” Steve says. He crosses his arms crossed tightly over his chest, stomach twisted imagining how angry Thor will be.

“Because I told him that you are the key to fixing your friend, and Thor is too jealous of you to allow it if he knew,” Fandral says. “Loki will not tell him if he wishes to undo what the Midgardians did to your friend.”

What Hydra did to him. Steve finds it hard to believe that Loki would want to undo all of that, but he can’t tell Fandral that and risk his one way of seeing Bucky again. Steve takes a deep breath and another, hating that he has to trust Fandral and Loki both against his better judgement.

“His name’s Bucky,” Steve says, and hopes he doesn’t regret it as Fandral gives him a smile. At least if Steve’s there, he’ll know what Loki’s doing to Bucky, even if he can no more stop it than he could
stop Hydra.

Chapter End Notes

omg! I'm not dead! Life is Happening right now, though hopefully things will slow down soon. And omg this is the first thing I've ever written that's hit over 100k, how did we get here.
Steve chews his lip as they walk, his face and hands still warm from being pressed against Bucky’s chest. He tries not to think about it in any way but the way Bucky meant it, but it’s hard not to. Hardly anyone’s touched him except to hurt him or fuck him in—months, and it’s wrong of him to think of Bucky that way when all Bucky meant by it was a hug.

Steve just—hasn’t been touched by anyone he’s wanted to be touched by in so long he doesn’t remember how to think of it in any context except fucking, and what’s that say about what he’s become.

He’s still stewing on it when they get back to Fandral’s rooms, distracted when Fandral waves him at the chess board like usual.

“What do you make of this?” Fandral asks him, setting the sheaf of papers he’d shown Loki in front of Steve.

Steve glances between Fandral and the papers, suddenly on his guard again. It’s a transcript of Dottie’s interrogation, going on for pages and pages. With Fandral as the interrogator.

The cozy little room feels claustrophobic, the fire built up too hot and the bookshelves looming. It’s the price of seeing Bucky or the price of keeping it from Thor, Steve doesn’t know which but it’s not like it matters.

Steve lifts his jaw and makes himself look Fandral in the eye. “I won’t help you torture her,” he says, throwing away his easy way of seeing Bucky. He’ll find another way, without such a terrible price attached.

“Torture?” Fandral says, looking scandalized in his seat across the board. “She’s not being tortured, we’re not barbarians.”

“That—thing Loki does, that’s torture,” Steve says.

“The thing—oh,” Fandral says. “Oh,” he says again, and has the decency to look embarrassed. “Well, that—didn’t yield results, as it were, so it was only done the once. She’s quite alright, I give you my word.”

“Can I see her?” Steve says, because he knows how much anyone’s word is worth here.

Fandral looks embarrassed again. “Ah—no. No, Thor would—not stand for that.”

Steve shifts in his seat, ass still unbearably sore from the belting, uncomfortably aware of how uncertain his footing is. All he’s got is Fandral’s word that he won’t tell Thor, Fandral’s word that Steve will be able to see Bucky again, Fandral’s word that Dottie’s ok. Nothing but blind trust when trusting Dottie was his biggest mistake yet.

“Why’d you ask her about Captain America?” Steve says, belly twisting as his eyes catch on the words. He reads the question over and over again, the words all jumbled with Steve’s heart suddenly racing.
“It’s all she’ll talk about,” Fandral says, reaching to shuffle the papers to another page, ignoring or not noticing the way Steve flinches. “Captain America this, Captain America that, particularly this story of sneaking into Hydra’s citadel to send coded messages to Captain America. But you were Captain America, were you not?” Fandral says, spreading his hands as if to gesture at the impossibility of Steve doing any of that heroic nonsense. And, well, he never did. “None of this happened.”

“No,” Steve says faintly, reading over the page Fandral lays on the top. It’s one of the radioplays they’d recorded between USO shows—Steve’s ears had hurt from the whizz-bang sound effect of hitting secret Hydra agents with his tin shield by the end of that one. Steve picks up the sheet of paper despite himself, reading it again carefully. Dottie put herself in the role of Agent Marjorie Wheeler, Peg’s radio standin, Captain America’s right hand gal who infiltrated Hydra from the typing pool and got their secrets while Captain America clobbered Nazis up and down the Western Front based on her coded messages.

Peg hadn’t liked the bit at the end that had Agent Margie Wheeler swooning into Captain America’s arms, but Steve had thought it was pretty okay.

“So what does it mean?” Fandral says. “Was she one of your actresses?”

That thought makes Steve’s skin crawl for a second, the idea that Dottie was one of the USO girls or one of the voice extras for the radio play, a Hydra plant all the way back then. But surely Steve would have remembered her; she was bland as toast to talk to for a minute, but she had that way of ticking through expressions like she was trying them on that stuck in the memory. Steve shakes his head, unsettled.

“Why the fixation on Captain America then?” Fandral says, sitting back.

Steve sifts through the papers, pulled into it despite himself. Radioplays and movies and the comics, all mixed up with Dottie as Captain America’s right hand gal saving the day. But not all of them, not the ones with Captain America’s kid sidekick, not the ones just punching Hitler or fighting Schmidt. Only the ones with Margie Wheeler. Dottie isn’t telling Captain America stories; she’s telling Peggy Carter stories.

She always told Steve she worked for Peg.

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Steve chews on that the rest of the evening, telling Fandral she’s just wasting his time talking him in circles. Maybe she is; Steve wouldn’t put it past her.

And yet.

He lies awake on the little cot Fandral puts out in the sitting room for him trying to think if he has a hope in hell of knowing if anything Dottie told him was true.

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Steve drags his feet when Fandral sends him back in the morning, but there’s nothing but corridor and closed doors between Fandral’s rooms and the suite. Even if there were a garden, Steve’s got no cloak or boots anymore, the snow still as heavy and thick as ever.

He dawdles anyway, pushing himself up on tip-toes to look out the chest-high window overlooking the city. This high in the keep there’s no one else in the corridor, just the distant noise of people moving far away and even that feeling dulled by the falling snow. The city is harder to make out in the falling snow, the peaked roofs blanketed in thick snow and the gold dulled in gray.
Steve wonders if he dares try to make his way back to Loki’s suite and find Bucky. They’ve still got no way out without Bucky’s handprint and whatever key Loki intends to make for Thor, trapped in the keep just as sure as if Steve were chained back to the foot of the bed. If they get a chance to run this time, they’ll have to take it snow or no, and hope that Bucky can keep them alive through whatever the Nazis have on the other side of the bridge.

The quiet is broken by the sound of heavy footsteps, and Steve blanches when he turns to find himself caught by Thor coming down the corridor towards him. He wasn’t doing anything but he can’t keep himself from guiltily dancing back out of Thor’s reach until Thor catches him by the collar and shakes him.

“What are you doing here?” Thor demands, holding Steve by the scruff of his coat so he has to dance on tip toes.

“Nothing, nothing, Fandral sent me back—” Steve protests. He wasn’t, and it’s not fair that anything he says will sound like a lie because Thor suspects him now.

Thor drops him with a displeased noise, Steve staggering flat-footed and just barely catching himself clutching at Thor’s cloak. “And you dawdled,” Thor says, pulling Steve’s hair to make him stand up straight.

Steve nods tightly, keeping his eyes down in the hope that if he’s just not defiant Thor won’t slap him. It’s not fair; he just wanted a moment alone without anyone expecting anything from him.

Thor doesn’t say anything to that, just puts a hand on the back of Steve’s neck with a frown and sweeps him along without another word. Steve takes it as among the best possible options, hurrying to keep up as Thor sets off towards Loki’s suite.

Best and worse possible options; Bucky frowns when he sees Thor’s hand on the back of Steve’s neck, worse still when Thor takes a seat and Steve folds to his knees neatly beside him. Steve’s face burns but he doesn’t fight it when Thor tips his head for Steve to rest his cheek against Thor’s thigh, Thor petting his hair like he hadn’t just shaken Steve in the corridor. Fandral turns up, Steve huddling against Thor’s knee as they talk over his head about Dottie and Bucky serves lunch.

It feels strange and unreal, like seeing Bucky at the restaurant where he waited tables for a summer in his neat pressed shirt and tie. Thor frowns at him when Bucky fills his cup, but Bucky doesn’t acknowledge it until he moves around Thor’s chair to give Steve a wink where Steve’s watching through his lashes.

Thor doesn’t catch that, but he does catch Bucky’s wrist, the metal one, when he reaches out to brush fingers against Steve’s shoulder as he passes. Steve can’t breathe, Thor wrenching Bucky’s wrist up over Steve’s head. “Do not,” Thor says, low and dangerous, as Fandral and the rest look between them. Loki makes an annoyed noise, snapping his fingers for Thor to let Bucky go.

Bucky pulls his hand back slow and deliberate when Thor releases him, keeping his face carefully neutral as he goes back to his place standing behind Loki’s chair. Bucky’s expression doesn’t change, but Steve can feel Thor frown at him and all but see the line of tension in Bucky’s shoulders when Thor cards fingers through Steve’s hair. Steve turns his face down and tries not to think about it.

The conversation flows around them about what to do about Dottie, Fandral repeating what Steve told him about the radioplays without saying it was Steve who told him that it was just nonsense pieced together from comics and stories. It’s unsettling, the way Fandral recalls everything Steve’s ever told him about Earth, and that he’s clearly read ever book Steve’s half-remembered the titles of,
from *Heroes of the Western Front* to *Gone with the Wind* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. He knows more about Earth than Steve does.

Bucky shifts restlessly, Steve watching him shift his weight in glances through his lashes. The sound of the plates of his arm adjusting are just barely audible under the sound of voices, putting Steve on edge every time he moves. It makes all the rest feel less real. Steve saw the mass of scarring on Bucky-the-monster’s shoulder, the arm welded into him something no one could really survive. On the monster it was frightening and inhuman; on Bucky it’s impossible.

But then, the fantasy of Steve as Captain America was impossible, and almost everything about the pulp adventure nonsense of Asgard has been impossible. He just doesn’t want to believe Bucky lived through something so terrible because Steve couldn’t rescue him.

Thor distracts him from that morose line of thought by playing with Steve’s hair and tracing the shell of his ear; he can practically feel Bucky frown at it, and wonders if that’s why Thor does it. Steve keeps his eyes down and tries to wish himself anywhere else, drinking Thor’s beer to distract himself from the heat in his cheeks.

He’s fuzzy with the beer on an empty stomach when Thor rips off a little piece of bread and honey to feed him, and Steve’s just let himself be fed when he remembers Bucky’s eyes on him. He makes the mistakes of looking up as his lips close around Thor’s fingers, catching Bucky frowning at him before he glances away in disgust. Steve swallows around the knot in his throat, ears hot with shame.

Everything hurts. It’s dull under the beer so Steve drinks more when Loki snaps his fingers for Bucky to refill cups, Steve curling in on himself to avoid the shame of seeing how Bucky looks at him. The bruises hurt, his back and joints hurt from kneeling, and most of all his chest hurts knowing what Bucky thinks of him now.

He lets himself be fed from Thor’s hands, because what does it matter now, and throws himself into the cup of beer. At least drunk he doesn’t have to feel so much, if he can just get past morose despair to sleepy and pliant.

Thor likes him better that way anyway, tipping Steve to lean against his thigh and hooking big fingers under Steve’s shirt collar so he can thumb Steve’s pierced nipple back and forth. He hasn’t done that in weeks, since before Dottie, and Steve tells himself that it means Thor is pleased with him again so he doesn’t cry from the shame of Bucky seeing him blush hot at how good it feels. Steve closes his eyes against it, pretending he isn’t being petted in a room full of people where Bucky can see.

“We can’t hold her indefinitely—” Fandral says, voice rising above the others and jerking Steve’s attention back from trying to disappear into the floor.

Thor sits forward in his chair, jostling Steve as he blinks stupidly. “Then send her back to Midgard,” Thor says, “and let them kill her as a failed spy—”

“They won’t kill her,” Bucky says, cutting off Thor.

“Muzzle your dog,” Thor snaps at Loki.

But Loki just gives Thor an annoyed glance and snaps fingers at Bucky. “Speak.”

“She’s a widow,” Bucky says, like that makes any difference, and how he’d know that anyway Steve doesn’t know. He doesn’t sound like himself for all that he winked at Steve earlier, standing at an easy parade rest like he doesn’t give a damn that Thor’s glaring at him fit to melt steel. “Her
handlers will debrief her, find out everything she knows about Asgard from the way she’s been interrogated, and then they’ll reprogram her. Maybe send her back if they think they can disguise her or have her do it better, maybe at the head of a team.”

Even Loki looks unsettled at that, him and Thor sharing a look.

“As in, she’s assessing us with this interrogation as well?” Fandral says in the quiet.

Bucky flicks a glance between Fandral and Steve, and Fandral doesn’t miss it. Bucky gives Fandral a tight nod, Loki drumming his fingers on the arm of his chair.

Fandral sits back in his chair looking thoughtful. “We can use that,” he says, glancing between Thor and Loki.

The whole thing puts Thor in a sour mood even after Loki gives him a thick gold ring with a green stone, what Steve can only assume is the key from the way Thor frowns at it as he puts it on. Steve looks away when Thor catches him looking, hunching his shoulders when Thor storms out with Steve stumbling at his heels and Bucky frowning after them.

But Thor’s mood lightens as soon as they return to the suite, where the steward’s set out several little packages on the divan. It’s—paints, and more sketchbooks, even though Steve hasn’t touched his fine little fountain pen since Bucky came back from the dead, like looking at all those stolen memories of him will snatch the real Bucky away.

There’s another little package of jewelry, little blue drops that Thor says match his eyes and make Steve blush hot, and new panties, Steve supposes to replace the ones Thor’s torn and Steve’s ruined. They’re more shameless than the first set, some of them with no back so Thor can fuck him without even pushing them down, some of them so flimsy with lace they’re mostly see through.

Steve mumbles a thank you, trying to be as grateful as Thor wants him to be. He’s clumsy and ungraceful when Thor tells him to pick a set of the new panties to change into, but Thor doesn’t seem to mind. He pets Steve after when he bends Steve over the desk to fuck, slowly working Steve’s cock to hardness with a firm hand even after too much beer like it matters whether Steve comes or not. Steve feels wrung out after, exhausted by all the gentleness even though he knows he should be grateful Thor is trying to be kinder.

“Why must you be so unhappy?” Thor asks him that evening. Steve stiffens where he’s been allowed to lay in Thor’s lap again, face turned into his thigh. His head hurts by then with the alcohol wearing off and he wishes Thor had let him drink more with supper.

It’s not a real question so Steve doesn’t say anything, mouth gone dry even as he tries to work up the courage to bat his eyes and beg to suck Thor’s cock. Thor traces the edge of Steve’s panties, finger teasing under the edge of the lace. Steve picked the flimsiest pair, uncomfortably aware of Thor watching him dress with the white lace accentuating the lingering bruises. Steve doesn’t like it, but Thor does, and that’s all that matters.

And if he’s being honest with himself, Steve appreciates the security of it, of the return to normal that is being petted and ignored curled on the divan in Thor’s lap while Thor reads in the evenings. He can push down the resentment of being treated like a pretty toy if it means that Thor doesn’t snap at him and kick him out of the way.

“I do not wish to hurt you,” Thor says when Steve doesn’t answer. “I would prefer a different cure for your willfulness.”
Steve swallows and curls tighter against Thor at that, trying to hide his face and keep his expression from betraying him. He’s got no doubt that Thor means it, because Thor would rather Steve just obeyed without any punishment. Thor would rather not hurt him because Thor would rather think of himself as kind and indulgent, and Steve being unhappy and afraid of him ruins that. Steve doesn’t try to be willful, he just—is.

“Fandral said you have been very helpful,” Thor says, carding fingers through Steve’s hair. “I know you have been very lonely without your friend.” He sighs heavily as Steve holds his breath, knowing better than to expect anything.

Steve studies the folds of Thor’s tunic carefully. It’s not a conversation and Steve wishes he could just—stop caring. Just be the passive, pleasant thing Thor wants him to be. Life would be easier.

Thor finally leaves him be, going back to his reading and petting Steve’s hair. Steve’s skin prickles under his hands, the room cool despite the fire built up high, and Steve tries to keep himself calm when he realizes Thor is frowning down at him.

Steve sleeps poorly, sore under the weight of his hangover and Thor being pleased enough with him to wrap him up tightly, so warm under the covers Steve feels like he’s nearly suffocating. He dreams about Bucky watching Thor fuck him, Steve crying so hard through it he can’t breathe while Thor wipes his tears away gently.

He wakes up gasping under the weight of Thor’s arm heavy over his chest, squirming away until he can curl up in a ball at the edge of the bed and pull his hair to keep himself from waking Thor up with his crying.

He’s mostly pulled himself together by morning, even if he barely slept, and he shies away from Thor’s frown and hands feeling for a fever. Steve even nearly says yes when Thor asks if he’s too ill to be sent to Fandral but he doesn’t; he just hates himself from wanting to hide from Bucky, and goes anyway.

Loki gives Steve a disdainful look when he shows up at Fandral’s heels, but the two of them sweep into the study without saying anything. Leaving Steve alone with Bucky, stomach all twisted up at how badly he wants to run.

“You okay?” Bucky says as soon as they’re alone, stepping into Steve’s space to run hands down his arms.

“I—yeah,” Steve lies. His heart hurts with how little he deserves Bucky, who only cares if Thor’s hurting him, not what Steve has to do to not be hurt. “Sorry, yeah.”

“You don’t look okay,” Bucky says, putting arms around him.

Steve stiffens; Bucky was never this—handsy, before. An arm around the shoulders, a hug once in a while, sure, but not this. But Steve hasn’t looked like this much of a mess since his mother died. He wants to push Bucky away, tell him Steve doesn’t deserve to be coddled like this, tell him that Bucky was never really like this, but Steve’s too pathetically, selfishly grateful that Bucky will still touch him after seeing him petted like a toy.

“Just tired,” Steve says, his throat raw with pushing down everything he should say. His earring hurts where his ear is pressed to Bucky’s chest, listening to the quiet beat of his heart through his coat. “Didn’t sleep well.” At least he doesn’t have to lie to Bucky with everything that comes out of his mouth.
“C’mon,” Bucky says, taking him by the hand to pull into the other room. Steve glances over his shoulder at the study door, still closed. Bucky scoffs. “His majesty said they’ll be hours. You need to sit down before you fall over.”

Bucky leads him back into the bedroom, Steve’s stomach fluttering nervously at the sight of the bed. If Thor tries to be gentle when he’s pleased, Steve has no doubts that Loki would ever go out of his way to be anything malicious.

But Bucky leads him to a little curtained alcove that Steve hadn’t seen stealing in to get a cup of water for the monster. It doesn’t have a proper door but it’s private enough, because Bucky’s not a toy, he’s a—bodyguard, a weapon, a soldier, whatever Loki thinks to do with him. It’s just big enough for a low bed and a small chest, a cloak hung up on a peg and a spare pair of boots tucked neatly under the bed. Bucky could walk out of the keep if they can get Thor’s ring and get out.

Bucky pushes Steve’s coat off him with brusque hands the same as he ever did when he all but carried Steve home from the bar and Steve lets him, grateful for the thick wool shirt over his linen tunic that keeps his piercings from being too obvious. Bucky shucks his own coat off and throws them over the chest before closing the curtain and bullying Steve to sit on the bed.

It’s wide enough for the two of them to sit without touching, but Bucky crowds up against him shoulder to shoulder like they’re sitting on the fire escape with no room. He puts a solid arm over Steve’s shoulder and Steve all but sags against him. All they need is a pack of Luckys.

“Tell me about the flying car,” Bucky says.


“Tell me anyway,” Bucky says, tipping his head against the wall.

So Steve does. The supper Bucky’s mother made, the picture they went to see with the girls, the press of the crowd at the show. It feels good, like a weight’s been taken off his chest with Bucky interrupting when he gets the details wrong, like what color the girls’ dresses were or what cartoons played before the picture.

Bucky’s got the details, Steve realizes, he just has them all mixed up in the wrong order. He feels like he can breathe again knowing that, knowing that Hydra didn’t take Bucky and replace him with someone else. Steve knew it but he didn’t know it, and leaning against Bucky’s solid chest with just them it feels like maybe they can go home again, or something like it at least.

Steve’s so tired he’s half dozing when they trail off into easy silence, head tipped against Bucky’s shoulder. He could almost fall asleep like that if not for the aching tension in his shoulders and neck from the past few weeks, but leaning against Bucky he finally relaxes enough to realize how sore he is.

“Did we ever?” Bucky says after a while, looking him over sideways. Steve blushes, feeling the weight of Bucky’s look taking in his lined eyes, his pierced lip, the earrings that sway when he glances at Bucky.

“Did we ever”—Steve starts, and chokes as soon as he realizes what Bucky means. He tries to pull away and Bucky lets him, Steve suddenly cold at the absence of Bucky’s solid warmth. “No. No, you’re not—like that. I’d’ve never—we didn’t.”

Bucky makes his unconvinced face, the one he makes when he’s sure Steve’s lying about something but not sure whether it’s where he got a bruise or who gave it to him.
“Tell me about that Errol Flynn movie,” Bucky says. “The one where he’s got the mustache.”

Steve swallows and sits back again, carefully not touching until Bucky bumps him with his shoulder. “Which one?”

“The one with the sword fights.”

That’s their new routine, then, Fandral borrowing Steve every few days to give him a few hours alone with Bucky and pepper him with questions about the Captain America radioplays to draw out Dottie before sending her back to Hydra. It’s surreal and more than a little comforting, like his life before all this was real and he might be able to go back to it, if they can just get Thor’s ring. Steve doesn’t look at it on Thor’s hand, but he thinks about it constantly.

What he doesn’t think about is the smell of Bucky’s bed, of the heat of him pressed up against Steve’s side, of all the times Steve’s thought about him instead of Thor. The cozy privacy of the little alcove only makes it worse, like if Bucky wanted he could just lean over and kiss Steve, slow and sweet like he used to kiss his girls.

But Steve’s not a girl even if he’s painted up like one, and Bucky would never want to kiss him besides, so Steve doesn’t think about it. He doesn’t think about it so much that Thor catches him at trying to jerk off one evening when he thought he’d have fifteen minutes alone, and Thor teases him the rest of the way to completion with Steve trying desperately to not think about Bucky.

It’s like Bucky can hear his guilt the next day, leaning against the wall with his legs kicked out across the bed to give Steve a long look sideways.

“What’s it like?” Bucky says and Steve’s suddenly dizzy with the deja vu of having this exact conversation in 1933, when Bucky had first gone with a girl and Steve had been so jealous he could hardly see straight.

_A gentleman doesn’t kiss and tell, Rogers_, Bucky had said, punching him in the arm. They’d been fifteen and seventeen, sitting so close Steve’s shirt had smelled like Bucky’s aftershave when he’d gone home because Bucky shaved every day even though it would take Steve almost ten years to catch up. Ten years and Howard Stark’s science fantasy, all gone as soon as he landed here.

Steve shrugs one-shouldered, uncomfortably aware of the heat of Bucky’s body next to him. “It’s fine,” Steve says to his shirt cuffs, because what else does he say to that.

“But you like it,” Bucky says, bumping Steve with his shoulder like he’s asking to bum a smoke.

“It’s fine,” Steve snaps. One thing for Bucky to know he likes it up the ass, another thing entirely for Bucky to know how and how much, or that he thinks about Bucky for it.

Bucky’s quiet for a long minute after that, the silence stretching out. “That why you never went steady with anyone?” Bucky asks after a while.

“I went with a girl,” Steve lies, peevish about whatever Bucky’s fishing for. Him and Peg never kissed, but they might have, closer to than any other girl who bothered to give him the time of day, and Bucky doesn’t need to know that. They could have gone together, if Steve had worked up the courage to ask.

“When?” Bucky says, not entirely disbelieving, but there’s the edge of it in his voice.

“After you shipped out,” Steve says, sticking his chin out mulish. Not that he’d ever resented being
in Bucky’s shadow, because Bucky was the sun around which he orbited, but sometimes he just—
got tired of it, a little.

“She a looker?” Bucky says, bumping Steve’s shoulder again.

“I guess,” Steve shrugs. “Smart as a whip. Looked like Claudette Colbert with dark hair.”

Bucky laughs at that. “You have a type.”

“What’s that mean?” Steve demands, shoving him.

“Just that you have a type. Dark hair, taller’n you and smarter’n you,” Bucky laughs.

“So not you,” Steve says, shoving him again.

“Yeah,” Bucky says, the smile dropping off his face and Steve curses himself for making it queer.

“Not me.”

There’s an awkward silence, the quiet flowing around them as Steve searches for something to fill it.

“How’d you meet her?” Bucky says before Steve can put his foot any further in his mouth.

“I joined the Army,” Steve says, flip until he realizes how much explanation comes with it.

But Bucky just gives him this fond sideways look like he really believes it, even with Steve sitting
there looking like he’d blow away without rocks in his pockets. “You really did it, you dumb shit,”
Bucky says, and hooks an arm over Steve’s shoulders like they’re back home and suddenly Steve
feels like he can breathe again because he doesn’t have to explain it, the whole unbelievable mess of
it.

“Who you calling a dumb shit, sergeant?” Steve says, shoving at him. He just gets Bucky mussing
his braided hair for his trouble, knuckles in his crown like they’re fourteen again and Steve shoving
him over like they were ever a fair match.

They go rolling across the bed with the little beads braided in Steve’s hair clicking and the metal
plates of Bucky’s arm humming, Bucky laughing breathlessly when Steve gets him pinned. Steve
leans over him to pin his hands over his head, regretting it almost immediately with the vertigo of the
time he pinned Thor like this, riding his cock and thrilling at the pretended power of pushing
someone so much bigger than him around.

Regrets it even more when he lets go of Bucky’s wrists like he’s been shocked and sits back to
realize Bucky’s half-hard, Steve’s stomach lurching. He scrambles off Bucky like he’s done
something wrong because he has, because he’s painted like a—like a whore.

“Sorry,” Bucky says, sitting up with a wince to rub a hand over the back of his head. “Sorry. Been a
while, you know?”

“Yeah,” Steve says, not knowing what else to say. “It’s fine.”

They talk about baseball after that.

Steve turns the whole thing over in his head like a stone when Fandral comes to collect him and
after. He worries over it until the edges are worn smooth, trying to convince himself it was only
because Bucky’s gone so long without a girl, and not because Bucky sees him like everyone else
does.
He’s still worrying over it in the morning, scowling at his shoes when Fandral sends him back to the suite. He wants Bucky but he doesn’t want Bucky to want him, doesn’t want Bucky to think of him like that, something to be used and discarded.

The thought of Bucky looking at him the way Thor does makes him more ill than the thought of Bucky hating him, and he’s so caught up in the bitter fantasy of it he doesn’t notice who’s coming down the corridor until Rumlow’s too close to get away from.

Rumlow closes him in easily, backing Steve against the wall with no room to bolt. “Hey Cap,” he says, popping the p. He puts a hand in the center of Steve’s chest, pushing him against the wall to keep him in place. “Long time no see. Think it’s time we caught up.”

Chapter End Notes

Most of one chapter of Steve not being sad is progress, right?
Steve takes a swing at him but Rumlow just catches his wrist easily, twisting Steve’s arm behind his back and shoving him face first against the wall. For all that Rumlow’s ten years older than the last time Steve saw him and scarred to hell besides, he’s still got height and weight and meanness on Steve, wrenching his arm up so sharp Steve can’t hardly breathe.

“I’ll yell,” Steve says, teeth clenched on the pain in his shoulder and the panic threatening to well up as Rumlow presses against his back. It’s worse than in his nightmares because at least in his nightmares he’s bigger than Rumlow and has a hope in hell of fighting back. But at least like this he has a hope in hell of someone rescuing him; Steve never thought he’d be so glad of Thor’s jealous possessiveness.

“No you won’t,” Rumlow says pleasantly. He hauls Steve back from where he’s crushed against the wall and starts steering him down the hallway, back past Fandral’s rooms. Steve kicks and curses, trying to kick back into Rumlow’s inseam and hoping that Fandral, anyone, will hear the commotion.

Rumlow makes an annoyed noise and flicks a little pen knife out of his pocket; Steve can feel the point of it press into his side before Rumlow even says anything. “There we go,” Rumlow says when Steve goes still. “Make a noise and you can bleed out right here on the floor.”

Rumlow frog marches him down the hallway right up until they run head first into the electric barrier at the corner, Steve’s face pressed against it so hard and sudden it nearly burns. But he has to laugh at the stupid, horrible absurdity of it as Rumlow rears back. “The fuck?” he says, and shoves Steve at it again.

And fuck it hurts but Steve can’t stop laughing, coughing between the pain and the way Rumlow’s got his arm twisted behind his back. It’s a little victory even if it’s not much of one, Rumlow growling at him and hauling him back in the direction they came.

“You’re gonna get caught,” Steve says hoarsely after the third time Rumlow shoves him into an invisible barrier. Steve’s never been so glad of his shortened chain, because he knows exactly what Rumlow’s looking for; a hidden spot to fuck him where they won’t get caught. The longer Rumlow spends trying to find a way to take him down to the lower floors of the keep, the more likely it is they’ll run into someone.

Rumlow jabs him with the penknife to shut him up, starting to jiggle handles of the closed doors they go by. Locked, locked, closed to Steve, locked—but Rumlow wins in the end, just like he always did, shoving Steve into a dusty little storage room where the steward keeps his broom. Rumlow kicks the door behind them as Steve gets his balance and comes up swinging.

Rumlow catches him easy, shoving him back with one hand, Steve catching his balance as a pile of mops and brooms falls over.
“Look, Cap,” Rumlow sighs, exasperated like he’s the one put upon here, “this doesn’t have to be so
difficult. I got a good deal for you—get me your sugar daddy's ring and I'll get you home safe.”

Steve straight up laughs in his face. “I wouldn't cross the street to piss on you if you were on fire,”
Steve spits. Even if a tiny, traitorous part of him wants to go home at any price, he knows Rumlow
and Hydra would never honor any deal. “Why in hell would I do anything for you.”

Rumlow smiles nastily, his scars pulling in ugly directions. The room is suddenly much closer, the
dust so thick it’s nearly choking. “If you don’t,” Rumlow says, relishing it like he's just been waiting
to say it, “your girl Carter gets a bullet between the eyes.”

Steve blanches. “You're lying,” he says. Even though he knows as he says it that it's not a lie.

“Is this the face of a man who would lie to an innocent waif,” Rumlow says, pushing Steve back
against the wall again. Steve goes, boneless.

“I can't get it,” Steve says. He swallows thickly. Rumlow's hand is hot through his shirt.

“Sure you can,” Rumlow says, pleasant. He puts a hand in his pocket, pulls it out. A replica of the
ring. He takes Steve’s hands in his, folding the fake ring into Steve’s hot palm, all together too
intimate. “He’s got to sleep sometime. Switch the rings and I’ll make sure you get home nice and
safe. Brooklyn, apple pie, all that shit.”

Steve shakes his head. “I can’t get it,” he says again. Because never mind that he’s been turning over
in his head how to steal it for himself and Bucky the past few weeks; no one dies if he can’t steal it
for himself.

“Figure it out,” Rumlow says. “You’re a smart kid.” Then he flips Steve around by the shoulder,
shoving him against the wall.

Steve pushes away even though he’d been expecting this from the start, but Rumlow wrenches his
arm up behind his back again. “I'll tell him—” Steve gasps, trying to twist out of his grip even
though it hurts.

“Go ahead and tell him,” Rumlow says, low and pleasant. “If he doesn’t like sharing, I’ll pay your
girl Carter a visit.”

Steve goes rigid at that, enough for Rumlow to fumble with the unfamiliar laces of Steve’s trousers
and start to push them down. His weight is suffocating, leaning one shoulder against Steve’s back to
keep him in place and Steve’s arm wrenched up, hand still curled painfully around the ring. Steve’s
cheek presses against the stone wall, sharp and cold, and with his free hand he tries to cushion
himself enough to at least hope he won’t bruise for Thor to see.

Rumlow yanks Steve’s trousers down unceremoniously, the cold air hitting Steve’s exposed ass with
his jacket hiked up. Steve struggles but Rumlow’s too strong, shoving him against the wall. Thor
picked the worst possible set of panties for him, lacy light pink with no back, the kind he likes
because he can just bend Steve over the desk or the bed and fuck quick and easy, or play with the
plug without undressing him all the way.

“Oh fuck,” Rumlow breathes, running one callused hand down the curve of Steve’s ass to tug at the
lace opening framing the thick plug. He slaps Steve’s bruised skin, making him kick until Rumlow
shakes him. “Hold still.”

Steve throws an elbow back, catching him right in the sternum.
Rumlow wheezes and nearly doubles over, giving Steve just enough room to slip out from between him and the wall. He’s older than he used to be but he’s still quicker and meaner than Steve, getting him in the kidney with a sharp punch that sends him staggering and tripping over a pile of buckets and rags.

The door’s right there but Rumlow yanks him back, throwing him hard against the wall. He’s not even pretending to be nice now, grinding Steve’s face against the stone with a hand on the back of his neck as Rumlow gets his cock out. The collar strangles him like that, sharp edge of the metal digging into his neck. He’s going to have marks from this one way or another.

Rumlow digs rough fingers into the skin around the base of the plug, pulling it out in one sharp motion to toss on the dirty floor. Steve’s breath comes sharp and fast at the sound of Rumlow spitting in his palm to slick himself up, trying to get his arms between him and the wall to shove away from it.

And then Rumlow leans in, mouth warm against Steve’s ear too intimate as he presses the tip of his cock to Steve’s loose, slicked ass. “Either you take it nice and quiet or your girl Carter does,” Rumlow says, fucking into him in one smooth motion.

Steve shudders. It doesn’t hurt like it used to and that’s the worst of it. He’s gotten so used to the plug and Thor fucking him that his cock pulses even as Rumlow fucks him brutal and hard.

“You put it in yet?” Steve gasps against the wall. “Can’t hardly feel a thing.”

Rumlow cuffs him across the back of the head, slamming his face into the stone wall. Steve hears his nose crunch more than feels is, a sick, wet sound that isn’t enough to be a break but sure as shit is enough to make him bleed. It almost feels good, the blood running down his face, into his mouth, onto his shirt, because it means he didn’t let this happen without a fight, that he can still put up a fight when it matters even if he’ll always lose.

“Fuckin’ bet you can’t, your pussy’s sloppier than a soup sandwich,” Rumlow breathes in his ear, hand above Steve’s head to fuck him in short, sharp little strokes. “Used to be tighter ‘n a nun on Sunday, your sugar daddy should thank me for getting you stretched out for that big alien dick.”

Steve gasps through the blood, head spinning with the pain. “Go fuck yourself,” Steve spits.

“The mouth on you,” Rumlow laughs. “Pretty little thing like you ought to watch her language.” He fists a hand in Steve’s hair, yanking it to bend him painfully backwards as Rumlow fucks him. The pain at least makes Steve’s cock go soft, a small mercy on top of all the rest.

It takes forever. Rumlow’s not as young as he used to be and Steve’s not fighting him like he used to, and Steve feels like he’s going to be sick when he realizes that that probably got him off faster. It’s a relief and an anticlimax when Rumlow finally stiffens against him and shoves him against the wall, his cock pulsing in Steve’s ass as he comes. Rumlow hisses through his teeth and pulls out, not bothering to drag it out like Thor does.

That’s the only respite Steve gets, though, Rumlow spinning him around and shoving him to his knees. His joints crack loud in the little room, the smell of come and blood overwhelming with his face so close to Rumlow’s wet cock.

“No teeth,” Rumlow says, ruffling Steve’s hair playfully before twisting fingers in it and yanking hard so Steve opens his mouth. Steve thinks about biting him, nearly gagging at the thought of doing it, but his cock just tastes like come and oil. Even Thor hasn’t made Steve lick his cock clean after fucking him; Steve closes his eyes and tries not to think about it.
“You’re a lot better at this than you used to be,” Rumlow says conversationally, cupping the back of Steve’s head. “Finally learn to like it?”

Steve jerks back at that and gets slapped across the face for it, sending him over on his ass into the pile of rags and buckets. He pushes himself up on his elbows but Rumlow doesn’t take a step closer to him.

“Nice seeing you again, Cap,” Rumlow says as he buttons himself up. He’s as neat and proper as ever in his black uniform, Steve a bloody mess with come leaking out of him. “Should do this again sometime.”

Steve spits blood at his shoes. Rumlow just blows him a kiss and leaves.

Steve gets himself dressed with shaky hands and slides down to sit against the wall. He pulls his knees up to his chest and puts his head in his hands. It gets blood on his trousers and shirt cuffs, but it’s already all down the front of his jacket and shirt anyway; anyone who takes a look at him will know right away something happened.

He can’t let Bucky see him like this, or Thor.

And god he wants Bucky, wants him like a physical thing. He’s got so little shame left he could just crawl into Bucky’s lap and cry.

But the fantasy of it is sour, like opening a jug of milk gone bad, because even if Bucky let him it would be because he’s so goddamn pathetic.

He sits there with his head in his hands for lack of anything better to do; he knows he should get up, get cleaned up before someone sees him like this, get out of here before the steward comes looking for a broom and finds Steve sitting in a closet with blood on his face and the plug lying on the floor but. He just can’t, not yet.

His body doesn’t feel like it’s his anymore because it isn’t, something far away he’s got no control over.

His head feels full of cotton wool. It should hurt but it's muffled, wrapped up in a little box and pushed as far away as he can make it.

He sits there for longer than he should, finally coming back to himself with a shuddery breath when he realizes he has no idea what time it is. Thor will be looking for him come supper time if he isn’t already; Steve needs to get himself put back together before he makes everything even worse.

It takes an hour to get himself pushed up standing, or feels like it anyway. He puts the brooms and mops and buckets back in order as best he can, scuffing away drops of blood with his shoe and trying to push piles of rags over them.

Then there’s the plug. It’s filthy and cracked; there’s nothing to be done about it but hide it, but he can’t leave it here to be found. He wipes the oil and dust from it with a rag and puts it in his jacket pocket, along with the ring. He’ll find somewhere to hide it. He has to.

The hallway is still empty when Steve cautiously opens the door. He tiptoes out, heart hammering, because where can he go. He’s got no idea where Thor might be to avoid him, and he’s only got
three suites open to him. As bad as he wants to throw himself at Bucky, he can’t let Bucky see him like this or depend on Loki’s good graces; stumbling into Thor in the suite like this is too much of a risk.

Fandral’s the only option left, even if it means trusting him to say nothing to Thor and lying to him about what happened. Steve staggers back that way, trying to think of a song and dance routine convincing enough that he won’t accuse Thor of beating Steve again, or make a fuss about Midgardians to Thor.

It’s hard to think much past the cotton wool in his head, neck and back aching as he stumbles towards Fandral’s rooms like a drunk. The only saving grace is that the corridors are still empty and the lamps aren’t lit yet; Steve can’t tell what time it is from the flat white light through snow, but it’s at least not supper yet. If he’s lucky, he can convince Fandral to lie to Thor for him, say that he decided to keep Steve for longer than usual.

Steve staggers to a stop in Fandral’s doorway, chest working like he’s run a mile. It’s just nerves, working up to the lie and hoping Fandral buys it. Steve looks a mess and Fandral’s a soft touch; he might buy it.

But there’s no answer when Steve knocks on the door, and it’s locked when he tries the handle. Knocks again, even though he knew he couldn’t be so lucky.

The sound of voices down the corridor jolts Steve to panic, chasing him away from Fandral’s door and back towards the suite. It’s not Fandral and it’s not Thor coming down the hall behind him, or he doesn’t think so, but it is men’s voices and he can’t risk anyone seeing him like this.

He nearly runs back to the suite, not daring to look back over his shoulder for fear someone might see his face. It gives him just enough room to press his good ear to the door of the suite, listening for Thor moving around the room before tumbling through the door and closing it behind him.

The voices pass in the hall, Steve huffing in the blessedly empty suite. Small favors.

Steve strips out of his jacket, leaving it on the floor where it falls as he stumbles into the suite. His nose has stopped bleeding but the jacket, sweater and shirt he was wearing are a loss, even the undershirt bloodstained at the collar and cuffs, spotted on the chest in places where it soaked through his sweater.

He makes straight for the pitcher of strong beer set out with lunch, messily wiping the blood on his face on his ruined shirt cuffs. He should be—destroying the evidence, like he’s a crime scene, but all he can make himself want is the beer, gulping it down greedily. Between the blood and the empty stomach, his guts threaten to rebel, but he pours himself another and downs that too.

He feels it by the third, a slight fuzziness to everything that lets him stagger back to the bathroom. At least if he can’t hide from this, he doesn’t have to feel it quite so much.

In the bathroom, Steve leans on the counter with the washbasin, feeling heavy and slow in every inch of his body. It’s hard to think past the cotton wool in his head and the beer hitting his empty stomach, but he’s got to get cleaned up while he still has half a hope of hiding his clothes and pretending nothing happened. If he’s lucky, Thor won’t be back until evening and Steve will have the afternoon to pull himself together.

He stands on tip toes to rinse his face in the basin, the water shockingly cold as he washes the blood away. It feels like coming back to reality and Steve would almost rather the cotton wool unreality of before, when he didn't have to feel every ounce of pain and panic sitting coiled in his gut.
His face and shirt cuffs are still wet when the door slams open and his heart stops. He should have—
hidden, tried harder to find Fandral and beg for help, anything instead of coming back here for Thor
to find him like this and in a mood besides.

Steve makes himself take a deep breath and another, knuckles white where he leans on the counter.
In a perfect world, he'd tell Thor everything, about Rumlow and the ring and Peggy, and beg him to
save her. In a perfect world, Thor would see from the shadow bruises under Steve's eyes that he was
forced, that he fought back even if he lost. In a perfect world, Thor would send someone to save
Peggy and kill Rumlow and Steve would be able to breathe.

But it's not a perfect world and Thor's got no reason to believe Steve's not the spy he thought all
along, and Steve's got no reason to think he'd do anything to save Peggy.

He looks up to find Thor standing over his bloody jacket, expression dark. Steve feels like he's going
to be sick. The ring and the broken glass plug are just sitting there at his feet.

Thor doesn't even have to say anything and Steve takes one heavy step towards him and then
another, trying to keep his chin high and not cringe like the weak thing he is. It's like walking
towards a furnace, more painful with every step he forces himself to take until he's nearly blind with
it. He means to stop just out of arm's reach but he's so scared he can barely see, and the world is far
from perfect.

Thor grabs Steve by the shirt and fists his hand in the bloody fabric, yanking him close as Steve
dances on tip toes and panics. "Where have you been," Thor demands.

"Here—" Steve says, and Thor backhands him across the face before he's even finished saying it. He
lets Steve fall at his feet, just barely catching himself on hands and knees. Steve doesn't even realize
his nose is bleeding again until it starts dripping down on the toes of Thor's boots.

There's no sound except for Steve's wet, ragged breathing, and he doesn't dare move to put a hand
on his cheek where the sharp stone of Thor's ring dragged across his face. He tries to take a deep
breath but he just swallows air, one side of a sob. A tiny, traitorous part of him still wants to just tell
Thor the truth and spare himself whatever's coming next, but it's Peggy's life if he does. He
swallows, tasting blood and bile in the back of his throat. He nearly laughs at the thought of how
angry Thor would be if Steve just puked on his shoes right then.

"Get up," Thor says. He sounds like he does the night he whipped Steve, dark and angry and it
makes Steve want to crawl under the bed to hide. He feels like he'll break in a million pieces if Thor
gets the belt.

Steve pushes himself to his knees like he's climbing a mountain, slow and painful. He doesn't look
up but he can feel Thor watching him. He staggers to his feet by inches, breathing hard to keep
himself under control when every muscle and joint hurts. He feels like his strings have been cut and
wound tight, tension radiating from his aching head and down his back, chest so tight his ribs ache.

He finally sways on his feet, the floor tilting dangerously. Maybe he will be sick after all. Maybe
Thor will finally get rid of him and he won't be able to get the ring. They wouldn't hurt Peg for that.

Or at least Steve tries to tell himself that.

"You're drunk," Thor says. Angry and disgusted. Steve wishes he could feel the same but really he's
just tired.

"Yeah," Steve says, eyes closed for the slap. It's obvious anyway. His nose is still bleeding
sluggishly, he can feel it drip down over his lips and onto his shirt.

“Where,” Thor says again, wrapping a hand in the front of Steve’s shirt, “have you been.”

Steve’s throat works but he can’t swallow, stomach heaving at the taste of copper. “Lost a fight,” he says with his eyes still closed, feeling his way through the truth and what’s obvious, one foot at a time in an unfamiliar dark room. “Got jumped from behind, didn't see who it was.” Two truths and a lie, Steve was always terrible at this game. “Passed out, tried to find Fandral. Came here. Got drunk.”

“You tried to find Fandral,” Thor says, and Steve can't read his tone.

With his eyes closed, the room spins back and forth, orange and blue painful behind his eyelids. “Scared,” Steve says finally, when it's clear that Thor's going to let him stand there until he either says something or falls over. It feels like a defeat, admitting he's scared of Thor, but that's been obvious from the beginning.

Doubly so when he flinches at Thor putting a hand on his cheek. “You are not well liked by other Midgardians,” Thor says. It's worse than being slapped.

“No,” Steve says. It's true, and it's what Thor wants. For Steve to be isolated, dependent, needy. His nose has stopped bleeding, the blood sticky under Thor's hand. It itches and he wants to move away but he doesn't dare.

Thor shifts; Steve feels his attention change, even with his hand still on Steve’s face. “Were you violated?” Thor says, and Steve opens his eyes.

His stomach drops at the sight of the cracked plug where it rolled out of his pocket when Steve tripped over his jacket, still tangled at their feet. He shakes his head but doesn’t pull away. The crack’s obvious, bright in the black glass. “It broke when I fell,” Steve lies, and hopes that sounds true.

Thor sighs heavily and pulls Steve against him, getting blood all down the front of his own jacket. “My poor rabbit,” he says, petting Steve’s hair.

Steve lets himself be held, stiff. His cheek and nose still hurt from being slapped, worse where the skin is pressed against the rough fabric of Thor’s coat.

“I would not punish you if you were forced,” Thor says, voice gentle as he ever gets as he combs blunt fingers through Steve’s hair. “Anyone who touches you without my permission will be severely punished. But you will regret it very much if you were not forced,” he says, pushing Steve away and tipping his chin up so Steve has to look at him.

Steve swallows and nods. Thor hasn’t accused him of lying yet—he’d just beat Steve if he thought he’d lied again—but it’s enough of a warning that Steve’s ears ring like he’s been slapped. He sways on his feet, only keeping his balance because of Thor’s hand on his face.

“Go wash,” Thor says, voice still gentle even though Steve’s heart is hammering near loud enough to hear.

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After his bath, Thor is in the far room, reading on the divan by the repaired book case when Steve peeks out. Steve tip toes around the bedroom, hiding the fake ring in the back of his drawer before picking out a clean pair of panties and kicking his ruined, bloody clothes into a pile for the steward.

He’s got a welt across his face from where Thor slapped him, a scrape on his cheek bone from the
wall, and shadow bruises under his eyes from hitting his nose, but otherwise no worse for wear. He might be able to tell Bucky and Fandral the same story he told Thor; Bucky at least will believe that Steve can get himself in trouble a million miles from home.

Dressed in the lacy white panties Thor likes best, Steve slicks himself up again, two fingers in his ass as he leans over the foot of the bed. He washed as best he could but it felt no different than if Thor had fucked him, and it feels no different now as he spreads his fingers and tries to relax.

Slicked up, Steve pads out to where Thor is reading and climbs into his lap naked but for the panties and Thor’s favorite pair of earrings, the new ones with the little blue drops. Thor lets Steve straddle his lap and lay his head on Thor’s shoulder, Thor setting aside his book to pet the knobs of Steve’s spine and cup his narrow ass.

Steve breathes shallowly, trying to work up to grinding himself down on Thor’s cock and begging to be fucked. He needs Thor’s affection and there’s only one way to get it. Thor doesn’t seem to notice that he’s not doing anything, though, just petting him even though Steve’s got his face buried in Thor’s shoulder and mostly naked in his lap.

In the end, Steve doesn’t move and Thor doesn’t fuck him, doesn’t even finger him or tease him, just lets Steve huddle in his lap and hide his face. It should be humiliating, Thor petting him gently, but Steve pretends it’s Bucky instead. Even if Thor doesn’t smell the same, even if Bucky would never pet him like this, Steve pretends it’s Bucky.

Chapter End Notes

Blood, including the taste of blood, pussy as a slur, ass to mouth, and unhealthy alcohol use.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Gosh this chapter took a while! Between Life still Happening and trying to sort out what pieces to put in this chapter or the next one, it took a little longer than anticipated. But the good news is that the next chapter is all but done since I thought some of it would happen in this chapter. Unfortunately this is mostly plotless sounding, next chapter has plenty of Bucky.

The ring is right there, sitting in a little dish. Thor's got his eyes closed. Steve feels sick with it, trying to pretend everything's normal. He keeps his hands occupied braiding Thor's hair, feet wrinkling in the bath water where Thor's sprawled out with his arms thrown over Steve's knees. It's—nice, almost, quiet with Thor's hand curled around Steve’s ankle and his head against Steve's thigh as he braids first one section of hair and then the other.

It's been a quiet stretch of days with Thor in a good mood, petting Steve and getting another box of chocolates from the embassy. Thor doesn't like them and Steve doesn't like them anymore but he pretends anyway, grateful that Thor at least wants him to be less unhappy. Thor seems guilty over the plug breaking, or Steve getting beat up, or something, keeping Steve close and treating him gentle.

It's not so bad if Steve ignores the welt he's still got from Thor's ring. Better than trying to avoid Rumlow on his own, even if trying not to think of how badly he wants to see Bucky aches like a physical thing.

Steve finishes the last braid and ties it off with the red ribbon braided through. Four strands and a red ribbon just like Dottie showed him, and a hell of a lot easier on someone else than trying to do his own hair.

Looks better on Thor anyway, his hair a dark gold instead of Steve’s pale blond, like Steve got left out in the rain and all his colors ran. Steve tries not to think about that Thor’s basically everything Erskine and Stark tried to make Steve into

Except that everything good about Steve came out of a bottle. Fake, gone as soon as he landed in Asgard. Useless even on Earth because how else would he have ended up here, or let Rumlow do all of that to him in the first place.

“All done,” Steve says, trying not to shift as he puts his hands on the cool stone tile, not sure what else to do with them.

Thor rolls his head on Steve’s thigh and smiles up at him, languid and easy in the warm bath. Steve blushes for no reason; the room’s just warm and humid from the bathwater. Doesn’t help that if Steve doesn’t think about the welt on his cheek he can imagine Bucky like this too easily, washing up for a date in the middle of the kitchen they shared for a year, naked and beautiful in the big bathtub they put a door over to use as a dining table. Steve tried not to look then and he tries not to look now, ashamed of himself.

Thor shifts in the bath, turning to face Steve and kiss up the inside of his knee. He kisses like Steve
always imagined Bucky kissed his girls: slow and sweet, but just a hint of a wicked smile right before he nips the inside of Steve’s thigh with a sharp bite. His newly trimmed beard prickles Steve’s damp skin right before he moves up and bites again, hard, the bright red teeth marks standing out against skin rubbed pink. Steve’s cock comes to attention despite or because of the pain because there’s something wrong with him, because Bucky would never huff a smile against his thigh and kiss one darkening mark before making another.

Bucky would also never tease him and then leave him like that; Thor gives Steve a self-satisfied little smile as he gets up and reaches for a towel. “You may finish bathing,” he says, patting Steve’s unwashed hair as he dries off, even though his cock is stiff and thick between his legs.

Steve turns and pushes himself up on his knees, parting his lips like he’s supposed to. It’ll hurt kneeling on the stone tile long enough to suck Thor’s cock, but it might buy him a few more days of Thor’s good mood if he pretends eagerness.

“Later,” Thor says, wrapping the towel around his waist. “I wish to have you properly tonight, finish your bath.” And then he leaves Steve there to finish with the cooling bath water.

The luxury of being ignored for the first time in days should be a relief; any other time Steve might have taken the chance to jerk off in relative privacy, quick and quiet and trying to think of anything but Bucky’s hands on him. But the feeling of Rumlow’s hands on him, Rumlow’s breath on his neck, what Rumlow said about him, is all too close to the surface, too easy to wonder if Bucky might think the same of him. Thor likes him—loose, and pliant, and slicked open, but Bucky would just think the same Rumlow did. Used and dirty.

It’s useless to think about, because Bucky will never fuck him, so Bucky will never know. Steve just has to get them home. He tries to focus on that, feeling the weight of the little ring still in the dish where Thor left it as Steve washes and tries to reason a way forward. It’s selfish and pathetic to wallow in his own misery when god only knows what’s being done to Peg while Steve dithers.

Steve combs fingers through his hair, pulling at the roots to make himself think. He can’t trust that telling Thor won’t get him beaten or worse, but he can’t trust that Peg will be okay or that getting Rumlow the ring won’t be disastrous. He can’t tell Thor—but he might be able to tell Fandral. He might be able to tell Fandral, who might be able to get Peg safely off Earth, or at least safely out of Hydra’s hands.

Steve dries off and fixes his hair. It’s not much of a plan, but it’s a better plan than giving Rumlow the ring and letting Hydra do anything they want on Asgard. Fandral’s a soft touch.

Thor pays Steve no attention, legs kicked out in front of himself on the bed, reading with the fire built up high. He seems in a good enough mood, and the ring is just sitting there next to the basin, the stone dark in the low light. Steve curls his hand around the heavy ring. It’s just his imagination that it feels hot and jittery in his palm like the hammer; it’s all just Ahnenerbe nonsense like the tarted up lightbulbs.

He could—switch the rings and run, tonight. Bucky’s got a cloak and boots, they could be on Earth by morning if Steve just slipped out of bed after Thor fucked him. But then there’s no way of knowing that Peggy won’t be hurt. Rumlow could be lying, or Peggy could end up dead, and Steve would have no way of knowing until it was too late.

Steve takes a breath to steady himself and pads out to the bed in bare feet, not letting himself hesitate before he thinks better of it.

Thor looks up from where he’s reading on the bed, smiling as he lifts an arm for Steve to lie in his
lap. Then Steve holds out his hand with the ring in his palm and Thor's smile drops, Steve's stomach twisting with the worry that he shouldn't have touched it.

“You left it,” Steve says, voice smaller than he meant it to be. “Master,” he adds, trying not to cringe.

Thor takes the ring from him then, blunt callused fingers brushing Steve's palm. A chill chases down Steve's back, bracing to be slapped. But Thor just pushes hair out of his face, turning Steve’s face back and forth to look at him.

“You finally learned a lesson,” Thor says finally, giving him a fond smile as Steve tries to hide his resentment. “My very good rabbit. Go fetch the case of metal rods from the wardrobe.”

Steve barely keeps himself from jerking back like he’s been slapped. He shouldn’t have touched the ring, but Thor doesn’t sound like he means to punish him for it.

But Steve knows better by now that to hesitate, so he goes and gets it, his stomach fluttering the whole way. The plugs and the ginger weren’t so bad, once he knew what they were for, but the little metal rods are incomprehensible. He lays it on the bed at Thor’s knee and crosses his arms over his chest, like that'll do anything to protect him stark naked.

“Come,” Thor says, holding out a hand. He put the book aside and moved to sit cross legged on the bed like he means to have Steve in his lap; better than most of the alternatives if only Steve knew what the little metal rods were for.

“Did I do something wrong?” Steve says. Better to know how much it will hurt so he can avoid it in the future.

Thor actually smiles, reaching out to pull Steve to the bed. “No, you have been very good. You will know when I am displeased. Come here, you will enjoy it.” Steve climbs into his lap ungracefully, his stomach still twisted around the not-knowing.

Thor pets his back and lays Steve’s head against his shoulder, slow and easy even though he can feel Thor’s cock thickening against his thigh. Steve tries to take deep breaths against Thor’s warm skin, telling himself he’s got no reason to be so nervous when he doesn’t even know what’s coming yet. Thor’s never hurt him fucking except when he meant it to hurt, when Steve did something to deserve it, and he said Steve hadn’t done anything this time. Getting fucked’s about as safe as Steve can hope to be.

“You were so tight the first time,” Thor says, shifting so he can coat his fingers with oil from the little vial by the bed. The ring’s been put aside again, sitting on Thor’s book so it doesn’t get filthy with oil. “You could barely take the small plug. And now you open so easily.”

Steve shudders against his chest, letting Thor push two slick fingers into him. In the back of his mind he knows that it’s better this way, that it’s better than having it hurt every time and for days afterwards like it did with Rumlow, but it’s too intimate like this, huddled against Thor’s bare chest and nose pressed to his throat.

“You are so pretty when you are so shy,” Thor says against Steve’s hair, petting him and spreading his fingers. Steve clings to him and squeezes his eyes shut, trying to be as needy and grateful as Thor wants him to be. “Now that you can take the large plug so easily, perhaps I should make you take my hand.”

Steve’s breath catches at that, curling tighter against Thor as though that’s any protection. He doesn’t sound like it means it like a threat but Steve can’t help take it as one. The thought of Thor’s whole
hand in him, even with a third finger pressed into him and spreading him open now, is too much.

“Hush,” Thor says, still fucking Steve gently with his fingers even though Steve’s trying to hide against him. “I do not wish to hurt you.”

Steve’s eyes feel hot and tight when Thor lifts him up to finally fuck him, seating Steve on his cock in one smooth motion with Thor’s big hands spread on his thighs to keep him from sinking down on Thor’s cock too quickly. The smooth stretch and burn is familiar and safe and better than the horrible pain of Rumlow fucking him, but Steve can’t get hard with the dread of what’s coming next coiled up in his belly.

Thor pets him slow and gentle, making soothing noises against his hair until Steve starts to feel foolish for huddling against his chest. It’s only fucking, even if Steve doesn’t know exactly how it’s going to go. “What has you so skittish,” Thor says quietly, but it’s not a real question. Steve just lets himself relax where his cheek is pressed to Thor’s broad shoulder, letting himself be soothed into imagining that he’s safe. Better to be soothed into being pliant than risk Thor getting angry that he’s being disobedient when he’s really just scared for no reason.

“Better,” Thor says when he feels Steve relaxing against him. But he still just pets Steve slowly, and if Steve didn’t have his thick cock up his ass it would be almost nice to be held and coddled. Except for the little rods, he knows exactly what Thor wants from him like this and he can pretend that maybe Bucky would run callused fingers down his back like this, even if he knows Bucky’s cock isn’t so overwhelmingly big as Thor’s.

Thor doesn’t give him time to be ashamed of himself for even wondering about Bucky’s cock, tipping Steve back with a fond smile to make him rest back against the headboard and pillows still sitting on Thor’s cock. The angle makes Steve’s soft cock throb and Thor pushes hair out of Steve’s face before making him wrap a hand around his own cock. So he’s exposed, laid out for Thor to watch him bring himself off like this.

“Slowly,” Thor says, running the rough pad of his thumb over Steve’s lips as he starts to work himself to hardness. It’s not difficult if he just closes his eyes and doesn’t think about the little metal rods, focusing on Thor thumbing his nipple ring back and forth instead. If he doesn’t think about them, it’s like they’re not there.

Thor makes a pleased noise as Steve’s cock stiffens in his hand, arching his back into it and tightening on Thor’s cock when Thor pinches both his nipples and pulls just a little. It hurts, but in a way that’s good and distracting, going straight to Steve’s cock as he starts to rock himself on Thor’s cock as much as he’s allowed. With the crackle of the hot fire and the curtains of the big bed closing them in, it almost feels like safety.

He could make himself come like this if Thor let him, precome beading at the tip of his cock as Steve makes himself go as slow as Thor told him. Thor’s cock feels thicker at this angle, the whole length of it in him so Steve feels spread open wide as he gets closer and tries to grind himself down on it. Thor doesn’t seem inclined to fuck him yet, just letting Steve tighten and relax on his cock as he gets closer, sucking his lip ring to keep himself from getting too close as Thor thumbs the rings in his sore nipples back and forth.

Thor doesn’t tell him to stop but suddenly his hands are gone, Steve’s stomach tightening when he opens his eyes to the sharp smell of Thor swabbing down one of the little metal rods with what smells like alcohol. Like when he sterilized the needle he pierced Steve’s ears and nipples with; maybe he does mean to finally pierce Steve’s cock.

But there’s no ring or stud like Thor’s got. Thor follows his worried look and sets the rod and vial of
alcohol down on a clean cloth from the little case, bending to brush a kiss across Steve’s forehead. “Hush, I promise that you will enjoy it,” he says. “You will be very brave?” He puts a big hand on Steve’s cheek, the welt from his ring burning at the warm touch.

Steve swallows and nods. It’s not the smallest of the set; it’s two or three sizes bigger than the smallest, nearly the size of Steve’s pinky. No going slow like with the plugs, then.

Thor gives him a fond smile and uncaps another little vial, this one smelling like nothing. It’s cool in the warm room when Thor dribbles a few drops over the head of Steve’s cock and it’s suddenly, painfully clear what he means to do with the metal rod.

“Please—” Steve starts, almost trying to jerk away, but he’s got no way to get away easily with Thor’s cock in him and Thor’s hand suddenly hard on his chin.

“Be still,” Thor snaps as Steve’s heart hammers in his chest.

Steve breathes shallowly, eyes darting from the metal rod and away. It’s not like Zola’s needles but it’s close enough, and the thought of it in his cock is—Steve’s thoughts slide over and away from it. “Will it hurt?” Steve says, closing his eyes against the small, weak sound of his own voice. Pathetic. But if it hurts he can just—try to go away from himself, like he did for Zola.

Thor’s hand softens on his chin, then pets him gently. “No,” Thor says, voice softer, and Steve wants to believe him. “Not if you are very brave and do as you are told.”

Steve swallows and tries to hide his face in Thor’s hand. It’s not exactly a threat, but it’s enough of one that it makes Steve’s chest tighten. “I’ll be good,” Steve says miserably.

Thor huffs a laugh, gathering Steve in his arms to pull close and stroke his hair and back again. If Thor had never slapped him, it’d be comforting. “Breathe,” Thor says, resting his cheek against the top of Steve’s head. “You will enjoy it, but you must be still and do as you are told. Understood?” He pets Steve’s shoulders and back in long strokes as Steve nods against his chest.

Steve’s traitorous cock is still mostly hard when Thor eases him back to lean against the headboard again, and he tries to take deep breaths as Thor drizzles more oil over the head of Steve’s cock and starts to stroke him harder. He can feel Thor’s cock throb in him as Steve’s breath hitches and his cock comes back to full attention. Steve sucks his lip ring, feeling Thor’s attention on him; Thor wants him to want it, just like always.

When Thor picks up the little metal rod, Steve should make himself look away but he can’t, horrified and fascinated despite himself as Thor lays the cool tip of it against the head of Steve’s cock. His big hand is hot around Steve’s cock and starts to stroke him harder. He can feel Thor’s cock throb in him as Steve’s breath hitches and his cock comes back to full attention. Steve sucks his lip ring, feeling Thor’s attention on him; Thor wants him to want it, just like always.

When Thor picks up the little metal rod, Steve should make himself look away but he can’t, horrified and fascinated despite himself as Thor lays the cool tip of it against the head of Steve’s cock. His big hand is hot around Steve’s cock, holding it steady. “Now,” Thor says. “You must be very still or you will be hurt.”

Steve swallows and nods, bracing for the sting and burn of the VD swab at the Army induction center. But it’s slow and smooth as Thor aligns it with the slit of his cock, an uncomfortable, strange sensation as it starts to enter his cock.

It’s too big, but not like the plugs or Thor’s cock, no horrible tearing feeling. Just a slow burn as it sinks lower, like the ginger but worse, making every muscle in Steve’s body tense at the feeling of it lancing down into his balls. The rod is longer than his cock and he tenses worse suddenly fearful of how far in Thor will force it, if the pain will go all the way in him.

“Hush,” Thor says, not angry yet. “Breathe and relax, do not try to push it out.”

Steve takes a shuddery breath and nods, closing his eyes. He’s trapped with no option but to trust
Thor and do as he’s told, letting his cock be filled with the horrible thing. Taking slow breathes and trying to relax helps some, but it still hurts, worse and worse the further in it sinks.

“Very good,” Thor says. Soft, soothing nonsense that Steve tries to lean into as his breath comes thready fast. With his eyes squeezed shut he’s got nothing else to concentrate on but the slow burning as his cock is stretched open and the ache in his back as he tries to relax like he was told. Steve can feel himself going soft in Thor’s hand as the rod pushes further into his cock, cool and hot at the same time, and his breath hitches at the thought of what Thor will do when he notices.

It’s not fair. Thor said it wouldn’t hurt but there’s nothing Steve can say or do to make it stop. His legs shiver with the pain and the impulse to get away.

“Are you in pain?” Thor says, suddenly sharp. He lets go of Steve’s cock to wipe a tear from the corner of his eye; Steve hadn’t even realized he was crying.

Steve takes a deep breath, trying to make himself stop. Fandral might have stopped because Steve cried, but Thor won’t, Steve will just make it worse. But it burns, worse now that it’s not moving. “It hurts,” Steve finally says, just managing to keep his voice from breaking on it even if it’s breathier than he wants. Thor told him it wouldn’t hurt, so maybe he does actually care whether it hurts.

Thor makes an annoyed noise and Steve cringes, but Thor doesn’t hit him or push it further in. “My poor rabbit, I did not intend to hurt you,” he says, and he really does sound sorry. He tips Steve’s chin up and waits until Steve opens his eyes to meet his look through wet lashes. “I will remove it, but it will hurt again. Can you be brave for a bit longer?”

Steve nods; it hurts enough that he can barely bring himself to care that he’s being talked to like a frightened animal. That’s all he is anymore, really, a skittish bundle of instincts trying to keep himself from getting hurt and not much else. He twists hands in the sheets to keep himself still as Thor draws the rod out, slow and painful like he said.

It feels like miles but it was barely two inches, hardly anything once it’s out and Steve can gasp a shuddery breath. He tips forward against Thor’s chest again, desperate for the comfort of it despite himself, despite how hard he can feel Thor’s cock still in him. Maybe Thor will just fuck him now and get it over with. He wants Steve to want it, but sometimes Steve thinks he likes it just as well when Steve’s weepy and clingy.

Thor shushes him with soft noises, letting Steve wrap arms over his broad shoulders and rub his damp face against Thor’s chest. He cleans his hands on a cloth before tipping Steve back again to swipe thumbs across his cheeks, even though Steve’s mostly managed to calm himself down again. “My poor rabbit, that was too large for your pretty little cock.” His hands are big and warm and Steve turns his face into one, trying to hide. “We will try the smallest one, and you must say if it is painful. Understood?”

Steve’s still shaky but he nods anyway; maybe Thor will stop if he cries again. He’s close enough to it already that it won’t be too difficult to make himself start.

But Thor is as gentle and slow with him as he ever is, even though Thor’s hard enough to just flip him on his belly and fuck him rough. Steve hates himself for being a little grateful for the way Thor takes the time to pet him and work him open slowly when they fuck, and for the way he takes the time now to tease Steve back to hardness. He knows how to get Steve’s cock hard better than Steve does by now, hand hard and sure as he slowly strokes Steve and teases the little ring in his nipple with his thumb, nipping little bites along Steve’s shoulder as he goes. It’s not fair, that he should know Steve so well, but it could be so much worse. Getting fucked by Rumlow again just proved that. Steve lets himself be coddled and teased, twisting on Thor’s cock as he gets closer again even
though he knows how much it will hurt again.

This time he doesn’t watch when Thor puts more oil on Steve’s hard cock and oils the little rod separate. Thor makes him wrap a hand around the base of his cock, Thor putting a hand on the back of his neck and stroking his thumb slowly behind Steve’s ear as he lays the tip of the smaller rod against the tip of Steve’s cock.

“Steady,” Thor says, and then it’s sliding in again.

It’s too smooth, slipping in faster in a way that makes Steve’s stomach lurch, but it doesn’t hurt this time. He swallows when he dares glance at it, the cool metal looking wrong and obscene where Thor holds it at the tip of his cock.

“Do you hurt?” Thor says, still stroking his thumb against the side of Steve’s neck. It’s just enough of a distraction to keep him from being dizzy at the sight of it and Steve leans into his hand as much as he dares. Steve shakes his head.

Thor makes a pleased noise and lets the rod sink further down, a slow, steady pressure from the inside as Steve does his best to be still and relax muscles he’s never thought about before. His cock throbs harder in his hand despite himself, the unfamiliar-wrong feeling of it going straight through him like the ginger did because there’s something wrong with him. Thor strokes the back of his neck with one big, steady hand, smoothing down the line of Steve’s neck and shoulder just enough to keep him grounded when Thor draws the little rod nearly all the way out again and then lets it drop with its own weight, sliding smoothly back in.

There’s the little shiver of burn from the first one every time Thor moves it, but not enough to block out the overwhelming strangeness of it in the moment. Especially not when Thor carefully takes the rod in two fingers and slowly spins it, the motion making Steve gasp and shiver as Thor’s hard hand on the back of his neck keeps him in place. It’s too much, like he’s close enough to come but just can’t, precome or oil welling up at the tip of his cock.

Steve wants to hide himself or beg for Thor to just flip him over and fuck him hard, but all he can do is close his eyes and bite his lip. “Very pretty,” Thor says softly, fucking the rod in and out of Steve’s cock slowly. This is why he wanted Steve in his lap, so he could see and feel Steve’s reaction to it, Thor’s cock throbbing in his ass as Steve tries to squirm away from the pressure and need to come. “You are doing so well,” he says, like when he fucked Steve with the littlest glass plug for the first time, when Steve thought it was too big and couldn’t imagine taking the larger ones that Thor puts in him now. He swallows and tries not to think of the largest rods in the set, the ones nearly the size of Thor’s fingers. “Did I not say that you would enjoy it?”

Steve hasn’t got breath or room in his head to even try to answer that when Thor leaves the rod in place as deep as it will go and starts stroking Steve’s cock. It makes his whole body flinch in Thor’s lap and all Steve can do is arch his back against the headboard and press his knuckles to his mouth to keep himself from coming. His breath is ragged and short and Thor just keeps stroking his slick cock but between Thor not saying he’s allowed and fear of what it will feel like with the rod in his cock, Steve feels like he’ll bite his lip nearly bloody to keep himself from coming.

But Thor is relentless and it ripples through his body before he realizes it, trying to curl in on himself if not for Thor’s hand on the back of his neck keeping him in place. Thor’s cock in him feels bigger than ever and this must be why he wanted Steve on his cock, to feel him shudder and tighten as he comes. Thor pulls the rod from his cock in one smooth motion and it’s somehow even more intense, like every nerve in his body is shivering even though the come just wells up in little spurts like when Thor made him come wearing the cage.
Steve hasn’t even caught his breath, still shivering through the aftershocks, when Thor puts both broad hands on his ass and starts to fuck Steve in earnest, Steve too boneless and overwhelmed to resist. Steve throws his arms around Thor’s shoulders and finally buries his face in Thor’s neck, shuddering with the overwhelming intensity. He can’t think and he can’t breathe, Thor lifting him like he weighs nothing to fuck him hard and fast even though Steve’s still tight and over sensitive with his own climax.

It’s too much and it’s not fair and that’s why Thor did it, because he likes to push Steve over his limits and see him overwhelmed and needy like this. It’s a half-formed thought in the back of his mind, all mixed up with the gratitude that Thor didn’t try to hurt him and resentment of the welt across his cheek burning where it’s pressed to Thor’s shoulder and he can’t even untangle it all because Thor bites his shoulder just then, a series of marks across his shoulders.

Thor squeezes Steve’s ass around his cock as he comes, grinding up into him so Steve can feel his cock throb deep in him as he finishes. He holds Steve against him as Steve pants into his neck and finally catches his breath, shivery sensitive as Thor traces blunt fingers over his skin. It’s better and worse than what Rumlow did to him, because without the pain to fight against he is as needy and dependent as Thor wants him to be, knowing it could be so much worse and desperate to feel like he has any control over what Thor does to him.

Thor finally eases Steve off his lap to lie in the center of the bed, kissing down Steve’s chest as he reaches for cloths to wipe them both down with. They’re both filthy enough to need another bath but Thor doesn’t seem inclined to it so Steve can’t be bothered, letting himself be pulled over to lay his head in Thor’s lap.

“You were very brave and very good,” Thor says when he’s settled, feeding Steve one of the little chocolates from the ambassador. Steve eats it and tries not to think about it; Thor doesn’t mean to punish him with it.

Thor eats one himself, the first time Steve’s seen him. “Why do you enjoy these?” Thor says around a mouthful of chocolate, nose curled like he ate a bug. “They are too sweet. And they taste false, like wax.”

Steve shrugs, half smiling to himself at the thought of Thor trying to eat a fruit at a Coney Island wax museum. “They’re expensive, nicer than cheap penny candy,” Steve says, even though he can’t stand the taste of them now. The chocolate’s fine if he pretends it’s not from Thor’s hands, but the centers make him nearly gag; what he wouldn’t give for cheap penny candy now.

Thor makes an unconvinced noise, picking another from the box and chewing it skeptically.

“Have you ever been to Earth? Midgard?” Steve says on impulse, nevermind that he’s never asked Thor anything except whether he was going to fuck Steve. Fandral likes Earth; Loki accused Thor of liking humans too much. Maybe Steve can talk his way around to Peggy and throw himself at Thor’s mercy.

Thor hums. “Not for—twenty-five or thirty years,” he says absently, playing with Steve’s hair. That’s five or six centuries, and Thor barely looks over thirty himself. “Midgard was very different then.” Steve has never felt so far from home, in this alien place where time passes slowly and all the people live forever.

“Would you ever go back?” Steve says, cheek pressed to Thor’s warm bare thigh and disoriented by the thought that maybe Thor is near-immortal like Schmidt and Zola said he was.

Thor taps him on the side of the head with one blunt finger. “I know what you are asking,” Thor
says, but he doesn’t sound or look angry when Steve glances up at him. “Yes, you may accompany me to Midgard if I make another visit, but that will not happen until Schmidt and his ilk are defeated. We will return to the winter keep soon, and see how things stand after.”

“When?” Steve asks, trying not to sit up. He should have taken the ring and run, if he’s going to be separated from Bucky soon. Who knows how many more years will pass on Earth before they see each other between the winter court and the summer court again.

Thor just makes a non-committal noise, rubbing Steve’s back. “You carry too many worries on your back,” he says, digging a thumb into a knot below Steve’s shoulder. “When the situation with the assassin is more settled. I know you will be even more lonely at the winter keep without other Midgardians, but I will get you a present before we depart. You have been so much better behaved of late.”

Steve chews his lip and lets himself be petted and tries not to look at the ring on the beside table.
He’s there when Thor and Steve come back from an interminable meeting with Loki, Fandral, and too many other people yelling about what to do about Midgard to get close to either Bucky or Fandral. Steve spent the whole thing huddled behind Thor’s chair trying to hide the bruises under his eye from Bucky, but he knows Bucky saw it anyway, glaring at Thor the whole time.

And now this.

Pietro, sitting on the floor with his back against the divan like he owns the place. His wild curly hair has been bleached down to the roots, his face shaved and his ears pierced. He gives them a radiant smile that falters just a little when Steve nearly stumbles into Thor.


“Your friend you wished to protect,” Thor says. He snaps his fingers for Pietro to come and he does, easy and graceful on his feet like Steve will never be. Pietro’s even prettier in new clothes than he was before, the cut of his dark embroidered jacket like Steve’s making him look tall and trim. “You were so lonely, now you may see your friend without skulking about like a weasel.”

Steve does his best to not look sour as Thor tips Pietro’s face back and forth like he does Steve, inspecting him, while Pietro does his best to not give Steve an anxious look. It’s not fair, but it’s not fair to Pietro either. Steve would have been worried too, if there had been someone here before him and they didn’t like him.

“You will do,” Thor says finally, patting Pietro on the cheek. “Put his things away, and then you may have time to yourselves,” Thor says to Steve. Pleased and indulgent. “You have a little bed to yourselves, and you may kiss, or do anything you like together.” Fuck, he means, waving them out of the front room like Steve’s stomach isn’t lurching at the thought.

Pietro follows Steve back to the bedroom as Thor settles with a book, and it feels strange to have someone else in a space Steve had thought of as his despite himself. There really is a small bed, tucked in the alcove to the balcony where Steve’s little table and paints have been moved off to one side to make room. It’s open to the bedroom, no false privacy like Bucky’s heavy curtain.

“Thank you,” Pietro says when they’re more or less alone. There’s tied up little packages of Pietro’s new clothes sitting at the foot of the bed; Steve busies himself making room in his one drawer of the wardrobe and putting them away. “For telling him about me.”

“I didn’t,” Steve snaps. Pietro’s taller and more muscled but he’s got a set of lacy panties same as Steve, and Steve doesn’t like it. Steve tries not to wonder whether his nipples have been pierced too, because he’ll probably find out soon enough. “We’re not friends.”

“No,” Pietro says slowly. “But we are both here, and this is better than the kitchens, no?”

Steve doesn’t want to think about it, how selfish and petulant he’s being when Pietro’s been doing real work and dealing with that asshole Jack besides this whole time. “Did you know she worked for Hydra?” Steve demands instead, finally turning to face Pietro. “Dottie?”

Pietro shrugs. “We all do, do we not?”
“I don’t,” Steve snaps.

Pietro gives him a perplexed look. “How did you get here if you do not?” he says. “Everyone from Earth works for them, or we would not have been sent across the bridge. They have my sister, so I do what I am told. Do they not have someone of yours as well?”

That shuts Steve up finally. He does more or less work for Hydra, even if he’s trying to get out of it.

“You will not tell him, will you?” Pietro says, glancing at the arched doorway to the front room. “They will hurt her if Jack says I do not cooperate, they have sent photos.”

Steve closes his eyes, takes a deep breath. Looks at Pietro again. “My friend,” Steve says, mouth dry. “They have my friend, a girl I—a friend.”

Pietro visibly relaxes, closing the space between them to squeeze Steve’s hand. “I will not tell him. We do not have to be friends.”

Steve tries not to be too sour that Pietro gets to sit at Thor’s feet on his other side for supper, or that Thor pets Pietro’s hair and says he’s pretty when Pietro does all the fetching and clearing dishes. Steve never wanted all of Thor’s attention anyway.

It wouldn’t have been better if it were Bucky, or Steve tells himself that, picking at his supper. Bucky already knows Thor fucks him and doesn’t despise him for it, but Bucky would be livid if he saw Thor slap Steve, or take the belt to him.

Though if he could be with Bucky, even have the thin excuse of sharing a bed with him like they did the two winters they lived together, maybe Thor wouldn’t have a reason to slap Steve again because Steve wouldn’t have a reason to sneak around and get himself slapped.

Steve lets himself indulge the fantasy of it, that Peggy’s safe and Thor’s pleased with him and Bucky’s not disgusted with him, helping destroy Hydra the only way Steve can anymore. It’s a stupid, self-indulgent fantasy, because everything Steve knows about Hydra is more than twenty years out of date and no one cares what he knows any more. But it’s maybe the best Steve can hope for, which he also tries not to think about.

Thor sends him to bed with Pietro with a pleased little slap on the ass, like he thinks Steve and Pietro fucked earlier. Steve shrugs on his long night shirt with his back turned to Pietro, eyeing the little bed where Pietro’s in just his lacy panties and wrapped up in all the blankets already with distaste.

“Shove over,” Steve hisses as Thor turns down the lights. Pietro gives him a sleepy look, scooting over maybe an inch. But he surrenders some of the blankets when Steve climbs in.

The bed is all but a camping cot; it’s narrow enough it could be the same one Steve slept on during the USO tour. It bows towards the middle and rolls them both together even though they’re back to back. Pietro elbows him as he shifts, trying to get comfortable.

Steve elbows him back. “You take up too much room.” Steve’s all but hanging off the edge of the cot.

“Your ass is too bony,” Pietro says without budging.

“Quiet,” Thor snaps from the other room.

Steve huffs and rolls out of bed. Let Pietro have the too-small cot.
He should go out and sleep on the divan to spare his pride, but it's too cold and he'll wake up with walking pneumonia if he does it too many times. And anyway Thor's bed is big enough Steve can squirm away and pretend he's sleeping alone most nights.

Thor's not asleep when Steve pads out to the bed, but he is turned on his side away from the alcove and he sleeps with a knife under his pillow. Steve stops out of arm's reach and coughs, arms wrapped around himself and doing his best to look pitiful in the cold dark.

Thor half sits up, looking over his bare shoulder annoyed. Maybe Steve should have gone out to sleep on the divan. “Can I sleep here?” Steve says, since he's in trouble already no matter what he says. “Master?”

Thor actually smiles at that. “Of course,” he says, like he's never made Steve sleep on the floor for being willful. He turns over and lifts the covers for Steve to tuck against his side.

Pride be damned, the bed is hot as a furnace when Steve climbs in and fits himself gratefully against Thor's chest. He lies with his head on Thor's shoulder and Thor pulls one of Steve's legs up across his knees to tuck Steve's cold toes against his legs. Steve's cold enough that he doesn't even mind that Thor pushes up the hem of his nightshirt to cup his ass.

“You do not wish to be with your friend?” Thor says when they're settled.

“He's all elbows,” Steve says, trying not to sound too sour. It's not Pietro’s fault the little bed is too small for both of them. Steve tries not to think about that Thor might just end up having both of them in his bed.

Thor huffs a laugh, tracing blunt fingers down the back of Steve's thigh. “Fandral is the same.”

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Steve wakes up to Thor shoving his nightshirt off him, the air shockingly cold as Thor undresses him and tosses it away. It's cold enough and early enough, windows still mostly dark, for Steve to be grateful when Thor rolls him on his belly and covers Steve with the heavy warmth of his weight.

Thor kicks out of his drawers and shoves Steve’s lacy panties down just far enough to let him push his thick cock between the cheeks of Steve’s ass. He kisses across Steve’s shoulders and neck, lazily rubbing his cock against Steve’s ass so Steve can feel the wet tip of his cock slide against his hot skin. Steve’s still muzzy on sleep, arching his back into it and trying to grind his cock against the sheets. With the panties half down his thighs he can’t spread his legs for it, but maybe that’s what Thor wants, reaching between them to slick his cock with spit.

Steve hisses and arches his back as Thor fucks him, the burn and pain all mixed up with Thor’s heavy weight pinning him down and Steve’s cock against the mattress. Thor makes a pleased noise against his shoulder, kissing along Steve’s hot skin for all that he’s got Steve trapped like they’re not just playing at ravishment anymore. The rings in Steve’s nipples catch on the sheets, a little painful pull that makes the rest of it still feel dreamy unreal. The fire’s not yet built up for the day, and between the crisp cold air outside the bed and Thor’s burning weight covering him, Steve feels like he could spend forever like this, wrapped up warm with nothing to worry about but the thick drag and burn of Thor’s cock in him.

Safer than having to think, anyway, safer than worrying what will happen when Thor finds out Steve’s been thinking about anything besides just being fucked. Thor’s heavy weight and hot skin against his back is almost a comfort as Steve twists his hands in the sheets, a relentless normal as Thor fucks him slow and insistent. Bucky would be just as heavy, stubble sharper than Thor’s beard and the metal of his arm cool where he put it around Steve’s narrow chest.
Thor keeps him from lingering on that thought too long, putting a broad arm around Steve’s chest and hauling him up so that Thor’s sitting with Steve in his lap, finally shoving his panties down so that Steve can kick them away. Not Steve’s favorite way to be fucked and the room’s too cold, but Thor’s in a good mood, kissing along Steve’s shoulder and letting Steve fuck himself as Thor strokes his cock instead of teasing for once. It’s nearly good despite the cold, Steve close as he rocks himself on Thor’s cock.

It doesn’t last, though. “Pietro!” Thor calls over Steve’s shoulder, making him freeze. “Pietro, wake up.”

Not like Pietro hasn’t seen Steve’s cock before, or like Pietro wasn’t expecting this, if the way he stirs and gives them a sleepy smile over his shoulder before rolling out of bed. Steve’s trapped between humiliated at being seen like this and annoyed that Pietro’s nipples are pierced the same as his.

Nobody but Fandral’s seen Steve get fucked so far, and not so spread open on display like this. Pietro pads towards them half asleep in his own lace panties, sleepy-confident until he gets in arm’s reach and he catches the mortified look on Steve’s face.

Thor snaps fingers at him, annoyed with his hand going tight on Steve’s hip as Pietro glances between them, and all the breath goes out of Steve at the thought of Thor’s good mood evaporating. Steve reaches a hand out for Pietro, to tell him it’s okay before everything goes wrong.

Pietro lets himself be pulled in, reluctant from the tension in his shoulders, but he goes willingly enough when Steve puts a hand in his hair and kisses him. It’s a little like what Steve wishes it would be like with Bucky, his mouth soft and warm and his morning stubble sharp as Pietro eases into it, putting a knee on the bed to lean into Steve and tentatively trace fingers up his thigh. Thor makes a pleased noise then, going back to kissing along Steve’s shoulder.

It’s less frightening, less overwhelming, than being trapped between Thor and Fandral, in part because Pietro’s not pressed right up against him and in part because it’s easier to imagine he’s Bucky, or Bucky before Hydra got him and made him more broad and muscled than he ever was before.

But that’s not fair to Pietro or Bucky, so Steve pushes the thought away and concentrates on making it good for Pietro, even if it’s hard to know what he wants. But Pietro shudders and sighs against his mouth when Steve strokes his thickening cock through his panties, so he can’t be too picky.

Thor has other ideas, though, leaving off stroking Steve’s cock to twist a hand in Pietro’s hair and push him down on his knees. Pietro goes easily enough, looking up for Steve’s tight nod before leaning in to lick his lips and slowly, so slowly, take his cock.

It’s nearly unbearable, Thor rolling his hips to fuck Steve slowly and Pietro’s hot mouth on him, Steve arching backwards to put his arms around Thor’s neck as Thor laughs at him softly.

“That good?” Thor says against Steve’s hair, idly playing with Steve’s nipple piercings as he watches Pietro. “You are a very pretty pair.”

Pietro’s pretty, glancing up at that with a wicked smile as he leans back to just tease the tip of Steve’s cock. He’s a better performer than Steve too, leaning into it when Thor puts a hand in his hair and pushes him down to choke on Steve’s cock. Steve jerks in Thor’s lap at the feeling of it, ashamed of himself until Pietro recovers and swallows around him and Steve’s got no room in his head for anything else.
“I can’t—” Steve pants, rolling his head against Thor’s shoulder, barely able to get the words out. “Can I, please—”

“Hmm,” Thor says, nipping little bites along Steve’s neck like he’s actually considering it.

“Please,” Steve whines, arching into it and desperate as Pietro’s tongue flicks against the head of his cock. Between that and Thor pinching his nipples it’s too much, he can feel himself tightening on Thor’s cock and Thor must be able to feel it too, drawing it out.

“You may,” Thor says, cool and indulgent like he isn’t fucking Steve near to tears.

Steve comes in Pietro’s warm mouth with a shuddery breath, Thor fucking him through it as Pietro swallows around him. Hands in Pietro’s wild hair it’s hard to think about anything else, shivering through it as Thor keeps Pietro in place with a heavy hand and bites dark marks along Steve’s shoulders.

Everything feels syrupy heavy when Thor finally lets Pietro up, Steve oversensitive as Pietro kneels up to kiss him again. Thor digs blunt fingers into Steve’s hips, fucking him as much as the position allows. Pietro’s mouth is salty and bitter and warm, smiling against Steve’s mouth as Steve shoves his panties down with shaky hands and wraps a hand around Pietro’s cock to bring him off.

Thor pushes Pietro away, but just to make him suck his fingers, and why is clear when he pulls Pietro close again to finger his ass, Steve trapped between them. Pietro leans into them, head on Steve’s shoulder and his breath coming fast as Steve strokes his cock and Thor pushes fingers into him. Between Thor’s beard against his shoulder and Pietro’s warm breath, the room doesn’t feel so cold anymore, Steve’s skin electric hot.

Pietro curses softly against Steve’s neck as he comes, hot and thick over his stomach and belly. Steve kisses him as he finishes, soft and nearly chaste with Pietro so sleepy on it.

Not sleepy enough to not still be aware of Thor watching them, Pietro folding to his knees again to lick come from Steve’s belly and thighs. Thor’s hands tighten on Steve’s thighs as he finishes, his cock pulsing hot and thick as Steve twists between them. His skin buzzes, too much all at once between the whiplash of waking up warm and safe, the worry of Thor’s mood changing, and Pietro’s warm mouth. Thor’s beard scraping along his shoulder and his broad hands are about all that keeps Steve from just floating away like static.

“Go wash and dress, you may not laze about today,” Thor says, easing Steve off his lap. Steve goes on shaky legs, shoving Pietro’s hands away when he reaches out to keep Steve from stumbling. Thor gives Steve a swat on the ass. “Play nicely.”

Steve ignores Pietro as they wash, ashamed and wanting nothing more than to wrap himself in what shreds of dignity he has left before Thor bends him over and fucks him with one of the glass plugs, or worse yet, does it to Pietro. It’s bad enough having to clean come from his belly and chest and thighs after being used like that, though it’s cold enough that Pietro washes as quick as Steve while Thor dresses in the other room.

Thor’s built up the fire enough to take the chill off the room by the time Steve goes out to hop into stockings and trousers, ignoring Pietro trailing after him. Pietro got what he wanted, out of the kitchens; there’s no reason for him to ask anything else of Steve. Thor gives them both a fond smile and pats Steve’s cheek on his way out to the front room.

“Was that okay?” Pietro says as soon as Thor’s out of ear shot, giving Steve a worried look.
“Just do what he tells you,” Steve says, fiddling with his shirt cuffs. Thor settles at the desk, busy and ignoring them.

“But you—” Pietro starts.

“He’ll hurt you if you don’t,” Steve snaps. He combs fingers through his hair to keep from having to look at Pietro. If Thor hurt Pietro for being willful, Steve might do something stupid. He doesn’t even like Pietro.

Pietro’s quiet for a long minute, straightening his shirt and buttoning his coat. “I am sorry,” he says after a while, reaching over to squeeze Steve’s hand.

Steve looks up at him, off his balance. “Me too,” he says. Because he is. No reason to make them both more miserable than Steve already is. He sucks his lip ring, glancing between Pietro and Thor in the other room. “I have a—friend,” Steve says. “Who might be able to get your sister safe. I’m going to tell him about my girl, if you want me to tell him about your sister too. You’d have to tell him about Jack too, probably.”

Pietro glances out to the main room, where Thor’s shuffling through papers and scratching out notes. Steve can see Pietro weigh it, the chance that Steve might sell him out. Not like Steve hasn’t been obvious about not being pleased Pietro’s here. “You do not think he will find out?” Pietro says finally, voice low. “Or that your friend will tell?”

“I don’t know, but I don’t think so,” Steve says. Maybe Fandral will tell Thor and it’ll be all over. Maybe Peg and Pietro’s sister will get rescued. He’s got no way of knowing and no other options. “But it’s more dangerous the longer we don’t tell someone, and more dangerous for my girl and your sister the longer Hydra has them.”

Pietro gives him a sharp look, but Steve can already see he’s thought the same thing through. There’s nothing they can do but keep cooperating with Hydra until they get caught, unless there’s some way of knowing the girls are safe and Fandral might be the only chance they get. Pietro nods, mouth thin.

“Steven!” Thor calls from the other room, annoyed. “Pietro! Cease your dawdling,” he says, and they go.

When Fandral turns up later to have Steve again for the first time in days, Thor waves away his tight look at the bruises under Steve’s eyes before Fandral can even scold him for it. Accosted by Midgardians, Thor says, which Fandral doesn’t look like he really buys until Thor adds that all other Midgardians have been barred from the upper floors and Steve all but sags with relief. At least he hasn’t got to worry about Rumlow dragging him off again.

They leave then, but not before Fandral gives Pietro a thoughtful up and down look, like he did Steve the first few times he saw him. They’ve fucked, or at least Pietro’s sucked his cock before, and Steve’s absurdly annoyed by Fandral’s attention.

Fandral doesn’t ask him if it’s true, if Thor didn’t hit him, as they walk to Loki’s suite, looking like he’s distracted over thinking something. Steve sucks his lip ring, trying to work out how to bring up Rumlow without giving himself away too much. Fandral’s not unreasonable, he’ll have to understand that Steve and Pietro both were put in an impossible situation, but Steve’s got no way of knowing what he’ll do about it without jumping in both feet first.

By the time Steve thinks he’s figured out an angle of approach, they’re at Loki’s door and Steve’s got another problem all together as Fandral and Loki sweep into the study together.
“Who hit you,” Bucky snaps, crossing the room to grab Steve before the door’s even closed. The welt from Thor’s ring and the scrape on his cheek are healed, but the shadow bruises under his eyes will be there for a few days longer. “Thor? Or that other one?”

“Just tired,” Steve lies, shying away from him.

Bucky frowns at him, stepping into his space. He does the thing where he runs a hand down Steve’s arm, touchy, like he’s checking if Steve’s got a broken arm and just isn’t saying anything about it. “You look like someone punched you in the nose,” he says.

“I lost a fight,” Steve says, sharper than he ought as he steps back from Bucky, putting space between them.

Bucky laughs at that, surprised, like he really believes it; it’s mostly the truth. “You can’t stay out of trouble even a million miles from home,” he says. “You get the other guy good?”

“Don’t I always?”

Bucky smiles, hooking an arm around his shoulders and all but hugging him. Too close, too intimate, wrong if Bucky only knew what Steve was thinking about him that morning. “Thought I taught you to punch with your fists, not with your face,” Bucky says.

“Nose is sharper than my knuckles,” Steve mutters, the old joke worn thin. It feels good anyway, even if it’s not true, that Bucky still thinks he can stand up for himself in a fight.

“Barnes!” Loki calls from the other room.

Bucky rolls his eyes, stepping back from Steve finally. “C’mon,” he says, taking Steve’s hand like they’re in gradeschool again, “time to see what his majesty wants. That other one really didn’t put hands on you? He sure looks at you a lot.”

“Fandral’s fine,” Steve says. “You sound like a jealous date.”

Bucky snorts like that’s a real joke and not just Steve’s wishful thinking, like Steve hasn’t ruined everything between them.

Fandral stares when Steve follows Bucky into the study, but it’s because they’re still holding hands. Steve flushes hot down to his collar and drops Bucky’s hand. Fandral just smiles, trying to hide it behind his hand, but he smiles.

“What?” Bucky says to Loki, short like Loki’s never slapped him across the face. Steve’s stomach drops.

“How many widows does your shield have?” Loki asks.

“None, I told you,” Bucky says, and Steve can practically see his annoyed look from where Steve’s all but hiding behind him. “Underwood either got poached or defected. They stole one, maybe two others if the director’s as smart as everyone says she is.”

Loki spreads his hands at Fandral, ignoring Bucky’s smart attitude. “As I said,” Loki says. “There is no resistance.”

“Of course there’s a resistance,” Bucky scoffs before Fandral can answer. Steve and Fandral both stare at him but Loki just gives him an annoyed look. “But shield’s not it. Shield just wants to fuck over Schmidt, same as every other goddamn subagency, same as Pierce and all the rest. They want a
“power vacuum so they can carve up the pieces.”

“All the more reason to assassinate the director, then,” Loki says, peevish.

“And I told you,” Bucky says, slow and annoyed like he gets when Steve’s being pig headed about something, “you do that and you’re going to end up with every two-bit Reichsmarschall and Oberster Fuhrer scrambling to get hands on a Winter Soldier of their own and a widow or two across the bridge to slide a knife in you. It’s not just going to be a power vacuum, it’s going to be a blood bath.”

“Good,” Loki snaps. “Let them have a filthy end to this filthy problem.”

Bucky crosses his arms over his chest, the metal places of the metal arm shifting menacingly in the quiet room. “You do it that way and you won’t have me to do your dirty work. Not unless you keep your promises.”

Loki waves that away like he’s waving away a fly; Steve can’t imagine him keeping a promise to anyone, let alone Bucky with the silver collar around his throat.

“What of the resistance, though?” Fandral says, looking Bucky over like he hasn’t just been arguing with Loki, like he’s got as much right to say his piece as anybody.

“What about them?” Bucky scoffs. “They’ve got no money, no weapons, and no leadership. They’re just a nuisance, not a threat.”

“Tell us anyway,” Fandral says, sitting back in his chair.

Steve’s half asleep by the end of it, leaning against Bucky where Bucky leans against the stone wall, snapping at Loki and correcting Fandral. Steve follows but he’s got nothing to add, everything he knew twenty years out of date and ashamed of himself when he hears that Colonel Phillips died a hero’s death in London.

It’s like something out of a radio play, War of the Worlds with Nazis, and Steve’s exhausted under the tension of worrying that Loki will finally lose his patience and slap Bucky for his smart attitude. But it never comes, Bucky talking and insistently pulling Steve against his side so he can trace the seam of Steve’s coat sleeve with his metal fingers.

The arm is heavy but Steve feels himself dropping off anyway despite himself, lulled by the close warm smell of Bucky familiar as ever despite the horrible tension of Loki’s sourness.

If Steve walks back to Fandral’s suite with a crick in his back, it’s worth it both for the smell of Bucky lingering on his jacket and the conviction that he has to get Peg and Pietro’s sister out of Hydra’s hands as soon as possible. Whether Bucky and Fandral succeed in talking Loki around to not burning Europe down or not, they’re in danger the longer Hydra has them.

“What if,” Steve says, turning the pawn he’s just taken over in his hands, sitting at Fandral’s chessboard later that evening.

“Hmm?” Fandral says pleasantly. He leans over the board, chin in his hand to over think his next move like he always does. He’s better than he was but he’s still slow and Steve finds himself playing like Bucky, reckless and impulsive just to move things along.

“What if there's a spy in the keep,” Steve says.
Fandral looks up at him then. “There's several,” he says, voice deliberately bland in a way that makes Steve's stomach twist.

He pushes on anyway; he's got no other options. “Hydra?” Steve says. Fandral nods but doesn't say anything; Steve takes that to mean there's spies for others but Fandral won't say who, not to Steve. “There's—” Steve starts. “What if the spy—threatened to hurt someone on Midgard, if they didn't get something.”

Fandral sits up then, chess board forgotten. “What did they ask for,” he says, voice as hard as Steve's heard it and Steve has to make himself sit straight in his chair and not cringe like he would for Thor.

He lifts his chin and looks Fandral in the eye. Thor would just beaten him until he said; Fandral hasn't raised a hand to him yet. Steve’s got a little room to maneuver but Fandral’s got control of the board. “What could you do,” Steve says carefully, “to make sure they didn't get what they want. To make sure they couldn't hurt someone to get what they want.”

Fandral sits back in his chair. He gives Steve a considering look, like Steve's a dog that's suddenly learned to walk on two legs. It's an uncomfortable, dangerous feeling, like they've been playing a game Steve didn't know the rules to and didn't even realize he was playing until just now.

“I suppose,” Fandral says carefully. “I suppose it would depend on how much about Hydra's plans we did not already know.”

He wants to know how much else Steve has, Steve realizes. Holding out the promise of Peggy and Wanda's safety in exchange for the worth of something Steve has no way of knowing. Fandral would have to be both stupid and blind to not know that Rumlow's been up to no good; that alone won’t be worth Peggy’s safety.

“Could you get someone off Midgard? Make sure Hydra couldn't hurt them?” Steve says again, fighting to keep the anger and fear out of his voice. It comes out more or less steady. But he has to know how much his information can buy before he gives it away.

“Possibly,” Fandral says. It's a negotiation now, but at least he isn't lying. “It depends if the Midgardians have them in hand, or if they can be invited here without arousing undue suspicion. If the information was worth having.” He pauses, giving Steve another long, considering look. Steve's sure he hasn't managed to keep all the anger off his face. “Who did they threaten?”

Now it's no longer hypothetical; if Steve says, he's admitting to being a spy without having gained anything. But hypotheticals won't save him if Fandral decides to tell Thor. “My—betrothed,” Steve says, casting around for a word to make sense of how he feels about Peggy, even if it's a lie. “And Pietro's sister.”

Fandral's looks softens for the first time. “Who made the ask?” he says. “What do they want?”

“There's two—handlers here,” Steve says, looking for a word out of Bucky's pulp novels. He feels like he's walking on thin ice, the cracks opening under his feet even as he tries to slowly feel his way forward. “But they have to be safe first. Pietro's sister and my girl.”

Fandral gives him a cool, even look. Weighing whether he should just have it whipped out of Steve; he's no different from Thor or Rumlow. “One name,” he says finally. “And what they want.”

Steve feels like he can breathe again, but even so he doesn't trust it. “And you’ll get our friends off Midgard?” Steve says, just one side of a demand.

“I will try. It may not be possible, if the Midgardians have made them disappear already,” Fandral
says, and Steve’s stomach twists. He knew Hydra did terrible things, but the possibility that Peggy
has been—disappeared, like Steve was disappeared—is too terrible to look at straight on. “But I will
try.”

It’s as much of a promise as Steve can hope for. “Rumlow, Pierce’s man,” Steve says, and the look
on Fandral’s face says he already knew, or suspected as much. Steve’s stomach sinks. “He wanted
information from Pietro and me, about warriors, and the keep, and other things.”

“That is all,” Fandral says, voice flat. It’s not enough to save Peggy and Wanda.

“The other one wanted other things,” Steve says, desperate. The ring might be enough, if Steve holds
it out and can give it away without implicating himself. “The other one has other connections,
downstairs in the kitchens.”

Fandral looks placated for the first time. Maybe that’s enough. He reaches over to the side table,
grabbing a pen and sheet of paper before sliding them across the chess board to Steve, pieces pushed
aside. “Write the names of your friends, and any other identifying information we can use to find
them.”

Steve takes the pen like a lifeline, hand nearly steady as he writes out Peggy and Wanda’s full
names, first in Roman characters, and then in Asgardian characters, sounding it out as best he can.
Their dates of birth, the last place he and Pietro saw them, what they look like. It’s pitifully little, but
it’s all he has.

Fandral watches him as he writes, Steve can feel the weight of his look. “Have you told them
anything? Rumlow and the other one?” Fandral says.

Steve’s stomach goes cold. He looks up, trying not to give himself away. Maybe Fandral knows he
told Dottie something; maybe he didn’t believe Thor’s suspicions about Steve before but now he
does, now that Steve’s nearly given away all his cards. Steve shakes his head mutely, afraid that his
dry mouth will betray him.

“I would like you to tell them something. Give them information we can use against them. Can you
do that?” Fandral says, voice overly gentle now like he’s talking to a child.

Which would mean seeing Rumlow again, deliberately seeking him out. Or sending Pietro to Jack,
maybe so that Fandral can have them watched and find out who the other spy is so he doesn’t need
to keep his promise to Steve.

“He fucked me last time,” Steve says, unable to look Fandral in the eye anymore because he’s a
coward. He picks up the chess piece and fiddles with it again, fidgeting because this shouldn’t be so
hard to say out loud. Fandral knows Steve’s been fucked by plenty of people whether he wanted it or
not; it’s the only reason he’s sitting in that chair, at the chessboard, in the first place. Fandral’s just—
the only person besides Bucky who’s treated him like he’s got any worth besides that. “Rumlow,
when I said I wouldn’t do it. Thor said he’d—he doesn’t want anyone to touch me but you.”

Fandral doesn’t say anything for long moments stretching out, and Steve can’t make himself look up.
He doesn’t want to beg but he might anyway.

“It would help get your friends safely off Midgard,” Fandral says finally. Steve closes his eyes. It’s
either true, and he has to do it to get Peggy safe, or it’s not true, and Fandral’s just saying it because
he knows how to manipulate Steve. Steve has no way of knowing either way.

“Thor won’t like it,” Steve says. It’s a weak protest and he knows it, but it puts him right back where
he was.

“No,” Fandral agrees. “But I will speak with him if it becomes an issue.”

Steve feels like he can’t breathe; he thought Fandral was a way out, but now he’s got a worse problem than he had before. Fandral explaining it won’t do him any good if Thor breaks his teeth for it first.

“Please don’t ask me to do this,” Steve says, hating how small his voice sounds. He’s a pathetic coward, trying to save himself the humiliation of Rumlow fucking him again instead of doing everything he can to save Peg.

“Thor would also not be pleased to know you learned to read after he forbade it,” Fandral says, cool and even.

Steve stares at him. “You knew?”

Fandral shakes his head. “I said I thought you clever enough to be a secretary and he forbade it then,” he says, and Steve’s head spins. Fandral must have suspected him and tested the waters to see if Steve was lying to him. “I would have taught you regardless, had you been honest,” Fandral says, and he sounds like he regrets Steve having put him in this position to blackmail him.

Fandral and Thor are both the same, wanting to think of themselves as kind men who would never force someone. Rumlow was at least honest about it.

“I will get you back your liberty of the keep,” Fandral says when Steve stays quiet, like they’re actually negotiating, like that’s supposed to help anything when the only thing protecting Steve from Rumlow was being locked away on the upper floors.

“Just tell me what to say,” Steve says. What’s letting one more person fuck him, if that’s all he’s got to bargain with.
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

See end notes for specific warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#).

Pietro’s in bed with Thor when Steve stumbles back in the gray morning, feeling sick with dread between that and being sent back to Rumlow. They’re both naked, Pietro still sprawled on his belly where Thor fucked him last night and dark bite marks across his shoulders, sleeping on Steve’s side of the bed.

Steve scowls at them; Thor didn’t have to spend months being patient with Pietro because he’s not skittish and scared like Steve was. He’s prettier, and more eager, and more obedient than Steve, because he actually wants to be there. It’s not fair.

Thor shifts, coming awake enough to push himself up on an elbow and squint at Steve. He smiles, still half asleep, and flips back the covers to hold out a hand for Steve to come.

Steve goes on heavy feet, Pietro stirring sleepily on Thor’s other side to wrap himself in more of the blankets. Thor pets Steve idly as he undresses, waiting to pull him close until he’s undressed, and then Thor pulls Steve into bed to wrap around him tightly. Steve lets himself ignore Pietro curled at Thor’s back and pretend that Thor’s broad heat is Bucky the winter the radiator died.

Better than think about what Fandral wants him to do, or that Thor’s getting bored of him.

Another person in the suite makes their morning routine too crowded, Steve feeling more under foot than ever with Pietro all but elbowing him out of the way of the wardrobe to get dressed. He actually picks out his clothes, eyeing over what Steve’s put on and looking over the little box of jewelry when Steve goes to put on his earrings. Steve pointedly closes it when he sees Pietro looking.

Thor ignores them as much as he ever did Steve, pausing to run fingers through Steve’s hair and ruin the braid he’s working on before he goes out to his desk. Steve just shakes out the braid and starts over.

He finishes it in the half a minute he’s alone, Thor in the other room and Pietro shaving for the day, quiet Steve wishes he could hang onto when Pietro finishes and comes to watch him line his eyes in the little mirror.

“How do you do that?” Pietro says after a minute watching him.

“Carefully,” Steve says, peevish.

“Will you show me?” Pietro says. Either oblivious or deciding to ignore Steve’s mood.

“No,” Steve snaps, and finishes in silence. It’s stupid and petty, but showing him means that Pietro’s learning what Thor wants without having to be told and going along with it just like Steve, and Steve can’t stand the thought.
Can stand the thought even less that Thor will like Pietro even more once he starts lining his eyes and wearing more jewelry, and Steve’s got no reason other than he knows better what Thor wants that Thor should keep him. Now that he knows that while Fandral might not fuck him, he’s got no compunctions about using Steve in other ways.

So Steve watches sullenly when he finishes and Pietro sits down to clumsily line his eyes, with Steve’s makeup, at Steve’s little table he’s been too resentful to use for anything but doing his makeup.

“You’re doing it wrong,” Steve says when Pietro’s finished with one eye, annoyed with himself and annoyed with Pietro for doing it so badly and ruining the eye pencil. The tip is mashed with the way he put it on, a thick line from corner to corner, shaky as a drunk. Pietro glances at him, looking wall-eyed with how thickly his one eye is lined.

Steve takes the pencil from him and bullies him to sit on the floor at Steve’s feet. Steve’s back aches enough as it is that he’s not going to make himself sore to do Pietro a favor. He wipes the thick, clumsy line of makeup away with his thumb, snapping at Pietro to hold still. Then he carefully sharpens the eye pencil and lines Pietro’s eyes, thin in the corner and thick on the outer edge to accentuate his dark lashes.

Steve dabs pink on his lips, sour. Pietro’s prettier than Steve and he knows it. He even preens when Thor comes to stand in the doorway and watch fondly as Steve finishes Pietro’s makeup.

Fandral wants him to tell Rumlow he overheard plans about moving warriors across the bridge and demanding more scientists. Fandral wants Steve to find Rumlow down in the administrative levels of the keep where Steve’s never been before and where Rumlow will be able to corner him easier than ever. Fandral’s as good as his word and gets Steve access to most of the keep except for the lowest floors where he could actually get out into the city, because Fandral knows better than to trust Steve to do anything but what he’s been cornered into.

Rumlow straight up laughs in his face when Steve finally finds him, after days looking for him Steve could have spent with Bucky.

“I don’t give a shit,” Rumlow says when Steve tells him he overheard plans to move against Hydra. He grabs Steve by the arm, but there’s enough Asgardian bureaucrats moving past them in the hall that Steve shakes him off and puts space between them. There’s other humans with collars talking with Hydra embassy staff, but Steve’s recognizable enough with his earrings and his embroidered coat that he should be safe as long as he keeps Rumlow from dragging him somewhere private.

“They said they’re going to inspect the old rocket sites,” Steve says, backing himself into a corner. “They think you’ve got another Winter Soldier program starting.”

Rumlow laughs again, short and sardonic. “Cap,” he says, closing the space between them to straighten Steve’s collar and tuck a strand of hair behind his ear. Steve’s skin crawls. This close, Steve can see the new gray in his hair and stubble. At least Steve’ll out live the bastard one way or another. “I appreciate the thought, but I ain’t gonna trust shit you think you overheard. Now where’s the goddamn ring.”

“I can’t get it,” Steve says, trying to push himself sideways along the wall. He glances past Rumlow’s annoyed look, checking for a way out. Thor would hear about it if Steve made a fuss, and Steve hates having to weigh how afraid he is of Thor against how afraid he is of Rumlow. “He never takes it off.”
“Then make him take it off,” Rumlow says slowly, like Steve’s a stupid child. “Beg him to finger your pussy, or do I need to give you the birds and the bees talk?”

“I can’t get it,” Steve says again.

Rumlow grabs him by the chin, hard like Thor does. “Get it, or I’m going to visit your girl Carter,” he says, low and mean, and then he’s walking away while Steve’s still catching his breath.

Fandral says they’ll just have to try again.

“We’ve got her,” Fandral says, triumphant when Thor, Pietro and Steve settle in Loki’s suite a few days later, Bucky glowering at the way Thor tips Steve’s head against his knee like always.

Better than Thor ignoring him in favor of Pietro, though, if Steve doesn’t want to end up getting fucked by Rumlow on Fandral’s say-so forever because Thor’s bored of him. Steve tries not to think of what Bucky would say about selling his dignity so cheap. The room’s too hot, the fire built up so high Steve can’t tell if the blush creeping up his collar is from Bucky watching him get petted or from the heat of the room.

“The assassin?” Thor says, carding fingers through Steve’s hair.

Fandral shakes his head. “Hydra’s shield. She’s agreed to come to Asgard,” he says, and gives Steve a triumphant look like Steve’s got anything to do with it. Maybe this puts them one step closer to getting Peggy safe.

“Good,” Thor says. “Have done with the thorn once and for all.”

Fandral shakes his head. “She’s more valuable if we can suborn her. We know she already works against Schmidt.”

“She didn’t play ball with Pierce, she won’t play ball with you,” Bucky says from his place behind Loki. He stands more or less at rest, arms crossed over his broad chest and head tilted so he can frown at Fandral sideways without taking his eyes off Thor’s hand in Steve’s hair.

Fandral waves that away. “We have something we know she wants. She will play ball, as it were.”

“And if she doesn’t, she’ll be done away with then,” Loki says. Casual, like they aren’t talking about having someone murdered in cold blood. Even if she’s Hydra, Steve has a hard time biting his tongue.

“Didn’t stick the first time I tried to kill her,” Bucky says, in the same casual tone, maybe a little annoyed. Steve knows he shouldn’t be shocked but he is; he knew Hydra wouldn’t have created a monster for anything else. But it’s different hearing Bucky say that he did it, not Hydra’s monster. “And she’ll be expecting you to, she’ll bring all her widows with her.”

“The better to be done with all of them at once,” Thor snaps, his hand tightening in Steve’s hair until he notices Steve’s wince and pets his hair in apology. Bucky gives him a dark look that Thor ignores.

“Or rewrite them and use them ourselves,” Loki says.

“Because that’s going so well already,” Bucky says sourly, and Steve can’t tell if he means himself or Dottie or what they’re even talking about. Thor gives Loki a pointed look that Loki just waves away.
Pietro watches it all like a baseball game, glancing between the four of them and Steve like Steve’s supposed to know what’s going on. All Steve knows is that Thor’s in a mood the rest of the afternoon, annoyed because they have to delay going back to the winter keep.

Steve almost wishes they would, if it keeps him from being decorated and put on display again. *Midwinter*, Thor says about a week later, like that means anything when the small army of valets, dressers, and stylists pile into the suite again.

Instead of Dottie there’s a dour Asgardian man who doesn’t say anything to Steve or Pietro except to bully them out of the room and yanking the careful braids Steve had put in that morning. Steve gets gold ribbons and little blue beads braided into his hair and Pietro gets the sides of his head shaved down with his curls twisted up so he looks like a rooster, Steve sulking when Thor tells Pietro he looks very fine.

It’s not fair; Steve never wanted to be madeup up like a doll but here he is again, draped in delicate gold chains while Pietro gets heavier cuffs and earrings that just make him look tall and lean, nothing like Steve’s fey delicacy.

Though small mercies, only a bit of blue paint on both their faces this time. Because the room’s too chill, Pietro and Steve shuffled off to sit at Thor’s feet wrapped up together in a heavy fur throw, Steve too chilled to mind Pietro’s elbows or Thor’s hand in his hair. His skin is cold to touch already except where Pietro’s pressed up with an arm over Steve’s shoulders, but maybe he’ll get lucky and Thor will only put him out on display for a bit. Pietro’s not so bad when he’s not preening for Thor, rubbing his hand up and down Steve’s goosebumped arm.

_Midwinter_ is—something else entirely from Midsummer.

For one thing, there’s people fucking in public before food’s even served, the sheltered courtyard warm from the heat of braziers reflected back off stone even though it’s open to the cold sky. Even Pietro looks taken aback, holding tight to Steve’s hand even though Thor’s got them both on a leash as they pick their way past fucking couples and groups to one of the little portico bays hung with tapestries and furs.

Even with the braziers and torches set out it’s too dark to make out much more than that Loki and Bucky aren’t there, which makes Steve feel like he can breathe again, and Pierce, Rumlow, and the dark clot of SS uniforms are there. Rumlow gives Steve a pointed look and then turns his back.

Steve snags a glass of hot, syrupy liquor from one of the servers, sure he’s going to need it before the night’s over. Thor’s got no armor on, just trousers and a plain shirt open down to his navel and marked with blue paint on his face like Steve. Steve finally gets the joke—Thor and some others are marked with the same, but Fandral and others aren’t. Thor had Steve painted up like a warrior for Midsummer and put on display for Pierce and the SS, a snide little snub that they must have understood with all their Ahnenerbe nonsense even if Steve didn’t. Steve can barely bring himself to resent it now, six months later.

Sheltered in the little portico and warmed up by another glass of liquor on an empty stomach, it’s comfortable enough leaning against Thor’s leg watching the crowd. To his other side, Pietro eats like a starving thing, a plate of something warm and spicy smelling he begged off a server. Steve shakes his head when Pietro tries to offer it to him; he’d rather be drunk when Thor and Fandral decide to fuck them, and food will only slow it down.

And it’ll be sooner rather than later, Fandral and Thor kissing above them and ignoring them except
for Thor’s hand in Steve’s hair. It—won’t be so bad, better if Steve finishes another glass of hot liquor before Thor’s attention turns to them. He can feel the warmth of it on his face and chest, following Thor’s fingers trailing down over his neck and shoulders. Between the music growing louder, the low light, and the sound of who knows how many other people fucking around them, it won’t make any difference if Thor and Fandral both fuck him like Thor did at Midsummer.

Steve lets himself sink into the heavy furs covering the stone, trying to enjoy what part of this he can. Thor didn’t hurt him last time, and maybe this time he’ll only fuck Pietro, his new favorite.

Pietro shuffles over once he’s done with his supper, offering Steve something sweet with pastry and nuts. Steve takes it, too sleepy on the liquor to really want it, but he’s warm and comfortable with Pietro snuggled up against his side. It’s sticky and savory, and Pietro tastes the same when Steve leans over to kiss him. It’s not Pietro’s fault, and kissing Pietro is better than kissing no one and being morose and pathetic about Bucky.

Pietro licks the sticky honey from Steve’s fingers, mouth warm and sure as the rest of him, and Steve kisses along the line of his collar bone. It’s not so bad, having someone to kiss lazy and slow, Pietro smiling against Steve’s mouth when he pulls Pietro back up to kiss.

The chill breeze and woodsmoke from the courtyard is just enough to put an edge on it, enough to make Steve bold enough to skim a hand down Pietro’s arm and side. Grabbing someone else’s ass is—almost as good as being manhandled himself, Pietro all bones and muscle as he kneels up and swings a leg over Steve’s lap.

Pietro’s hard and Steve’s getting there, skin hot all over and worse when Pietro leans in to kiss and thumb the dark bruise Thor’s teeth made around Steve’s nipple. Pietro’s got a chain between his piercings same as Steve but no bruises, so Steve tugs it to get even, just one side of mean, to see Pietro arch his back and not look so smug for once.

Steve can feel Thor and Fandral’s attention shift to them at that, still tangled up in each other but clearly watching when Pietro leans back in to bite Steve’s lip and Thor’s hand tightens in Steve’s hair.

That’s—fine. Maybe it will be enough to watch Steve and Pietro pet, and they won’t have to get fucked in public tonight. Pietro’s warm and solid in his lap, enough of a novelty with his ass grinding down on Steve’s cock that he barely minds how bony it is.

Pietro leans back to smile at him beatifically, rolling his hips. “Good?” he says, sotto voce, because he knows they’re being watched too. Steve nods, trying to concentrate on just how good his thighs feel under his hands. At least they’re in it together. Steve tries not to wonder if Pietro would rather be kissing someone else too.

Thor nudges Steve in the thigh before they can do much more but kiss chastely, and the meaning’s clear enough when Steve glances up at him. It really is a show now and they want to be able to see. Thor and Fandral both lean back on the fur-strewn divan and watch Steve and Pietro avidly. They’re both hard; Steve tries not to think about it as he and Pietro rearrange themselves up on their knees, so Thor and Fandral can see when Pietro puts a warm hand in the small of Steve’s back and leans in to stroke his cock.

It’s—not so bad. Pietro’s hands are still warm and sure, his mouth is still soft and lazy even though they’ve got an audience, and Steve grabs at him like no one’s watching. No one besides Thor and Fandral are, anyway, or else it’s too dark for Steve to tell so it doesn’t matter anyway. Pietro’s a tease, kissing and backing away to pet and run fingers down the shivery muscle of Steve’s stomach and thighs. He’s a better showman than Steve, drawing it out and making a show of it.
Steve bites him, sucking dark marks down his neck to make Pietro shudder and Thor laugh, pleased. Thor likes him pliant and needy, but he also likes Steve bold and a little willful, so maybe Thor isn’t so bored with him after all. Or at least if Steve can show that Pietro’s more interesting with him than without him.

Pietro arches his back into it when Steve kisses all the little marks he left, and it’s then that Steve catches sight of Loki over his shoulder, his stomach dropping, because right behind him is Bucky.

Loki’s as dressed as everyone around him is undressed, though his coat collar’s undone enough to show the white shirt beneath. He’s—drunk, by the look of him, loose and easy in the big throne that had been empty before with a cup in his hand and Bucky glowering like his dark shadow.

Bucky’s—made up. Eyes lined and his hair braided through with silver ribbons and beads before it was tied up in a bun, even with delicate earrings he looks harder, dangerous. Nothing like Steve and Pietro.

Steve’s got nothing to be proud of himself left, his cock throbbing under Pietro’s hands at the sight of Bucky’s bare chest, put out for display in just collar, dark trousers, boots, and a harness of black leather for a set of knives despite the cold. Even with the silver collar at his throat, Bucky looks more like the feral thing the SS dragged in than he has since the mask came off, all muscle and metal and scarring. Steve hasn’t seen him with his shirt off since he was the monster, and it’s still hard to reconcile the monster with Bucky, even with the metal arm and mass of scarring right there.

He pointedly doesn’t look at Steve, frowning as he scans the crowd over Loki’s shoulder.

Thor tugs his hair, putting a hand on Steve’s face to pull him back from his distraction. He pushes fingers into Steve’s mouth, calluses warm and rough as Steve sucks around his fingers. Steve shudders at the possibility that Bucky’s watching, that he glanced over and looked away, that Bucky might watch Thor lift Steve into his lap and fuck him like Midsummer, and Steve’s drunk enough that the thought is terrifying and tangled up with Pietro’s warm mouth on his neck and his steady hands on Steve’s cock and thigh.

The dark isn’t enough to hide in anymore, Steve feeling like he’s going to burst into flames as Pietro lazily kisses along his chest. Thor pets his hair, tipping Steve so he’s leaning hard against Thor’s thigh and too distracted to pay much attention to Pietro’s hands until he’s pulling hard on the chain between Steve’s nipples, paying him back for earlier. Pietro gives him a wicked smile before leaning back in to bite Steve’s ear, rolling his hips against Steve’s thigh so Steve can feel just how hard he is.

Thor and Fandral say something to each other over their heads, quiet and low, but Steve’s ears ring too loud to catch it, trying to all but hide behind Pietro. He can feel Bucky’s eyes on him, but every time he dares risk a glance at him Bucky’s pointedly looking anywhere but at Steve. Between Thor’s hand in his hair, Pietro’s mouth on him, and Bucky’s disapproval, Steve feels trapped and so close he can barely breathe. It’s not as though Bucky didn’t know, but it’s a different thing entirely to have him see it, the weight of his disgust like a physical thing on Steve’s shoulders.

Steve turns his face into Thor’s thigh, getting a pleased noise from him or Fandral, Steve can’t tell which anymore. Pietro’s not broad enough to mistake for Bucky even if he smiles like Bucky would, and Steve feels like he’s going to shiver out of his skin every time Pietro kisses him.

Bucky’s—not there, when Steve manages to lift his head enough to risk a glance at him again, needing and hating himself for needing to know if Bucky’s watching him. Loki’s still there, draped in his gaudy throne talking to someone, so Bucky can’t have gone far. Steve casts around for him, looking for the broad shape of him in the crowd.
The only thing worse than the thought that Bucky might have left so he didn’t have to see Steve like this is the thought that he might have found a pretty girl to make time with, that he might have something like a normal life here while Steve frets about how Thor and Fandral will want to fuck him. Steve hates himself for being jealous in more ways than one, Pietro leaning back just far enough to give him a questioning look when he notices Steve’s attention wandering.

“Whichever one of you comes first gets the cage for a week,” Thor says, voice low and rough as he tugs Steve’s hair to bring his attention back. Fandral laughs softly, leaning into him. They’re both drunk, cups in hand and still watching lazily, pink-cheeked and on their way to undressed themselves.

Steve shakes himself out of his morose jealousy, moving first because he knows what that means and Pietro doesn’t, glancing at Thor with a confused look. Better to have it done before Bucky can see it happen; it’s about the best Steve can hope for tonight.

Steve pushes Pietro back to sit between Thor’s spread legs, Fandral and Thor laughing as Pietro goes with a noise of protest that turns into a moan when Steve undoes the catch of the gilded band holding the flimsy cloth in place and shoves it aside to wrap a hand around Pietro’s cock. It’s not fair and Steve’s not proud of himself, but it won’t hurt Pietro any. Maybe it will even make Thor like Pietro more, and Steve’ll regret this later.

Steve puts that out of his mind and focuses on anything but the possibility that Bucky might be watching, licking his lips and leaning in to suck Pietro’s cock, looking up to make sure Thor and Fandral are watching. If not for the possibility that Bucky might reappear at any moment, that he might see Steve like this, it wouldn’t be so bad—in the suite, in private, it might be good even with Thor and Fandral watching.

Thor tips Pietro’s head back to expose his throat, trailing fingers down his neck and chest as Steve nips little bites to the inside of Pietro’s warm thighs like Thor does him. Pietro’s easier to swallow, not so big as Thor or Fandral, and he only puts long fingers in Steve’s hair and twists, doesn’t try to pull or shove. He makes breathy little noises where he’s tipped back against Thor’s lap, breath catching when Fandral brushes a hand over his hard nipples.

Steve tries to concentrate on finishing him quickly, ignoring the vicious little thrill that goes down his spine from being able to push Pietro around so easily and put him where he wants. Pietro is pretty, and lean and muscled in the way Bucky used to be, before all this. Steve runs a hand up Pietro’s thigh and over his flat stomach, thinking about all the summer evenings he watched Bucky at the boxing gym, lithe as a dancer.

Bucky now is as dangerous as he was beautiful then, and that’s all Steve can think about as Pietro comes in his mouth, hot and bitter as he shudders against Thor’s thigh and Steve swallows around him. Thor and Fandral tease him through it, Pietro clumsily sucking Thor’s fingers as Steve grazes teeth up the inside of his thigh and leans back to wipe his mouth. It’s not fair, but Pietro doesn’t seem to mind it, giving Steve a sleepy-drunk smile even though he hasn’t had anything, looking like he’s enjoying being petted as much as Steve doesn’t.

“A good show,” Thor laughs, hauling Steve up to the divan to sit between him and Fandral while Pietro puts himself back together and cuddles sleepily against Thor’s leg. Steve doesn’t even mind, cock gone soft between the anxiety of wondering if Bucky’s watching and pushing down the resentment of being made to perform. “You will have your reward later,” Thor says, as though any of his rewards have ever really been for Steve.

If they mean to fuck him, they don’t mean to do it right away, Thor snapping his fingers for more food and beer and tucking Steve against his side. Fandral puts an arm over Steve’s shoulders as they
eat, Pietro still sleepy-drunk as Thor feeds him little pieces of candied fruit. Steve finally makes himself eat, stomach twisted up with anxiety as Fandral idly thumbs one of his nipple piercings back and forth and Steve keeps scanning the crowd for Bucky.

It’s—nearly nice. If he pretends not to care what Bucky will think when he sees Steve cuddled between Fandral and Thor, petted and coddled, with Pietro’s hand wrapped around Steve’s ankle and idly playing with the delicate little chain there, if he pretends to forget that Fandral and Thor both mean to use him one way or another, if he pretends that he’d never want any of this in another life—then it’s nearly nice.

Thor’s solid weight, radiating heat through his thin shirt, the way he pulls Steve closer and smiles against his hair when Steve finishes eating and leans his head against Thor’s side. Fandral’s warm hands and easy laugh as he and Thor talk over Steve’s head, fingers idly tracing patterns over Steve’s bare chest, Pietro’s soft lips where he shifts and brushes a kiss against Steve’s knee to get his attention.

Pietro flicks his eyes out over the crowd when he’s got Steve’s attention, Steve following his look to find Bucky sourly leading Rumlow, Pierce, and a few SS uniforms through the crowd of half-naked bodies to present to Loki. Rumlow and Pierce don’t look overly pleased about it either, but Steve has to keep himself from sitting to attention at the look on Bucky’s face, pinched and just-controlled anger.

Rumlow—couldn’t have done to Bucky any of the things he’d done to Steve. Couldn’t have done. Bucky isn’t—wrong, or weak, the way Steve is wrong and weak. He’d have let them kill him first. The thought’s impossible; Bucky would never have let himself be used like that.

At this distance, Steve can’t tell if Loki puts a hand on Bucky when he comes close enough, but it looks like he puts fingers on Bucky’s wrist as he moves to his place behind Loki’s throne and mutters something. Whatever it is, it’s brief, and it doesn’t change the annoyed look on Loki’s face as he turns his attention to Pierce.

Thor’s watching as well, he and Fandral going quiet as they watch the interaction. Steve can’t make out anything beyond Bucky, Loki, and Pierce’s unhappy body language, a shiver going through him when Bucky finally does glance over at him with a pinched look. Steve can feel Bucky looking him over, lingering on Fandral’s hand tracing Steve’s nipple and Thor’s hand on his thigh. Steve turns his face down to avoid Bucky’s look, concentrating on the glass of liquor in his hand. If he drinks much more he’ll regret it in the morning, but it might be better than this.

Thor feeds him a piece of sticky candied fruit and Steve lets him; Bucky’s already seen him humiliated like that. It’s too sweet on Steve’s full stomach and Thor’s fingers taste of ginger when Steve licks them clean, making him shiver. Steve turns his face away when Thor tries to feed him another little pastry, but Thor tugs his hair in warning and Steve eats it, chewing slowly where he’s cuddled against Thor’s side to make it last longer even if he doesn’t want it.

It’s obscene, all of it, and not just the fucking. Seeing Bucky here just emphasizes it; the last time Steve saw Bucky before all this pulp adventure nonsense, they had the last of the Barnes’ jam ration on dry biscuits for dessert. There’s more food laid out than Steve’s ever seen in his whole life, whole roasting pigs and sides of beef on the bonfires in the center of the courtyard and fancy roast hares and birds being passed around on platters with feathers and fruit. Avoiding looking at Bucky means all he’s got to look at is the delicate glass of liquor in his hands or the towers of little pastries piled high and crowned with spun sugar, delicate and unreal in the firelight. Steve wonders if he’ll ever see a soda fountain again.

Pietro pinches him, nails digging into the soft skin behind his knee, and Steve just barely keeps from
kicking him in the face. Pietro rolls his eyes, not looking so sleepy-drunk anymore as he nods at Bucky.

Bucky jerks his chin over to a dark corner, where the servers flow in and out with platters, just like they did at the dance hall when Bucky thought he found a girl who’d dance with Steve and he wanted Steve to quit nursing his soda. Steve shakes his head as much as he dares without risking Thor’s attention; it’s bad enough already and there’s nothing Bucky has to say to him that can’t wait.

Bucky frowns to fit a thundercloud and nods at the corner again. Standing behind Loki, he’s not going to get caught by him, but if Thor or Fandral follow where Steve’s looking, they’ll certainly get caught. Steve shakes his head again and keeps his eyes down. It’s not a dance hall.

Pietro rises up on his knees, eyes on Thor, but his aim is precise and true when he knocks the little glass of syrupy liquor out of Steve’s hand and spills it all over him. “Oh dear,” Pietro says, all exaggerated apology as Thor and Fandral push themselves away from Steve.

“Go wash,” Thor says, drunk enough to laugh. He pushes Steve up with a pat on the ass, Pietro following after to the edge of portico with a crumpled piece of cloth acting like he’s trying to help.

“Your boyfriend is very pretty,” Pietro says sotto voce as he pretends to help Steve dry off, Steve watching Bucky excuse himself over Pietro’s shoulder.

“He’s not my boyfriend,” Steve snaps, snatching the sticky cloth out of Pietro’s hands.

Pietro rolls his eyes. “Then perhaps I should go meet him instead, if you do not want to fuck him.”

“Don’t joke about that,” Steve says, and brushes past Pietro with what dignity he’s got left.

The crowd is louder and more raucous as Steve picks his way through it than it looked from the dark safety of the portico. When he looks back, Thor’s not paying any attention to him, stroking Pietro’s hair where he’s settled back at Thor’s feet, and Pietro gives him a significant look as Bucky disappears in the dark.

Heart racing despite the cold, Steve makes his way back to the dark bay where servers stage platters of food and dirty dishes to be taken back to the kitchens, begging a clean cloth and water off one of the women to clean himself up with. The flimsy black cloth of his little loincloth is a loss but it’s at least not wet, Steve shivering as he tries wipes the stickiness away. Pietro had too good of aim, just spilling it on Steve’s belly and chest, not on any of the jewelry that would stay sticky and awful all night. But that doesn’t change the fact that away from the braziers and cozy alcove of the portico the night is frigid cold, the piercings in Steve’s nipples gone freezing and the rest of the jewelry chilled against his skin.

He dances from foot to foot once he’s as clean and dry as he’s going to get, feet chilled in his ridiculous little sandals trying to decide whether he’s enough of a coward to run back to Thor.

Bucky’s nowhere in sight anyway, as much as Steve casts around for him. Maybe he’s further in the kitchens; maybe he gave up on Steve when he took too long. Maybe Loki called him back and Steve got spilled on for no good goddamn reason. Steve rubs his hands up and down his goosebumped arms and starts to pick his way back to the lit courtyard, doing his best to stay out from underfoot of the servers who give him sideways looks.

Bucky, goddamn him, melts out of the dark like a shadow when Steve’s just about made it, catching Steve by the elbow to steer him back into the dark. “Christ, Steve, are you okay?” Bucky hisses, pulling Steve into a private little corner behind a curtain, near full dark except for the slice of firelight
between the curtain and the wall. Bucky steps into his space to run hands down Steve’s bare, chilled shoulders.

Steve flinches back from his touch, too much like what Steve’s guiltily fantasized about every time Thor fucks him, Bucky bare-chested and beautiful even with the metal arm and all the scarring. The leather straps of the harness across his chest do nothing to cool Steve’s fevered imagination. “I’m fine,” Steve lies. He puts space between himself and Bucky, shoulders tilted away like it does anything to hide him, arms crossed over his chest as if that will hide the dark bruise around his nipple Bucky’s already seen. All it does is give Bucky a better view of the bite marks across the back of his shoulders from the last time Thor fucked him, jewelry sparkling over them in the firelight.

“They do this to you?” Bucky says, voice rising as he reaches out to touch the dark bruises. “They make you—do that, with your—boyfriend?”

Steve pulls away and backs himself against the icy cold wall, face hot now that Bucky’s really seen him as he is. It’s stupid, as stupid as getting backed against a wall in any fight, because now Bucky can see the dark bite marks up the inside of Steve’s thighs. He can see Bucky’s eyes jump to them and back to his face, determined not to look at the evidence of the dirty thing Steve is.

“I said I’m fine,” Steve snaps, on the edge of angry drunk or worse, he can’t tell. “Pietro’s not my boyfriend.” His chest hurts and his eyes burn, like he’s walked into a fight he can’t win. He knew Bucky would see him for what he is sooner or later; he just selfishly hoped it would be later. And he’s coward enough that he actually glances past Bucky to see if he can run, as if he’s safer with Thor than he is with Bucky.

“You’re not fine,” Bucky says, “because I know you and you’d never let anybody touch you like—like—”

“Like what?” Steve spits, pushing himself as far from Bucky as he can get in the little corner. “Like a whore?”

“Like you’re a thing,” Bucky says, sounding like he’s been punched in the gut. “Like you’re his property.” He takes a step towards Steve but doesn’t raise a hand to touch him again.

Steve’s face twists; he doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. His eyes and throat feel hot and tight because it’s not fair, that Bucky’s seen him all but naked like this and not actually seen him yet. Steve balls his fists, the ugly thought coiling in the back of his head that he should do the worst and finally expose what he really is if Bucky hasn’t seen it yet.

So he does it. Steve grabs Bucky by the black strap of the harness and yanks him forward, standing on tiptoes to kiss him. It isn’t nice and it isn’t pleasant but it’s not supposed to be, all of Steve's stupid, hateful want focused down into the handful of seconds before Bucky shoves him away. Bucky's mouth is just as warm and soft as Steve wanted it to be, too shocked to react yet.

Bucky's hands on his shoulders nearly make him panic even though he was expecting it, and Steve tells himself to not be a coward when Bucky should have known what was wrong with him all along. The metal is shockingly cool as his other hand is warm on Steve’s bare shoulders as Bucky pushes away from him.

Steve’s stomach drops, suddenly regretting his stupid, useless anger because now he’s ruined things between them for good. He meant to, but he didn’t want to.

Steve shifts along the cold wall, wanting to run, to hide himself in the relative surety of knowing exactly what Thor thinks of him, but Bucky grabs him. His hands are hard, he’s so much taller than
he used to be and Steve’s just as fragile as he ever was as Bucky bodily picks him up, one hand on his ass and one hand on his chin to tip Steve’s face up.

To kiss. This time Steve’s the shocked one, reflexively putting his legs around Bucky’s waist before he thinks better of it because he can’t think past the shock of Bucky holding him up against the icy wall and kissing like a drowning man, like he’s been thinking about it nearly as long as Steve has. There’s no room to get away and Steve doesn’t want to now, arms thrown over Bucky’s shoulders to hold on for dear life.

Bucky kisses like he’ll die without it and Steve doesn’t know what to do but let himself be kissed. Bucky’s shaved but it’s late enough in the day his stubble’s sharp, making Steve’s breath come fast at the wicked, shameful thought of what it would feel like between his thighs.

Steve’s skin burns where Bucky touches him, the metal of his hand warm on Steve’s ass where he holds Steve up and his other hand hot on Steve’s face. The straps and buckles of the harness dig in to Steve’s chest but it’s hard to care, Bucky hot as a furnace where he presses Steve up against the cold wall. Hands over Bucky’s shoulders, Steve hangs on for dear life but he can feel the cool metal of Bucky’s piercings pressed to his chest, trying not to think about what they’d feel like to put his mouth on.

Steve pulls back first, out of breath and dazed, blinking at Bucky like this isn’t real because it can’t be. “This isn’t—you’re not—”

“Fuck, Steve,” Bucky laughs. “I am now. You want to kiss or you want to argue about it?” He leans in to kiss Steve’s neck just above his collar.

“But you’re not—”

“Christ,” Bucky murmurs against his throat. “You haven’t changed at all.” And then he shuts up Steve’s protest with another kiss. Not so desperate now, just slow like they have all the time in the world. Like Steve wanted his first kiss to be, with Peggy or Bucky, if it wasn’t with—if everything else hadn’t happened.

“Steven,” Pietro says behind them, and Steve’s stomach drops before he even pulls away to look at him. Bucky puts him down even as he stiffens protectively, hand still on Steve’s shoulder. Pietro looks pale, worried, and Steve’s stomach twists up in knots. “You must come, he is very displeased.”

“If he hurts you—” Bucky starts.

“I’ll be fine,” Steve says as Pietro takes his hand and starts to pull him out of the little alcove, but Bucky just frowns and starts to say something. “I’ll be fine,” Steve snaps again, and then they’re hurrying back to Thor.

“You can’t say anything,” Steve says to Pietro as they wind their way through the loud, drunk crowd still holding hands.

Pietro looks back at him, all his smirking bravado gone. “No,” he says. “I would not.”

Why is clear as soon as Steve sees Thor; his face is dark, worse once he catches sight of Steve and it’s only then that Steve thinks to worry about whether he’s got beard burn all over his face. Fandral watches like the whole thing is slightly distasteful, but he doesn’t look about to say anything about it.

“You dawdled,” Thor says, pulling Steve close with two fingers hooked in his collar once they’re in arms reach.
“I got cornered,” Steve gasps, the first thing he thinks of. He tries not to fight, tries to just let Thor haul him close, but he can feel Bucky’s disapproving look on his back.

Thor releases him, letting Steve collapse at his feet. On his knees, looking up at Thor, his stomach twists when Thor puts big hands on his face to make him look up. “Loki’s creature?” Thor says, face still dark.

Steve gulps a breath and shakes his head as much as he can. He risks a glance over his shoulder at Bucky, who’s definitely watching from his spot behind Loki. No way Thor wouldn’t have seen him reappear at the same time as Steve, and worse and worse, Loki follows Bucky’s look to watch the whole thing. “He got me out of it,” Steve lies. “One of Rumlow’s men cornered me.”

Thor glances at Pietro, still looking pale and worried, but he nods without hesitation. Steve hates himself for putting Pietro in this position, because Pietro doesn’t even know yet what Thor will do to him for lying. Thor looks between the two of them and Bucky, doubtful.

But he finally releases Steve, pulling Steve back up to sit between him and Fandral. Steve’s shaky on the adrenaline and embarrassment of Bucky seeing him like this, but it’s better than Bucky seeing Thor slap him. Especially now.

Thor pets his chilled shoulders and Steve just hopes Thor can’t feel any of the warm marks still lingering on his skin.

Chapter End Notes

Public sex, voyuerism, alcohol use.

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omg! Only took another 50k to get Bucky and Steve to kiss. I promise it won't take that long to get them to bang.
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

OMG it's been a while! I don't plan on taking so long to do the next chapter, but I wanted to get this one out before I see Ragnarok this weekend (!!) so it's a bit shorter than I would like. <3 <3 <3

Fandral puts an arm around Steve’s shoulders again as Thor settles Steve back in the warm, protected space between the two of them on the divan, Pietro leaning against Thor’s thigh like none of it happened. Steve regrets his place almost immediately when Fandral leans down, lips brushing the curve of Steve’s ear, too close and intimate.

“You should be very careful,” Fandral says, barely more than a breath against Steve’s ear so no one else can hear.

Steve’s belly goes cold; it’s not exactly a threat, but it’s not clear what he means by it except that he knows Steve’s excuse is bullshit. Fandral sits back, arm still over Steve’s bare shoulders and fingers tracing through the thin chains draped around him like nothing happened. Trapped between them, Thor’s distracted watching the center of the courtyard clearing out, and Fandral just gives Steve a look with raised eyebrows when Steve glances at him. Pietro’s studiously not paying attention with his head tipped against Thor’s knee in that way that means he knows something was said even if he doesn’t know what.

Steve’s not cut out for this; the sneaking around, the lying, any of it. As though Fandral cares what Thor will do to Steve when he finds out about Bucky, or Rumlow. Steve doesn’t even know which is worse.

In the cleared center of the courtyard, two men face off and clasp hands. Wrestling, like Thor and the others did in the summer, and Steve can’t be bothered to keep track of which is which in the firelight or who Thor and Fandral place bets on, head spinning as he steals the little glass of hot liquor out of Pietro’s hand.

Steve can’t make himself look at Bucky, who he knows is watching him down Pietro’s glass of liquor and then another. It’s safer being ignored as Thor and Fandral bicker over their bets, the wrestlers’ technique, the gossip about who won last year, but it would be safer yet if Steve was drunk enough to not care and not remember any of this in the morning.

He’s most of the way to it when he finally has to look at Bucky. Thor makes a disgusted noise and a dismayed laugh ripples through the crowd, and when Steve looks up, Bucky’s setting down the last of the knives from his leather harness at Loki’s feet and standing to face the winner of the last match.

Bucky in the ring used to preen, and there's none of that now. Hydra's monster hangs over the Bucky Steve remembers like a heavy shadow, stalking serenely into the center of the courtyard like death itself. The previous winner is a big Asgardian with blond braids, easily a head taller than Thor and even more broad, and next to him Bucky looks like a banty rooster stalking a mastiff.

They clasp hands in the center of the cleared courtyard, the crowd laughing at the sight. The big Asgardian tries to yank Bucky off his feet like Thor did Steve, and Bucky doesn’t move an inch.
Even with his flesh right hand clasped in the Asgardian’s and not the metal one, Bucky doesn’t move an inch. Doesn’t even look like he’s trying.

Then there’s a little flicker of the old Bucky: he glances around the courtyard to make sure everyone’s watching. He catches Steve’s eye with just enough of a quirk to his eyebrow that it could be a smile, then he glances at Loki to get a curt nod, and the big Asgardian is yanked off his feet and on his back in one motion.

The courtyard goes dead quiet. Bucky, in the middle of it all, is stone still, eyes scanning over the crowd like the predatory thing he used to be. Then he shakes hair out of his eyes like he used to do boxing, and reaches down to give the Asgardian a hand up with an open smile.

The Asgardian’s laughing when he gets to his feet, the crowd letting go of a breath to laugh nervously. There’s a press of Asgardians staggering to their feet for a place in line to fight Loki’s monster then, Bucky rolling his shoulders to square off against them.

Loki’s practically radiant where he’s still draped on the low throne, only taking his eyes off Bucky long enough to give Thor a smug, nasty smile. Bucky goes through every challenger like he did the guards in the snowy courtyard when he was still the monster, heavy and flat footed as he used to be light and graceful as a boxer.

But he still knows how to work a crowd, just enough cocky looks around the courtyard and tilted smiles to get the crowd on his side even as he rolls one big Asgardian after another over his shoulder. He hesitates, once, when a woman a head taller than him steps up, and Steve’s cheeks pink at the frank way she looks Bucky up and down. But it’s as fair a fight as any other, and she claps Bucky on the shoulder with a smile when she picks herself up again.

Bucky’s beautiful in the ring as he ever was. Steve’s face heats between the liquor, and the sight of Bucky’s skin in firelight, and the half remembered feel of Bucky’s mouth on his. It’s near enough to forget Fandral and Thor bracketing him in, Fandral combing fingers through Pietro’s hair.

The line of challengers finally dwindles, Bucky left standing in the middle of the courtyard with just the barest sheen of sweat. Loki gives him a pleased, proprietary look that Steve doesn’t know how to interpret, unfolding himself to step down the dais. He gives Bucky a sideways look, half fond and half appraising.

“Will no one else challenge the champion of the winter court?” Loki calls to the crowd finally, sounding unbearably pleased with himself. He turns in the quiet, arms spread and cup still in hand. It might as well be his victory and not Bucky’s.

Thor stands, and the look on Loki’s face goes sour. Behind him, Bucky’s tilted half-smile goes flat, nothing but the feral, hunting thing left.

As drunk as Thor was earlier, he’s steady on his feet now, Steve not daring to move as Thor strips out of his shirt to step into the cleared center of the courtyard. Thor and Loki size each other up like alleycats, and for a minute Steve hangs onto the hope that they might just fight each other, and not put Bucky between them.

But then Loki turns on his heel with a disgusted noise, stalking back to his throne.

Bucky’s almost a full head shorter than Thor, but he stands his ground as Thor steps into his space and sizes him up. It’s as close together as Steve’s ever seen them, and his ears ring with the thought of how fragile he would be trapped between them. Bucky keeps his chin up, daring to challenge Thor in a way Steve never would.
Thor takes the challenge and sweeps Bucky off his feet, not bothering with the formalized clasp of hands. Bucky tucks into it and rolls, coming up with his center low and ready to block Thor’s crushing swing. On a mortal man it would break bones, but they circle around each other steadily, Bucky blocking Thor’s swings almost too fast for Steve to follow.

Thor pulls no punches, trying to trap Bucky into a misstep or provoke him into overreaching. It’s more boxing than wrestling because neither of them can get a hold on the other, Bucky on the defensive as he continues to block.

It’s unnatural and strange, and Steve only realizes what Bucky’s going to do a half second before he does it, barely keeping himself on the divan with how badly he wants to stop it all.

Because Bucky’s not on the defensive, he’s getting Thor’s rhythm, and neither Thor nor Steve nor anyone else sees it coming when Bucky finally staggers him back with a blow to the jaw. Even from across the courtyard there’s the wet crunching sound of Thor’s nose breaking on the metal of Bucky’s fist, a horrible crunching sound that makes Steve’s stomach twist on—dread, and sick worry for Bucky, and a horrible petty glee he doesn’t want to look at too closely.

Bucky’s face finally betrays something other than dangerous blankness as he starts to push Thor back, Thor just barely blocking his blows after the first two and just barely keeping his feet under him. It’s not a wrestling match, it’s vicious bare knuckle boxing, and Bucky hasn’t lost a fair fight since 1940.

Then Thor catches Bucky’s metal hand in his, the air in the courtyard suddenly stinking of ozone as Bucky tries to jerk back. But neither he nor Thor can break the hold, both of them too strong for the other, except that the plates of Bucky’s metal arm start to crackle with arcs of electricity, blue in the warm light of the braziers. Thor’s face twists, bloody from his split eyebrow and broken nose, forcing Bucky to his knees.

The metal arm hangs heavily at Bucky’s side once Thor lets go, Bucky’s face twisted in anger and the courtyard dead silent around them. Fandral lays a light hand on Steve’s shoulder where he hadn’t even realized he’d nearly leaned off the divan, pulling Steve back to sit as Thor catches his breath. Because it’s dangerous for Thor to see Steve so invested; it’s Steve’s fault this is happening in the first place.

Bucky’s about to get his feet under him when Thor backhands him across the face, the same as he does Steve. Then again, hard enough to break Bucky’s lip and spatter blood across stone.

“Enough,” Loki calls from the dais.

Thor glares at him, but doesn’t raise his hand again. Loki stalks down from the dais, looking over dressed in his long coat as he comes to stand over Bucky where he still kneels at Thor’s feet.

“You cheated,” Loki says to Thor. Quiet, but enough to carry in the silent cold.

“I won,” Thor says, still breathing heavily. Bucky’s dead still between them, metal arm hanging dead at his side crackling with electricity. Thor spits blood in his direction.

“You won,” Loki says sourly. “As always. Come,” he snaps at Bucky, turning on his heel without so much as a look at Bucky, who’s still staring murder at Thor.

Fandral snaps his fingers at Pietro, who’s been nearly frozen by the whole thing as much as Steve. “Come here,” Fandral snaps at him, putting an arm around Steve to pull him close as he pulls Pietro up on the divan nearly in his lap.
To distract Thor when his attention finally turns away from Bucky, Steve realizes half a beat too slow. He can’t think, still transfixed with dread watching Thor measure Bucky for a coffin.

“I said heel,” Loki snaps from dias, and at that Bucky finally staggers to his feet. Standing, they look at each other eye to eye, Bucky’s left arms still dead at his side.

Bucky breaks first, looking like it kills him when Loki snaps fingers at him. Thor takes the victory, the whole courtyard shivering back into life as he turns away to scoop up his discarded shirt and wipe the blood from his face and chest. He stalks back towards them, dark and inevitable as a summer storm, and Steve shrinks against Fandral’s side despite himself.

“Where is my prize?” Thor says, scooping Steve up from the divan. He smells like blood, swinging Steve into his lap, sprawling out on the divan next to where Fandral’s got Pietro half draped in his lap.

“Could we—go to bed?” Steve makes himself say, running fingertips down Thor’s bare chest, trying to play coy, trying desperately to think of some way out of the inevitable. He feels hot and lightheaded from the liquor and the adrenaline and Bucky’s hands on him, cheeks pink and stomach twisted up at the horrible thought of Bucky watching Thor fuck him now, after—everything.

“You are so tired already?” Thor says, grabbing Steve’s ass with a smile. He’s decided to be affable, lazy and rough on his win. Fandral pets Pietro idly, pretending to only have half an ear on their conversation as he runs fingers down Pietro’s thigh.

“I meant,” Steve says, trying not to feel Bucky watching him. “I didn’t mean to sleep.”

Thor laughs. “If you are so eager, I will fuck you right here,” he says, making Steve’s belly twist. He grabs Steve’s ass in both hands and—he’s half-hard, rolling Steve’s ass against his cock like he really does mean to fuck Steve then and there.

“It’s cold,” Steve protests. He doesn’t pull away, he doesn’t look up from where his hand is curled on Thor’s bare chest, he just so badly wants a way out of this.

“You try my patience,” Thor says, all the laugh gone out of his voice.

“You try my patience,” Thor says, all the laugh gone out of his voice.

“Please,” Steve says. He should have known better; he knows that before he even finishes the word. Thor pops him across the mouth. It’s barely anything, but it’s enough to make Fandral and Pietro stare and snap Steve’s head to the side. There’s a commotion in the crowd but Steve doesn’t dare turn to see what it is. The slap doesn’t even hurt, but Thor’s never hit him in front of anyone else before.

“I’m sorry,” Steve says, folding himself against Thor’s chest before Fandral can say anything. Head tucked under Thor’s chin and ear pressed to his chest, all Steve can hear is the wild racing of his own heart.

“You are very spoiled,” Thor says. But the annoyance is gone from his voice, and he pets the knobs of Steve’s spine.

Out of the corner of Steve’s eye, the commotion resolves: Bucky, on his knees practically vibrating and face twisted. Loki’s hand on his face, keeping him where he is. Steve can’t—won’t—let himself think about it, because there’s nothing to be done about it. He needs Thor’s good mood more than he needs Bucky to not see him humiliate himself like this.

“Do you want them both to catch their death of cold,” Fandral snaps, and Steve goes rigid against
Thor’s chest.

“You did not seem to mind a moment ago,” Thor says peevishly. Steve and Pietro exchange looks, both of them knowing better than to draw away even as Fandral’s hand tightens on Pietro’s hip.

“A moment ago I had other concerns,” Fandral says, grabbing Pietro’s ass, and the mood breaks when Thor laughs at that.

“Very well,” Thor says, and hauls Steve up, standing with Steve over his shoulder trying not to drunkenly thrash. “Come, I wish to enjoy my prize without your nagging.” Fandral follows, Pietro’s hand in his, and if it’s mortifying knowing Bucky’s watching him being carried off with Thor’s hand on his ass, at least it’s a relief Thor won’t fuck him right there with Bucky watching.

Thor’s good mood carries them all the way back to the suite, Fandral and Pietro drunker than Steve thought they were, stumbling into each other in the dark corridors and grab-assing all the way. Steve’s drunk enough to be cranky about it, annoyed and more annoyed still when they all get back to the suite and Fandral and Pietro pile into Thor’s big bed with them.

Thor strips Steve down to just his jewelry with cold, hard hands, giving him a wicked look as Fandral and Pietro start to kiss on the other side of the bed and Pietro’s obviously getting hard again. Thor nods Steve at the drawer of the wardrobe with the cock cage, and Fandral’s caught on to the game by the time Steve comes back with it.

Pietro looks at the thing, and Steve tries not to wonder if he looked so dismayed the first time. He wants to apologize, and hates himself for being so selfish as he fits it over Pietro’s wilting cock just on Thor’s wave of a hand.

“Now you may have your reward,” Thor says magnanimously, sitting back against the headboard shoulder to shoulder with Fandral. “Fuck him,” he says to Steve.

Steve freezes, just enough hesitation for Thor’s face to go dark. Because it’s not a reward, it’s the night’s entertainment, and Steve is being willful. “I can’t,” Steve says, a weak protest as he tries to keep himself from cringing back against Pietro. “I drank too much.”

Fandral laughs in the awful quiet. “So you are not the only one,” he says, shoving at Thor’s shoulder. It’s enough to shift Thor’s attention off of Steve, like a weight taken off his chest.

Thor shoves Fandral over, the two of them wrestling across the bed as Pietro and Steve scramble out of the way. They’re both laughing breathlessly, drunk and wild, until they end up kissing with Thor on top and his hand fisted in Fandral’s hair.

Pietro looks at Steve sideways.

“Sleep,” Fandral says finally, pushing Thor away.

“As you wish,” Thor sighs, flopping over dramatically. Fandral laughs, drunk or acting like it, holding out a hand to pull Steve and Pietro up the bed between them. Thor kicks out of his trousers as Steve fumbles his jewelry off, something like normal without the threat of fucking, even if Fandral and Pietro are back to kissing as Fandral undresses Pietro. Steve decides he’s too drunk to care, letting Thor tug him against his bare chest still smelling of blood.

Steve’s head pounds and his mouth feels gummy with his hangover, Pietro just coming awake snuggled against his side.
Thor’s cock throbs lazily against Steve’s ass, thickening as Thor’s breathing deepens and he starts to wake up. To Pietro’s other side, Fandral pets Pietro idly, kissing down the line of Pietro’s neck and shoulder to wake him up more. Pietro tips back into it, turning his head back to be kissed.

Thor snorts a laugh when Fandral props himself up on an elbow to kiss Pietro, Thor biting into Steve’s shoulder harder than usual, or maybe it’s just the hangover making all of Steve’s nerves jangle. Steve still remembers too much of last night even with as much as he drank, wishing he could crawl away from the memory of Thor slapping Bucky across the face like he does Steve. Even without looking at him, Steve knows Thor has dark bruises under his eyes by now, and Steve’s pathetic enough to be grateful that Thor doesn’t seem to blame him for it even if he’s rougher than he needs to be pulling Steve’s hair to expose his throat. Thor spits in his hand and slicks his cock, pushing into Steve in one motion.

It’s almost a relief, the safe, nearly boring routine of being fucked when he doesn’t really need to be there for it, even if his head is pounding and he’d rather be sleeping. Thor twists one of Steve’s nipple rings to get a reaction out of him as Fandral starts to fuck Pietro, and Steve closes his eyes for it.

Steve can barely bring himself to care; can barely bring himself to think about Bucky. Even knowing now what Bucky’s mouth feels like on his, what Bucky’s bare chest feels like with Steve’s legs wrapped around his waist—it doesn’t bear thinking about with Thor fucking him and Pietro trying to coax Steve’s soft cock to hardness. It feels like more of a betrayal than ever, because Bucky wouldn’t have kissed him if he’d known Steve only ever thought about it to get him through—this.

It’s over quickly enough, Fandral kissing Pietro through it and petting him as Thor digs fingers into Steve’s bruised-feeling thighs, his whole body aching between the fucking and the hangover. But Thor lets him rest after, letting Steve bury himself in the blankets against the light as soon as Thor finishes in him. It’s something at least, a few more minutes he doesn’t have to think about anything.

“Come,” Fandral says, pulling Pietro out of bed with him. Pietro goes with a sleepy smile, padding on bare feet letting himself be led along by the hand as Fandral goes to draw a bath.

“If only you were so biddable,” Thor says sleepily, rolling to half cover Steve with his weight.

There’s the sound of the tub filling, and soft voices through the closed door. What sounds like fucking once the water finishes. Steve tries not to listen, still curled up in the center of the bed with Thor at his back.

“Are you going to get rid of me?” Steve says finally. Better to know, and maybe beg Thor not to give him to Fandral.

Thor half props himself up to squint at Steve in the morning light. The bruises under his eyes darkened over night, and it’s too much like the last time Bucky punched him in the face. Steve turns his face down so he doesn’t have to see the way Thor looks at him.

“You are jealous,” Thor says, unbelieving, hauling Steve over by the waist to straddle him. “You are jealous of Pietro, and think I would get rid of you and keep him in my bed instead?” Thor laughs, settling Steve to lie across his chest, held tight in his big arms.

Steve shrugs as best he can, sticky warm where his face is pressed to Thor’s bare chest.

Thor kisses the top of his head, careful of his broken nose. “You are my favorite, I do not wish to be rid of you. You are much more interesting than Pietro.” He pinches Steve’s ass to make him jump. “Even if you are more willful. Here,” Thor says, reaching over to pluck a letter from the side table.
“Your Midwinter gift”

Steven G. Rogers, it says in Mrs. Barnes’ neat secretary hand, Steve tumbling off Thor’s chest to sit bolt upright even naked as he is. Care of the Asgardian Embassy. The envelope’s been opened but Steve can hardly bring himself to care; it even smells like home.

Steve opens it greedily, desperate for the first real tie to home after all this time. It’s just one small notepad sheet, almost empty. Paper rationing must still be in effect. It still smells like home, though, like Mrs. Barnes’ kitchen and supper with the Barneses before going dancing and the last slice of normal before everything went spinning out of control.

He opens it and tries not to read it all in one go, barely thinking of Thor reading over his shoulder.

The letter is stiff, formal.

Dear Steven.

Thank you for the money but they’re doing fine.

Please don’t send anything else.

Steve must be doing very well for himself to be so well respected on Asgard. What would his mother and father think, rest their souls.

The Barneses all pray for Bucky, who died a hero’s death.

Steve can’t breathe.

They think Steve works for the Nazis.

It’s all but true, anyway. What would his mother think.

Steve makes himself fold the letter neatly. Tucks it back into the envelope to give to Bucky. It’s painful and humiliating, but Bucky deserves to know his mother thinks of him.

Thor hooks an arm around his hips, pulling Steve close to kiss on his bare thigh. Thor’s in a good mood but Steve feels like he might shatter if Thor wants to fuck him again. It’s a stupid thing to cry over so he won’t, but maybe if he could be alone he would.

“The rest of your gift,” Thor says, pointing away from the bed. Steve follows where he’s pointing and it’s—his footlocker. PFC S. G. Rogers, USO.

“Can I?” Steve says, torn between the dread of opening it and the desperation of something to prove that all the Captain America nonsense wasn’t just a pulp adventure fantasy. Twenty, thirty years ago now.

Thor laughs and hauls Steve over him to set gently on the edge of the bed; he really is in a good mood. “Go,” Thor says.

Steve all but trips over himself pulling on a crumpled shirt from the night before, staggering to the footlocker. He shouldn’t get his hopes up after the letter, but—

In it, his things are a jumble. It smells like it hasn’t been opened in years, damp wool and dust, old paper and Italian mud that never washed out, but it’s his things. His sketchbook, an extra sweater, the books he’d dragged to bootcamp and all across Europe; he’d been so stupid.
At the bottom, his Bible with the photo of his mother tucked inside, and the rosary she’d given him for his first communion. He can’t bear to look at the sweater or the books, but he cradles the photo in his hands for fear of dirtying it. It feels like breathing for the first time in months.

“There,” Thor says, half dressed in his soft pants and robe, coming to stand over Steve where he’s still kneeling by the footlocker. In the bathroom, the sound of Fandral and Pietro fucking is unmistakable. “Now you have nothing left on Midgard,” Thor says, running a hand through Steve’s hair. “You need not be so unhappy.”

Steve tucks Mrs. Barnes’ letter and his mother’s photo into his jacket pocket, combing his hair neat and trying not to think about any of it. Not the letter, not Earth, not the way Pietro trails after Fandral like fucking means anything, not the way Fandral steers Steve out of the suite on his way to meet Loki. And Bucky.

Steve drags his feet the whole way. After the letter and the footlocker and—everything, he’d almost rather let Thor fuck him again than face Bucky, because surely nothing good will come of it after everything else.

Certainly not with the look Loki gives him, like it’s Steve’s fault Thor tried to beat the tar out of Bucky. Steve glances at Bucky through his lashes, who at least looks like his arm’s working again, even if Steve can’t read his expression. His split lip is already healed.

Fandral gives Steve a significant look as they leave, and Steve hates himself for playing into this trap. It’s just one more thing Fandral can hold over him to make him go back to Rumlow: Peggy’s safety, learning to read, and now Bucky.

That Bucky looks like he would rather be anywhere else in the world is almost beside the point; it won’t make a difference when Thor decides to break Steve’s hands for it. “Hey,” Bucky says when the door to the study closes, taking an awkward half-step towards Steve, completely unlike his earlier handsiness because Steve ruined everything between them. “About last night—”

“It’s fine,” Steve says without looking at him. What’s one more kick in the stomach after everything else. The toes of his soft boots are scuffed from tucking his feet under himself to kneel on stone so often. “You were drunk. I was—we were both drunk. It's fine.”

“Steve, I wasn’t—”

“We don’t have to talk about it,” Steve says.

“Steve,” Bucky snaps. You’re being an asshole, Rogers. “I wasn't drunk. I can't get drunk since—anymore. You don't want to do it again, that's fine, but don't say so on my account.”

Steve looks at him sideways through his lashes. Between the hangover and having to face Bucky in the light of day, the room sways under his feet. “But you’re not like that.”

Bucky shrugs, his turn to look uncomfortable. “I thought about it, once in a while, but you were so put out any time someone said something I thought you weren't. So I didn't think about it.”

“Oh,” Steve says, all the breath gone out of him.

“Here, come on,” Bucky says, closing the distance between them to take Steve’s hand in his. He tugs Steve out of the front room, back to the little curtained alcove. “Got something to show you.”

Except—not. The alcove is empty, and Bucky walks right past it, towards Loki’s bed. Steve’s heart
kicks in his chest, Bucky’s hand tightening on his as Steve hesitates.

Bucky walks right past the curtained bed and puts his flesh hand on the wall. The stone bricks melt away, same as the elevator.

It’s—a bed. A little room with an actual door, just barely bigger than the vacant alcove. Bucky nudges him through and it closes behind them. Real privacy, for the very first time. Can’t even hear the far away sounds of the keep.

“You wanna fuck me?” Steve says in the quiet.

Bucky gives him a look somewhere between scandalized and dismayed. “I mean—sure, I guess, I just thought we'd, you know, neck first, or talk. Have a couple of smokes. Gotta wine me and dine me before you put a hand up my skirt, Steve.”

“Oh,” Steve says, face hot. He turns his face down so Bucky can’t see how ashamed of himself he is. “Sure. Sorry.”

Bucky nudges him with his shoulder. “You okay?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“You can stay here tonight, if you want,” Bucky says. “I asked your—whatever he is, Fandral—about it, and Loki doesn’t give a damn. Thought it would be good to have a place to talk where you aren’t looking over your shoulder every other minute.”

Steve glances around the little space; he has a hard time believing that Loki doesn’t actually care, but the price of the private little room is hard to see from inside it. The thought of Bucky and Fandral talking about him doesn’t bear thinking about, because it means Bucky must have had this planned before Steve threw himself at him last night.

Steve takes a deep breath. “Sure,” he says, feeling like he just stepped off a cliff.
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Shorter chapter than usual, which might be the new normal with the time I have for writing now. Happy new year and thank you for continuing to read! <3

So Fandral leaves; Steve doesn’t. He watches it through a haze at first, like he can see exactly how badly this is going to go, eventually. It has to go badly, sooner or later.

Bucky gets Loki his supper; Steve listens to them talk through the door propped open. They’re in the far room talking too quiet to make out, but Bucky laughs at something, familiar and unfamiliar all at once. Steve fiddles with the hem of his jacket sleeves. The little room feels like Bucky’s at home even though nothing’s the same; the chest at the foot of the bed, the hooks on the wall, the threadbare carpet over stone. He shouldn’t feel as claustrophobic as he does, in Bucky’s space, with Bucky’s things, surrounded by the smell of him like Steve’s wanted for—months. Nearly a year since he finally admitted it to himself. The room even smells like home.

Bucky shoulders back into the room after a while with two plates and a cigarette hanging off his lips, looking casual as all hell like it’s 1939 even if he’s got his hair in a high bun and earrings in. “You okay?” Bucky says when Steve stares at him, kicking the door closed behind himself. “You don’t got to stay here tonight if you don’t want to.”

“Can I have a smoke?” Steve blurts. It smells exactly like he remembers Luckys but it can’t be—and then Bucky sets the plates down on the foot of the bed and tosses him a pack of Luckys from his jacket pocket.

Steve fumbles with the pack, tapping out a cigarette and even a book of matches. Veselka’s Ukrainian, 144 2nd Ave NYC Since 1954!

Bucky settles next to him and watches him sideways while Steve gets his smoke lit. His hands nearly shake with the first heady drag of it, acrid and horrible and everything he’s missed about home.

“Merry Christmas,” Bucky says, bumping his shoulder.

“Is it actually?” Steve says. Looks at the cigarette in his hand so he doesn’t have to look at Bucky.

Bucky shrugs and passes Steve’s plate over. “Fucked if I know. You know how time works here. But might as well have a Christmas; I haven’t had one since forty-one, have you?”

“Suppose,” Steve says. They’ve had worse Christmases. “Where’d you get these?” Steve says, taking another drag of his smoke. He picks at his dinner; more pickles and bread and fish than Thor prefers. The food tastes ashy and dull with the cigarette, but he keeps smoking anyway because it’s the closest anything’s come to tasting like home.

“Where d’you think?” Bucky says, bumping Steve with his shoulder again. Maybe Steve should’ve asked for that pie or a bottle of Coke.

The silence is halfway comfortable, Bucky reaching past him to tap the ash of his cigarette out in a cup as they eat. The heat of his skin is heady as the cigarette, and Steve holds his breath.
After Bucky takes the supper dishes away, he comes back to the little room to shuck out of his jacket and hand Steve a little fifth of whiskey from his footlocker.

“Thought you can't get drunk anymore,” Steve says, fiddling with the cap. Zola'd tried to fill Steve up with liquor and dope and God knows what else trying to figure out his limits, and Steve had wished to God he could just get drunk and pass out for it.

“Can't,” Bucky says, settling back on the bed. “Got it for you last time I was on Earth.”

Steve nearly chokes on the sip of whiskey. “You—what?” he sputters.

Bucky shrugs one shoulder, cupping his metal hand around another cigarette as he lights it. With his jacket off, the heat of his skin through his shirt is impossible to ignore. “His majesty wants errands done, so I do them. And some shopping on the way back.” Bucky reaches over and grabs the bottle of whiskey, taking a swig of it before passing it back.

“What errands?” Steve demands “You've really been back?”

Bucky turns that look on him again, the flat predator's look, and it's like being trapped with a cougar. If Thor is terrifying because he's huge and overwhelming as a hurricane, Bucky's terrifying because he's focused as a spotlight.

“He wants Nazis killed, so I kill them.” Bucky says it so flat Steve nearly flinches back even as a thousand questions spin out from that. Steve’s all but certain Loki’s gone behind Thor’s back with this; Thor wanted to use Bucky to assassinate Hydra's shield, but he’s been careful to avoid all-out war so far.

“Can you go back whenever you want? Have you been back home?” Steve says, bulling through Bucky’s stone-faced look.

Bucky finally turns the spotlight look off of him, rolling his cigarette between his metal fingers. “There’s nothing to go back for,” he says, and he sounds more like the Bucky Steve remembers, bone deep tired instead of flat and empty.

It’s disconcerting, how he slides back and forth between the two, and more disconcerting still with Mrs. Barnes' letter burning a hole in Steve's pocket. Steve hasn’t got anything to go back for, but Bucky has.

Steve pulls it out and passes her letter over in the quiet. “I didn’t know you were—you, when I wrote her,” Steve says, watching Bucky turn it over in his hand.

“When I didn't know I was me,” Bucky says. He just looks at the letter without moving to open it. “What’d she say?” Bucky says after a while, holding it just between the tip of his finger and thumb.

“You can read it,” Steve says. Bucky’s got more right to it than he does, anyway, and not like Steve’s had any privacy in anything else since he got here.

Bucky looks at him sidelong with an expression Steve can’t quite read; it’s close enough to the monster’s shuttered, hunting look that a chill races over Steve’s skin, but then it’s gone. Bucky opens the letter carefully, slowly, like he thinks he might rip it with his metal fingers.

He glances it over, then folds it back closed almost faster than he opened it. Passes it back to Steve without saying anything.

The quiet stretches out as Steve tucks the letter back in its envelope and doesn’t know what to say.
Bucky’s face is closed, looking at something far away. “You can keep it, if you want,” Steve says finally, for lack of anything else to say.

“You should tell her I died a coward,” Bucky says, voice gone flat again. “They shouldn’t pray for me.”

“You’re—what?” Steve says, trying to catch his balance. “You’re not a coward.”

Bucky gives him a long, weighing look, almost too much like the look Thor gives him when he’s considering whether to get the belt. Steve drops his look, fussing his cigarette straight with his heart hammering.

“The thing about pain,” Bucky says finally, and Steve’s stomach lurches. “It makes everything clear. It makes it so you know one true thing clearer than anything else, even your own name, and that true thing is that you’ll do anything to make the pain stop. I did a lot of things to make the pain stop, Steve.”

“That wasn’t you, Buck,” Steve says, finally looking up at him again. “You didn’t have a choice.”

“I know. But I did it.” Bucky says it flat, just a shadow of a shrug as he looks away. That’s what Steve’s failure did, he left Bucky to fifteen years of that. The shame of it is so thick in his mouth he just lets the cigarette hang there in his hand.

It’s hard to tell time in the quiet, private little room, like they’re in a little bubble cut off from everything else. Steve’s whole life feels vertiginously unreal and now more so than ever, like he’s standing on a tall building looking down at everything that got him here. They sit there in the quiet for what feels like forever, or a minute; hard to tell with the way Steve’s heart feels like it’s stopped.

“I heard your Captain America show,” Bucky says, bumping Steve with his shoulder, sounding more like himself again. It’s been no time at all; Steve’s cigarette is near burned down to his knuckles, but the cherry’s still hot.

“You did?” Steve says, feeling suddenly green around the gills like the first time he had a cigarette. He fumbles for the cup of ash to stub out his smoke.

“Sure,” Bucky says, like it’s the most natural thing in the world. He grinds out the stub of his own cigarette when Steve’s done, their hands brushing on the cup. The walls feel like they’re pressing in.

“They played it at mess most nights and I recognized your voice right off.”

“Oh,” Steve says.

“The guy they got for the posters didn’t look much like you, though,” Bucky says, lighting another cigarette.

“No,” Steve says faintly.

“Knew it was you because who else’d make it sound like a good idea to walk across Europe to punch Hitler in the nose like that,” Bucky laughs. “And you know the damnedest thing, when they had me on the table, when Zola was—when they had me, I kept having this fever dream of you coming after me in that damn Captain America outfit. Could practically hear you yelling my name.”

Steve’s ears ring like he’s been hit.

“That was me,” Steve says. His voice sounds as small as he feels right then but it’s loud in the sudden silence, neither of them even breathing. “That was me, I went after you but I didn’t make it. I
was doing a USO show in Italy when I heard about your unit. That’s how I got here.”

“Fuck,” Bucky breathes. Steve risks a glance over at him and he’s half smiling, right before he throws an arm around Steve’s shoulders like nothing’s changed. “You dumb shit, you really did it. You really fucking did it,” Bucky says, shaking him by the shoulders.

“Sorry,” Steve chokes. It’s like bile coming up, or draining a wound. Necessary but not cathartic. “I didn’t—I couldn’t—”

“The hell you got to be sorry for?” Bucky says, pulling Steve against him. The heat of him is almost unbearable against Steve’s side, claustrophobic in the little room.

“I couldn’t get you out, it’s my fault—”

“Steve,” Bucky snaps, arm tightening on his shoulders. Steve squeezes his eyes shut against the seasick disorientation of remembering both Bucky and Thor doing the same. “I’d have never remembered my own name if you weren’t here, you did get me out. You miserable goddamn martyr.”

Steve chokes a laugh on that, enough like Bucky as his old self to shake Steve out of his misery in the middle of all this horrible pulp adventure nonsense.

“You okay?” Bucky asks, squeezing Steve’s shoulders. Steve swipes at his eyes with his wrist, pretending he wasn’t just choking on his own shame.

“Sure,” Steve says. He hasn’t been okay in a while. But the room feels less claustrophobic, and Bucky’s warmth against his side feels comforting instead of smothering. Steve sags against him.

The quiet is companionable this time, instead of guilty, and Steve finally feels every ounce of the past few days weighing him down. He could sleep forever wrapped up in the familiar half-remembered smell of Bucky’s cigarettes and—

“Is that pomade?” Steve says, squinting at the tin on the little side table. He can’t quite make it out, but it looks a damn lot like Bucky’s hair pomade.

And sure enough, Bucky’s blushing when Steve glances at him. Even a million goddamn miles from home with earrings and little braids in his hair, Bucky had to have his pomade. “You vain asshole,” Steve says, shoving at Bucky’s chest. Bucky just laughs and keeps Steve pulled against his chest.

It’s easier to talk after that; about Europe, and the USO show, and the war. Bucky studiously avoids anything after Hydra had either of them, but lets slip that Zola’s dead. Steve doesn’t ask how he knows, or what Zola did to him, or what exactly he does killing Nazis that Loki gives him such a long leash. If Bucky still slips back and forth between familiar and unfamiliar, at least Steve’s getting used to the unfamiliar.

And if Bucky studiously avoids anything about Hydra, Steve studiously avoids the details of how he joined the Army, and anything that’s happened to him on Asgard. Steve shivers away the one time Bucky stiffens at a mention of Pietro, but they both tip toe around anything to do with Asgard after that.

Bed is an entirely different thing. Bucky can control the tarted up lightbulbs in his room, for one thing, waving them dimmer with a hand; it’s more than Steve’s been able to do than since he got locked out of the elevator.
For another thing, just taking off his jacket is an ordeal, and one Steve didn’t think through clearly. Bucky shucks off his shirt and folds it neatly on the footlocker with his trousers, pretending he’s not watching Steve sideways. He’s not very good at it; he didn’t have as much practice at it as Steve did.

Steve shrugs out of his clothes, intensely aware of Bucky’s eyes on him. It shouldn’t matter anymore, now that Bucky’s seen him all but naked except for jewelry and paint and Thor and Fandral and Pietro have seen him naked plenty of times, but they don’t look the way Bucky looks at him now. Measuring, looking for the bruises he saw the night before, eyeing the bite marks just visible below the collar of Steve’s shirt. Steve leaves his shirt on, hanging on to the bare privacy of white cloth down to his knees. Doesn’t want to think about what Bucky would say about the lacy pink panties.

Bucky’s just as beautiful as he ever was in the dim light, the muscled bulk of him familiar and unfamiliar all at once. The bed at least is neither as narrow nor as saggy as the one Steve has to share with Pietro, but Steve doesn’t know what to do with his elbows or his knees once Bucky climbs in beside him and waves the lights off.

In bed, with the lights off, Steve breathes shallow and doesn’t move. Bucky is heavy and solid and warm beside him, the sound of his breath steady and even in the dark. Between them, where they don’t touch and where the blanket doesn’t quite meet the mattress, the air slices in icy cold under the covers despite the warmth radiating off of Bucky, and Steve finally moves to curl in on himself against the cold.

Bucky moves at that and Steve freezes as Bucky rolls onto his side to face Steve, tucking his metal arm under Steve’s pillow. “This okay?” Bucky says, breath warm as his other hand finds Steve’s under the covers.

Steve squeezes his hand in answer, some of the tension finally bleeding out of his shoulders. He’s more okay than he has been in a while.

Steve wakes up with Thor’s cock pressed against his ass, hard and thick. Steve sucks his lip ring with his eyes closed, torn between feigning sleep or eagerness, muddled with grogginess as Thor starts to come awake, arm heavy and warm over Steve.

Better to get it over with, instead of waiting for Thor to wake him up with fake gentleness. Steve presses his ass back, tipping his head on the pillow to make his shoulder easier to bite the way Thor likes.

“For fuck, sorry, Steve,” Bucky says, pulling back and taking his warmth and the weight of his arm with him. “Sorry, Christ, it’s been a while, didn’t mean anything by it.”

“’s fine,” Steve mumbles, curling into himself tighter. Would have been fine if Bucky did want to fuck him, because of course Steve wants it, just like he wanted Thor to fuck him. But of course Bucky doesn’t.

“You okay?” Bucky says, a proprietary handspan away on the bed, lying on his back. “You used to kick like a horse in your sleep. Don’t think you kicked me once.”

Steve closes his eyes again. “Sure,” he lies. Thor doesn’t like him to move once they’re settled in bed, covering Steve with his weight to keep him in place, so Steve learned not to. “Guess I just grew out of it.”

The rest of the morning is something of a blur; Bucky gets Loki his breakfast while Steve eats cross
legged on Bucky’s bed, hidden away listening to their half heard conversation. Bread and jam and real coffee and a cigarette, practically like home. Steve’s belly twists around the bread and jam at the thought of walking out past Loki without Fandral or Thor to hide behind. He takes a shot or two of the whiskey to steady himself, tying his stomach in knots sitting alone worrying about it, but Bucky’s even got a separate door to the corridor that slides open into the stone like the other one.

If Bucky notices the liquor on Steve’s breath when they say goodbye, he doesn’t say anything about it.

Between the liquor and the anxiety and holding himself stiffly all morning, Steve’s still in a haze when Fandral sweeps Steve up in his wake along the way back to Thor’s suite.

“I need to ask a favor,” Fandral says as they walk. “Herr Rumlow must be told that we plan to kill Hydra’s shield. As soon as you can find him.”

The woman, the one they need to bring to Asgard to get Peggy safe. Steve takes a steadying breath. “But you’re not going to,” he says. Rumlow didn’t fuck him last time; Steve’s not going to be party to a murder; he can tell himself lots of things.

“Well,” Fandral says, and he has the decency to sound at least a little sorry about it. “Not right away.”
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rumlow looks positively gleeful as he backs Steve up to a desk in the dingy little diplomatic office. The walls look like they haven't been cleaned in decades, coated in the acrid tobacco smoke from cheap Nazi cigarettes. Fandral kept his word and got Steve access to the lower levels of the keep, but not far enough down to the kitchens or the gates. "I don't give a damn who they're going to kill," Rumlow says, finger in the middle of Steve's chest so he can loom, "if you don't get the ring—"

"Just get it over with," Steve snaps. He's trapped in Rumlow's cramped little office, he's got no way out, and he's tired of this bullshit. Tired of being scared of everybody, tired of walking a tightrope every time he breathes. And with the couple of steadying drinks he took to fortify his nerves to look for Rumlow, he's not as scared as he should be, but at least he can deny Rumlow the satisfaction of it.

That takes the wind out of Rumlow's sails. Not enough to stop him, just a flicker of annoyance, but it's more of a win than Steve's had in months and he'll take it. So Fandral can use everything as a threat and a stick to beat Steve into doing what he wants; Steve doesn't have to make anyone's work easy for them.

"Get it over with, huh?" Rumlow says, smiling nastily as he digs fingers into Steve's arm to turn him and shove him down. Steve catches himself without banging his chin as Rumlow starts to shove his trousers down, same as ever. Steve doesn't bother fighting back, because why bother. "You got somewhere to be, princess? Better things to be doing?" Rumlow says, leaning over so Steve can feel the warmth of him through his jacket, warm and heavy like Bucky.

"Yes," Steve snaps. His ass is cold bent over the desk, more cranky with the indignity of it than mad about what's about to happen, because what use is it being scared of it. "You all talk or—"

Rumlow doesn't bother spitting in his palm this time; doesn't even bother getting his cock out. The press of the baton against Steve's ass is familiar and horrible, more so because it's dry and Rumlow only ever used to fuck him with it with enough come or blood to making it stomach turning easy to fuck him with. Steve kicks out but Rumlow's got the leverage, and the first sharp pain takes the breath out of him.

"Thought you wanted it fast, princess," Rumlow says nastily in his ear. "Thought you'd learned to relax and take it by now."

It hurts worse than Steve remembers it, the horrible stabbing pain as his body resists it. Rumlow finally spits on him, but it doesn't help anything. The slow steady pressure takes up every inch of his awareness until Rumlow rocks back just enough for Steve to worry what Thor will do before Rumlow shoves it back in and there's the sick unreal sensation of something giving way as the baton's shoved into him.

Steve tries to yell but it just comes out a strangled, breathy gasp as he claws at the table and tries to get away. He hasn't got the strength to push Rumlow off him, and he barely knows who he's trying to get away from when Rumlow yanks his head up by the hair. "Next time I see you," Rumlow says, fucking him slowly with the baton, "you're gonna have the ring or I'm going to visit your girl Carter and see how she likes this," Rumlow says. "Bet she'll be a lot wetter for it than you."
Steve gets the strength to shove himself up, catching Rumlow by surprise enough to shove him off. Rumlow staggers back, baton in hand, and Steve's so mad he takes a swing at him. It goes wide, but he gets Rumlow in the jaw with his right.

It's not enough to stagger him back, just enough to make him mad, and Rumlow backhands him across the face like Thor does. It's enough to make Steve stumble, and then Rumlow's backing him up against the wall, baton horizontal under his chin to make him stand on his tip toes or choke. “Next time I see you,” Rumlow says slow and even, “you're going to have that goddamn ring. You understand me, Cap?”

Steve glares up at him, breathing ragged. Right in that moment, clutching his trousers to hold them up, he couldn't give a good goddamn about anything. Not Thor, not Rumlow. Not, God help him, Peggy.

Rumlow sees it on his face, pushing the baton up into Steve's throat so his Adam's apple aches. “I'll tell Carter you said hello, then,” he says.

And just like that all the fight goes out of Steve. “I'll get it,” he chokes. He can be selfish and stupid when it's just him getting hurt.

“That's the team spirit I like to see,” Rumlow says, letting him go so Steve can stagger forward. Rumlow claps him on the shoulder while Steve's still catching his breath. “Now run along and fix your makeup, princess, I've got things to do,” Rumlow says, propelling Steve out the door with his trousers still clutched in his hands.

He staggers out the door looking like he just had a quick fuck, Rumlow shutting the door behind him.

Steve manages to put himself back together before too many people see him, but the walk back up the tower still isn't pleasant. Fandral isn't stupid, and Steve's access to the lower levels doesn't include the elevator, so he's got to climb all those stairs with his ass aching worse every step and trying not to think about it.

Fandral’s not in his rooms because of course he isn’t, but he left the door unlocked and Steve lets himself in. There’s a bottle of liquor in the bookcase and Steve doesn’t bother with the fine little cut crystal glasses sitting next to it. It’s probably something fancy and expensive, but it’s hot in his gut like cheap whiskey all the same.

Whatever it is, it’s enough to steady his hands so he can check himself for bleeding in the palatial bathroom. At least he doesn’t have to explain that to Thor. It took him the morning to track down Rumlow and the afternoon to drag himself back up the tower; Steve goes out to sit on Fandral’s divan and have another drink. His feet don’t touch the floor, and he leaves the bottle uncapped on a side table out of sheer pettiness.

What he’d like to do is dawdle until Fandral shows his face again and ask if this is all part of his pulp noir plan, but the sun slants towards evening the longer Steve sits there, and he’s more scared of Thor than he is angry at Fandral. So he picks himself up and drags himself back to the suite.

It doesn’t hurt so bad, at least, after Steve takes one last drink to steady himself before he goes.

Thor’s in bed already, half dressed with Pietro sprawled naked under the covers beside him. He’s got his hand in Pietro’s hair and a book on his knee when Steve peeks around the corner from the front room, but he puts the book aside to snap fingers at Steve.
Thor pulls him close with a smile and starts to shove Steve’s clothes off him as soon as he’s in arm’s reach. Not too rough, but not gently either, like he intends to pull Steve’s hair and make him beg to be fucked, and Steve’s not sure he’ll make it through that. Not with the simmering anger in his chest barely under control, and what would Thor do to him then.

“Could I blow you, instead?” Steve says, trying to make himself sound small and meek, not willful and disobedient. Anything to buy him some time and let him bury the hysterics that threaten to well up with Thor’s hands on him. “I don’t—feel well.”

Thor pushes him away to frown, catching the look on Steve’s face before he glances down. He shouldn’t have said anything; he hunches his shoulders as if that will make him look any less guilty after Thor caught the look on his face.

“You do not feel fevered,” Thor says, putting hands on Steve’s face to make him look up.

“No,” Steve admits, turning his face down into Thor’s palm. “Just—sore.” It’s true, anyway. His back aches and his knees ache and his ass aches.

Thor frowns at him, running a thumb over Steve’s lips. Thinking it over, deciding how merciful to be. “Come along,” he says, unfolding from the bed to drag Steve along after him.

The bathroom’s cold after the warmth of the fire built up in the bedroom, and Steve stumbles on clumsy feet when Thor pushes him towards the counter and basin.

“Undress,” Thor says without looking at him, turning away to look at something. Not pleased, then.

Steve strips out of his clothes with slow hands, the air feeling thick and clotted. It’s better than the burning pain of staggering up all those stairs, but he shouldn’t have drank so much. Maybe if Thor just wants him to suck cock it won’t be so bad, but Steve’s so tired he can’t make himself flirt much more than glancing up through his lashes.

Thor sets the little glass jar of ointment on the counter at Steve’s elbow when Steve’s still half dressed and just watches him struggle the rest of the way out of his clothes, dropped in a pile at his feet. Thor’s dressed in his trousers and robe, chest bare. When Steve hesitates before stepping out of his underwear like that last little bit of pretend privacy matters, Thor shoves him around by the elbow to bend over the counter like Rumlow did and Steve nearly comes up swinging.

But then Thor puts a heavy hand in the center of his back to keep him in place, and Steve relaxes despite himself. It’s like the first night, is all, checking over damaged goods. Thor presses fingers into him, slick with the ointment. It hurts, but no more than it has to.

“Fandral did this,” Thor says.

Steve holds his breath. He can’t say no, because someone obviously fucked him, but he can’t say yes either. He’s foggy and stupid and not nearly numb as he wants to be.

“What did you do to deserve this,” Thor says, pushing another finger into him.

“Nothing,” Steve says, voice high and tight on the sudden pain.

“You gave him no cause,” Thor says, doubtful. He presses a third fingers into Steve, steady and unrelenting against swollen, abused skin.

“No, I—nothing, I didn’t do anything,” Steve says, finally catching on to where this is going. He tries to push up, but Thor’s hand between his shoulder blades keeps him where he is.
“He would not use you so without good cause.”

“I don’t know, I don’t know,” Steve says frantically. His nails can’t catch on the smooth stone of the counter and the sharp edge of it digs into his chest, but above all everything hurts where Thor twists fingers in him, spreading him open. “Please, I don’t know, please stop—” Steve chokes.

Thor’s fingers are suddenly gone, his big hand closing around Steve’s wrist to haul him around. Naked and goosebumped all over in the chill bathroom, Steve breaks out in a sweat when Thor almost bends him backwards over the counter with the sharp edge of the stone in his back. “I will know if you are lying again,” Thor says, Steve’s wrist still in his hand. He tightens his hand, the bones of Steve’s hand grinding against each other and tendons snapping over bones. It’s his right hand, tight enough to nearly drown out his jangling nerves and all his other pains, and Steve has the sudden giddy fear that Thor will break his hand. “Fandral may be fond of you,” Thor says slowly, “but he will not lie for you.”

“I know, I didn’t—nothing happened, I didn’t do anything,” Steve repeats, high and wild.

“Fandral would not do that,” Pietro says, standing in the door wrapped in one of Thor’s shirts. It’s enough to break the tension. Thor makes a disgusted noise, easing his grip on Steve’s wrist as he turns to glare at Pietro. Pietro holds his ground, chin high and hair mussed from rolling out of bed.

“Be quiet,” Thor snaps at Pietro, dragging Steve by the wrist and shoving Pietro out of the way. He lets Steve go to snap fingers at both of them, pointing at the little cot in the alcove. “I tire of both of you.”

They go, slow first and then scrambling when Thor gives them a dark look for not moving fast enough. The heat of the fireplace doesn’t quite reach to the dark alcove, and Steve doesn’t hesitate long enough to pull on his nightshirt. He stinks like liquor and sweat where he curls on his side, aching and trying desperately to push it back down into numbness.

Pietro curls against Steve’s back, and Steve’s stiff until he realizes that Pietro’s still got the cock cage. He can’t even get hard where he’s pressed up against Steve’s back. Steve relaxes a fraction, trying to make himself breathe slow and even, concentrating on the scratchiness of the pillow under his cheek, Pietro’s bony knees, anything to keep his mind off the rest of the day. He’ll regret his lack of supper and lunch in the morning, but for now the liquor makes it easier to be relieved that Thor just wants them to be quiet and out of the way.

Steve finally drifts once Thor turns out the lights, the tension of waiting to see if Thor will change his mind a little less heavy once Steve can stop jumping every time he moves.

It’s not until well after Thor’s asleep that Pietro moves, stirring just enough to make sure Steve’s awake. Steve elbows him.

“Fandral did not do this,” Pietro murmurs against Steve’s shoulder.

“He’s not as nice as you think he is,” Steve hisses back in the dark.

That shuts up Pietro for a minute, and Steve hates himself for the vicious satisfaction that for once he made someone else feel awful instead of waiting for them to do it to him.

“No,” Pietro says eventually, quiet and slow, like he really did think that over. “But he did not do this.”

“Go to sleep,” Steve says. Pietro can find out well enough on his own.
It hurts the next time Thor fucks him. Steve keeps his eyes shut tight and breathes shallow and tries not to think about it, concentrating on how much his teeth hurt where Thor presses his face to the desk. Easier to think about how badly his back aches from sleeping on the little cot the last few days.

“Do not,” Thor says after, and pops Steve on the cheek as he’s trying to pull his clothes back together. It’s barely a tap, and Steve scrubs at his wet face like that will make any difference. “I am not so easily manipulated as Fandral, save your false tears for him.”

Drinking helps. Not with the pain, that goes away on its own after a while, and the bruise around his wrist just gets darker. But drinking a little all day helps so he doesn’t keep track of days and doesn’t have to think about it so much, that it’s not safe to be angry at anyone but himself.

Pietro gets to go with Thor to meetings and sit at his feet at supper and sleep in his bed, but Steve’s left in the suite to sit alone and ignored and wait for Thor to turn his attention on him. Drinking at least makes the time go faster so Steve’s not jumping out of his skin every time Thor looks at him like the last time Thor was annoyed with him. Pietro pours out his beer when he catches him at it, but Steve never liked him anyway. Better to be tired and a little drunk when Thor wants to fuck him than do anything about his stupid, useless anger.

Or, he tells himself that until Fandral turns up, and then he can’t quite keep his face under control. Fandral jokes around with Thor, blithe like nothing happened, and sweeps Steve out of there to borrow without so much as an apologetic look.

Steve bites his tongue as they walk towards Loki’s suite. He can barely stomach the thought of another long day of listening to Fandral and Loki go on and on like they’ll ever actually move against the Nazis, Steve sitting quietly in the corner waiting to find out how else Fandral wants Rumlow to fuck him.

"Thanks for nothing," Steve finally says to Fandral's back.

"Excuse me?" Fandral says, giving Steve a look with one eyebrow arched. He keeps right on walking.

"You said you'd talk to him if he found out," Steve says. He knows he shouldn’t, even as he says it, but Fandral hasn’t kept his end of the deal. “You didn’t say anything.”

"He did not find out, because you covered admirably," Fandral says without breaking stride. "I told him you cried very prettily and I forgave the error."  

"That's not--"

"Do you wish to get your friends off of Midgard or not," Fandral snaps, stopping to look at him for the first time. Steve catches up short, nearly running into him.

Steve stands his ground, fists balled at his side and chin up. It’s the liquid courage that lets him do it but he doesn’t regret it; maybe Fandral will finally be honest about things for once and just hit him. “Are you actually doing anything to help them?” Steve says, trying to keep his voice even.
Fandral makes an annoyed noise at that and turns, walking away like it doesn’t matter how mad Steve is. “They’ll be here within the month, if Herr Rumlow relays what you told him,” Fandral says as he walks. He snaps fingers at Steve like Thor does. “Come along, we’re already late.”

And really, it doesn’t matter how mad Steve is at anyone, because what’s he going to do besides stand at Fandral’s elbow and fetch papers and glare at his feet while Fandral and Loki go over and over everything Dottie’s ever said again. Steve avoids Bucky’s look, concentrating on doing what he’s told after Fandral snaps at him for being slow and recalcitrant.

Loki finally loses patience when Steve nearly spills a cup on all the transcripts, sweeping the papers off the table in a snit and bossing Fandral into the study. Steve glares after them rather than look at Bucky; it would serve them right if all the transcripts were ruined.

“You’re drunk,” Bucky says when Steve won’t look at him, in that same flat, disgusted tone Thor used.

“So?” Steve says, crossing his arms over his chest like that will protect him any better than it ever has.

“So it’s ten in the goddamn morning, Steve,” Bucky says, stepping into his space before catching up short. “Did he make you?”

Steve laughs, bitter. “No.”

“Then the fuck are you doing drinking—”

“None of your goddamn business,” Steve snaps, finally getting up the courage to glare up at Bucky. He’s taller at this angle, and Steve’s mad enough he doesn’t step back even though his heart’s racing and he wants to.

“Well excuse the fuck out of me, Steve, for caring if you—”

“Barnes,” Loki snaps from the door of the study, startling Steve and Bucky both. Fandral frowns at Steve from behind him, seated and drumming fingers on the arm of his chair. “Shut up,” Loki says, and then slams the door closed again like one of Bucky’s little sisters.

Bucky sighs, exasperated, sounding something like his old self. He glances at Steve with his mouth tight. Steve looks down, feeling like a heel. They haven’t fought since the night Bucky shipped out. “You should drink some water and sleep it off,” Bucky says finally.

“You’re not my mother,” Steve mumbles, but the fight’s gone out of him and he lets Bucky steer him back towards his little secret room.

“No,” Bucky agrees. “But I’m not arguing with you Irish mad as you are. You can eat something while you’re at it, you look like hell.”

Chapter End Notes

That was a lot of hurt, but I promise next chapter is all comfort <3 <3 <3
“You sober up any?” Bucky says from the floor when Steve rolls over. He’s on the floor leaning back against the bed, cigarette hanging off his lips and polishing what has to be Loki’s boots, they’re too small for Bucky.

Steve puts an arm over his face and stays where he is. He’s not as hungover as he could be, but the hazy blur of a headache threatens when he moves his head. “Yeah.”

“You’re always meaner than a pissed on cat when you drink, Rogers,” Bucky says without getting up.

“I know,” Steve says. Bucky’s bed smells like cigarettes and pomade and Steve just wants to roll over and go back to sleep in it forever.

There’s the sound of the shine brush, a repetitive shush-shush in the small room, like listening to a heartbeat. Steve lets the sound of it wash over him, floating on the hazy warmth of nobody wanting anything of him for once. The headache is far away, along with everything else he doesn’t have to think about right now.

“You drinking in the morning for a reason?” Bucky says around his cigarette after a while.

Steve sighs. It’s been more than a week since Rumlow fucked him and he’s still moping over it; the thought of trying to explain himself when Bucky’s been through so much worse is ridiculous. “Been a long week,” Steve says. He’s just tired. Stupid and tired.

There’s the sound of Bucky putting down the boot. Carefully grinding out his cigarette. “Did he hurt you? If he—”

“Nothing happened,” Steve snaps, arm still thrown over his face. Nothing out of the ordinary, nothing that’s ever going to change, nothing worth getting worked up over.

Bucky gets up to pace, agitated. The room suddenly feels much smaller. Steve rolls himself sitting, shoulders gone tight like the walls are closing in on him. “I don’t see you for almost two weeks,” Bucky says, and Steve’s stomach tightens with the days that he’s missing, “and then you show up drunk as a lord first thing in the morning, something sure as fuck happened,” Bucky says. Standing over Steve, he looks tall as Thor in the little space. Shoulders hunched, all Steve can think about is the last time they were in bed together and how much less Bucky would want him if he knew what happened in the mean time.

Steve holds his hands tight between his knees, tendons rolling over bone. “I can suck your cock if you don't want to fuck me,” he says, eyes on the stone floor between his toes.

He doesn't have to look up to see Bucky stiffen. “Christ, Steve,” Bucky says. “I don't—what'd he do to you?”

“Nothing,” Steve says, feeling strung tight and on edge, the room claustrophobically hot. He combs fingers through his hair, trying to hide his face before he cries. “Nothing happened.”

Bucky grabs his wrist, the bruise Thor gave him throbbing. “This isn't nothing—”
“Nothing happened,” Steve says, higher than he meant it to come out. The bruising around his wrist is darker than he thought, a horrible mottled purple against the bright gold of Steve’s bracelet and the polished silver of Bucky’s hand. He tries to pull away and Bucky’s hand tightens, making him freeze instead. “It’s nothing, nothing happened,” Steve says, his voice getting higher the tighter Bucky’s hand gets on his wrist. “I didn’t do anything,” Steve says, feeling like he can’t breathe.

Bucky releases his hand like he’s been scalded, and Steve turns his face away. His shoulders are so tight they ache.

“Steve,” Bucky starts, and Steve flinches without meaning to. Bucky takes a tight breath and Steve holds his, waiting for him to move again. Everything feels stretched out thin.

When Bucky finally moves, it’s to drop to his knees. “Hey,” Bucky says, hands on Steve’s knees. “Look at me. Steve, come on, look at me.”

Steve glances at him sideways through his lashes, trying to make his breathing even. Bucky just looks back at him.

“I’m not him,” Bucky says, slow and even, and Steve feels like he’s been slapped.

“I know that,” Steve snaps. He pulls away, and this time Bucky lets him go. Steve pushes himself up the bed to get away. Back against the wall and knees pulled up to his chest, he’s still got nowhere to go, but Bucky’s not so threatening.

“I’m going to get you out of there, Steve,” Bucky says without getting up. “I promise.”

Steve shakes his head. “I’m fine.”

“Sure,” Bucky says. “Fine as that winter you almost coughed up your lungs.”

Steve laughs at that, scrubbing a hand over his face. He’d said he was fine up past the point he was coughing blood; he’s sure as hell not fine right now. He can’t stop laughing, breathy, wheezing laughing because what’s the alternative. He grinds the heels of his hands into his eyes, trying to make himself stop.

The mattress dips as Bucky puts a knee on the bed and comes to settle beside him. He’s a solid, inevitable weight, tipping Steve towards him on the sagging bed so they lean together. Steve takes gulping breaths, making himself calm down.

Bucky puts an arm around him, warm and enveloping as he pulls Steve against his side, steady and real as he’s ever been. Steve turns and kisses him before he can lose his nerve.

Bucky half-smiles against his mouth and doesn’t pull away even though Steve’s heart is pounding. He tastes like cigarettes and Steve’s head pounds, like they might be at home, like this might be New Year’s 1938 when they got drunk and fell asleep on the couch together with their shoes still on. Bucky tugs at Steve’s lip ring as they kiss, playing with it just a little like he doesn’t mind it. Steve leans into him, twisting hands in Bucky’s coat like that’ll save him from drowning.

“Fuck me,” Steve says when Bucky pulls back.

“I don’t think—”

“Please,” Steve says. It sounds as pathetic as Steve feels but he pushes on anyway, climbing into Bucky’s lap even though Bucky’s frowning at him. He needs Bucky to be real, not just the fantasy that Steve hangs onto when someone else is fucking him, and now that Bucky’s so close Steve
desperately needs to be closer, curled up safe with him for once. “Please, I need—please just fuck me,” Steve says.

Bucky takes a deep breath and leans his head against Steve’s shoulder, blowing his breath out slowly. He strokes Steve’s arms, hands warm and heavy through Steve’s jacket. “Steve,” he says. “You know I’d do anything for you, right?”

Steve nods against Bucky’s hair. Up close, he smells like pomade and Luckys.

“Does it have to be this?” Bucky says.

“I need you,” Steve says to his hands twisted in Bucky’s jacket. The jacket, the fabric it’s made of, it’s all alien as the rest of it, cut strangely and embroidered with unfamiliar designs, but Bucky’s real underneath it. He’s needed Bucky since they were kids, he needed Bucky even when he was dead.

“You’ve always had shit timing,” Bucky says, sitting up to kiss him with a sigh. “This is a bad idea.”

“I don’t care,” Steve says, rolling his hips the way Thor likes, chin tipped down coy and back arched. He can feel Bucky get hard at that, and Steve’s stomach twists. It’s a terrible idea and Steve can’t even stop to think of what will happen when Thor finds out, but he needs it anyway, just for the few minutes of pretending that someone wants him without wanting to use him. Steve licks his lips, tonguing his lip ring the way that always gets Thor’s attention, and he can see Bucky’s eyes focus on it. “Please.”

Bucky gives him a doubtful look, but he doesn’t pull away when Steve leans in to kiss him, tentative this time.

The problem with Bucky is he kisses like he knows what he’s doing, leaving Steve feeling off balance and clinging to his jacket even harder. The headache is far away now, just enough to make this all feel foggy and unreal as Steve tries to steady himself against Bucky, who’s solid as ever. Through his jacket, Bucky’s metal arm feels like the most real thing about him, hard and ungiving as Steve starts to fumble with the clasps of his jacket, quick before his sense catches up to him or Bucky changes his mind.

Steve’s hands shake despite himself, not quite ready to trust that this is real. Bucky puts a hand on the back of his head, fingers light on the ticklish stubble at the base of Steve’s neck.

The clasps of his jacket are too complicated, Steve’s fingers thick and clumsy; he’s never had to undress anyone but himself before. The fasteners of Steve’s jacket are just a thread-wrapped wire hook and eye, easy to shove off and easy to sew back on when Thor rips the jacket. The fasteners of Bucky’s jacket are intricate, fussy little metal clasps and Steve fumbles with them, cheeks going hot.

“Here,” Bucky says, leaning in to kiss quick, nudging Steve’s hands away. He twists the clasps of his jacket and they’re just—fancy hook and eyes, same as Steve’s jacket. Bucky gives him a half smile as he shrugs out of his jacket.

It’s a heavy, padded thing, and Steve can see where a set of small knives have been sewn into the lining, but even so Bucky seems broader with it off. He tosses the jacket down on the footlocker at the end of the bed, one arm around Steve’s waist to keep from jostling Steve off his lap. In just his shirtsleeves, he looks more like Bucky at home, warm skin just visible at the throat, under the silver band of his collar. His pierced nipples stand out enough in the cool room to make Steve blush, as if Steve’s got any shame left, the round beads to either side of each nipple clearly visible through the fabric. Steve swallows and tugs Bucky’s shirt up from where it’s tucked in.
Bucky pulls his shirt off over his head, the whisper of linen on skin loud in the small space. As many times as Steve's pretended to himself that Thor looks like Bucky, Bucky looks nothing like Thor. He's got none of the freckles across his shoulders like Steve remembers, pale like he hasn't seen the sun or summer in years. Steve smoothes his hands over Bucky's shoulders, the one warm and smooth, the other a mass of scar tissue and cool metal, and Bucky just lets him. Without his shirt, he smells like sweat and warm, spicy pomade and Steve takes deep breaths, trying to memorize it and steady himself.

Steve slips off Bucky's lap.

“Just—promise you won't say anything,” Steve says, fiddling with the cuffs of his coat. Standing between Bucky's spread knees, the whole thing suddenly doesn't seem like a good idea any more.

Bucky takes a sharp breath, and Steve expects him to say something about it. But then Bucky just blows it out slow, and when Steve glances at him sideways he's got his hands on his knees, meeting Steve's look. “I promise,” he says. “I promise I won't say anything.”

Steve keeps his eyes on his feet, stepping out of his boots first, dancing out of the way when Bucky kicks his and Steve's boots down in a pile at the foot of the bed. The clasps of Steve’s jacket feel clumsy and strange like he’s never done this before, and he tries not to think about Bucky watching him undress as he strips down to his shirt. At least he’s not wearing one of the plugs, but he can feel a blotchy hot blush creep up his chest and neck and cheeks when he steps out of his trousers and Bucky sees the stockings. Steve shoves them down, and then there’s nothing else for it; he twists hands in the hem of his shirt and pulls it off.

Bucky looks him up and down, Steve blushing hot at the long, lingering look Bucky gives the flimsy lace panties like Thor does. It’s enough to make him shiver when Bucky puts a hand on his elbow to pull him close, back into Bucky’s lap. He’s half hard and Steve nearly loses his nerve, but Bucky just leans in to kiss him and waits until Steve meets him. It’s soft and slow, something like Steve thought a first kiss might be like.

Steve feels every touch of Thor's hands on him as Bucky looks him over. He's got faint and fading bruises across his neck and chest, bite marks he never thought to hide until Bucky came back from the dead. The bruising around his wrist stands out brighter than ever, and Steve shivers when Bucky runs cool metal fingers down Steve's arm to rest on his wrist. Steve nearly pulls away, but Bucky holds him close and Steve's not strong enough to not go after wanting it so bad for so long.

Running fingers over Steve's shoulders, Bucky stops at the old lash scar Rumlow gave him all those months or years ago. It doesn't feel like anything, just dead nerves and strange smooth skin, but Steve closes his eyes when Bucky hesitates at it. “Did he—” Bucky says.

“You said you wouldn’t ask,” Steve said, unable to meet Bucky's look. Bad enough he knows what Thor's done to him, he can't bear the idea of Bucky knowing about Rumlow and all the rest too.

“Oh, okay,” Bucky says after a long pause. “Yeah, okay.”

Steve kisses him again before he can think better of it. Hands on Bucky's bare skin and Steve feels fever hot in the cool room, like this is all a dream, like Steve conjured it up from wanting it so bad. But Bucky's real enough, stubble sharp as they kiss and his teeth sharper still when he bites Steve’s lip around the ring.

Bucky runs a hand down Steve’s chest, stopping to thumb the little ring in his nipple, and Steve tries to shut out all thought of Thor. He thought of Bucky to get through everything with Thor, he’s not going to ruin everything with Bucky by thinking of Thor.
“You look good like this,” Bucky says, running fingers down the back of Steve's thighs, and Steve's chest goes tight. Straddling Bucky mostly naked, with Bucky still half dressed, Steve looks like the effete, painted fairy Thor likes. He’s just got plain little rings in his ears, but his eyes are lined and his hair’s braided with a blue ribbon. Steve looks down and waits for Bucky to trace fingers over his lips.

“Sorry,” Bucky says, not moving. “I just meant you look dangerous, like you could kick my ass. I'm sorry.”

Steve looks at him sideways, off balance.

“You okay?” Bucky says. “You still sure about this?”

Steve glances down at Bucky’s hands on his thighs. His right hand is warm and calloused, but in different places than Thor’s, and as heavy as the left is, Bucky rests it on Steve’s thigh delicately, not trying to keep him in place. Steve looks back up at him and swallows. “Yeah.” He’s wanted Bucky his whole life, he can’t back out now.

Bucky gives him a lopsided smile, pulling Steve in for a kiss as he pushes them up the bed. Steve fumbles with the laces of Bucky’s trousers as they kiss, and at least he’s done this part before. He thinks about sliding down the bed and taking Bucky’s cock in his mouth like he’s thought about doing for so long, but in the moment he can’t bear the thought of Bucky watching him do it, putting his hands in Steve’s hair and thinking about why he knows how to do it.

The realization that they’re going to fuck and Steve’s going to come from getting fucked crashes over him, horrible and shameful. There’s no going back on it now, not with Steve all but naked in his lap and Bucky kicking out of his trousers, cock hard in his soft drawers even if he’s still bothering to kiss Steve soft and slow. The stupidity of asking for this, from Bucky, washes over him and Steve can hardly stand the thought of Bucky seeing him like Thor and Fandral and Rumlow have seen him.

Steve pulls away to fumble for the little vial of oil he’s kept in his jacket pocket from when Thor used to be pleased with him, trying not to look at Bucky. He kicks out of the awful silky panties and turns his back to Bucky; better to get this over with, since Steve already asked for it.

He can feel Bucky shift on the bed, watching Steve slick up his fingers, and then there’s the sound of Bucky taking a breath as Steve opens himself up. Bucky doesn’t say anything, but he doesn’t have to, and at least if Steve’s on his belly Bucky won’t see him get hard or come from being fucked in the ass. His chest’s tight, but he tries not to think about it as he feels Bucky kick out of his drawers and kneel on the mattress beside him.

“How you want to do this?” Bucky says, and Steve has a hot flash of resentment. Isn't it enough that he's got his ass up to be fucked, he has to tell Bucky how to humiliate him too.

“You just stick it in,” Steve snaps.

Bucky laughs under his breath, hand on Steve's hip. His metal fingertips stroke over Steve's prickly-hot skin. “I know that,” he says. “But how do you want it? I don’t want to hurt you.”

It’s Steve’s turn to laugh, bitter. “You’re not gonna hurt me.” He hangs his head, eyes on the mattress so he doesn't have to see how Bucky's looking at him. “C'mon, just get it over with.”

“You’re avoiding the goddamn question, Rogers,” Bucky says, shoving him over so Steve's on his back. Bucky leans over him on one hand, a little dangerous with his metal hand right next to Steve's
head, and a little familiar like when they used to roughhouse. “What do you want?”

Steve reaches up before he thinks better of his own daring, twisting a hand in Bucky's hair to pull him down. Bucky goes easily, letting himself be pulled in to kiss.

It’s a heady thrill, making Bucky do what he wants so easily. He can feel Bucky’s coiled strength in just the half breath of resistance before he lets himself be pulled in, the whisper of the metal plates of his arm shifting with his weight as he leans over Steve. Even laying on his back, Steve can pretend that he’s got control of the situation the way he never did with Thor.

Bucky eases himself down to lie next to Steve, on his side so they can keep kissing. His cock’s hard and hot pressed to Steve’s thigh, nearly as big as Thor’s, and Steve twists towards him. Bucky shoves his right arm under Steve’s pillow and keeps kissing in the curve of Steve’s neck. He brings his knees up under Steve’s, curling around him so Steve’s on his back with his knees thrown over Bucky’s with Bucky’s metal hand on his thigh, drawing little circles on the back of his knee.

“This okay?” Bucky says against Steve’s throat, breath warm and cool fingertips skimming down Steve’s chest.

“Yeah,” Steve says, head tipped back. Better than okay. Bucky brings his right arm down around Steve’s shoulders, pulling him closer.

“You sure?” Bucky says, smoothing a hand over Steve’s thigh. “You’re not—y’know.” Steve’s barely hard, Bucky means. “We don’t have to if you don’t want to,” Bucky says, kissing along Steve’s shoulder.

Steve bites his lip and nods; there’s no good way of explaining that he still doesn’t trust this to be entirely real after wanting Bucky for so long, and the nerves are going straight to his dick.

Bucky makes a skeptical noise, skimming his metal hand down the inside of Steve’s thigh. He cups Steve’s cock, and that’s certainly real, nothing Steve ever thought to fantasize about. The metal is cool on Steve’s fevered skin even as Bucky touches him delicately, like he thinks Steve might break. Bucky breathes a laugh against Steve’s shoulder at the way Steve’s cock throbs in his hand, working him slowly to hardness as Steve twists against him to kiss.

Arm thrown over Bucky’s shoulder with Bucky’s cock pressed hot to the back of his thigh, Steve rocks into Bucky’s hand as best he can. Bucky’s as slow and methodical in bed as he was at wrestling, unmoving and steady as he kisses along Steve’s jaw and Steve kisses him desperately. Bucky’s broad and solid as a wall, everything Steve wanted him to be, the metal plates of his arm softly adjusting as his hand moves around Steve’s cock.

“C’mon,” Steve breathes, impatient. “Fuck me already.”

“Slow down, Rogers, I get to enjoy myself too,” Bucky laughs, rubbing his stubble over Steve’s shoulder. He circles the pad of his thumb over the head of Steve’s cock, being a goddamn tease. There’s something wrong with Steve, that the foreignness of Bucky’s metal hand is what does it for him, but it’s the most real part of all this, the thing Steve didn’t know to fantasize about, and it’s halfway comforting to know that Bucky wants him after everything that’s happened to both of them.

Bucky takes his damn time, combing fingers carefully through Steve’s hair, undoing the braid, running light fingers down Steve’s throat and chest and thighs. He kisses like he’s got all the time in the world, and in the safe quiet of his little room smelling like cigarettes and pomade, they might as well.
Steve lays a hand along Bucky’s throat, just above the warm metal of his collar, and tries not to think about it. It’s tempting to pretend that Bucky’s got both the hands he was born with, that Steve doesn’t have any of his bruises, that neither of them have a collar, that this is the first time for both of them, safe and drunk and giddy at home one night in 1938. It’s tempting like the bottle of whiskey Steve knows is sitting in Bucky’s footlocker, because pretending would let him feel warm and numb to all the sharp edges of the way this is happening now, with Steve’s heart racing every time Bucky’s hands skim over the shadow pain of one of the bruises Thor’s given him.

Instead, Steve leans into the edge of pain, because if it hurts like this, it’s because he’s really got Bucky, and not the empty fantasy of him. When Steve lifts his hips and reaches down to steady Bucky’s cock, Bucky doesn’t stop him, drawing in a slow breath as Steve eases Bucky’s cock into him.

Steve blows out a breath, tucking his face into the curve of Bucky’s neck. Bucky holds him tight, sinking into him but barely moving, lips warm against Steve’s temple. Smoothing a tentative hand down Bucky’s chest, Steve traces fingers down his scars and over his pierced nipple. Bucky lets him, starting to fuck him in earnest and shuddering when Steve brushes the piercing. Steve arches his back into it, spreading his knees as he thumbs Bucky’s piercing, and it’s a strange thing, to feel like he has some control of how Bucky fucks him.

Bucky tips Steve’s chin up to kiss, hand light on his chin, and this time it’s Bucky who kisses like he’s desperate. The world feels small and narrow, just the two of them in bed, and Steve feels narrowed down to his points of contact with Bucky.

He wishes more than anything that he could just stay there, selfish and wrapped up safe and never, ever having to think about anything outside Bucky’s room smelling of cigarettes and pomade and home ever again. Steve feels like he’s been carrying too much weight, a brick added every day, and he’s only just been able to put any of it down.

Bucky presses lips to Steve’s forehead. “You okay?” he says, voice rough.

Steve nods into the crook of Bucky’s neck, face hot and damp. He tries not to sniffle and ruin everything, but Bucky pets his hair and Steve loses his fragile control, taking a shuddering breath that turns into a sob.

Bucky starts to pull away but Steve clings to him, holding on tight so he can keep his face hidden in Bucky’s warm shoulder. “Don’t stop,” Steve manages. He’s just tired, is all, tired of trying to keep all his scattered emotions in check. “Please.”

Bucky holds him tight, both arms around Steve’s chest so Steve can hold tight with his arm thrown around Bucky’s neck and dig fingers into his back. It nearly hurts, being pressed so close and covered with the weight of Bucky’s metal arm, but Steve gasps ragged sobs as Bucky fucks him slow and steady. He buries his face in Bucky’s shoulder, wrapped up safe for once.

There’s something wrong with Steve, because he comes like that, crying into Bucky’s shoulder and clinging to him desperately. Bucky strokes his cock, fingers light as Steve tries to curl into him more tightly, and then Bucky’s coming too, holding Steve still as they both shudder through it.

Steve feels like he can breathe for the first time in years, loose-jointed and weak with Bucky breathing roughly against his temple. Bucky keeps petting him through it, broad hand over Steve’s mussed hair, down his shoulder and chest, over his thigh. Steve’s cock lays on his belly and twitches every time Bucky’s cock throbs in him, over sensitive and spent.

Steve rolls his head on the pillow, letting Bucky kiss down his chest as he leans over to grab his shirt
from the floor and wipe them both down. It feels good, letting Bucky fuss over him the way he never would have wanted before. Steve wipes his eyes with the backs of his wrists and then gropes for his own shirt off the floor to wipe his face carefully on the hem, where it’ll be hidden when it’s tucked in. He knows he looks a mess, but with the way Bucky’s looking at him with a half smile and lidded eyes, he can’t bring himself to care.

“You’ve always had shit timing,” Bucky says, rolling onto his back and pulling Steve with him to lie on his chest. Bucky traces fingers across Steve’s shoulders and Steve just lets himself float. He feels hollowed out, but lighter, like washing windows in the spring. “I always thought my first time would be in the back of a car or on someone’s couch listening for the folks to come home, but this wasn’t too bad.”

That jerks Steve awake, like a punch to the stomach. “But you went with all those girls— Didn’t you and Rose—” Steve starts, pushing himself up on an elbow and feeling sick.

Bucky laughs, reaching for his cigarettes on the floor. “Those were nice girls, Steve.”

“Sorry,” Steve says, curling away in the narrow bed. No wonder Bucky wanted to slow down; Steve’s no better than Fandral, ruining Bucky’s chance to have a normal first time with a nice girl. “I didn’t know you—sorry.”

Bucky drops the pack of cigarettes without pulling one out. “Oh, Christ, Steve, that’s not how I meant it,” Bucky says, pulling Steve back down to him. “I would have said no if I didn’t want to.” He bullies Steve to lay back down with his head on Bucky’s chest.

Steve spreads a tentative hand over Bucky’s chest, fingertips brushing the corded scarring where skin meets metal. “You sure?” He can hear Bucky’s heartbeat and the faint mechanical sound of small adjustments in the arm.

“Why would I want to with anyone but you,” Bucky says. He leans his cheek against the top of Steve’s head, trailing fingers up and down the back of Steve’s arm, solid and warm and real as Steve always wanted. Steve hooks a knee over Bucky’s, cheek pressed sticky hot to his chest. He falls asleep listening to Bucky’s heartbeat, slow and even.

Chapter End Notes

FINALLY. happy valentine's day!
Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

heads up, someone besides Steve gets hurt in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Steve wakes up with his nose pressed to Bucky's spine, arm wrapped around his waist. Bucky sighs and stretches against him, back popping before he cuddles back against Steve. He's so much broader than he ever was before, thighs near thick around as Steve's waist and all solid, dense muscle. Steve tightens his arm around Bucky's waist and presses close to him, like that will keep all the rest away. Bucky's warm as a brick wall in sunshine, and Steve basks in it like a cat.

Bucky puts a hand back on Steve's thigh, the metal blood warm. “Hey,” he says, rolling his ass back into Steve.

And that goes straight to Steve's cock like nothing has in a long time, Bucky laughing dirtily when Steve's cock throbs against the back of his thigh.

Steve scoots back away from him before it can get worse. “Sorry,” he says, turning his face down into the pillow and curling in on himself. “About last night.” They'd slept and ate supper without talking about it, then Bucky'd worked the knots out of Steve's back with his thumb and kissed him until he couldn't see straight, and Steve had cried some more from the sheer selfish relief of Bucky still wanting anything to do with him, and they still hadn't talked about it.

“Christ, Steve,” Bucky sighs, and rolls over onto his back. “We can do this til we're both old and gray, but you got nothing to be sorry about.”

“I know, but—” Steve starts, trying to pull away.

“Is there anything I'm going to say that'll make you believe me?” Bucky says, giving him that level look that's always gone straight through Steve's bullshit.

Steve props himself up on an elbow, something Thor would never allow him. Laid out, Bucky's vertiginously familiar, the line of his jaw, the curve of his mouth, even though Steve's never seen him from this angle. “I'm still sorry,” Steve says.

Bucky smiles his infuriating smile, the lamp-bright one that had always left Steve cold when he turned it on someone else, and reaches up to put a hand behind Steve's head and bring him down to kiss. If Bucky's familiar, this is wholly unfamiliar, feeling like Steve's got some control of the situation, like he could pull away and it would be alright. Bucky's hand at the base of his skull is warm and heavy, an easy, comforting weight.

So it's okay when Bucky pushes himself up and then rolls them over, kissing down Steve's chest as he lays Steve out. If it's a little too much like the way Thor does when he's pleased and taking his time, that's fine, because isn't it what Steve's been aching for this whole time? For Bucky to do what Thor does to him, for Bucky to treat him the way Thor treats him. Because of course this is what Steve wanted; he's hard in Bucky's hand, hiding his face in the curve of Bucky's neck.
“I can—” Steve says, trying to rearrange them so he can stroke Bucky's cock too.

Bucky laughs dirtily against Steve's chest. “Don’t rush me, I need the practice,” he says, and then rolls his palm over the slick head of Steve's cock like he doesn't need any practice at all. Steve takes a shuddery breath, imagining Bucky stroking his own cock like this, slow and tight and steady.

Bucky makes a pleased noise, dragging lips along Steve's exposed throat. His mouth is hot as a coal, and Steve shudders in his hands at the feel of his teeth dragging along Steve's collarbone.

Until reality comes crashing back down, and the horrible knowledge of what Thor will do when he sees a mark on Steve he didn't put there comes with it.

“Stop, stop, he’ll see,” Steve says, pushing away from Bucky frantically. Bucky jerks back like Steve slapped him, his face first blank with surprise and then dark when he realizes what Steve said.

“I’m sorry,” Steve says, trying to shrink into the mattress. He can’t keep himself from bringing a hand up, like he can feel where the bruise might be starting and rub it away. “He’ll know if he sees —”

Bucky’s jaw works, searching Steve’s face for something, and it’s all Steve can do to keep from shrinking away from him like he would Thor. “I won't, it's okay,” Bucky says after a minute. “Didn’t mean to scare you.”

Steve shakes his head, reaching for Bucky blindly. Without a window, it all feels dreamy-unreal, and in the dim light of the tarted up lanterns, he just needs to touch Bucky to know he’s there.

Bucky goes slow then, kissing down Steve’s throat. Steve might go pink from his sharp stubble, but nothing that will last more than an hour or so, nothing as dangerous as a bruise. Steve tugs Bucky over him, trying to make up for the awful reminder of where they are and who else touches Steve like this. Steve spreads his legs, tipping his hips up to take Bucky’s weight like he does Thor’s, hot and chilled together as Bucky settles over him, bracketing him in with his thick arms and his broad chest.

Bucky gives him a lop sided smile, sleepy and fond, hair hanging down around his face where it’s slipped out of his topknot. He’s still got little silver ribbons braided into his hair, like some prince in one of his pulp novels, and Steve tries to concentrate on that instead of Bucky’s callused hand on his hip where Thor digs in his fingers to lift Steve’s ass up to fuck him.

Steve sucks on his lip ring and tries to look like he wants it as Bucky reaches for the little vial of oil. He arches his back into it as Bucky teases him with two cool metal fingers, and if Steve had been going soft from nerves before, he’s not anymore. He hardly needs to pretend, and Bucky makes a gratified, possessive noise in the back of his throat as Steve arches into it.

Steve tells himself that it’s nothing like being fucked by Thor, that he’s getting what he wanted, even though he’s nearly choking on the claustrophobia of it, trapped with his face pressed to Bucky’s right shoulder. Bucky works him open, slow and methodical, while Steve tries to keep his breathing even. He curls a hand around Bucky’s left bicep, grounding himself with the feel of the metal plates of Bucky’s arm, reminding himself that this is what he wanted, that Bucky’s not Thor.

“You okay?” Bucky says, pulling back.

“I just—need to know it's you,” Steve says. He swallows hard and looks at his hand on Bucky's shoulder, face hot with the shame of it.

Bucky looks at him a long minute, like Thor deciding how mad he's going to be. And then the
moment passes, and he leans in to kiss Steve again, soft and slow like Steve isn't trying to keep from crying.

Then he puts an arm around Steve’s waist and hauls them around, turning so that Bucky’s sitting against the headboard with Steve straddling his lap. “I want to see you,” Bucky says when Steve opens his mouth, and Steve doesn’t protest that Bucky could already see him, that was the problem.

Instead, Steve lets himself be kissed again, resting his head on Bucky’s shoulder as Bucky kisses over his shoulder and strokes the backs of Steve’s thighs with light fingers. Even with his cock hard and insistent against the back of Steve’s thigh, he doesn’t rush, enough for Steve’s heart to settle again, the nervous jitter going out of Steve’s hands when he starts to trace fingers down Bucky’s spine. He breathes in the metallic sharp smell of Bucky’s skin, starting to rock against Bucky’s broad warmth as Bucky tugs the quilt up and holds it with one arm around Steve’s waist.

When Steve pulls back to lift himself up, Bucky gives him one of his lopsided, soft smiles, sleepy like they’re in bed on a Sunday morning before church. And then he squeezes Steve’s ass, because he’s an asshole.

Steve laughs despite himself, just the bare breath of a laugh before he’s sinking down on Bucky’s cock with Bucky’s hands on his ass holding his weight. With both of them trying not to laugh, it feels even more like home, and Steve doesn’t stop to think about it as he rolls his hips to take Bucky deep.

That finally wipes the smirk off Bucky’s face, and he holds onto Steve with one arm around his waist and one hand braced on the bed like he’s nearly out of breath. The look he gives Steve—hungry and wanting and worshipful all at once—it’s nearly a sin, and Steve tries not to think about that either, the huge, overwhelming thing it means.

Bucky saves him from that thought, leaning in to suck one of Steve’s nipple rings. He yanks Steve close with both arms around his waist, solid and heavy as Steve rides him, but not enough to keep Steve from fucking himself how he wants on Bucky’s cock. Bucky flicks the little ring with his tongue and thumbs the other with his metal fingers to make Steve’s nipples stand swollen to attention, and Steve combs fingers through Bucky’s hair coming undone. Bucky hisses, and Steve releases his hair.

“Sorry,” Steve says, pulling back.

“Fuck, no, do it again,” Bucky pants. He tilts his head, leaning into Steve’s fingers in his hair.

“Harder.”

Steve hesitates, and then reaches up to undo Bucky’s topknot. Bucky rolls his head, luxuriating like a cat as Steve combs his hair out with his fingers, smoothing out all the little braids with their beads and their ribbons. With his hair down, he looks half wild, but like something out of a fairy story instead of the feral monster. Bucky gives him a heavy lidded look as Steve twists fingers in his hair and starts to ride him again.

Balanced with one hand on Bucky’s metal shoulder and one hand in his hair, Steve feels almost light headed on the drug of pulling Bucky’s hair and feeling him shudder in response. It’s like a ripple through machinery, Bucky’s hands and arms flexing around Steve, his throat working with a breathy sigh. Steve’s cock rubs slick against his belly and the ropes of the bed protest as Steve drives him faster, Bucky’s breath coming short and fast.

Steve pulls his hair, hard, to expose the long line of his throat and his Adam’s apple standing out sharp against his skin. Bucky throws a hand behind himself, bracing with one hand on the mattress
as Steve fucks him faster, Bucky’s fingers twisting in the sheets. Steve keeps his head tipped back and leans in to kiss Bucky’s throat, his pulse hot and racing under Steve’s mouth.

Bucky makes a low noise as Steve kisses down his throat. He sounds somewhere between wounded and needy, pushed down too far to make out, his hand flexing on Steve’s waist without trying to slow or control the pace. Steve’s lips brush the cool metal of Bucky’s collar, moving past it to the hot skin of his shoulder, and without thinking it through, Steve opens his mouth to bite a dark mark just below the collar. In the split second as he does it, Steve knows he shouldn’t, that it will only invite trouble, but he can’t make himself want to stop. Bucky is his, and the jealous possessiveness is so consuming he can’t stand the thought of Bucky wearing a collar without a mark showing that he’s Steve’s.

Bucky comes then, his cock throbbing as Steve fucks him through it and sucks another dark mark along his collar bone. Bucky holds on for dear life, shuddering under him as Steve holds him in place by the hair and doesn’t relent. It’s a heady, dangerous thrill, making Bucky do as he wants without saying a word, and Bucky bending to it so easily.

Steve pulls Bucky up to kiss with both hands on his face, and Bucky makes that low, gut-punched sound again as Steve kisses him. Bucky puts a hand between them to stroke Steve’s cock as fast and desperate as Steve’s fucking him, and then Steve’s coming across both their chests and bellies, Bucky shivering with it as Steve comes on his cock. Bucky finally breaks the kiss to bury his face in Steve’s shoulder, shuddering as Steve twists fingers in his hair and rolls his hips to draw it out. There’s something wrong with Steve, that he enjoys making Bucky pant breathlessly against his shoulder by fucking himself on Bucky’s cock well after Bucky’s already spent.

When Steve’s finally done, Bucky flops them back on the bed, pulling the quilt up with them so that Steve’s head is pillowed on his chest with Bucky’s cock still in his ass. And god, Steve feels good for the first time in—a long time. Not just safe, but good, like he’s effervescent and can’t be weighed down by anything.

Bucky shivers minutely under him every time Steve moves, enjoying the power to make someone as strong as Bucky hiss and shudder with just fingertips traced over his ribs. Steve smiles against his chest, drifting as Bucky’s hands stroke his back.

“Barnes,” Loki says as the door opens at the foot of the bed, and Steve would have startled off the bed if not for Bucky’s arm around his waist. As it is, he flinches enough that Bucky’s softening cock slips out of him, leaving him feeling empty and used and like he’d rather bury himself under the stone floor than be seen like this.

“What,” Bucky says, flat and annoyed, barely lifting his head off the pillow to glare at Loki over Steve's shoulder.

“You're a terrible bodyguard,” Loki sniffs. “I could have been murdered in my bed.”

“I'm a great bodyguard,” Bucky says, stretching like Steve's not trying to disappear into the mattress. “You're still here, aren't you?”

“Fetch my breakfast,” Loki snaps and whirls out of there in a snit.

“What if you get murdered while I'm busy?” Bucky calls out after him. “Do you want your toast before or after you get murdered?”

“Christ, he's a pill,” Bucky says. “Almost crankier than you first thing in the morning.”
Steve lets that slide past him, scrambling for his clothes as soon as the door's closed. “He lets you talk back like that?” Steve says, pulling on his shirt like Loki’s going to come back through the door any second.

Bucky looks at him sideways. “Yeah.”

Steve has a hot flash of resentment before he catches up to himself, that he’s got to kneel and cringe and make pretty eyes for Thor, and Bucky can mostly be himself. It’s not fair, but it’s not Bucky’s fault it’s not fair. Steve keeps his face under control and pretends he isn’t watching Bucky dress sidelong like he used to.

In the footlocker, there’s the little fifth of whiskey Bucky got on Earth. Steve eyes it, wishing he could pocket it and keep it with him during the day, like being able to take Bucky and a sense of pretended safety with him.

“Steve,” Bucky says, following his look. Steve flushes to the roots of his hair and finishes buttoning his cuffs.

Out in the parlor, Loki’s still in his dressing gown, braid draped over his shoulder. He sits at a little breakfast table, frowning at the papers scattered over it.

Steve hangs as close to the wall as he can as Bucky goes to get the breakfast tray, over by the door where the steward must have left it earlier in the morning. Steve doesn’t see why Bucky had to fetch it from across the room; Thor gets his own breakfast once in a while, even if Steve has to kneel at his feet while he eats it. Bucky sets the breakfast tray down on the little table, laying a napkin across Loki’s lap with a flourish he must have picked up from his summer at the hotel restaurant. Loki gives him a look that could curdle milk.

Bucky drapes himself into a chair and Steve gawps like a country tourist. “Don’t hover,” Loki snaps at Steve. Bucky rolls his eyes at Loki and drags a chair over for Steve with the toe of his boot.

Steve perches on the edge of the chair, wary of what Loki’ll say about it. Steve’s never sat in a chair in Thor’s presence except for a handful of times, mostly to do his makeup or play chess against Loki by letter. This feels too much like chess, except Steve doesn’t know the rules.

But Loki doesn’t say anything, harping at Bucky because the kitchen sent up the wrong kind of preserves and the tea’s gone cold. Bucky ignores him and snaps right back that he could have gotten his own damn tea if he wanted it hot, and the whole thing feels old and well rehearsed, like the fight Mr. and Mrs. Barnes used to have about what brand of coffee to buy. Bucky pours Steve tea and passes him a little plate of sweet rolls, something puffed and round with cinnamon that Thor’s never had, and Steve tries not to gawk like he’s gone through the looking glass as they bicker back and forth. Steve picks at the sweet rolls, but the tea’s just tea, plain with milk, not the horrible bitter stuff Thor drinks.

“You haven’t checked the day's audience chambers yet,” Loki says after a while, without looking up from where’s scattered crumbs eating over his sheaf of papers.

“Pretty sure they're right where you left them,” Bucky says with his mouth full. Mrs. Barnes would have a fit.

“Check them anyway,” Loki says, nasty but not snappish, like they've done this routine before. “Just because you slept in doesn't mean I want to hand Schmidt an advantage.”

Bucky sighs heavily, pushing himself to his feet. But not before grabbing another roll. “Be right
back,” he says to Steve, and then abandons him there.

Steve sits there frozen like a deer in headlights, like all the air’s gone out of the room. But Loki just keeps right on ignoring him, like if he ignores Steve hard enough, Steve’ll just disappear with the rest of the furniture. Steve almost wishes he could.

“Why are you doing this?” Steve says finally.

“Having toast?” Loki says without looking up from the piece he’s buttering. “Eggs give me gas.”

“Covering for us.”

Loki gives him a pinched look. “Your Midgardian masters sent more of a challenge after all, and unfortunately you,” Loki says, pointing at Steve with his butter knife, “seem to be the key to it.” He turns back to buttering his toast sourly, then smiles nastily at Steve. “And it amuses me to know that my dear brother has less control over his toys than he thinks he has.”

Steve opens his mouth to say something else, but Loki cuts him off. “Go wash, before my brother notices you stink like a whore.” And that’s enough to send Steve to the washroom as fast as he dares, face hot as he wets a cloth and tries to clean himself up before Bucky gets back.

“You okay?” Bucky says later, when he finds Steve hiding in his little room. “You look like somebody walked over your grave.”

Steve just shakes his head. “Not feeling well,” he says. Bucky gives him a doubtful look, but squeezes his hand and lets him out the other door so he doesn’t have to face Loki again.

Walking back to the suite is like water draining out of a tub. So slow and gradual Steve hardly notices it until it’s halfway done, the heavy weight he always carries coming back to him without Bucky to buoy him. Fandral had said that Loki thought Steve was the reason Bucky got his memory back, but this feels like something else, something that no one’s quite said to Steve. And Steve wonders if anyone’s said anything to Bucky either.

It nags, like a stone in the bottom of his shoe, but then he’s rounding the corner to Thor’s suite and wishing that he had the fifth of whiskey to steady himself. It’s late enough in the day that Thor might be busy, and Steve might be able to stay out from underfoot until evening and Thor ignores him to fuck Pietro again. It might be fine.

And Steve knows it’s not, as soon as he puts a hand on the door, Thor’s deep voice carrying through the thick wood.

“I did not,” Pietro says, high and strangled as Steve opens the door. Steve hears him fall before he really sees it, the horrible dull sound of bone and muscle hitting stone, and it sounds so much worse when it’s someone who’s not him.

Thor stands over him, Pietro sprawled back on the floor with his hand on his face. When Steve rounds the corner, Pietro’s sprawled on his back at Thor’s feet. Steve knows exactly how it went without having to see it. There’s a half second where Pietro looks like he means to get up, shocked and angry before he remembers where he is.

“I did it,” Steve says before he thinks better of it. He can’t move, rooted to the spot with his hand still on the door knob.

Thor’s head snaps up; he hadn’t heard Steve come in. Steve makes himself stand there chin up and shoulders square even with his heart hammering, being as willful as he’d never dare to be on his
“Steven,” Pietro says, quiet, “do not—”

Thor doesn’t let him finish, crossing the room in two steps to grab Steve by the chin. “Where is it,” Thor demands. He’s angry as Steve’s ever seen him, all Steve can see as his face is yanked up roughly.

The ring, Steve thinks, and it’s all he can do to keep his eyes from guiltily jumping to the wardrobe. “I don’t know,” Steve says. In the corner of his eye, Pietro pushes himself up on his elbows, putting himself just where Steve can see him without catching Thor’s attention. Pietro glances back to the main room, towards the bookcases.

Thor backhands Steve across the face. Not hard enough to knock him over, but enough to feel the drag of the ring leave a welt. Not the ring, then. A book.

“Where is it,” Thor demands again, shaking Steve against the door.

“I don’t know,” Steve says again. At least it’s not a lie this time.

Thor releases him, letting Steve stagger back against the door. He gives Steve a long, measuring look. “You, he says to Pietro without taking his eyes off Steve, “fetch a belt.”

Pietro scrambles to his feet even as Steve swallows back the sudden tightness in his chest. It’s dangerous, keeping his chin up, but looking Thor in the eye is what got him there in the first place, so there’s no use hiding the anger and resentment on his face now. For one stupid, feverish moment Steve balls his fists at his side and lets himself imagine fighting back.

Thor sees it on his face, of course he does. “You do not know,” he says, voice flat.

“No,” Steve says. Keeps his chin up. As scared as he is of another belting, he knows how it'll go and how much it'll hurt. Might as well walk into it with his chin up.

Pietro comes back with a belt, not the broad one Thor whipped Steve with before, but a thinner one. Pietro doesn’t know how much worse it will hurt; he probably thinks he’s doing Steve a favor. Steve swallows but stands his ground.

Thor takes the belt from Pietro, weighing it in his hand as he looks Steve up and down. He folds it in half. “What,” he says, using the belt to tip Steve’s chin up, “did you do with it.”

“Nothing,” Steve says. It’s not even a lie, and he manages to keep his voice even and look Thor in the eye.

Thor looks him over.

He hooks two fingers into Steve’s collar like a recalcitrant dog and drags him through the suite, Pietro trailing after like he doesn’t know what to do with himself. Steve has to hustle to keep from being dragged, and stumbles against the foot of the bed when Thor throws him against it.

Steve recovers and makes himself stand up straight, and knows that the look on his face is dangerous. Thor wants him simpering and obedient even if he has to beat the tar out of Steve to get it, and Steve’s mad enough to spit nails even if Thor intends to thrash him and then fuck him dry over the foot of the bed with Pietro watching. It’s not fair and Steve’s incandescent with the effort of holding all of his useless anger in check this long.
Thor pulls the chain out from the foot of the bed where it’s been coiled, and Steve lets himself be chained, practically vibrating with how mad he is. He’s still got enough sense to not come up swinging when Thor shoves him, but only barely.

And then Thor just—turns his back on Steve. He advances on Pietro, who glances from Thor to Steve and back again, and then Pietro decides to bolt.

Too late, though; Steve sees the decision on his face at the same time Thor grabs him, and then it’s too late. Thor shoves Pietro’s jacket and shirt off him, rough like he means it to hurt, and grabs him by the wrists to tie his hands with his own shirt. Thor shoves him down over the arm of the divan, so that Steve can see him and so Thor can tie Pietro’s bound hands to the leg of the divan, stretched so that he’s half kneeling on the divan and stretched with his back exposed. Pietro jerks against Thor’s hands, but Thor fists a hand in his hair and shakes him.

Steve doesn’t really believe it's happening until the first sick crack of the belt lands across Pietro's back. Pietro must not have believed it either, a strangled sound escaping him before he bites it back. Thor hits him again, and this time Pietro just sucks in a sharp breath through his teeth.

“Where is it?” Thor demands of Steve.

“I don’t—” Steve starts, too shocked to say anything else.

Thor’s arm comes down and Pietro shudders with the blow, flickering like he’s not really there. But he’s real enough, the next crack of the belt drawing an angry red welt across his shoulders.

“I did it,” Steve yells, jerking against the limits of his chain so hard it chokes him. He can’t get close enough to throw himself in the way and Thor knows it. “I did it, don’t hurt him, I did it,” he yells, scrabbling frantically at the collar, choking himself on it.

“Then where is it,” Thor snaps, not pausing. Pietro can’t brace against the blows and Thor layers them over one another without spacing them out. Rumlow did the same, beating Steve until his back had been bloody shreds, but Pietro won’t heal like Steve did.

“I don’t know, I don’t know,” Steve says. “Please don’t hurt him, please—”

“Where is it,” Thor demands again. He digs fingers into Pietro’s hair and jerks his head up so that Steve has to look at him, and the only sound in the room is Pietro’s ragged breathing.

Pietro and Steve look at each other. Of course Pietro took it, whatever it is, Steve knew that. But now there’s no way out. Pietro knows it too, and he just gives Steve this tired, scared look that might as well be a reflection of Steve's. The sick, foreboding smell of ozone fills the room, like a building thunderstorm, like what Thor did to Bucky that paralyzed his arm. If Bucky walked away from that, there’s no way Pietro will.

Steve looks from Pietro to Thor, who’s as mad as Steve’s ever seen him. There’s nothing Steve can say that will save Pietro, because Thor knows Steve’s lying. Steve can see it on his face, Thor daring him to keep up the lie if this is the cost. And then he releases Pietro’s hair, cracking him across the shoulders with the belt.

There’s blood. Steve can’t tell how bad, but beneath the roar in his ears and Pietro’s strangled cry, he registers drops of blood across his face as Thor raises the belt again.

“I lied,” Steve yells, strangled where he’s choking himself against his collar, because that’s what Thor wants to hear. “I lied, I don’t know where it is, please don’t—please—”
Thor brings the belt down again.

“Stop—” Steve yells, strangling himself so that the bedframe groans with it, and there’s a horrible crackle in the room, like lightning racing across the walls. Steve staggers back, hands over his eyes, at the sudden crack of thunder in the room, and can’t look because he’s a coward, ill with the thought of what he’s done to Pietro.

When Steve forces himself to look up, Thor’s not looking at him or Pietro, arm outstretched holding the hammer, vibrating in air. For a vertiginous, sick second, Steve’s afraid that Thor’s called it to use it on one of them, but he’s actually straining against it like he’s trying to push over a brick wall.

Pietro twists around to stare despite the bleeding welts across his shoulders, wild eyed as Steve feels. He and Steve both startle when the hammer finally drops to the floor with a dead clang, Thor breathing harsh like he’s just run a marathon. There’s a long, heavy silence that follows, neither of them daring to move.

“Get up,” Thor says to Pietro without looking at him.

Pietro jerks away from him, but his hands are still tied to the arm of the divan. Thor finally turns on him, the belt forgotten at his feet, and unties the knot holding Pietro, hand on his collar the whole time like he knows Pietro’s going to bolt at the first chance. He shoves Pietro stumbling before him without letting him pull on a shirt, and then the door of the suite slams closed behind them.

Steve sits and stews, somewhere between angry with himself and out of his mind for Pietro. With Thor in that temper, he’d be surprised if Pietro would be walking after Thor got done with him, but Thor’d never taken Steve out of the suite before. He preferred to do things behind closed doors, in private so that out in front of people he could act like Steve deserved it. Easier to be magnanimous and generous when everybody else just saw Steve acting sullen and ungrateful.

What Thor’s doing to Pietro, and what he’ll do to Steve when he gets back, Steve doesn’t want to guess. Steve worries at the chain out of habit, but it does no good.

The hammer sits where Thor left it like an accusation. Steve stays away from it, the room still stinking of ozone, and tries not to think about how much it would hurt if Thor used it to break his fingers. The belt lays beside it, and that's bad enough.

Thor comes back after a couple hours, long enough for Steve to work himself back around to angry. Steve lifts his chin and looks Thor in the eye when he comes back without Pietro. His knuckles aren’t bruised and he hasn’t got blood on him, but that doesn’t mean much.

Thor eyes Steve over, still mad but not incandescently so as he had been. Steve sets his jaw and holds his look.

“What am I to do with you?” Thor says eventually. He sounds more tired than anything else, and that more than anything gets Steve’s back up, like he should just forget that Thor beat Pietro bloody. Thor pulls a chair over to sit in front of Steve, leaning down with elbows on knees to look at him.

“Where’s Pietro?” Steve demands. Chin up, looking Thor in the eye, even if he doesn’t dare stand up to him for real. Bolder than he ought to be if he knows what’s good for him, but he’s got little enough left to lose.

“I decided to be rid of him, as I should have done with you long ago,” Thor snaps.

“He didn’t—” Steve starts, and jerks back when Thor takes a book from his cloak and throws it at Steve’s feet.
“He gave \textit{that} to a Midgardian spy,” Thor says. Jack. Steve knew Pietro had taken it, he just hadn’t put the pieces together. “You did not know,” Thor says.

Steve looks up at him blankly. He knew, if he thought about it for longer than half a second, which he didn’t before throwing himself between Thor and Pietro, and he’s not sure if knowing would have stopped him anyway.

But now Fandral’s got no reason to get Peggy or Pietro’s sister off Earth. “Where’s Pietro?” Steve says faintly.

“I gave him to Fandral,” Thor says, annoyed. “Better than he deserved, if what you said of Schmidt’s plans for the rainbow bridge is true; had the spy gotten out of the keep with that, Schmidt would have an easy path to Asgard. The two of you are dangerously foolish together.”

Steve hunches his shoulders, feeling seasick. He failed Peggy just like he failed Bucky. Pietro’s told Fandral about Jack, their only hope of getting Peggy and Pietro’s sister off of Earth.

Thor just watches him, and Steve can’t bring himself to meet his look again. The quiet stretches out strained and thick so that all Steve can hear is his own heartbeat in his ears. He feels hot and claustrophobic, like a building fever buried under too many blankets.

“You knew he had done something,” Thor says after a while.

Steve glances up at him; he doesn’t sound or look angry, though it hardly matters.

As Steve watches, Thor winds the belt around his hand just in front of Steve’s face, so that there’s nothing else to look at. It’s still got Pietro’s blood on it. Thor folds it in half in his hand, so that there’s just a short strop. “You are not one of Schmidt’s creatures. And yet you would defy me and lie for Pietro,” Thor says, touching the length of the belt to Steve’s face. His cheek is burning hot against the cool leather.

Steve closes his eyes. It’s not fair. He doesn’t even like Pietro. “You were going to hurt him,” Steve says. It was stupid and impulsive and Steve knows he’ll regret it once Thor stops talking and just beats the tar out of him like he did Pietro, but Steve knows just as well he’d do it all over again without even thinking about it. It’s none of it fair, and that’s why he did it.

“I would not have had to if you had not been defiant,” Thor says, like it’s the most reasonable thing in the world. Like it’s Steve’s fault Pietro got hurt.

Thor had already hurt Pietro. He was going to hurt Pietro regardless of what Steve did, regardless of whether Pietro deserved it, like he had Steve before. Steve should just keep his mouth closed. Thor wants to think of himself as magnanimous, as generous and kind, and Steve ruins that with his defiance and his unhappiness.

“You were going to hurt him,” Steve says again, eyes still closed. He doesn’t need to see Thor hit him to know it’s coming and he doesn’t have to agree that it was his fault.

Thor watches him for a while, silent and weighing. It’s like a physical thing, the weight of his regard, huge and overwhelming. Steve almost wants to tell him to get it over with, but he’s not that stupid yet.

“I have never failed to break a horse, a dog, or a slave,” Thor says after a while, low and even. “You will not be the first to defeat me.”
Steve keeps his eyes down, tracing the smooth joints of the stone floor. He thought he'd been broken a long time ago. He feels broken.

Thor just leaves him there to think about that.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not dead! Just busy with life, but still chipping away at this. and omg this is over 150k, but we're closing in on the home stretch <3 <3 <3
“No, I forbid it,” Thor snaps over his game of cards with Fandral. Sitting across from him at Fandral’s knee, Pietro flinches. Steve keeps his eyes on the cup of beer in his hands, because he’s not stupid enough to react. Pietro got what he wanted and got to escape when it wasn’t what he thought it would be, so there’s no reason for Steve to feel sorry for him now. Even if his back probably hasn’t healed up yet.

“Oh, come now—” Fandral starts. Leaning against Fandral’s chair, Pietro’s all easy, slouching lines except for his hands, white knuckled resting on his knees.

Thor throws down his cards, pointing an angry finger at Fandral. “I gave him to you so that they would be separated.”

“It was an innocent mistake with no harm ultimately done, and I will supervise them besides—”

“No,” Thor snaps. He sits back in his chair, and Steve can feel his anger even if he can’t see it. “I suppose you support Loki in this assassination foolishness against me as well.”

Fandral gives Thor a pinched look. “You know I must be loyal to the Winter King as well as the Summer—”

“Enough.” Thor says, waving that away. “The winter court is nearly over and I will not lend out Steven. Tell me your news of the winter hold or take your leave.”

Fandral lets himself be redirected, looking put out. If Steve worries how he’ll see Bucky now, it’s a small punishment for not being able to save Peggy. Steve did his best to try to save Peggy, but his best wasn't enough. Just like it wasn't enough to save Bucky. Steve can only hope that they aren't doing to Peggy what they did to Bucky and try to drink himself to death in the mean time.

“Another,” Thor says, handing Steve his cup so that it's barely an inch from his nose. Steve struggles to his feet, drunker than he thought. His hands ache and his knuckles pound.

“Yes, master,” Steve says, not caring if it sounds snotty.

It gets him exactly what he expected, which is a pop on the cheek. Thor doesn't even look at him, but Pietro flinches. Steve doesn't bother keeping his face under control, scowling when Fandral flicks fingers at Steve and Pietro gets up at the unspoken order.

Steve ignores him, not interested in whatever Fandral wants him to do. Pietro got what he wanted, and if there's one good thing about this whole stupid mess, it's that Steve doesn't have to let himself be fucked by Rumlow on Fandral's say-so anymore.

Even so, Steve can feel Pietro and Fandral both watching him as Steve pours first Thor's beer and then snatches Fandral's cup out of Pietro's hands to pour that one too. Steve won't let himself be tempted back into whatever foolishness Fandral wants from him on the promise of seeing Bucky.
again. Bucky’s better off without him, anyway, doing a job where someone gives a damn what he has to say.

Pietro takes Steve’s hand and squeezes it briefly, out of view of Thor and Fandral behind the table. “Are you okay?” Pietro says sotto voce, without looking at Steve.

Steve can feel the weight of Thor watching him. “No,” Steve says to Thor’s beer. “Are you?” Steve says under his breath, glancing at Fandral, who’s smiling at Pietro. Fandral looks so damn pleased with him, Steve can’t help but be jealous that Pietro finally got what he wanted, even if Steve saw what he got before that.

Pietro smiles back at Fandral, looking for all the world like he hasn’t heard Steve. “No,” Pietro says then, blithe and quiet and barely there. And Steve has no idea what to say to that, but then Pietro’s gone back to fold himself against Fandral’s chair, head against his thigh.

Steve spends the rest of the evening trying to pick that apart through the fog of his own self hatred.

“I care even less for your sullenness than for your willfulness,” Thor says as soon as Fandral and Pietro are out the door. He yanks Steve down to kneel between his legs, yanking his chin up roughly. Steve just looks up at him mulishly, because what’s it matter now.

Thor pulls his hair, shaking him. “I tire of your brazen defiance—”

“Well I’m pretty sick of you too, pal,” Steve says, pig-headedly drunk. Thor gives him a good crack across the cheek, sending him sprawling back across the stone floor.

Thor stands and digs the toe of his boot into Steve’s side like he’s aiming a kick. “Then you may spend the night here with no supper,” he says, and leaves Steve there in the front room with the cold ashes of the fire.

“Yes, master,” Steve says to his back nastily, and has a vicious little thrill at the catch in Thor’s step as he pretends not to notice, because it means Steve’s getting under his skin. Steve can’t do anything else, but he can do that, even if it’s a petty, hollow consolation.

With Pietro sent away, the little bed they were supposed to share was sent away too, so Steve sleeps poorly on the divan until Thor comes to cuff him off it in the morning. Between sleeping cold and the slap to the back of the head every time he moves too slowly or sullenly for Thor’s liking, his head hurts, his neck hurts, his back aches, and his knees are stiff and smarting. And his own fault, the wicked hangover he gave himself makes him slower and sorer still. It’s not a petty victory he can afford to win often, but Thor’s aggravation is nearly worth it.

With Steve still wearing last night’s rumpled clothes, Thor dumps books and sheafs of paper on him to juggle. Steve drops a bundle of papers across Thor’s feet just as they’re out the door and gets his ears boxed for it.

It’s a game, then, how badly Steve can fumble all of Thor’s papers, how much he can mix up their order every time he picks them up off the floor, how many times he can drop a book in the corridor and then be sent back to fetch it while Thor waits impatiently to cuff him across the back of the head. Steve’s dizzy with having his ears boxed by mid-morning, but Thor knows he’s being deliberately clumsy, and knows that Steve’s goading him into doing something about it. It’s its own kind of satisfaction watching Thor grind his teeth about how much he’s willing to do in public, even if Steve knows it will be worse when Thor takes him back to the suite.
It’s also worth the satisfaction of baiting Thor into being short tempered and irritable all through his meetings. “I will not reconsider, as a matter of policy—” Thor shouts at some minister or other, standing to pound on the table. A few months ago Steve might have been scared of his temper, but he’s so far past scared now. Thor’s just a bully.

Loki breezes into the room just then, Bucky on his heels as Loki stops in the doorway to raise his eyebrows. Thor glares at him; Loki’s wearing the silver circlet he likes to swan around in when he particularly wants to get Thor’s goat over the whole Winter King thing, and Steve can practically hear Thor grinding his teeth.

“Am I interrupting something?” Loki says cheerfully, smiling like a fart in church.

“I was reiterating to thegn Aevar here,” Thor says carefully, “that it is not the policy of Asgard to create mökkurkálfi to fight our wars.”

“But it is the policy to send thralls to fight our wars?” Loki says sweetly, gesturing at Steve as he sweeps by to take his place at the head of the table.

“It is not the same and you know it,” Thor snaps, banging his fist on the table again. He snaps his fingers at Steve. “The blue volume, fetch it,” he says without looking at Steve.

Steve makes a show of rummaging around in the stack of books and papers, shuffling through each and every one while he tucks Skáldskaparmál, The Language of Kennings, into his jacket. “I must have dropped it somewhere, master,” Steve says innocently when the pile’s been sifted through twice, ignoring the way Bucky stiffens when Thor cuffs him across the back of the head.

“Find it, and do not dawdle, stupid creature,” Thor snaps, rapping the top of Steve’s head with his knuckle. Steve takes his chance to catch Bucky’s eyes and tilt his head at the door as he leaves, holding his breath for Thor to call him back.

The sound of shouting follows him down the corridor, barely muffled by the closed door. Thor and Loki, at it over ethics as though either of them is one to talk. At least Loki’s honest about what he wants to do about Earth.

Steve listens for footsteps behind him but doesn’t hear anything, not Thor’s heavy walk or Bucky’s light tap-tap in his dancing shoes. But a glance behind him and there’s Bucky shadowing him, silent as the grave, because he’s not fully his old self anymore, down to the soles of his feet. Steve catches his eye and ducks into a quiet alcove, half-hidden from the corridor by a broad sweep of velvet curtains half tied back. He puts his back to the stone wall, trying not to think about how much time they have and counting it in heartbeats anyway.

Bucky rounds the corner looking fit to burst, somewhere between sick with worry and ready to kill someone. “Steve, what the fuck. What’s going on, are you—”

Steve pulls him down by his coat lapels, yanking him into the shadow of the niche to kiss him hard. Bucky lets him, following where Steve pulled him, all that dense muscle of him Steve's to shove around. Steve can feel Bucky’s stance loosen as Steve pushes him around to shove against the wall, practically climbing Bucky to wrap arms around his neck and kiss him like he's dying.

“Christ, Steve, fuck, I miss you too, but what—”

Steve doesn't let him talk, fistling a hand in Bucky's hair to keep kissing him. Bucky finally gets with the program, hoisting Steve up so Steve can wrap legs around his waist. He's hard as Steve, cock huge and pressed against Steve's ass.
“Don’t know when I’m gonna see you again,” Steve says, fumbling with the clasp of Bucky’s coat. “No time right now before I gotta go back, hurry up and fuck me.” He can’t open Bucky’s jacket and kiss him both like this, especially with his legs around Bucky’s waist and Bucky’s hands on his ass, but he can feel Bucky’s hard cock thrub through their clothes.

“Here?” Bucky says, nearly dropping Steve with how hard he startles back, but his back’s against the wall.

“Yeah,” Steve says, and bites Bucky’s ear. That gets Bucky with the program, shuddering where he’s trapped between Steve and the wall, and he starts fumbling with the laces of Steve’s trousers.

When Bucky finally wraps a cool hand around Steve’s cock, holding him up with his other hand under Steve’s ass, it’s all Steve can do to keep himself quiet. He buries his face in Bucky’s neck, holding on for dear life. Their breath sounds loud in the little alcove, the rustle of their clothes taking up all the space and Steve’s breath hot against Bucky’s neck. Bucky’s silver collar is cool and hard just where Steve wants to bite him, so Steve shoves Bucky’s jacket open further at the collar to sink his teeth into Bucky’s shoulder.

It half feels like a fight, like both of them trying to get the upper hand, as Bucky uses his hips and Steve’s weight to set a punishing pace as he bounces Steve like they’re fucking and Steve claws at Bucky’s jacket and hair to hold on and kiss him roughly. Steve’s too impatient to do it nicely, kissing Bucky all teeth and insistent biting as Bucky strokes his cock roughly.

Steve comes into Bucky’s hand messily, Bucky jerking him in sharp strokes through it as Steve fists a hand in Bucky’s hair to kiss him. Steve’s skin feels tight and electric, like he hasn’t finished even though he’s just come, and he slithers out of Bucky’s hold when Bucky breaks away to take a breath.

“What—” Bucky starts as Steve gets on his knees, but then Steve’s got the laces of his trousers undone and his mouth on Bucky’s hard cock. Steve should feel bad, that this is another of Bucky’s first times and Steve’s just charging ahead, but there’s something wrong with him that the minute hiss Bucky makes when Steve first licks down his cock is more satisfying than finishing himself.

With all the time in the world, Steve would tease Bucky to tears licking the tip of his cock and then riding him until they both finished. But as it is Steve settles for circling his tongue over the huge head of Bucky’s cock and then teasing the ridge of his cock with his teeth, so that Bucky curses and holds himself rigidly still against the wall. There’s something wrong with Steve, too, that more than anything he wants the power to take someone as big and controlled as Bucky apart with just his mouth, to see him come undone.

Steve nearly gets it when he swallows Bucky deep, Bucky’s hips jerking as he fists hands in Steve’s hair, to fuck his mouth or keep from chocking him. Steve knows which and pretends it’s the other, taking Bucky deeper and swallowing around him just because he can.

Bucky yanks his hair, too sharp, repeatedly, and when Steve finally stops, he can hear why—Loki and Thor coming down the corridor, Thor’s heavy footsteps and Loki’s lighter. Bucky’s metal hand is pressed to his mouth, and Steve’s heart beats rabbit fast as their footsteps get closer. Steve and Bucky both hold perfectly still except for Bucky’s cock throbbing harder in Steve’s mouth.

“It’s time to finish this game with Pierce and Schmidt,” Thor says, just the other side of the curtain as they come down the corridor. Calmer now, but how quick will that change when he finds Steve on his knees with Bucky’s cock in his mouth. The curtained little niche feels claustrophobic, Steve looking up at Bucky and watching for the light to change on the stone wall behind him.
“It was your idea to court them in the first place,” Loki snaps back. “And now you want to change tactics just as we are about to get what we want? I've nearly broken their Ubermensch program, and soon we'll be able to create as many loyal creatures as we wish.”

“You've yet to break your creature,” Thor says, “or the assassin.”

“Yes, and how long has it been since you wielded the hammer?” Loki asks, voice light and silky smooth like he’s sliding a dagger in.

“None of your concern,” Thor snaps back, raw.

“It's my concern if we face an invasion and you can't wield it,” Loki snaps. “It hasn't got anything to do with all the bruises your little pet's got, has it?”

“It's not your concern,” Thor repeats. Low and dangerous enough it makes Steve shudder. Bucky swallows sharply, practically vibrating against the wall.

“Well, it won't be my concern at all in a few weeks. Then the king of Asgard can do whatever he likes and damn the consequences, because that's worked out so well in the past, hasn't it?” Loki says nastily, and starts walking away.

Thor, impossibly, laughs at that, like there's a joke in there somewhere as he follows after Loki. Whatever he says, he's too far away for Steve to hear it, and besides all his attention's dragged back by Bucky taking a juddering breath like he's coming back to life.

Steve doesn't waste any more time then, swallowing around Bucky's cock. Without a piercing, it's easy to take him to the base, and Bucky chokes and curses when Steve looks up at him. Steve knows how he looks with his eyes lined and his hair braided back with ribbons, but all that matters right then is how much he wishes he could take his time with this and really make Bucky sweat.

Bucky comes undone all at once, fingers twisted painfully in Steve's hair with one hand braced back against the stone wall. Even swallowing around him, Steve can't keep some of it from dripping down his chin, and Bucky finally draws back to wipe Steve's face for him. Steve licks his fingers clean, holding Bucky’s look while he hollows his cheeks around Bucky’s fingers. Then he mouths the head of Bucky’s still half-hard cock, making him curse under his breath and tip his head back against the wall.

Bucky finally hauls Steve to his feet and just clutches Steve against him, breathing like he's run ten miles as Steve kisses a dark bruise below his collar. Standing on tip toes with his hands twisted in Bucky’s jacket collar, he can almost pretend they’re in an alleyway back home, sneaking off after going to the movies. It feels like such a tame little thrill after everything else.

“You’re gonna get caught,” Bucky says finally, still sounding breathless.

“I know,” Steve says, and kisses him one last time. Then again, quick and chaste, before ducking out of the little curtained niche while Bucky’s still righting his clothes.

The long weeks of skulking around looking for pulp nonsense hidden passages paid off in some ways, because Steve knows the keep well enough to skirt around where Thor and Loki were headed and circle back so he can plausibly look like he went in search of the book. He fixes his hair as he runs, and anyway he looks suitably disheveled to look like he ran halfway through the keep.

He catches back up with Thor and Loki in one of the smaller corridors leading back up to the suites, with a small knot of functionaries trailing after them now. Steve skids out of a side passage, the soft little leather slippers he has for shoes making him slip slide across the smooth stone. Book in hand,
he hurries after Thor, who gets one look at Steve and goes back to glowering. Somewhere along the way Bucky melted out of the shadows, everyone’s attention directed at Steve huffing to a stop at Thor’s elbow.

“Useless,” Thor says, rapping the top of Steve’s head.

Steve feels triumphant, giddy on the sex and getting away with it, but his mood’s dampened by Bucky giving him an admonishing look as they’re both pulled along in Thor and Loki’s wake. It’s like the liquor; Bucky doesn’t know what it’s like, when it’s the only thing keeping Steve afloat.

Thor hands the book over to Loki and takes his leave; Steve doesn’t look for Bucky’s reaction. The aftereffects will be bad as a hangover, prolonged and painful, but worth the temporary respite.

Thor yanks Steve along by the ear, Steve hopping and skipping stupidly to keep up without getting his earrings torn out. Thor doesn't shorten his stride any, just gives Steve a sharp yank when he stumbles, and shoves Steve before him into the suite. Steve keeps his feet this time but scatters the sheafs of paper trying to keep his balance, righting himself with one of the books held in front of him like a shield. They’ve done this too many times.

Thor stalks past him, dropping himself into a chair by the cold fireplace to glower at Steve.

“Pick it up,” Thor says, a dismissive snap at all the scattered papers and books.

Steve kneels to gather up the papers, not bothering to put them in any kind of order because he’s not supposed to understand them. Thor watches him like a gathering thundercloud, and Steve doesn’t think he’s being punished for sneaking off with Bucky, because he wouldn’t be given time to wonder about it if he was.

“You are trying to be punished to justify your petty resentments,” Thor says finally while Steve’s picking up the last few sheets of paper, kneeling at his feet. “Pietro was disposed of better than he deserved.”

Steve looks up at him mulishly. There’s nowhere to even start, from whipping Pietro for trying to protect his sister to choking Steve as a convenient prop. Steve’s petty resentments have piled up for so long there’s no start or end to them. So he just says, “Yes, master.”

“Why must you be so stubborn?” Thor demands, reaching out to shake Steve by the hair. “You were so charming and eager only a few weeks ago.”

“Why can’t you use the hammer?” Steve says. “Master.”

It's the right response, or the wrong one, depending on how you look at it. If it's unfair that Thor knows Steve well enough to take apart by now, well, it's only fair that Steve knows Thor well enough to land that one where it hurts. And if Steve wasn't sure before, the look on Thor's face says that the two questions have the same answer and he knows it. He wants to think of himself as so kind and magnanimous, but Steve's not playing along.

Thor stands so suddenly Steve's sure he's going to be hit. “It is not your place to question me,” he says.

“Yes, master,” Steve says, and that does it. There’s nothing Steve can do right in this situation and no reason to try anymore, now that there’s no saving Peggy, so he may as well throw Thor’s hypocrisy back at him.

Thor grabs him by the hair so Steve’s bent painfully back, gasping for breath. “I do not wish to hear
another word from you until I command it,” Thor says. “You are too insolent for a creature only
good for fucking.”

“You’re nothing but a bully,” Steve says.

“And you,” Thor says, dragging Steve across the floor to the wardrobe, “are nothing but a slave.
And a foolish, ungrateful one at that.” Thor shakes him again and chains him there, out of reach of
the bed as though Steve would even want a blanket from him. And Thor’s right; Steve can’t even be
grateful to Loki that Thor just ignores him instead of giving him another slap, because why should he
be grateful. Thor wants to make Steve as stupidly devoted as his hunting dogs, but he wouldn’t beat
them and then expect them to fawn all over him. Steve gives Thor a mutinous look, because Steve’s
the one who’s leashed in the same clothes he wore night before last with no hope of supper, but Thor
can’t meet his look as he leaves the room.

In the morning, the steward packs away all of Steve’s things. Before Thor left for the day, he gave
Steve a piece of bread and a cup of beer for breakfast, so Steve watches the steward gather up his
things with nauseous detachment. Sitting with his back against the stone wall, knees drawn up and
wrists balanced on his knees, Steve watches the steward carefully pack away his paints, make up and
jewelry into his old footlocker. He has a few minutes stomach churning worry that the false ring
buried in his clothes will be discovered when those get packed away too, but the steward doesn’t go
near the wardrobe. So Steve won’t be made to go naked just yet.

The last thing the steward packs up is Steve’s sketchbook and bible, left stacked neatly under the side
of the bed he usually sleeps on. The steward hesitates, and Steve gives him the same flat,
unimpressed look he gave Thor that morning.

Except that the steward’s less ruffled by it than Thor; he comes to the wardrobe and tucks them far
under it, where they aren’t visible except to someone sitting on the floor. Then he goes back to his
business, locking up the footlocker and putting it away far out of Steve’s sight in the little alcove
where his makeup table used to be.

The only evidence of Steve left visible in the suite is the drawing Thor tacked to the side of the
wardrobe ages ago. Steve takes that down himself once the steward leaves, crumpling it up and
kicking it out of sight under the bed.
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bread and beer and a riding crop, that’s all Thor thinks it’ll take to change Steve’s attitude. Nothing to eat but bread and a cup of beer in the morning and sitting alone all day. When Thor comes back in the evening, he’s got a riding crop in his hand and Steve gives him a flat, challenging look.

“Up,” Thor says, and without giving Steve time to even react, he cracks the switch across the soles of Steve’s bare feet. It hurts like hell, a throbbing burn that hurts worse as soon as Steve stands and puts weight on it. The cool stone floor doesn’t make it feel any better, too rough and hard. Thor gives him another switch across the backs of his calves for his trouble, and it still stings like hell even through his trousers.

Finally unclipped, Thor points him at the books scattered around the suite and sets Steve to stacking them up while Thor sits down to his dinner. Steve gets another switch to the backs of his arms or legs if he doesn’t move quick enough for Thor’s liking, made to run while Thor sits back and watches him. As soon as all the books are stacked up, Thor gives him another stinging switch and makes him stack them one by one to the other side of the room, and flicks the riding crop at Steve’s heels every time he passes.

Between his stinging feet, his empty stomach, and the hard floor where he’s chained back to the wardrobe, sleep’s impossible. But it’s nothing compared to the first few weeks of bootcamp, sore from endless pushups and jumping jacks and running. If Thor means to train him out of his stubbornness like a stupid animal, he doesn’t know who he’s dealing with.

So Steve does everything stupidly and gracelessly, refusing to do anything he’s not explicitly made to with the riding crop. “Beer,” Thor says one midday, taking his lunch at the suite working through a stack of papers. He sits at his desk writing, riding crop on one side and Steve sitting at his feet on the other. He hands Steve the cup, and switches the side of his thigh when Steve doesn’t get up fast enough.

Steve goes and fills his cup, but then he stops and stands by the jug across the room, waiting to be told what to do.

A minute, two. Five. Steve can tell Thor knows what he’s doing from the tension in the way he writes, pointedly pretending to ignore Steve. They could be at this all day, but Steve’s got nothing but time and Hydra taught him infinite patience sitting in that dark box waiting to get hauled out and experimented on. Thor’s nothing.

Pushing on ten minutes, Thor breaks first. “Fetch it here, you stupid creature,” Thor says finally, turning in his chair to snap fingers at Steve. The crop’s in his other hand, just waiting for Steve to get close enough.

It hurts like a brand, hot and sharp where he catches Steve on the upper arm. But Steve was expecting it, so he doesn’t flinch.

Instead, he takes one step more to get close enough. Then he says, “Oops,” and spills the entire cup of beer over Thor’s boots.

That gets him a slap, hard across the face so that he’s knocked down kneeling at Thor’s feet with
beer soaking into the knees of his trousers by the time his ears have mostly stopped ringing. Steve half-shakes his head, expecting the crop next. He looks up at Thor, daring him to hit him again.

Thor looks him up and down, that weighing, disapproving look he gave Steve the first day. “How do you expect all this to end?” Thor says finally. “That you will annoy me into surrender and I will simply send you back to Midgard with a fond farewell?”

“That send me to Svartlfheim, I don’t care,” Steve says.

Thor makes an annoyed noise and leans forward on his knees to look Steve in the eye. “I shall not send you anywhere, because you are too much of a liability now. On Midgard, how long do you think it would be before Schmidt snapped you up and tortured everything you know of Asgard out of you? Even on Vanamaheim or at liberty on Asgard, his agents would hunt you.”

“I'll take my chances,” Steve says, mouth dry, because yeah, that's what he thought, but no, he hadn't really thought that nowhere would be far enough.

Thor sits back with a huff. “You are a stupid, ungrateful creature. You are pampered and protected for your own good, and yet you are resolved to be unhappy.”

Steve tips his chin up. He’s too tired to even laugh at the absurdity of it anymore, of Thor calling this pampered. “Would you be grateful?” he says instead.

Thor gives him another long look up and down. “I would not be coward enough to let my enemies take me alive.”

That’s worse than being slapped again and Thor knows it. Steve nearly can’t get his breath, mad because he wants to deny it and mad because it’s true. “You don't know anything about me,” Steve says finally.

“I do not need to.” Thor stands and kicks off his boots, dropping them next to Steve. “Clean this up, you foolish rabbit, and have my boots polished by the time I return.”

Steve polishes them, but badly. He leaves polish streaks all over the toes and leaves them wet and stinking of beer just close enough to the fire to get warm but not dry out. Hopefully they’ll mildew.

Left alone in the suite and chained to the wardrobe, Steve’s got nothing but his bible and his sketchbook, even his pen taken away. He tries to re-read the Sermon on the Mount, but his heart’s not in it, too mad to concentrate. Instead he thumbs the corner of the pages, a bad habit that’s left the pages rifled and browned from how often he used to do it.

He’s usually distracted when he’s doing it, a nervous tick while he’s reading, but he’s got nothing else to focus his attention on now except the minute little tick marks in the corners of the pages that add up to letters when he flips the pages quickly. Hidden, so that Hydra rifling through his things or Thor reading his letters wouldn’t see it. The cross of an x here, the bar of an s there.

On closer inspection, it’s tiny, precise letters in what can only be Peggy’s neat handwriting, and Steve’s heart beats faster as he flips through the pages looking for them. Exodus 3; he knows for a fact that she never touched his bible while he was still on Earth, but where was his footlocker in the twenty-odd years between then and it arriving on Asgard?

Steve flips to Exodus and stares at the page. Moses and the burning bush, same as it ever was.

Did Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the
backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

End the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

Said the LORD, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Steve feels stupid and slow on between his hungry belly, being knocked around, and the morning’s beer on an empty stomach. That’s the point, to make him too stupid and slow to do anything but what Thor tells him. He shakes his head, reading the whole chapter again.

And again.

It’s full of typos, he finally realizes. He never read Exodus enough to remember it by heart, but the beginnings of the verses are off. The familiar litany of *Ands* is jumbled around, replaced with poorly typeset misspellings.

Dear S.

Reading down the page, it’s as loud as shouting when Steve realizes to look for it.

Dear S.,

Our mutual friend D. said you need a new pair of boots.

Once you cross the bridge, click your heels together three times to open the way: H. thought it was a good joke.

Be well; you owe me a dance.

That’s it, a brief note typeset to look like misprints, nothing that would be obvious to Hydra or Asgard and the whole cypher of new pages bound in to look like it had always been there. Steve’s heart pounds in his throat as he searches the bible for any other note from Peggy, but there’s nothing.

So Dottie really did work for Peggy, that’s the first thing that hits him.

The pieces that click into place don’t entirely make sense: if Dottie worked for Peggy, then Peggy had a hand in ordering the assassination attempt on Thor. Dottie tried to kill Thor after Steve passed on the news that they were going to use Bucky against Hydra. Dottie was a double agent, maybe, working for the SSR and Hydra both.

Most importantly, Peggy’s alive. Or, alive when the footlocker was sent, and still working with Howard Stark. Rumlow never gave Steve any proof that Hydra had Peggy, only threats, and the footlocker—and the bible—arrived on Asgard after Rumlow threatened to hurt her. Steve can hardly breathe with the mixed relief and realization of Rumlow’s lie. Steve had no way of knowing it, but the thought that she’s been safe and working for the SSR this whole time turns his stomach with relief and all the things Fandral and Rumlow made him do because of it.

Between the fake ring and the magic boots, he’s got a way home if he can just get Bucky and get out
of the keep. Next thing he just needs to sell a cow for some magic beans and hope Thor doesn’t grind his bones for bread. And next time Hydra gets him, they won’t be taking him alive.

Annoyed as Thor is with Steve, he still doesn’t like carrying his own shit, so Steve has half a hope that he’ll get to see Bucky when Thor dumps a sheaf of papers on him one morning to carry. “Speak, and you will regret it,” Thor says, and clips a leash to his collar.

“Yes, master,” Steve says snottily, and gets a pop on the mouth for it.

Tugged along out of the suite, Steve keeps his head down, half out of mortification, bedraggled in the same clothes from—two nights ago, when he decided to sass off in front of Pietro and Fandral. Barefoot and in his shirtsleeves, too, because Thor’s just as petty as Steve is, and took away his shoes and jacket.

But Steve keeps his head down half because he knows he looks pathetic, hollow-eyed and bruised, stumbling barefooted after Thor, and people look. Not just at him, but at Thor, even if Thor’s too pig-headed himself to acknowledge it.

Better still when Steve has to sit through court at Thor’s feet. Bucky’s nowhere to be seen, but probably just as well, because he’d get himself killed trying to rescue Steve. With Loki holding court in that stupid crown and Thor behind the throne where Loki used to lurk, Steve’s put on display for everyone to see. Thor means to shame Steve with it, but more fool him, Steve’s so far past shame he’s out the other side.

Being put on display at Thor’s feet like a half-drowned cat means that he can see out in the crowd, including Pietro and Fandral. Pietro looks happy enough, and Fandral plays with his hair instead of paying attention. Pietro’s got no bruises that Steve can see, and he’s even got a new coat. He can see Pietro glance to and away from Steve, trying to look Steve over without catching Fandral’s attention. Pietro’s got nothing to complain about.

Except—well. Fandral’s attention shifts, and up on the dais, Steve sees before Pietro does. They’re too far away to see well, but the Nazis stand out in their SS black like a blot of ink, Rumlow among them. Steve watches Fandral say something in Pietro’s ear, hand on his chin like it’s sweet nothings, except for the way Fandral points Pietro at Rumlow.

So Fandral’s pimping out Pietro like he did Steve. Pietro starts picking his way through the crowded hall towards them, and Steve’s stomach feels heavy with dread like it’s him. Hydra hasn’t got Peggy; they might not have Pietro’s sister, either. The lie helps Fandral as much as it helps Rumlow, even if they aren’t both on the same side, because it gives Fandral the leverage to use Steve and Pietro against Rumlow. Steve wonders if Fandral knew the whole time; he said Peggy would be on Asgard soon.

Thor raps Steve on the top of the head and gives him an annoyed look; Steve hadn’t even realized he’d leaned forward.

There’s nothing Steve can do, about any of it. Steve squints, but can’t quite make out what happens. Pietro and Rumlow talk, Pietro staying out of arm’s reach of Rumlow as much as he can in the crowd, but the SS goons circle around him like jackals. Rumlow reaches out to ruffle Pietro’s hair and then Pietro turns on his heel, walking stiffly away as Rumlow and his goons laugh. Fandral looks pleased with whatever Pietro tells him, and Pietro looks sick to his stomach. Steve loses track of them after that, Fandral walking Pietro away with an arm possessively around his waist.

After court, Loki slips back with Thor, not bothering with glad-handing through the crowd like Thor
did. He sweeps Thor and Steve both along in his wake through the back rooms behind the audience hall. Thor walks briskly and keeps the leash so short Steve has to jog to keep up, hopping and skipping on his bruised feet so he doesn’t stumble and stranggle himself.

Loki gives Steve a withering look as they walk. “Really?” he says to Thor. “You can’t keep your creature under control better than this?”

Thor actually blushes, winding his hand around the leash. “Do you have actual concerns, or do you mean merely to snipe at me?” Thor says. Steve dawdles at the end of his leash so Thor has to tug him along, pettily glad that he’s embarrassed.

“I want to borrow your creature,” Loki says, and Steve's heart nearly stops, before it starts again in a juddering staccato. Bucky.

“What for?” Thor says.

“What do you think,” Loki snaps back nastily, like he hadn't just asked a favor. Steve’s stomach lurches in his throat. That can’t be what he means; he has to be covering for Bucky.

“No,” Thor says, walking on without a look back at Steve. “Your creature will hurt him.”

“My creature is on Midgard,” Loki snaps back. He’s not covering for Bucky, and Bucky won’t be there to stop him turning Steve inside out or fucking him, whichever he means to do. Light-headed on just the piece of bread that morning, Steve jerks back on the leash without meaning to.

Thor gives Loki a thoughtful look, and then stops to give Steve half a glance. Looks pleased at the stricken look on Steve’s face. “You promise you will only hurt him a little,” Thor says to Loki.

“When have I ever lied to you?” Loki says with a sidelong smile. Steve tries to keep himself under control; maybe Bucky’s not on Earth after all.

Thor rolls his eyes.

“I'll turn him into a frog and step on him, would that please you?” Loki snaps. “Lend him or not, I don’t care.”

“I want him back in the morning, whole,” Thor says, handing over Steve’s leash. “And not a frog.”

“A snake, then,” Loki says. Thor snorts a laugh at that, and then abandons Steve there with a sharp rap on the top of his head.

Loki rolls his eyes at Thor’s back. “Take this, it's embarrassing,” Loki says, tossing the leash into Steve's hands. “Come along, I told Barnes he’d have a reward if he did well.”

Steve keeps his mouth shut as they walk, not sure how nervous he should be. Every time he sees Bucky, there’s the risk of Thor finding out, and Steve has no confidence in Loki protecting either of them when it happens.

Mercifully, Steve doesn’t have to wait to find out what Loki actually wanted to borrow him for; they go to Loki’s suite, followed directly by a heavy knock on the door. Loki waves Steve at it, and Steve has to all but jump out of the way as it swings open.

Bucky staggers in surrounded by a knot of four guards, looking totally unlike himself. Or, looks exactly like he did when the SS dragged him in at the end of a leash, long hair wild, feral in his
muzzle and black leather. His eyes flick over the room and settle on Steve with that same focused, wild intensity as when he was the monster, and Steve takes a half step back despite himself.

“Soldier,” Loki snaps, and Bucky glances at him but just turns back to Steve, advancing heavily. The guards shuffle uncertainly around him.

“Bucky?” Steve says.

“Soldier,” Loki says again. “Kneel.” Bucky takes another slow step towards Steve and Loki puts up a hand. “Kneel,” he says, bringing his hand down with the sharp ozone smell and unreal pressure Steve’s only felt when Thor called the hammer.

Bucky falls to his knees with the same heavy, dull crack as the night Dottie tried to kill Thor.

Loki crosses the room and puts a hand on Bucky’s face, positioning himself between Steve and Bucky. He unbuckles the muzzle and tosses it away. “Is it done?”

“Yes, master,” Bucky says, dull. He sounds drugged or dazed, unfocused now that Loki’s hands are on him. It’s the kind of Ahnenerbe nonsense Zola was after, perfect obedience at a touch.

“The last of the winter soldiers on Midgard is dead, my lord,” one of the guards says. “But we ran into trouble with the widows.”

“They’ll be dealt with soon enough,” Loki says with a flick of his wrist. “Leave.”

Bucky leans into Loki’s hand on his face as the guards filter out, and they look intimate as lovers. Loki strokes Bucky’s hair, holding his face like he did the first time Steve saw this, when Bucky was the monster, but Bucky sighs like he’s falling asleep, the pained, tense lines of his face easing. Steve didn’t think they were fucking—thought Bucky would have said something, thought it would be impossible for Loki to force Bucky if he hadn’t seen this. But seeing them like this feels like catching them fucking, too intimate. Bucky’s eyes roll up in his head and he shudders, leaning forward until Loki lets Bucky collapse against his legs.

“Up,” Loki says after a minute of letting Bucky catch his breath, nudging him with the toe of his boot. “Your reward,” he says with a sneer of distaste.

When Bucky picks up his head, the look he gives Steve is somewhere between hunger and the feral, spotlight intensity of the monster. But then he says, “Steve?” voice rough from smoke and overwork, and it’s all him.

“Don’t be late with my breakfast this time,” Loki says, and raps Bucky on the top of the head like Thor does Steve, but Bucky doesn’t seem to mind it. Steve goes to Bucky and at Loki as he helps Bucky up with one of Bucky’s arms over his shoulders, but Loki just swans off.

Bucky’s a wreck. They’re sure a pair. Steve rolls Bucky onto his bed and peels him out of the unfamiliar leather armor, all fiddly buckles and straps while Bucky protests that he can help and mostly just gets in the way. He smells like electrical fire and gun powder and blood. Steve kicks Bucky’s leather jacket into the corner and goes to fetch a basin of water, giving Loki the stink eye the whole way and getting it right back.

Bucky’s laid out on the bed when Steve shuts the door, shirtless and smoking one of his Luckys. They could be at home, if not for his pierced nipples and wild hair all over the pillow.

“You okay?” Bucky says, looking Steve over as he sets down the basin next to the bed.
And Steve’s—not. No worse than sometimes, the riding crop doesn’t bruise much, but Bucky’s still not quite together enough to take in Steve’s bare feet and lack of make up.

But for once, he’d like to pretend to be okay. Steve strips out of his shirt so it doesn’t get dirty and smiles down at Bucky. “Just let me take care of you for once,” Steve says.

Bucky coughs a little laugh, but he lies back and lets Steve work. The blood's mostly not his, and the rag comes away dark as the water gets progressively dirtier. Steve goes carefully around his scarred shoulder, watching Bucky’s face as he relaxes more into himself, the last tension of the monster coming away with the dirt and blood.

“Could get used to this,” Bucky says when Steve bullies him to sit up and wipe down his back. Steve pinches him, but then he makes up for it by digging his thumbs into Bucky's shoulders. Bucky exhales, leaning forward with wrists balanced on his knees and hair hanging in his face. His neck and shoulders are full of tense knots, and it feels good to be able to do something concrete. Feels good too, to do something active, not have to be the one petted and dependent.

With Bucky more or less clean, Steve nudges him down to sit on the floor with his back against the bed so Steve can take care of his wild hair. There’s not much to be done about the electrical fire smell without dunking him in the bath, but Steve combs the worst of the knots out carefully and grabs the box Bucky points to when he asks for a ribbon. It’s a box in the footlocker right next to the whiskey, and Steve tries not to look at it for too long.

The little carved box is full of ribbons and beads and little decorations, almost as much as Steve’s jewelry box. “You vain asshole,” Steve laughs, picking out a couple of plain silver ribbons and a handful of beads, a concession to Bucky’s vanity. He smiles down at the top of Bucky’s head as he starts braiding a small section of hair. “You need a whole harem of slave girls just to do your hair.”

“Slave boy,” Bucky corrects, head bent. “Just the one.”

Steve doesn’t know what to say to that. He hasn’t really let himself think about what might happen between them when they make it home, and the implication that Bucky might not go with girls any more makes him uneasy. It’s too much responsibility, like Steve’s ruined something Bucky never had and neither of them will go home to a normal life. Steve knows he won’t, but he needs the fantasy of Bucky going home more than he wants to admit to himself.

Steve ties off the last of the little braids, gathering the hair around Bucky’s face so it’s half tied back, and realizes too late that he’s done Bucky’s hair like Thor does his. Bucky rolls his head on Steve’s thigh to look up at him once it’s tied off. Hair wild and half braided back, he could be some barbarian warlord out of a pulp novel like Thor, especially with that heavy lidded smile he gives Steve.

Bucky turns on his knees so he’s kneeling between Steve’s spread legs, and Steve’s heart kicks in his chest with mixed desire and fear just watching the movement. Bucky circles broad arms around Steve’s waist and lays his head in Steve’s lap, breathing deeply like he means to go to sleep like that. Steve pets his hair, trying not to think about the whiskey in the footlocker.

“Too tired to fuck you tonight,” Bucky says after a while, turning to slant a look up at Steve.

“'S okay,” Steve says, trying not to sound disappointed. He tries not to think about whether the awful risk of Thor finding out is worth just this, but of course it is.

Bucky turns his head to kiss Steve’s palm. “You want to instead?” Bucky says.
“Want to—no,” Steve says, recoiling as he realizes what Bucky means. “You don’t want that,” Steve says.

“Why not?” Bucky says, sitting back on his heels to look at him. “You like it.”

“I don’t,” Steve says, pushing away from Bucky with his face hot. He pulls his knees up on the mattress.

“The fuck do you mean you don’t like it?” Bucky says.

“It’s filthy and degrading,” Steve snaps. “You’re not like that.”

Bucky looks at him like Steve just slapped him. “You think it’s degrading?” Bucky says, slow and careful. “I’d’ve never touched you if you told me that.”

Steve half shakes his head, trying to clear it. “That’s not—it’s not the same. I already—you don’t have to be—used. Like that.”

Bucky stares at him like he didn’t hear. “You—” Bucky starts, and stops again. “You let me fuck you because someone else fu—used you?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Steve says. He can’t look at Bucky, and he wishes he could shrink in on himself. “You’re not wrong like that.” Because there is something wrong with Steve, that even after Rumlow and Thor and Fandral have used him, he still wants to be fucked, and he can’t do that to Bucky.

“Yes,” Bucky says. “I want you to fuck me because I love you and I trust you. It doesn’t mean anything else.”

Steve can’t breathe. “You—” he starts, finally looking up at Bucky.

“You heard, me, Rogers,” Bucky says, pushing up so he can kiss Steve. He’s slow and overwhelming, big hands on Steve’s jaw.

“You really mean it,” Steve says when Bucky lets him catch his breath. He’s not even really sure which he means.

“Yeah,” Bucky says, kissing along Steve’s collar bone. “Unless you’re gonna be a lazy asshole and make me do all the work.”

Bucky gives him a knowing look, glancing up as Steve’s cock throbs against his lips. He’s got every reason to be as vain as he is, beautiful in the low lamplight. With the little silver beads and ribbons catching the light, his gray eyes look lighter, and Steve’s pulse picks up when Bucky shoves Steve’s trousers off him and stands to kick out of his own. Steve backs himself up the bed and Bucky follows, predatory, and Steve thinks for a minute Bucky might have changed his mind.

He settles his weight in Steve’s lap, though, the heavy bulk of him solid and hot with Steve’s cock pressed up against his ass. It’s—a good view. Bucky’s balls press against Steve’s stomach and his thick cock stands up between them, easy to stroke lightly and make him shudder. Steve’s cock throbs at the movement. He kisses along Bucky’s broad chest and his pierced nipples, tentatively feeling his
way forward. It feels a little too like playing pretend with Thor, but as far from it as could possibly be. Bucky’s solid and real in his lap, the muscles of his thighs tensing as Steve runs light hands down his back.

Steve puts a hesitant hand on Bucky’s ass, muscled as all the rest of him. Stalling, if he’s being honest with himself, unsure of how to start. The vial of oil’s right there, for one, and he doesn’t want to hurt Bucky.

Steve hesitates, torn between needing to know how delicate to be and needing to let Bucky have whatever privacy he wants to keep. “Have you ever—have you and Loki?” Steve says against Bucky’s shoulder.

“Have we fucked? No,” Bucky laughs, and then swallows it guiltily. “He kissed me once, but it didn’t go anywhere,” Bucky says. He pulls back slightly to give Steve an abashed look.

“He kissed you?” Steve says, feeling like the floor’s shifting under them.

“I meant to tell you,” Bucky says, like Steve’s caught him at something. “We were fighting about something, I shoved him, he kissed me. I told him to back off and he’s been pretending like it never happened ever since. I swear it didn’t mean anything, Steve.”

Steve tilts his head against Bucky’s shoulder, not sure if he’s relieved or wildly, hatefully jealous. It’s not fair to Bucky, that a small, vicious part of Steve hates that it was so easy for him to say no. “It doesn’t matter,” Steve says, and kisses Bucky’s shoulder until he lets himself be pulled close again.

“Sorry,” Bucky says. “You know you’re the only one for me.”

Steve strokes a hand down Bucky’s thigh, the gesture unfamiliar. “It’s not your fault,” Steve says. It feels like vertigo, the realization of what Bucky was saying when Steve confessed all the ugliness to him and Bucky still wanted to touch him in spite of it all. It wasn’t his fault.

Bucky lets himself be kissed, slow at first, like he’s easing into the idea of Steve’s hands on his face. The whole thing feels slow and strange, like they’re both doing this for the first time. Which—maybe it would have been like this at home. Slow, a little awkward with their teeth clicking as they try to figure out how to kiss at a new angle. Bucky’s stubble is a familiar scratch and burn against Steve’s lips, and Bucky’s cock throbs when Steve’s hands unconsciously tighten on his thighs.

Bucky finds a rhythm, rocking as they kiss so that his cock rubs wet against Steve’s belly and Steve’s cock pushes up against his ass. His weight is solid and unfamiliar, knees spread so that he can bend to kiss Steve without crushing him. With Bucky’s hand on his face and kissing like he means to lead, Steve feels a little bolder. He skims a hand down Bucky’s chest, playing with the warm metal of his piercings and dragging fingers down his thighs.

Steve fumbles for the little vial of oil with Bucky kissing down his neck, and makes himself uncap it without hesitating. Bucky knows his own mind.

“Tell me if it hurts,” Steve says against Bucky’s shoulder, and gets a kiss in answer. Metal arm smudged with dirt and hair wild, Bucky looks anything but fragile, but Steve can’t bear the thought of hurting him.

Oil on his fingers, Steve takes a breath against Bucky’s chest. His thigh is huge and muscled under Steve’s hands, muscle smooth as he shifts restlessly. A minute shiver goes through him when Steve carefully presses one oiled finger to him, stroking gently. Bucky’s cock throbs, wet with precome as he arches his back and smears the head of his cock across Steve’s belly.
“’m not made of glass,” Bucky mumbles, trying to push back on Steve’s fingers. Steve huffs a laugh against his shoulder and keeps teasing him, just slick fingertips and a couple of kisses as Bucky twists in his lap.

Bucky blows out a breath when Steve finally pushes the tip of one finger into the tight heat of him, his head bowed against Steve’s. He feels furnace warm all over, lips against Steve’s face as Steve fucks him with just the tip of one finger, just barely teasing. He takes a second so easy, arching his back into it and rolling his hips.

“I can—do more if you lie back,” Steve says, kissing Bucky’s chest. The only problem with Bucky grinding on his lap like this is Steve’s too short to properly open him up at this angle.

“This is fine,” Bucky says, taking the oil to slick Steve’s cock. The tight heat of his hand and the promise of what he wants is nearly too much, every muscle in Steve’s body tight with how much he needs Bucky.

“You sure?” Steve says.

“Not going anywhere til you fuck me, Rogers,” Bucky says, and rolls his ass like he means it. Kissing Steve deep, he pushes himself up on his knees with Steve’s cock steadied behind him, and starts to sink down slow.

He’s so overwhelming it takes Steve’s breath away, the slow, tight heat of him on Steve’s cock like his body’s been narrowed down to just the sensation of Bucky’s weight and warm closeness. Steve hides his face against Bucky’s chest, arms wrapped around him as Bucky rolls his hips and adjusts, fucking himself slowly as he gets used to it. He rolls his hips in shallow little movements, sinking down on Steve’s cock by tiny increments until his weight is fully in Steve’s lap again.

Bucky breathes slowly, gone still with Steve’s cock fully in him. Steve feels like he’s vibrating out of his skin, burning with Bucky’s weight and every little pulse of his body.

“You okay?” Steve says, smoothing a hand down Bucky’s back.

“Yeah,” Bucky says, breathing out, and Steve can feel some of the tension go out of him. “Just hurts, give me a minute.”

Steve feels a traitorous wave of—directionless anger, or useless grief. No one ever gave him the chance to stop, and all the times it hurt—it’s nearly overwhelming, the thought of all the ways it didn’t have to be. The idea that his first time—every time—could have been like this, with Bucky, nearly drowns him. Steve can feel every minute movement that goes through Bucky’s body as he breathes and lets go of the tension in his shoulders and spine, and the intimacy of it takes Steve’s breath away. It’s so much more intimate than he was willing to admit to himself, when he didn’t want to let himself think about what exactly had been taken from him.

Bucky kisses him again, and Steve tries to put his selfish anger away, or at least to the side. It’s not fair to Bucky, who deserves better than Steve ever got. Bucky kisses like they’ve got all the time in the world, like his hair isn’t wild and stinking like electrical fire. He kisses like he’s just put off his uniform coat and his sergeant’s cap is hanging on the chair, like he’s still clean-cut as a movie star in Steve’s sketchbook. He rocks on Steve’s cock in short, abrupt movements, not quite finding a rhythm.

Steve gathers up his hair, pulling Bucky down so Steve can suck dark marks along his throat and collarbone. Bucky shudders as Steve tightens his hand in Bucky’s braided hair, and the easy way Bucky lets Steve pull his head to the side makes the knot of want and grief in the pit of Steve’s
stomach loosen a little. One hand in Bucky’s hair and one hand on his thick thigh, Steve guides him into a rhythm, heart beating fast with the way Bucky just follows his lead.

And God, he’s beautiful, perfect in every way Steve could have asked for. The familiar unfamiliar strangeness of the ways his body has changed, the metal arm, the pulp fantasy place they’re in, all underlines how damn lucky Steve feels to have Bucky as much the same as he ever was at home, for all that they’ve both changed. Steve nips a little bite to the small expanse of smooth skin between Bucky’s scarred shoulder and the cool silver collar, then kisses the mark as Bucky rides him.

Bucky’s rhythm falters when Steve finally puts a hand on his cock again, stroking him feather light and slow the way Bucky likes, and Steve can feel every shiver that goes through him. Steve teases the ridge of his cock, letting Bucky thrust into his hand and fuck himself on Steve’s cock.

Steve feels the ripple that goes through his entire body first, and then Bucky’s cock spills in his hand. Bucky kisses him desperately, clutching at Steve like he’s drowning, beautiful and breathless with it.

“Too tired, huh?” Steve says against Bucky’s mouth, stroking Bucky’s cock slick with his own come, enjoying the feeling of Bucky shuddering and twisting in his lap. He doesn’t look too closely at why he likes it, why he wants to keep Bucky like this, overwhelmed and desperate, because there’s something wrong with him.

Bucky finally takes Steve’s wrist and moves his hand to Bucky’s ass, taking control and surrendering control all at once as he shifts his weight so Steve can thrust up into him. Coming down like this, he’s so loose and pliant, and lets Steve fuck him as much as the angle will allow. Even with Steve’s fingers tight on his hip, Bucky kisses dreamy-slow.

It’s the way Bucky shudders and arches that pushes Steve over the edge, Bucky’s body going tight around him a second time as Steve pulls him close and holds him there. The feeling of marking Bucky, of claiming him so completely, is overwhelming and intoxicating, and Steve hides his face against Bucky’s chest to avoid looking at it too closely. Bucky kisses the top of Steve’s head, petting him artlessly, both of them drunk on it.

Steve cuddles against Bucky’s chest after, letting himself be draped over Bucky in the narrow bed. They both eat supper like starving things, and it’s enough to let Steve forget his sore feet and aching back. He’s got Bucky, Peggy is safe, and they’ve got a way out. Everything is going to be okay.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 34

Chapter Notes

All aboard the whump train, things are Not Okay in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sometime in the middle of the night, Bucky's sitting in the dark, smoking. "You okay?" Steve says, swimming back awake in the half dark.

Bucky slants a look at him, the red light from the cherry of his cigarette catching on the silver in his hair and his piercings. "Didn't mean to wake you," he says, and shifts so that Steve can curl against him. "Just trying to put my head back in order," he says as Steve settles against him.

Steve's stomach is cold. "Because of what he did?"

"Him?" Bucky says, gesturing with his cigarette where Loki is sleeping on the other side of the door. "Nah. He just . . . you know down in the Bowry, they shuffle so the right cards always come up on top? He does that, but it's all still there. This is more . . . I have to figure out how to put the house of cards back together. You should get some sleep."

He pets Steve's hair like that, until Steve does fall back asleep.

Bucky's not quite all together himself in the morning either, subdued even with Loki sniping at him. He gives Steve a sideways look as Steve eats more than half the breakfast tray himself, but doesn't say anything about it except to snap at Loki for whining about it.

So Loki retaliates by marching them out of there early for court, flicking Steve's leash at Bucky to deal with. They deposit Steve in the warren of antechambers behind the audience hall, leash looped over some statue for Thor to find him, like a stray dog.

"You okay?" Bucky says, lingering in the door to the final anteroom before the audience hall.

And Steve wants to say he's not, almost says don't go. Going back to Thor now feels like going back in the lion cage, just waiting to be eaten. If it doesn't happen right away, it will eventually.

"Barnes," Loki snaps behind Bucky. "Soldier," he says when Bucky doesn't move, and Bucky goes stiff at the sound. "Heel," Loki says nastily, and Bucky half turns, heavy, like he's half asleep and not sure what he's doing.

"I'm okay," Steve says, because Bucky's still looking at him, halfway between that blank, accepting obedience when he's the Soldier and the tight, focused anger the night he punched Thor. His look clears a little at the sound of Steve's voice, but his back's still stiff as he turns away.

Something's changed, or something's unsettled, Steve can't tell which, but something's shifted between Bucky and Loki. They need to get back to Earth, as soon as Steve can get the ring from Thor.

Steve sits with his back against the arched niche of the statue and his bare feet stretched out in front
of him, making all the Asgardians either step over him or go around him. With the collar and the
leash looped over the statue, he's unmistakable, and he hopes Thor is mad as hell when he sees Steve
sitting there looking pitiful where anyone and their brother can see.

He's chewing his nails and worrying over Bucky when there's the sound of booted feet coming
straight for him, and Steve has barely enough time to look up before Rumlow's got him.

"You lying, duplicitous little shit," Rumlow says, hauling him up by the collar so he strangles. He
back hands Steve across the mouth, and if he's not as strong as Thor, he makes up for it with the way
his black glove drags on Steve's lip ring so it feels like it's tearing. He's grayer than he's ever been,
old and scarred.

He's got backup with him, two or three neat-pressed, perfectly grim SS officers who close ranks
around Steve and frog march him into the nearest antechamber. With Rumlow's hand fisted around
the metal of his collar and yanking him up, Steve can't even yell, and there's no one to see him
getting dragged off the short distance.

Rumlow shoves Steve before him into a little room, the kind of dusty, tiny little room with just a table
and a few chairs Thor had interminable meetings in before and after court. Steve stumbles but keeps
his feet, putting the table between them. It's a bad choice, because it puts him farther from the door,
but there's too many of them to fight through.

"I'm not doing shit for you anymore, you haven't got Peggy," Steve spits at Rumlow.

Rumlow just straight up laughs in his face, circling closer, and that's when Steve knows he has to get
out of there.

The other Hydra goons bar the door as Steve bolts for it. There's the awful crackle and hiss of one of
the stun sticks, the sound and smell of it making Steve's gut twist in the split second before the pain
crackles up his side. He can't even draw breath to scream, the one time it'd do him any good.

He's slammed face down over a table, thrashing against too many hands as he tries to get enough
breath to yell. It just comes out a strangled garble, but surely someone has to hear all the commotion.
Someone cracks his head against the table, sharp, and it hurts like broken glass behind his eye.

Rumlow or one of his men yanks Steve's head back with a hand in his collar, strangling him on the
metal of it as another one pushes him down and another one yanks his clothes off. There's the sound
of a knife in cloth as they laugh, slicing his pants and then the silky panties off him.

Steve's got barely enough time to register the indignity of having the panties shoved in his mouth
before someone starts fucking him roughly. Not Rumlow; Steve can see him, so they all mean to
fuck him, like the night before he was sent here.

It's not fair. The laughing, the horrible, hot pain of the stun stick, the smug sneer on Rumlow's face,
any of it. Steve shoves himself up and lunges across the table, catching them all by surprise enough
he grabs the stun stick out of Rumlow's hands.

And swings it up into Rumlow's scarred face, the crackling sound of it almost lost under the sudden
yelling before Steve's slammed back down on the table, his nose crunching horribly.

He's choking on blood with his ears ringing when one of them wrenches his arm back and Steve's
vision goes white with the pain of it.

It hurts so much he can't breathe. There's an awful popping sensation in his shoulder, like he's
coming apart at the seams. The electrical burns from the stun stick don't even register underneath it,
worse still as his arm's twisted up behind his back so he can't move.

Rumlow's saying something, moving to fuck Steve, but Steve can't track it between the pain and the ringing in his ears. *Not worth fucking, maybe*, except for the awful pressure of something being pushed into him.

The stun stick. Steve thrashes a half second too late, realizing what it is from the familiar high pitched charging sound right before every muscle in his body locks up. He must scream, but he can't hear it, only the laughing. Worse and worse as Rumlow shoves it into him again and again and Steve thrashes against the hands holding him to make his shoulder scream.

He tries to—go away, like he did when Zola had him, when the pain and the lights and the needles were unbearable. He used to be able to do it, just put himself somewhere else while he was strapped down and only come back after, when the pain was an enveloping, throbbing whole instead of a thousand separate hurts. But he's lost the trick of it, each thrust of the thing in him bringing him back to himself, so he's trapped with the pain and the hands on him and his fragile, stupid body.

Then it's done, but it's not done, Steve shoved off the desk. He lands hard on his wrong shoulder, almost blacking out with the pain. He rolls onto his back and gasps for breath, too hurt to care it leaves him exposed. There's at least four pairs of boots he can see, too close.

"I'll tell Carter you said hello," Rumlow says, and kicks him in the side.

If Steve cradles his left arm in his right, he can almost breathe. It doesn't want to move right, tingling hot up his neck and down his arm. The first time he tries to leverage himself up, it spasms so sharply he collapses back against the wall and regrets it as soon as the electrical burns down his back and side make contact.

By the time Steve leverages himself mostly upright, leaning against the wall with his unhurt shoulder and cradling his left arm, he's shaking and sweat drenched. The trousers are an utter loss, ripped and cut in a heap on the floor, so Steve doesn't even bother with the pain of trying to pull them on. He's decent enough in his shirt, hanging down to his knees and soaked with blood.

Decent enough to try to find Thor, anyway, because he has to. He could just—wait, where Loki left him, but the thought of staying where Rumlow and his men can see him like this makes his skin crawl. As bad as Steve feels, he must look worse, and that's going to be his only protection against Thor's anger. Peggy's safe, Steve looks like he was forced, Thor will have to believe him this time.

Out in the corridor where Loki and Bucky left him, it's emptier than before. Court's started, maybe. Steve swallows down the pain in his shoulder and his ass and everywhere else, making himself take the first step out into the open.

He has to get back to the suite. Thor might be in court, but Bucky is too, and Bucky will kill someone if he sees Steve like this, Steve's got no doubt about that. And bad as Steve wants Rumlow dead, he still doesn't want Bucky dead at Thor's hands or Hydra's. So the suite it is.

Steve staggers down the corridor, right shoulder on the stone wall to keep himself upright as he cradles his arm. It hurts to walk and it hurts to breathe but he'll hurt worse if Thor thinks he's been caught at something, so there's nothing for it but to grimly put one foot in front of the other.

The handful of Asgardians who see him stare, and then pointedly look away. Because no matter how awful Steve looks, he'll always have Thor's collar around his throat. It's nearly what Steve wanted, everyone horrified with what they think Thor's done to him. And not a one of them so much as looks
in his direction.

He's made it—three feet, it feels like, in about a thousand years, when someone does bother looking at him. Steve's head snaps up at the sound of footsteps hurrying towards him, not Thor's heavy boots and not the Nazis' clipped heels.


Pietro's face goes hard. "I will protect you," he says, and Steve wants to laugh at the absurdity of Pietro protecting him from Thor. He takes more of Steve's weight with an arm around his waist and steers them up towards the stairs. "We will find Fandral, he will protect you."


"We will go to Fandral, he will protect you," Pietro says again.

Steve shakes his head and tries to pull away. "I can't—I gotta—"

"Yes, okay, do not hurt yourself," Pietro says, grabbing after Steve as he staggers. Passing Asgardians give them sideways looks. There's blood on Pietro's coat now too. He's nicer than Steve deserves, after every awful thing he's thought about Pietro. "We are going, see?"

"They're safe," Steve says as they start picking their way up the stairs, the least he can do for Pietro after everything. "Peggy and your sister, they're safe."

Pietro shakes his head. "I saw her. They had us both when they sent me here. I know she is not safe, they have shown me photographs."

Steve's stomach lurches and he doesn't know what to say to that. Peggy has to be safe; she sent the footlocker.

They make their way up the stairs slow, lurching with Steve's knees threatening to give out under him. Pietro tries to carry him but Steve shakes his head; he can't take one more indignity on top of all the others.

They've made it maybe a floor up out of the dozens or hundreds between the audience hall and the suite, Steve sweating bullets every step of the way. He stinks like sweat and blood, the electrical burns flaring with every step and stumble when Pietro catches his weight.

"Pietro," Fandral calls behind them, annoyed, and the second to last person Steve wants to see right then. There's the sound of him bounding up the stairs after them two at a time. "You foolish creature, I sent you to fetch—" Fandral catches up short at the sight of them when Pietro half-turns them on the stairs to face him. "Norns, what happened?"

"Rumlow," Pietro says, and there's an edge of anger in his voice Steve hasn't heard before.

"Go fetch the healer," Fandral snaps at Pietro. "Tell him to meet us at the suite." They shuffle Steve's weight between them so he's leaning on Fandral, and then Pietro's taking off at a dead run before Steve can say anything.

"I gotta see Thor—he'll be mad—" Steve says, trying to pull away from Fandral.
"Yes, yes, I'll send for him, don't worry," Fandral says. Then he hoists Steve up to carry, and Steve finally passes out from the pain.

Steve comes back to himself with his head pillowed in Pietro's lap, the doctor who bandaged up Thor the night Dottie tried to kill him in the process of cutting Steve's shirt off him. Steve lifts his head off Pietro's lap enough to see Fandral hovering uselessly.

"Be still," the doctor snaps at Steve.

So they're at Fandral's suite. Thor will be angry because Steve went to him again. Or angry because Steve found trouble. Or angry because Steve's useless for fucking, for weeks it feels like. Angry about something, Steve's sure of it, even if he can't quite see the outlines of it through the pain yet. He should have gone to Bucky instead.

"You gotta tell Bucky," Steve mumbles, tipping his face up so he can see Pietro through his one eye starting to swell shut.

"Yes," Pietro says, petting Steve's hair as the doctor finishes cutting Steve's shirt sleeve open. "I will tell him." With both of Steve's sleeves cut away, Pietro helps the doctor maneuver the ruined cloth out from under Steve, leaving every mark on him exposed. Steve doesn't have to see himself to map all of it: the electrical burns across his back; the bruising across his throat, face, and ribs; his distended shoulder; everything else.

"You should be more careful," the doctor says disapprovingly. He presses Steve's broken shoulder, clicking his tongue when Steve gasps and presses his face to Pietro's thigh.

"I—" Fandral says, and stops. "Yes," he says. "Yes, I'll have to be more careful."

Steve doesn't like the tone of his voice, but before he can say anything about it, the doctor's got one hand on Steve's arm and one hand in the middle of his back, and then suddenly there's the most wrenching pain Steve's ever felt as his shoulder slides back into place.

He couldn't go away before, but lying in Pietro's lap, bent over the foot of the bed on display for Fandral and the doctor—he just goes. It's a relief, even if somewhere even farther away he hates himself for being such a coward and only letting go here and not when it actually mattered. Everything still hurts, but it's far away, and he can just float with Pietro petting his hair. One arm around Pietro's waist and face buried in his lap, he could be anywhere, and definitely not spread across Fandral's bed.

The doctor makes disapproving noises at Fandral, tutting and scolding over the electrical burns and everything else Steve still can't make himself think about. But that's all it is, tutting and scolding, and the small part of Steve that's still watching it all from a distance cringes wondering just how much worse the doctor's seen done to slaves.

The burns get ointment and bandages. The—cuts, or burns—from the stun stick Rumlow shoved into him get ointment and more disapproving noises. The bruises get nothing; they're just bruises, and Steve's had plenty of those. Steve's moved back and forth, the doctor's hands cool and impersonal. The distance is almost comforting, like what Hydra did to him. He lived through all of that.

And then the door slams open. Thor. Steve's gut wrenches sideways through the distant haze and he tries desperately to claw his way back to himself.

“What in hell is this,” Thor demands. Steve can feel him in the room, looming and dark, filling up the suite.
“I caught them conspiring together,” Fandral says, voice gone ice cold. “Your creature talked back, so I taught him a lesson.”

“That’s not—” Steve says, fighting to swim back up from where he went away.

“Quiet,” Fandral snaps at him, and it’s all so much worse than Steve dreaded. Steve tries to push himself up, but the doctor pushes him back down on the bed. Pietro squeezes his hand tight.

“You,” Thor says, coming to put a rough hand on Steve's bare ass, “did this.” Steve tries to pull away, but between Thor, the doctor, and Pietro, there's nowhere to go.

"No—" Pietro starts, but Fandral cuts him off.

“Yes,” Fandral says. Steve can't breathe.

“I did not think you would do such a thing,” Thor says, voice still slow and even like he hasn't decided yet how angry to be. His hand on Steve's thigh is heavy and warm, like it should be a comfort.

“He was insolent,” Fandral sniffs. It even sounds true. "He's a bad influence on Pietro."

"Get up," Thor says to Steve, with a sharp slap on the ass that makes him flinch. He hauls Steve up by the collar when he doesn't move fast enough. Between the pain and the looming darkness of Thor's anger, Steve sways on his feet, shaking like he'll rattle his shoulder back out of socket as he stands there holding his left elbow.

"He should not be used for at least two weeks," the doctor says to Thor and Fandral, cleaning his hands on a cloth. Pietro hustles off the bed and grabs a crumpled shirt from the floor to shove into Steve's hands. Steve looks at it dumbly. He's naked, but the shirt is Pietro's because there's no blood on it. "And nothing but beer, broth, or milk until he is healed."

Steve's barely got the shirt pulled over his head with Pietro's help when Thor shoves him towards the door, and Steve stumbles towards it barefooted. "Move," Thor snaps when Steve makes the mistake of looking over his shoulder. Fandral has the gall to look sorry.

Thor sweeps out of there like a thunderstorm, Steve caught up in his wake wearing nothing but Pietro's shirt. He tries desperately to keep up, sure that it will only make Thor angrier if he stumbles or falls behind. Thor doesn't pay him any mind, walking quickly with his anger wrapped tight around him like he means for it to be impossible for Steve to keep up. The bruises on the soles of Steve's feet hardly register anymore.

Steve skips to keep up, breathless with the effort to not lose ground. “That's not what happened,” Steve says, hoping for once he can forestall some of Thor's anger,"I didn't—"

Thor turns on him like a storm, huge and dark, and Steve finally realizes the position Fandral put him in. “Do you call him a liar,” Thor says, slow and dangerous.

Steve shakes his head, ears ringing like Thor just slapped him. Fandral might as well have. Thor makes a displeased noise and yanks Steve along by his left wrist, ignoring the way Steve gasps and tries to keep from having his arm wrenched.

Steve stumbles over his own feet trying to keep up. Anything he says to defend himself will only make him sound more willful to Thor, and Fandral knew that. Of course he said he'd talk to Thor if it became a problem; he made sure that he could keep using Steve once this all settled out.
"You are a useless, embarrassing creature," Thor says, shaking him as they walk, so that Steve can barely see for the pain. "Of all weeks, you choose to make trouble with Hydra's shield in our midst and her assassins no doubt looking for distractions. I should have had you gelded from the start and spared the trouble, or cut out your lying tongue." He cuffs Steve roughly when Steve tries to pull away from him, heart beating frantically for fear of what Thor'll do behind closed doors.

At the suite, Thor throws Steve through the door, making him stumble against the little round table by the door. Thor aims a kick at him and sends Steve crashing into it fully, the delicate little thing shattering as the door closes and traps Steve with Thor's anger like a train coming right at him. Steve gets to his knees as Thor rounds on him, and barely manages to bring the round tabletop up between himself and Thor's fist.

Thor knocks it out of his hand and sends Steve sprawling with a backhanded slap. Before Steve can right himself, Thor stops him with one heavy, booted foot on Steve's hand. Lying on his belly on the stone, left arm brought up to cover his head, all he can see is the side of Thor's boot, pressing too hard to pull his hand away.

"If you ever raise a hand to me again," Thor says slowly, putting more weight on Steve's hand, "I will break every bone in your hands."

Steve panics, trying uselessly to pull his hand away. Rumlow broke his fingers, but that was when Erskine's serum healed everything. With his fingers broken here, Steve'll never hold a pen again. It's a stupid, useless thought, but the only thing Steve can process is that he'll never work again, he'll never get another drafting job, the enormity of Thor's threat too much to understand after everything else.

"Do you understand me?" Thor demands, pressing down.

"Yes," Steve says, frantic. "Yes, yes, I understand, I'm sorry—master. Yes, master, I understand." He's babbling and trying to yank his hand away, and then Thor kicks him over, hand free, so that Steve can scramble up just before Thor catches him by the collar.

Thor dumps him unceremoniously in the far corner of the bedroom, between the wardrobe and the wall where he's been sleeping. Steve huddles in the corner, watching with dread in his stomach as Thor connects the chain to his collar.

"I didn't mean to," Steve says as Thor straightens, choking on the fear that telling the truth might be worse at this point.

"I do not wish to hear your whining," Thor says, and leaves him there for the evening.

A cup of broth. That's all Steve gets for supper. It's impossible to sleep, painful to lie on his back or his left side, the floor icy cold and damp through his thin blanket and Pietro's shirt. It starts raining sometime during the night, the heavy, constant rain of spring. Steve ends up dozing propped up in the corner sometime towards morning, but wakes up with a start when Thor kicks his feet out of the way as he gets dressed.

The steward brings Steve a cup of milk and a cup of broth around midday, hesitating when he makes the mistake of looking at Steve's bruised face. Steve turns his face away, glad he's got the blanket pulled up to hide the rest of the mess that's been made of him. Steve doesn't need a mirror to know that he's got dark bruises under both his eyes from having his nose smashed, and his right eye is swelling. The rest doesn't bear thinking about, his left shoulder so tender he can barely stand to move. The steward leaves the milk and broth without a word.
Thor doesn't even look at him except to kick him out of the way when Steve makes the mistake of taking up too much room when he's sleeping. So Steve does his best to stay pressed into the corner and be invisible.

Two, three days of rain, Steve loses track. Between his pounding head, his empty stomach, and the throbbing bruises over what feels like every inch of him, it all bleeds together. He can't see the window from where he's chained, but he doesn't much care, trying to doze when Thor's out of the suite and Steve doesn't have to press himself so rigidly back in the corner for fear of being kicked.

The monotony's broken on the third or fourth day, with porters, hairdressers, and launderers piling into the suite like at Midwinter. Thor doesn't even acknowledge Steve, so maybe he'll be merciful and Steve will just be left in the suite for once, now that he's a broken, embarrassing toy.

Steve sits with his knees pulled up to his chest, watching the flutter of activity in the suite. No one dares look at him directly, and that's how he knows they all see the bruises, carefully avoiding acknowledging him or what they think Thor's done to him. It puts Thor in a bad mood, and there's a collective intake of breath when he kicks Steve's feet out of his way even though Steve's already pressed into the corner as small as he can be.

The one Asgardian who can't ignore Steve is the dour, gruff man who did his makeup at Midwinter, and even he does his best to not look at Steve when painting his face. The man just gives Steve a pinched look when Steve takes off Pietro's shirt and there's no mistaking the deep bruising all down his chest and back. Steve can feel the weight of everyone else looking his bruises over, and he makes sure to sit so they can see his bruised face getting painted over. The guy doing his makeup is rougher than last time, like he can make it all go away if he pretends hard enough. Like Steve hasn't tried that already.

When it's all done, it looks exactly like what it is: paint over bruises. There's nothing to do about the bandaging, so he just paints under the edges of it and ignores the way Steve hisses and tries to twist away when he moves the dressing. Thor, passing by to get something, cuffs Steve across the back of the head and tells him to stop fidgeting.

The paint over Steve's shoulder and back is thick and unnatural looking, too pale in some places and mottle colored where it rubs away around the bandaging. The makeup around his eyes just makes the left look more swollen, the pale paint and the dark liner just making him look gaunt and under fed. The man sent to do Steve's makeup gives it up for a bad job and abandons him like that. Dressed in just the flimsy black loincloth, the gaudy gold jewelry makes him look even thinner and the dark bruising more livid where the paint is too thin.

Steve looks Thor in the eye when he comes to clip the leash to Steve's collar, holding his chin up so Thor has to see the way the paint doesn't quite cover all of Steve's bruising.

"If you embarrass me this evening, you will regret it very much," Thor says, quiet as the staff filters out of the suite.

"Yes, master," Steve says, snotty enough that Thor pops him on the cheek. Steve's head feels cloudy on the pain and how little he's eaten. Steve focuses on the hope that he'll see Bucky, and tries not to think about any of the rest of it.

Court, when they arrive, is practically vibrating with tension. Loki sits on the throne with Bucky standing to his side, dressed in his black combat leather and the muzzle, enough to make Steve's heart judder.

As Thor takes his place to the other side of Loki, Bucky turns blank grey eyes on them, empty like
the monster when he was first brought to Asgard. Steve's stomach lurches as Bucky's eyes catch on
him just like the first time they saw each other here, empty and focused all at once. It's enough for
Thor to shake Steve by the collar and force him to his knees, annoyed.

Bucky isn't all together gone, taking a heavy step towards Thor at that, but with just a snap of fingers
from Loki, Bucky's rooted where he stands. Steve can't see him past Thor and the low bulk of the
throne, but he can feel Bucky's attention like electricity in the air.

Thor fists a hand in Steve's hair, forcing him to keep his head down. If Steve can feel Bucky's
attention, he can also feel Thor's annoyance, sure that he'll get more than just ignored as soon as they
get back to the suite.

It's oppressive enough that Steve can't even take consolation in the way everyone looks between his
poorly painted bruises and Thor's hand in his hair. Rumlow, when Steve dares look out at the crowd,
looks smug as shit. There's too many Nazis in the crowd, and too many Asgardian guards, the
civilians looking less civilian than usual even if there's no weapons out. Something's in the air. The
Nazis aren't supposed to be able to bring stun sticks or anything else across the bridge; the tension
between the Asgardians and the Nazis is almost palpable, like the night Bucky was presented, and
Steve's back is rigid wondering what they'll try this time.

The doors at the end of the hall open smoothly, silently, and Thor shakes Steve to make him look at
the floor again. From what Steve can see through his lashes, it's a little delegation of Nazis, Pierce at
the front of them.

"Your majesty," Pierce says, oily-smooth,"it's my pleasure to introduce the head of Hydra's Supreme
Headquarters International Espionage and Law Enforcement Division, Frau Directorin Margaret
Carter."

Chapter End Notes

I PROMISE PEGGY'S NOT A NAZI
Chapter Notes

So I finally got this cleaned up trying not to watch election news. Enjoy the distraction?

Steve looks up as much as Thor's hand in his hair will let him, sure he didn't hear right.

But there she is plain as day. She's in a neat gray suit that suits her figure, with the tiny little emblems of Nazi insignia on her shoulders like black soot.

Peggy glances over and through Steve like she's never seen him before in her life, like he's furniture.

Steve feels like someone's walked over his grave.

"Your majesty," she says to Loki, voice cool and even like they're the only two in the room. It can't be anyone but her. "It's a pleasure."

Thor cuffs Steve's ear to make him look down again instead of stare. Head down, heart pounding in his ears too loud to hear Loki and Peggy exchange bland formalities, Steve can just see Peggy if he tilts his head.

She's got her hair swept up more severe than she ever used to wear it, just a touch of gray at her temples. They were twenty-four in 1942; Steve still is. He feels ill with the evidence of how much time has passed without him. Peggy's at least twenty years older, like she's had a whole life in the year he's been kneeling for Thor.

In the crowd, Steve can see Fandral looking pleased as punch, and beside him, Pietro. Pietro holds himself stiffly, trying to keep an arm's length away from Fandral, who keeps one hand tight on his elbow.

If Steve squints, he can just make out that Pietro's wearing the bit and staring mortified at Peggy—or the woman beside her. Other than Pierce, everyone with Peggy are women.

They hold themselves like Dottie, Steve realizes with a jolt. Widows. From what little Steve can see, Bucky's focused on them like they're armed to the teeth, but they're just dressed neatly in the same smart gray suit as Peggy. They've got that way of standing like Dottie did, though, light on their feet. Predatory and watchful.

Steve's ears are still ringing when the large doors at the end of the hall are opened, and the crowd is dispersed for a formal dinner. Thor drags Steve to his feet, following Loki down the steps of the dais close enough to see the plates of Bucky's arm move but miles out of reach. They walk right by Peggy and Steve feels invisible.

Everyone moves carefully, like over-wound clockwork. Peggy and Pierce go through the motions but keep their distance from each other, their people carefully separated even though they all wear Hydra's uniforms. Steve barely follows, court unwinding around him as the nervous tension of the guards and the Nazis filters out into the vast dining hall. Steve skips at the end of his leash after Thor, conscious of Bucky dark at Loki's heels and Peggy somewhere behind them in the procession.
Then—best or worst of all, Steve can hardly tell, Thor and Loki get seated in the center of the head table, with Pierce to Loki's left and Peggy to Thor's right. And Steve kneeling at Thor's feet, between him and Peggy without Peggy so much as acknowledging Steve.

Steve's stomach growls loudly as platters of food are set out. Boar's head, platters of whole fish, sugared fruit, wheels of cheese as big as Steve's face. Peggy's hands in her lap twitch, and again when Thor cuffs Steve on the back of the head and snaps at him to be quiet.

Steve wants to die of the shame of it, pressing a fist to his belly. Peggy gets served in tense, cold silence. Steve's all too conscious of Thor's displeasure at being seated next to her, like a wall between them. Around them, Bucky, the widows, and all the Asgardians are practically vibrating with how on edge they are, everyone watching every little interaction.

Steve holds himself tightly, as if by controlling his growling stomach he can control anything else around him. He can barely think about the depth of how Fandral lied to him. Fandral had to have known the whole time who Peggy was, and he kept sending Steve to Rumlow on the pretense of saving her. So that he could get her on Asgard to kill her.

Across the room, the lady Sif enters, followed by a human woman with red hair and a collar at her throat. Thor perks up immediately, like he doesn't even notice that the red-haired woman carries herself like Dottie. Like one of Peggy's widows. Steve doesn't know whether to be afraid for Sif or hopeful for Peggy.

Thor excuses himself with barely the pretense of politeness, and then Steve's there alone with Peggy. Who glances down at him like she's mourning.

"What are you doing?" Steve hisses.

"Rescuing you," Peggy hisses back, looking away from him. She nudges a roll off the table and into Steve's lap, and that's how he knows it's really her even if she looks for all the world like she hasn't even acknowledged him.

Across the room, Thor makes straight for Sif as Steve stuffs the roll in his mouth and watches Thor for fear of being caught at it. Thor looks like he's glad to be rid of Steve. Sif tilts away from him, her gestures tight and dismissive.

"But you're—" Steve starts around the roll stuffed in his mouth, trying to watch both Thor and Peggy.

Peggy presses her lips together, knocking another roll off the table. "I'm not Hydra. Shield is—a parasite, inside Hydra. After the war, they recruited some of us from the SSR. We've been undermining, changing things as we can. We've been funding the resistance and trying to set up independent contacts with Asgard, but this is the farthest we've gotten."

"They're going to kill you," Steve says, as best he can around the roll. It's just bread with nutmeats in the center, but it tastes like heaven, it's been so long. His stomach clenches angrily, desperate for more. "If you don't do what they want. They know about Dottie, they think you tried to have Thor killed."

"Well, I did," Peggy says. "Perhaps next time it'll stick. But I've lived through the Winter Soldier before, and now that there's only one of him he won't walk away from a second try alive."

Thor looms up behind Peggy at that, like a storm. Steve swallows the last of the roll, like he's got lead in his belly. "Directorin Carter," Thor says, cold. He moves back to his chair, putting a heavy
hand on Steve's head to make him look down again. Thor sits, not bothered to hide the distaste in his voice. "I thought Hydra had no more use for a reduced Captain America."

"Hydra, no," Peggy says, and the way her voice shifts back into that perfect cool disdain makes Steve's stomach turn. "But I might, if you were willing to trade him." Steve stiffens, trying to look up, but Thor shakes him by the hair.

"I won't send him back to be tortured," Thor says, hand tight in Steve's hair.

"Yes, it looks like you're perfectly capable of that yourself," Peggy snaps.

"I've done no such thing," Thor says, offended. "Hydra sent me a sickly, skittish, savaged-half-to-death rabbit, and now you tell me you wish to welcome him back with open arms? Forgive my skepticism, my lady."

Peggy leans in, dropping her cool brittleness. Steve can't see well, but he can all but feel Rumlow and Pierce watching her avidly across the room. "My lord," Peggy says, urgent, with none of her cool Shield Director disdain. "I am not Hydra, and Steven and I were sweethearts when we were young. I would like to bring him home."

Steve's heart kicks in his chest as Thor leans back in his chair, releasing Steve's hair. Steve risks a look up at them, Peggy and Thor. Peggy's as beautiful as she ever was, intent and furious.

Thor catches Steve glancing up at him, and Steve lifts his chin, holding Thor's look. "Is this true?"

Even as Steve swallows to answer, he knows it's the wrong thing to say. "Yes," he says, looking Thor in the eye like it's a challenge to admit he ever had a life before Asgard.

Thor snaps his fingers. "Get up," he snaps at Steve, and hauls him by the collar when he's not fast enough. Steve's only consolation is the paint that comes off on Thor's hand, the mottle bruising under it a livid purple even if being touched hurts like hell. "Go fetch Fandral, and do not dawdle," Thor says, wiping paint on his napkin with distaste. To his other side, Loki glances across Thor annoyed. Bucky stands behind his chair, a dark shape blocking Pierce.

"Frau Directorin," Thor says. "You'll get your spy back when I have Schmidt's head as proof of your good will."

"Done," Peggy says as Thor shoves Steve stumbling away. She sounds made of steel; Thor doesn't know who he's up against. If there's anyone who can bring down Schmidt, it's Peggy.

Steve picks his way through the crowd carefully, conscious of his bruised shoulder as Asgardians narrowly miss knocking into him and doubly conscious of Thor watching him.

Fandral's in good spirits despite Steve's mood, seated with Hogun, Volstagg, and the lady Sif in the center of the dining hall. Pietro sits at his knee, still wearing the bit and looking past Steve to the table where Peggy's women are seated just below the head table. To the other side, Sif's new red-haired woman watches Steve, the only one who acknowledges his approach. She's unsettling, the red-head, not bothering to put on the bland pleasantness Dottie put on over this predatory watchfulness.

Fandral doesn't pay Steve any mind, gesturing wildly as he keeps on with whatever story he's in the middle of. He puts a proprietary hand on the small of Steve's back without even looking at him, and Steve jerks back.
"Don't," Steve says. He'd never dare to say that to Thor, but he doesn't have to take it from Fandral, not anymore.

Fandral stops and gives Steve a look, eyebrow raised. Like Steve's broken the rules of this game they've been playing, so Fandral doesn't have to pretend politeness anymore either. Sweep the pieces off the chessboard and get treated like a savage. "My master asked for you," Steve says snottily, not backing down. He can feel Thor watching him from across the room.

"Well then," Fandral says, rising. He snaps fingers at Pietro to follow, who's still distracted looking at Peggy's group of women. Fandral bows to Sif. "I beg leave to attend your betrothed, my lady."

"He's not my anything anymore," she says, waving him away.

Steve takes off without waiting to see if Fandral's following; Thor's glowering at whatever Peggy's saying, and Steve doesn't know if he wants to be back between them or anywhere but between them.

"Rabbit's not so skittish anymore, huh?" Volstagg says to Sif as Steve ducks away through the crowd.

"If he ever was a rabbit," Sif says, and Steve doesn't know what that's supposed to mean.

Steve tries to stay as far ahead of Fandral as possible, out of arms reach as they pick their way through the crowd with Pietro dawdling at Fandral's heels. Steve doesn't want to even look at Fandral if he doesn't have to.

"I don't know why you're so out of sorts," Fandral says to Steve's back when it's clear that Steve's not making any effort to not separated in the crowd. "She's safely off Midgard, is she not?" He sounds annoyed and Steve hates him.

"You lied to me," Steve snaps, half-turning before he thinks better of it with Thor watching from the head table. "You're going to get her killed."

"Not if she cooperates," Fandral says, offended. They're so offended, Thor and Fandral, when they have to look at their own hypocrisy. Steve turns away, angry with himself for taking the bait.

Thor meets them at the foot of the dais, Loki looking annoyed over his shoulder, Peggy not bothering to hide her concern. Bucky, at Loki's shoulder, watches Steve over the dark blankness of his mask like he did the night he arrived, grey eyes focused and looking through Steve intently.

Thor grabs Steve's leash and yanks Steve after him, sweeping Fandral and Pietro into a side chamber and Steve stumbling at Thor's heels trying not to choke. That he's mad as hell is clear enough, but who at isn't clear. Through the half-open door, the noise of the dining hall is a low murmur, but Steve can't get between Thor and the door to make a break for it with the way Thor shoves Steve before him. There's another door, though, out to the corridor. Steve goes where he's shoved and inches sideways towards the door to the hallway.

"You knew," Thor snaps at Fandral as soon as they're out of hearing, just barely keeping his voice down as he jabs a finger at Steve. "You knew he was connected to Hydra's shield and you lied to me about it."

"I never said they weren't," Fandral says, skating on a technicality. "She's here because we have him, and she'll negotiate because we have him."

"You have been colluding with my brother against me," Thor says darkly. He winds Steve's leash around his hand and a cold chill races down Steve's back as he tries to back away.
"I have been serving Asgard as my lord the Winter King requires," Fandral says, stiff. "We need a faction on Midgard that will serve our interests, or at least one that can be forced into serving our interests more than Schmidt."

Pietro brushes Steve's arm, turning his back to Fandral as though watching the crowd in the dining hall while Thor and Fandral are distracted. He's got dark circles under his eyes, from fading bruises or just not sleeping, Steve can't tell. Fandral wouldn't hit him, too good to get his hands dirty, so if it's bruises it's Rumlow or someone else's doing.

"We must go," Pietro says quietly, moving the bit to talk. "My sister will get us across the bridge—" Out. Steve feels like he's been hit by a truck with how bad he wants it.

"I have to get Bucky—" Steve hisses. "I can't—"

"Quickly," Pietro hisses back. "We must go soon, there is not much time before they—"

"I wash my hands of it," Thor snaps at Fandral, yanking on Steve's leash. "You wish to negotiate with Hydra's shield at my brother's bidding, have at it now without me in the way. Give my regards to my brother and Hydra's shield," Thor says, and pushes Steve before him towards the door out to the corridor.

"Thor, wait—" Fandral starts as Steve's chance to get out gets further and further away every step.

"I told her my terms. Go negotiate if you wish to negotiate," Thor says, and then shoves Steve stumbling out into the corridor.

Steve has a handful of breaths to decide what to do. Leash wound tight around Thor's hand, there's no way Steve is getting back to the dining hall, back to Bucky, and across the bridge, unless Thor goes back too. But wound as angry as he is and as displeased he is with Steve specifically, there's no pleading that do anything but get Steve a slap across the face. He can't just pull the leash out of Thor's hands and bolt. He can't risk annoying Thor himself; Steve needs to redirect him and make Thor mad enough to go back.

"Fandral never hit me," Steve says in the quiet.

"Yes, the doors on Asgard are quite vicious," Thor says without pausing. Trotting after him to keep up, Steve risks a sidelong glance up at him.

"He's covering for Rumlow," Steve presses on. Thor pretends to ignore him, but there's enough of a pause in his steps that Steve knows he's on the right track. "He was negotiating with them for months. He let Rumlow fuck me—"

Behind them, there's a flash of red light, blinding bright in the dim corridor and a deafening noise that roars out a split second behind it. And then the sound of gun fire in the dining hall.

Thor half-turns, and in the moment he takes to hesitate, Steve yanks hard on the chain, making Thor stumble and let it go. Whatever it is, both Peggy and Bucky are in the middle of it. Behind him, he can hear Thor curse and come after him heavily, but Steve's got the lead even if his shoulder is screaming.

The gilded little sandals slip and slide on stone just as badly as Steve always thought they would, his narrow lead ahead of Thor closing as Steve nearly slips past the door. Thor curses and grabs after him, the sound of gun fire echoing on stone almost deafening as Steve darts across the side chamber.

The dining hall is chaos, armed Asgardian civilians and guards trying to push back Nazis with
machine guns. The Asgardians have some kind of—sparkling shields, the same sort of thing that makes a barrier across doors and windows, with bullets ricocheting right off them in flashes of light.

Thor makes a grab for him, and Steve, stupidly, ducks out from under his reach and into the line of fire. Thor doesn't follow, and whatever he yells after Steve is lost in the shattering of a long wooden table against the stone table, thrown by a flash of red light.

On the far side of the dining hall, Peggy and her women are blockaded behind a flipped table, grimly returning fire—against the other Nazis. The flashes of red light come from one of the women with Peggy, the one Pietro had been staring at with wine-dark hair tucked up into a neat bun. Coughing to catch his breath, Steve is lost and small in the churning chaos of the dining hall. As Steve stares, she lifts a Hydra soldier with nothing more than red light and throws him against the far wall with a sickening crack of stone.

The room is filled with the stink of ozone, what Steve refuses to think of as the stink of magic even though what he's watching is clearly nothing but magic. Behind him, he can feel the electric prickle across his skin as Thor calls the hammer. Pietro—blinks in and out of the room, picking up one of Peggy's dangerous widows, blinking out, and then returning without them. He's barely visible, moving too fast to see. Even flying into enemy territory to rescue Bucky, Steve never felt so woefully out of his league.

Steve's resolve hardens when Bucky steps into view from a protected alcove, Loki at his heels with green light crackling in his hands. Bucky clearly doesn't see Steve, focused and intent as a hunting cat. As Steve watches, some of the Nazis firing on the Asgardians and Peggy turn their fire on Bucky, but Loki flicks the gunfire away with a swanning wave of his hand.

With that, Pietro appears at Steve's elbow. "We must go, now—" Pietro starts, making like he means to pick up Steve.

"I won't go without him," Steve says. Pietro follows his look to Bucky, where Loki yells something at him over the din, pointing at Peggy.

"I cannot, he is too dangerous—" Pietro says.

"Then go without us, I'm not leaving without him," Steve snaps, breaking from Pietro, who blinks away again as Steve breaks into a run. Behind the barricade, Steve can see Peggy, hair wild and loose from her bun take aim at Bucky with a little pistol. Unconcerned, Bucky stalks towards her with nothing more than a knife in hand and Steve has no doubt that he could kill her if he got close enough.

Coughing with the effort, Steve throws himself between them, in the line of fire between Peggy's gun and Bucky stalking towards her like a freight train. Behind him, Peggy shouts at him to get out of the way, and across the hall Steve can hear Thor yelling his name. The electric crackle of the hammer races along Steve's skin, making his hair stand up on end.

"Soldier," Loki snaps behind Bucky, as Bucky comes to a stop, watching Steve over his mask. "Kill him."

Bucky cocks his head to the side at that, then shakes his head like he's trying to clear it. "Soldier," Loki snaps again.

"Bucky," Steve pleads, taking a step towards him with his hands out. Behind him, he can hear Peggy shouting. "You can't kill her. It's me, please."
Bucky fumbles with the straps of the mask, clumsy and thick-fingered. It drops to the stone floor and Bucky frowns at Steve, Loki shouting at him with green light crackling around both of them. Too far away to touch, Steve takes another step towards him despite it.

"Steven, move," Peggy shouts, and suddenly Steve's attention snaps to Rumlow serenely stalking towards them, gun out and trained on Bucky. Gun fire whistles past Steve, Peggy and the women with her firing at Rumlow, but Steve's in their line of fire, their shots going wide as they try to avoid hitting him.

Rumlow gives Steve a smile and raises his gun to aim at Bucky.

Rooted to the spot, Steve puts out a hand like he can stop the bullets like Loki, heart hammering as the red and green light builds around them and electricity crackles over Steve's skin. With a sickening crash, the hammer flies from Thor's hands to crush Rumlow, driving him against the wall with a horrible gurgle and his chest crushed.

Behind him, there's a last flash of red light, and as Steve turns, Pietro blinks in and then out again with Peggy and then the woman with the wine-dark hair, and finally there's no one left behind the barricade. Across the dining hall, the Asgardian guards surround the last of the Nazis, slowly and methodically boxing them in with the sparkling shields until the bullets just ricochet back on their own men.

With a disgusted wave of his hand, Loki slams Steve and Bucky both to their knees, Steve only barely catching himself with his hands. It feels like being crushed with a load of gravel, a sudden, crushing weight throwing him down with a thousand sharp points. On his knees and coughing, Steve can barely breathe.

Across the hall, the gunfire goes quiet, leaving only the sound of the injured and Thor's purposeful steps towards them. Steve has barely a moment of warning before Thor fists a hand in his hair and jerks his head up.

"What in hell was all this?" Thor demands. But it's to Loki, not Steve. Steve coughs, throat strained by the angle Thor holds his hair at, and Thor shakes him by the hair to quiet him.

Loki frowns at Bucky and the little group of Nazis being dealt with across the hall. Bucky frowns at Steve, looking for all the world like he doesn't notice Thor or Loki or anything else around them.

"The Midgardians picked a fight amongst themselves," Loki sniffs. "As best I saw, the ambassador's men tried to assassinate their shield, and Carter's witch prevented it. I thought to finish the whole business, but your creature got in the way," Loki says, nudging Steve in the thigh with the toe of his boot. Bucky stirs, but Loki freezes him with a gesture.

"You lost control of your creature," Thor says.

"You lost control of yours, and the hammer too," Loki snaps back. Thor sets his jaw and resolutely does not look at where Rumlow is messily crushed against the wall.

"They've crossed the bridge," Fandral says, hurrying up with his hair a mess. The arm of his coat is bloody, like he caught a bullet across his upper arm, and Steve feels nastily a little glad.

"Ambassador Pierce is dead, but the shield and her women overpowered Heimdall and crossed the bridge, Pietro with them."

"They have more powers than we thought," Loki says darkly.

"You never said he could do that," Fandral says accusingly to Steve, the first time anyone's
addressed him. "What else do you know of this?"

Thor pulls Steve to his feet, yanking him up by his good arm rather than his bruised left or by his collar, thank goodness. "He knows nothing," Thor snaps at Fandral before Steve can say anything. "As though you're one to talk of honesty."

"Enough of this," Loki snaps. "They should have never been able to bring weapons across the bridge in the first place. I say we bomb Berlin and Washington into oblivion for this."

"Are you mad," Fandral says. "We have a faction on Midgard now with the shield. That is, if she'll still speak to us after your assassination attempt."

"After my—" Loki sputters.

"Why must I be the voice of moderation?" Thor demands, petulant. "We will decide what to do with Midgard once we know how things stand with the shield and with our security breaches."

With that, Thor sweeps Steve out of there. Around them, the dining hall buzzes with Asgardians securing the last few Nazi prisoners and bandaging up the injured, but Steve just trails after Thor's footsteps carrying his own leash. At least Peggy's alive and on the other side of the bridge.

"You stupid creature," Thor says when they get to the suite, but there's no heat in it. Thor sits on the divan and methodically strips Steve of his jewelry, neither rough nor overly gentle, with paint coming off on his hands where his blunt fingers brush the still-swollen bruises. He shushes Steve when he coughs, snapping fingers for him to kneel by the divan while Thor gets up to move around the suite.

Steve's mind races. It's clearly possible to cross the bridge, if they can just get there, and with Peggy on the other side, they have somewhere safe to go to.

"You could have been killed, you reckless, stupid, foolish thing," Thor says, coming back from the bathroom with a cloth and a bowl of warm water. He sits in front of Steve again, carefully wiping away the paint and makeup from Steve's face and shoulder. "Did you learn nothing from your previous foolish heroics?" Steve just coughs in answer, but Thor doesn't cuff his ears this time.

When the paint's all washed away, Thor bullies Steve naked towards the bed. Steve hops foot to foot on the cold stone when Thor pauses by the wardrobe to scoop up Pietro's dirty shirt Steve had been wearing.

As Thor turns to hand it to him, there's the dull thud of a book landing on stone, and Steve's stomach lurches. Scrambling with the shirt in his hand, Steve ducks to try to snatch up his sketchbook where it's fallen open at Thor's feet. But Thor's between him and the sketchbook, stooping to pick it up. Steve backs away, yanking on the shirt and trying to put the bed between them like it will be any protection.

"He fucked you," Thor says after a long moment, holding Steve's sketchbook like he doesn't quite believe it. Steve can just make out the page, with Thor radiant and sun-limned on one side, after he'd been wrestling in the courtyard.

And Bucky on the other, slant-smiled, shirtless, and everything Steve thought about whenever Thor touched him.

"This is what all your foolish heroics were about," Thor says, turning a page.
Steve feels entirely transparent and entirely stupid. "I thought he was dead," Steve says, as though that's any kind of defense against what Thor will do to him.

"Tell me he forced you," Thor says, letting the sketchbook drop to his side. It's so absurd Steve almost doesn't hear it. "Tell me he forced you," Thor says again, slow like he knows he's making an absurd demand, "and I will send you to the Carter woman tonight."

So that's the choice: lie, and go home. Thor comes around the bed towards him, mouth pressed thin.

"No," Steve says, without even thinking about it. Thor backhands him across the mouth before he's even finished saying it, and Steve goes down hard on his bruised shoulder. Curled on his side, he can't stop coughing with the pain.

"Get up," Thor says. "Get up," he says again, nudging Steve in his bruised side as a threat. Steve picks himself up slowly, not bothering to hide the anger on his face this time. Thor yanks his chin up in one big hand as soon as Steve's on his feet again. "Tell me he forced you," Thor says again.

"No," Steve spits. "I asked him to fuck me." It's entirely different from telling Bucky he asked Thor to fuck him, wild and defiant and this time Thor slaps him across the face like Steve thought Bucky would.

Without Thor's hand on his chin, Steve would have fallen. The second time Thor hits him, he doesn't hold Steve up, knocking him back to the floor with his ears ringing. Steve can't breathe for coughing, curled in on himself with the coughing and the pain.

"Get up," Thor says, kicking Steve in the ribs. Just barely, just enough to make a point. Steve catches his breath enough to laugh, curled in on himself. Of course Thor wants him to stand up just to get knocked down again. "Thought pain was a weak man's tool," Steve says, and immediately regrets it when Thor yanks him up kneeling by his hair.

The slap, when it comes, is sharp and sudden, catching the already-bruised side of Steve's face. Thor throws him to the ground by the hair and then nudges him in the ribs with his boot, making a point. "Get up," Thor says.

And isn't that the point of it. Steve'll never win by trying to fight by Thor's rules, because Thor plays a rigged game. He just wants Steve to stand up for the appearance of a fair fight, like Steve standing up to him means anything when Thor can just keep knocking him down every time he gets up. Steve can keep doing this all night, but it will never mean anything.

"No," Steve says, and stays curled on the floor where he is.

Thor makes an angry, disgusted noise and reaches down to drag Steve by the hair across the floor. He throws Steve back in the corner and chains him back to the wardrobe, but it's an admission that Steve's won.
Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

This isn't the last chapter, sorry! It was getting too long and I want Steve to have a proper amount of coddling, so I decided to split this into its own chapter.

Thor slams the door behind him so hard the windows all but rattle, and the suite still stinks ominously of ozone even with Steve all alone. Steve tugs uselessly at his chain, worrying his fingertips raw trying to pry the chain loose from where it's looped around the leg of the wardrobe. If Thor hurts Bucky—

Steve barely has time to think about how stupidly useless he is regardless of what Thor does before Thor storms back, the sound of him and someone else shouting at each other loud in the corridor.

"And you never told me—" Thor shouts, throwing the door open before him.

"Of course not," Loki snaps back, and Steve can't hear the sound of Bucky with them. Steve freezes with the chain wrapped around his hands, hauling on it so hard it hurts. "You're a jealous fool, and without your creature I can't unmake mine. Yours was the faulty prototype, why else do you think they dumped their trash here and called it a gift?"

"He is not trash—"

"They made one in the light and one in the dark, and because your creature was made with light, it was undone by the Bifrost," Loki said with a long-suffering tone like they'd been over this before, "and they learned how to make a mökkurkálfi that would not be undone. They sent mine here to murder one or both of us. He was never meant as a gift, and his stupid infatuation with your creature was the only thing that kept Hydra from having us both murdered horribly. I had to know how they did it so we can make our own mökkurkálfi without having them unmade by the Bifrost like your creature."

"That does not mean allowing your creature to fuck—" Thor says, voice rising as he paces around the main room.

"He was more stable," Loki says, peevish. "There was nothing left of mine but mush when they dumped it here. I made a—template, to pick apart what the Midgardians had done, using your creature's memories of mine before Zola got hands on it. But the template isn't stable without—reinforcement."

Steve picks that apart slowly, feeling like he's two steps behind what Loki said even as his stomach heaves and his heart starts beating jittery fast. Bucky wasn't there anymore when they brought him to Asgard, so Loki—remade him, with what he scraped out of Steve's memories.

Steve feels like he's going to be sick. No wonder Bucky was everything Steve needed him to be. Loki made him into what Steve always wanted him to be.

"So you let them fuck," Thor says, low and dangerous.

"Yes," Loki snaps. "To reinforce the template. I don't know what you're so jealous about, they're just
"I am not jealous—"

"No, certainly not," Loki says, and there's the sound of paper fluttering he tosses something aside. The sketchbook, Steve realizes with a sick jolt, with all the sketches of Bucky and all of Steve's hateful, selfish wanting. Thor had it sitting out in the main room. It feels like another violation; Thor had never bothered looking through his sketchbook before.

"I am putting an end to it now," Thor says. He sounds like he crouches as he says it; to get Steve's sketchbook.

"How am I supposed to remake—" Loki starts.

"I do not care," Thor snaps. "Take what you need for the last time, and then be done with it. I should have your creature whipped for despoiling my property."

"I forbid it," Loki sniffs. "As the King of Asgard, I forbid it."

"It will not be winter for much longer," Thor says darkly.

Steve barely has time to get his feet under him before Thor and Loki sweep into the bedroom headed straight for him. Loki catches up short at the sight of him, battered and in Pietro's ratty shirt. But he only hesitates the barest half step without breaking stride. Loki hasn't seen Steve without makeup since he got the tar beat out of him by Rumlow, but he doesn't seem too bothered by it once he takes it in.

"No," Steve says, trying to bolt out past Loki boxing him in, like he has any choice in whether he's used against Bucky again. As if his permission has ever mattered. Thor catches him easily with one big hand and shoves Steve back at Loki.

Loki lifts him by the chin just as easily as he did the first time, and Steve kicks and claws at his hand trying to get away from him. His hands are unnaturally cold, and he shakes Steve hard before the shock of being peeled open tears Steve's breath away.

Steve screams, a strangled, jagged sound.

If the first time Loki was looking for everything false about Steve, trying to see what he was lying about by peeling open every hidden thing Steve had tried to bury, this time it's like having a meat grinder taken to his memories of Zola and Bucky, all of them ground up and jumbled together with all the best and worst parts of Steve's life poured out for Loki to see. All of Steve's memories of Bucky from before mixed up with all Steve's memories of how Erskine and Stark and Zola tried to make and unmake him.

Steve tries to pull back from it, to think of anything else and not give Loki anything else to hurt Bucky with, but he just keeps getting pulled back towards it. Loki lays out everything Steve ever thought or hoped or wanted about Bucky in excruciating detail the way Zola did with his needles and scalpels.

But Steve keeps dragging back to how badly he wants Bucky, how badly he wanted Bucky every time Thor touches him, how badly he needs Bucky to save him now.

Loki finally drops him in a heap on the floor after a year, a decade. A century. He's got bloody red welts on his hands, for what little satisfaction it is. Steve scrambles back from him with his jaw aching. If he could get breath to spit something at Loki he would, but Steve can't stop coughing, his
throat worn raw from screaming. Loki and Thor leave him there where they found him, and Steve can't hear what they say to each other over his own coughing.

Steve can barely think past what he's done to Bucky. Thor snaps at him to be quiet when he goes to bed, but Steve can't stop coughing. He tries to cough into his hands, for what little good it does when Thor tosses a pillow at him and tells him to shut up. Steve shivers like the ice from Loki's hands crept into his bones.

Once Steve's sure Thor's asleep enough to not curse at him again, shivering and cold to his bones, Steve creeps to the wardrobe. Carefully, slowly he pulls on his one clean pair of trousers, his thickest pair of stockings, and over Pietro's dirty shirt he pulls on a wool tunic and a sweater. The chain for his collar goes down the front of his shirt and pulls the hem up because he has to pull the tunic and sweater both over his head, but he's so cold he can't care.

Steve huddles in his corner, worrying at where the chain is attached to the foot of the wardrobe like it will do him any good. Loki is making—or unmaking—Bucky into something else again, twisting him up based on what Steve remembers of him and of what Zola did to them both, and Steve's trapped by his stupid, weak body.

The rain doesn't help, seeping cold and damp into his bones so deep he feels like he'll never get warm again. Thor turns over in his sleep, so warm he tosses the covers away. Steve feels the cough settle into his chest sometime around dawn, that tell-tale heavy brick feeling whenever he breathe in. He sleeps sitting up for all the good it will do him with pneumonia.

“Be quiet,” Thor says in the morning. He wakes Steve up with a nudge to the thigh with the tip of his boot.

Steve leverages himself sitting straight where he'd propped himself in the corner. His head feels heavy from fever and exhaustion and being peeled inside out. Steve coughs in his hands and the chain to his collar pulls awkwardly under his clothes.

Thor gives him another nudge in the thigh and then ignores him, all tense displeasure in the way he won't look at Steve.

Steve swallows his pride, because he'll never save Bucky if he dies from pneumonia on the floor. “Can I have breakfast?” he says to Thor's back.

“No,” Thor says, ignoring him as he finishes dressing. “You heard what the healer said.”

The doctor said broth and water and milk and Steve hasn't had anything in his stomach since the roll Peggy gave him.

“Just milk? Or tea?” Steve says, hating the sound of his own voice. Desperate and rough from coughing all night.

“No.”

Steve knows he shouldn't press with Thor still so angry—days on, Steve's lost track of how many it's been since Rumlow beat the hell out of him, and now Thor's found out about Bucky besides. It'd be better if Thor just finished the job of beating the hell out of him. But Steve can feel the heaviness in his chest, the cough starting to turn wet and low, and he has to get out of the suite somehow.

“Please, it's cold—”
“And you,” Thor says, coming to stand over him, “are useless because of your disobedience. Perhaps after a few nights of cold you will finally remember the lesson.”

“I’m not useless—” Steve starts, and makes a liar of himself with coughing. Thor makes an annoyed noise and leaves him there, gathering up his things before he leaves the suite for the day.

Steve's useless as he's ever been. Instead of strangling himself at the end of his chain trying to get away, he steals a blanket that slipped from the bed and falls asleep in his corner. With his feet tucked under him and his arms tight around his chest, he can just get warm enough to sleep. He forces himself to not think of how badly he wants Bucky to rescue him, except for how Steve's going to take Thor's ring and get them both out of there, and never, ever touch Bucky again.

He flinches awake around midday at the sound of the steward setting down a mug of broth just within reach. Steve curls away from it before he realizes what it is. Then he pushes himself up sitting and as far into the corner as he can, face turned down like he can will himself invisible even coughing into his hands.

The steward stands there for a long minute. He's never said more than two words together to Steve, and the humiliation now of being chained like a feral thing to be gawked at is unbearable. Steve crosses his arms over his chest and pulls his knees up; he'd push himself through the cracks in the stone if he could. He knows his face still looks as bad as the rest of him feels; he doesn't need an audience to know that.

The steward finally walks away to leave him to his misery, and Steve feels like he can breathe again. Except that the steward wakes him up again later that afternoon when he sets down another mug of stew, a plate of buttered bread, and a hot brick wrapped in flannel. The steward leaves it without a word, and Steve eats it gratefully before Thor can come back and take it away. He eats it so fast he barely tastes it and his gut cramps, but it's the first time he's felt full in ages.

"He is fine," Thor says that evening, startling Steve awake again.

The steward, in the other room, murmurs something diffident.

"He is a liar," Thor says in response. "And you are not a nursemaid," Thor says, and ushers the steward out.

Steve curls in on himself at the sound of Thor coming back to the bedroom. He coughs in his hands, trying to be small and quiet and invisible so Thor won't blame him or punish him or look at him.

Thor scoffs at him. "You are fine," he says. "Get up and clean up this mess, you filthy, stupid creature." He unhooks Steve from the chain, kicking the empty cups at him.

Steve takes the chance to get out of Thor's sight, more unsteady on his feet than he first thought. He takes the dishes out to the main room, and steals a potato from Thor's supper while he's out of sight. He's just tucked it into his sweater and stuffed a slice of roast in his mouth when Thor walks back into the front room. He crosses the room and slaps Steve across the back of the head, making him almost choke and cough as he gulps the slice of roast down.

"Disobedient, deceitful, manipulative creature," Thor says, grabbing after him as Steve scrambles back. "You cannot even do what you are told for your own good."
"Please, I'm sick—" Steve says, trying to get away from Thor and staggering back on clumsy feet. He trips, stumbling to his knees and coughing uncontrollably.

Thor fists a hand in his hair and yanks him up, hard, to slap across the face. Steve gasps; the only small mercy is Thor's already taken off his rings. "Be quiet," Thor snaps, shaking him before letting Steve collapse at his feet.

"Fandral made me fuck Rumlow—" Steve starts, trying to get his breathing under control. "Rumlow beat me when I said I wouldn't—"

"I do not care for your stories and lies," Thor says, nudging him in the ribs, just the threat of a kick. "You disobeyed me in the one thing I asked of you. Be quiet, you have tried my patience enough."

"I'm sick," Steve says petulantly as Thor drags him back to the wardrobe.

"Yes, you cried to the steward already," Thor says. He forces a cup of tea into Steve's hands, and watches disapprovingly as he drinks the foul stuff. It's laced with laudanum or something this time, more bitter than just camphor and cigarette butts, and Thor raises a hand threatening to slap when Steve pauses for breath. So Steve gulps it down under Thor's unforgiving eye. It finally makes Steve stop coughing for just long enough to drop into a fitful sleep even with Thor glowering at him, so tired he can't keep his eyes open enough to eat his stolen potato.

Steve loses track of days—he wakes up coughing, Thor kicks and curses at him until Steve drinks the foul tea, and then Steve goes back to sleeping a drugged, fitful sleep with only his one stolen potato and broth to eat. It could be a day, it could be days, Steve can't keep track, foggy with the laudanum. Hard to keep track when every time he wakes up Thor cuffs him for coughing. It rains and rains so that even when Steve's awake enough during the day to try to track the light, he can't tell what time it is in the flat light.

The steward's been replaced, and the new one doesn't so much as acknowledge Steve.

It's a gray afternoon when Steve startles out of sleep at the sound of the door opening. He tries to make himself as small as possible, sure Thor heard him coughing from the other side of the thick door his throat's so raw with it. He hides his face in his shirtsleeves, trying to push down the coughing and hoping Thor isn't in a mood again.

But the footsteps are heavy and purposeful coming straight towards him, and Steve barely manages to swallow his coughing. He’s so tired and so cold and everything hurts so much he can barely think to put together begging, pushing himself as far into the corner as he can. It’s pathetic and useless but he’s got nothing else.

Thor stops dead in the doorway and Steve puts his arms over his head to wait for the slap. Muffled, his chest burns with with the effort, like it will do him any good.

"Jesus Christ," Bucky says, and Steve's head jerks up painfully. Bucky sounds like the wind's been knocked out of him, and doesn't look any better when Steve looks up to find him and Loki standing in the archway between the bedroom and the rest of the suite. "Jesus fucking Christ," Bucky says. He crosses the space between them in two steps and drops to his knees in front of Steve.

Steve throws his arms around Bucky's neck, too grateful to even care that Loki's standing there scowling at them. Bucky gathers him up like Steve always wanted, and Steve's too selfish and weak to even care right then why Bucky does exactly what Steve's always wanted. Steve buries his face in Bucky's shoulder and hates himself for it.
"He's alive, does that suffice?" Loki says nastily.

Steve doesn't even look up from where he's got his face pressed to Bucky's chest, but Bucky half turns. "What's wrong with you?" Bucky says. "Get him unchained from here."

"I can't," Loki sniffs. "It's my brother's lock."

"I'm not fucking leaving him here," Bucky growls. "If you're not going to—"

"Bucky, you can't, you have to go," Steve says, still clinging to him, "if he finds you here he'll hurt you—"

"I'm not leaving without you," Bucky says. Without letting go of Steve, he winds Steve's chain around his hands, both the metal and flesh one.

"Soldier, what are you—" Loki starts, and Steve's so slow he doesn't catch on until the chain's slicing through Bucky's right hand, leaving a bright line of blood as the thin chain groans.

Still clutching Bucky desperately, Steve can feel the power in his arms, his back, his arms, shaking with the effort until there's finally a crackle and the stink of ozone as the magic in the chain gives way. Bucky scoops Steve up into his arms in one motion and stands. Steve can feel the blood from Bucky's hand soaking into his trouser leg, but he just shamefully hides his face in Bucky's chest with the broken end of the chain trailing between them.

"I'm taking him out of here," Bucky says to Loki. "You can help, or you can get out of the way."

"Soldier," Loki says warningly. There's the stink of ozone, welling up from the stones like foul water. There's a long, tense silence as Loki and Bucky eye each other up and down, until finally Loki throws his hands up. "Fine! We'll take him to the valkyries. Come along."

"Bucky, you're not you, he made you wrong—" Steve whispers as Bucky carries him through the corridors, trying to peek past him and Loki for Thor to find them.

"You're delirious," Bucky shushes him.

They arrive at a plain door, some ways down the tower, and Steve's head aches with the noise when Loki pounds on it.

The woman who answers it is neither old nor young, piled in a crown of blond braids laced with gray, and not pleased to see them. "What is this? What half-drowned kitten have you dragged to my doorstep this time, boy?" the woman demands.

"He's not dead," Bucky says, and shoulders past her.

"Eir, my brother's creature has a bit of a cold—" Loki starts.

"I heal warriors, not kittens, my boy," Eir says, watching disapprovingly as Bucky sets Steve down on the low daybed in her front room.

"For me," Bucky says before Loki can speak. "Please, valkyrie."

Eir gives Bucky a doubtful look. "You've lived through worse than this, my boy, but I don't know that your pet will."

Before Bucky say anything to that, Thor throws the door open with the shivering, dark stink of
ozone following him through.

Bucky yanks Steve to him. He keeps his left arm free, putting his shoulder between Steve and Thor as though that's any sort of barrier. Steve clings to him all the same, coughing and trying desperately not to.

"Thor, this is my doing," Fandral says, hurrying in after him. "I needed to pass information to the Midgardians and Steve was obedient to a fault—I made him lie to you, under threat of revealing—"

"What have you done?" Thor demands of Loki, pointing at Steve on Bucky's lap.

"Even the King of Asgard can't have a free man whipped," Loki says nastily, and it's only then that Steve realizes Thor's not pointing to him—because Bucky's not wearing a collar anymore.

"Is this your doing, boy?" Eir snaps, and she does point at Steve. Thor snaps his mouth shut like a chastened schoolchild as she steps into his space, two heads shorter than him and towering in her anger. "What would your mother think?" Eir demands of Thor, who just sputters as she turns on Loki, who gloats before he gets the full force of her look. "And you, Loki Odinson, Winter King. You are your father's son, dragging this to my doorstep."

She turns her glare back to Thor, taking out her belt knife to gesture at him with the handle. "If you meant to kill that half-drowned kitten, do it cleanly now, not this dishonorable, drawn-out mess."

"I did not—" Thor starts.

"Then get you out of my sight," Eir snaps. She sweeps them all out of there, Fandral and Loki and Thor all tumbled back through the door. "And do not come back until you are sent for." With that, she shuts the door in their faces, leaving Steve alone with her and Bucky.

"I told you to stop bringing such tangled, bloody messes to my door," Eir grumbles at Bucky.

"Yes ma'am," Bucky says dutifully. "Not so bloody this time, though."

"Don't speak too soon," Eir says darkly as she starts to strip Steve of his layers. He tries to protest, but he's coughing too much to do much.

Steve tries to shrink in on himself as he's stripped bare, Bucky and Eir both getting more agitated the more they see of him, until Eir snaps at Bucky to fetch a blanket and be quiet. Even half wrapped up, Steve shivers from the tension and the cold both as she examines his bruises, listens to his chest, and frowns at the half-healed burn marks and tearing Rumlow's shock stick gave him. Bucky sits like a thundercloud behind him the whole time, and Steve doesn't have to see him to know he's planning out how to kill Thor.

Eir stands back and frowns at him when she's done, the listening cup still in her hand. Steve hunches away from Bucky, trying to draw the blanket around himself like he's done something wrong. His stomach growls loudly in the heavy silence.

"When's the last time you ate?" Eir demands sharply in the quiet.

"Yesterday?" Steve says. Maybe it was yesterday, maybe it was today. He's not sure any more what day it is or what time of day it is.

"What was it?" she demands, like it matters.

"Tea? And broth?" Steve says, feeling Bucky bristle behind him.
"Did that idiot boy order that?" Eir demands further. Steve gets the feeling that she's measuring Thor for a coffin, and he's not sure yet whether to be glad of it or more afraid.

"And the doctor?" Steve says, not sure if he's defending Thor.

Eir makes a rude noise. "Haras treats horses. What was the boy thinking." She snaps fingers at Bucky. "Soldier—go down to the kitchens and fetch stew and bread. Don't kill anyone, come back straight here," she says when he's on his feet before she's even done speaking. He gives Steve a grim look, but squeezes his shoulder on his way out the door.

After that it's a blur that Steve can barely prop himself up for and eventually doesn't have to. While Bucky's gone, Eir bullies him into a bed that's also a bubble. The air around him shivers with golden light as she bustles around him reading different parts of the bed. It feels like a warm bath full of needles, which Steve protests until Bucky comes back with a tray piled so high even he has trouble balancing it as he kicks the door shut. Bucky sets it down out of Eir's way, bringing a warm buttered sweet roll and a cup of thick stew to Steve's bedside.

Steve protests when Bucky sits and tucks Steve against his side. But he's so tired, and so hungry, and so useless, he lets Bucky bully him into eating even though he shouldn't be so much as touching Bucky.

The golden light feels like it's pressing on all his bruises and burns and tears, pressing in his lungs with every breath. Like being prodded at by sunshine. Like breathing sunshine: too warm, and a little prickly besides.

It doesn't hurt, exactly, the kind of sore press of trying to find the edges of a bruise or a broken tooth where it doesn't quite hurt, but promises to if it pushes much further. It makes Steve tired, even though he's done nothing but sleep and eat and be carried by Bucky. He feels like he's walked a mile for every little throb of the golden light pressing all around him. Like that seasick disappearing edge of the world out Thor's window, if he looks at it too long he feels like he'll pitch right over into sleep.

When he's eaten, Eir pours more of the foul laudanum and camphor tea down him, but it's not quite so bitter as the tea Thor made him drink. Whatever it is, it makes Steve fall asleep curled up in Bucky's lap, so it can't be that bad.

Steve sleeps for—days, it feels like, a deep and total sleep for the first time in weeks, and when he swims back up to waking just long enough to eat, Bucky's there. Dozing next to his bed, sitting propped reading one of his creased paperbacks from Earth, like he's standing guard or sitting watch.

Steve's too gratefully exhausted to care that he shouldn't cling selfishly to Bucky. Every time Steve wakes, he clutches at Bucky more tightly even as he drifts back closer to being aware of why he shouldn't.

"Hey, I'm not going anywhere, buddy," Bucky says once as Steve's fighting sleep, curled in his lap, trying not to drift off for fear that the next time he wakes up he'll either find this was all a fever dream and he's still chained to the wardrobe, or he'll find it's not a fever dream and he has to tell Bucky what he has to tell him. Bucky pets his hair, shushing him until he finally does sleep again.
Comments are very appreciated, I love everyone in this bar. <3 <3 <3

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