Consequences

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/8874430.

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<td>Post-Captain America: Civil War (Movie), POV T'Challa (Marvel), Blood, Deadpool References, References to Depression, References to Illness, Anxiety, Angst, Graphic Depiction of Blood, Graphic Depictions of Illness, Major Illness, If Blood Bothers You Don't Read Chapter 11, BAMF Tony Stark, BAMF shuri, BAMF Loki, Rare Pairings, Civil War Team Iron Man, Slow Build, Platonic or Romantic-You Be The Judge, BAMF T'Challa (Marvel), Minor Peter Parker/Wade Wilson, Not Spider-Man: Homecoming Compliant, Matt Murdock Appears Around Chapter 25, Not TeamCap Friendly, Not Thor: Ragnarok (2017) Compliant, Not Black Panther (2018) Compliant, But There Are References From Those Movies, Not Avengers Infinity War Compliant, Shuri is NOT a teenager in this, Older Shuri, Not Ant-Man &amp; The Wasp Compliant</td>
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<td>Stats:</td>
<td>Published: 2016-12-17 Updated: 2019-09-05 Chapters: 39/41 Words: 122593</td>
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Consequences

by WintersGoddess
T'Challa could only hope Rogers hadn't seriously injured or killed any one on his quest. There had been enough death in the past weeks, God knows he couldn't handle much more right now. He was a strong man, but even the strongest can break under to much pressure.

T'Challa sighed noisily, his frustrations growing further. Shuri would be returning soon and then he had no way to stash the Avengers away. He looked out the windows of the study, staring out over the vast jungle, at the skyline cloaked in its blackness. He prayed for strength, for guidance, for some kind of foresight of what may come. If only his prayers had been answered. He would have been able to see what the Gods had in store for him. How his life was about to be shattered. Nothing would ever be the same. His world would forever be changed, and he didn't even know. All because he offered another sanctuary. *My own take on what I feel should/could happen after the events of Civil War. I didn't really like the ending, so this is my way of dealing with it* 

Peter/Wade is a very small part of this fic, basically a blink and miss it but I put the the tag bc they do show up eventually.

Notes

This is my first time writing such a huge fanfic so please be gentle, lol

A couple things about this fic -

1. It's compliant up to Civil War but after that it was free game
2. There is no Infinity War here, so no Thanos to bring them back together
3. There are some mentions of things from other Marvel films but that's all
4. Shuri is NOT a teen in this, she is much older
5. I started this b4 Black Panther so my take on Wakanda is completely different.
6. My updates are random there, is no specific timeframe. I'll update whenever I can.

Please enjoy 😊😊
Patience

Just have patience.

Those words kept repeating themselves over and over again inside his head. Usually, he was a very patient man, he had to be. Being King, he couldn't let himself make any brash decisions. Doing so could be dire for his country and it's people.

And himself as well.

A lesson he should have learned after his rage filled chase of Barnes.

Given, at the time he hadn't known the mans innocence in his fathers death, but still he should have taken the time to process it all, to grieve for his father, to let someone else handle Barnes.

But he couldn't..

All he could see was red, a blatant fury that had consumed him nearly to the point of madness.

He had nearly taken the life of an innocent man.

Not completely innocent, he reminded himself. Barnes was still responsible for countless murders over the last sixty years and he would have to face the consequences for that eventually, but for now he was going to let the man have some peace.

Maybe, he thought, he might find some peace for himself as well.

Even though that was unlikely.

People like him never had peace. It was always the next fight, the next battle. Sometimes peace was just a pleasant dream.

"Where could he be?" T'Challa said into the night. Patience was clearly not meant for him tonight.

He had known where Rogers was going when he lent him use of one of his jets, but at the time he had so many things to deal with around the palace he didn't give much thought to what could happen if the Captain got himself caught.

Harboring a wanted fugitive, especially one of the Captains caliber could be unpleasent for Wakanda. The people always came first. They came before everything and everyone. Your family, your friends, and most definitely they came before yourself.

Whenever he felt himself being a bit thoughtless or selfish he always remembered his fathers words.

You have to protect your people, your brothers and sisters. They are the lifeline of this land and every single soul is in your hands. A King can not afford to be selfish, T'Challa, for selfishness and greed, individual or national, cause most of our difficulties.

His fathers most important lesson, it had been driven into his mind since his childhood. Selfishness has no place in a King's heart, the kingdom would only suffer from it. He couldn't afford to be even a bit self-centered.
Was he being selfish when he allowed Barnes and Rogers sanctuary inside Wakanda?

He honestly couldn't be sure, he had just wanted to right a wrong, to try and make up for his actions toward Barnes. But right now all he could feel was worry.

Rogers had left with the jet over 24 hours ago, and he had heard nothing, not even a whisper from him for a full day. Since the jet had the ability to cloak itself it was virtually untraceable.

Except to him.

He wasn't worried enough yet to track it but if he wasn't here in a few hours T'Challa would have to take some action. All he could do for now was wait and hope Rogers would return soon. It was troublesome to say the least, he should have been back by now. Knowing that Barnes was back in cryo brought him a little reprieve. Rogers would never leave without his brother.

T'Challa could only hope Rogers hadn't seriously injured or killed any one on his quest. There had been enough death in the past weeks, God knows he couldn't handle much more right now. He was a strong man but even the strongest can break under to much pressure.

He understood the need to free his friends, his family, from their prison. Family would always have a duty to one another. But he didn't share the Captains belief that they were innocent, they had caused possibly thousands of deaths and injuries over the years, New York couldn't really be on them, they did what was necessary.

DC, Sokovia, Lagos, a different matter entirely.

Even so, it wasn't his place to stop Rogers. If he tried he knew it would be another battle, a battle so close to his people, and couldn't risk that. He knew that once they were free the former Avengers would be coming back to Wakanda. He wasn't sure just how he felt about that. Having Rogers here was one thing, but all of them together could prove a disaster in the future. The witch made him edgy, he didn't like knowing she could get inside your head whenever she wanted.

God, he hoped Rogers made it back before Shuri came home. She was still in Nigeria dealing with the aftermath of the explosion Maximoff caused. He hadn't yet told her he had Rogers and Barnes here.

God, she was going to claw out his eyes. She was fully capable, on more than one occasion in their training she had managed to knock him on his ass. They hadn't had any squabbles in a while, but if Shuri went into a rage he may have to hide out in the jungle for a bit. At least the panthers wouldn't kill him. With Shuri he had no guarantees.

She could be a terror.

T'Challa looked around his father's (now his) study. A place he had always come growing up whenever he needed his fathers advice, or if he just wanted to share stories about his adventures for the day. T'Chaka had always made time for him, he had no idea how his father had managed but he was always there for them. T'Chaka would sit behind the gleaming centuries old desk, with its hand carved panthers and images of old Wakandan royalty, and he would listen to every tale or problem they had.

God, how he missed his father. He could really use his guidance now. T'Chaka would never have gotten into this situation to begin with. His father had had more emotional control than he did.

If he let Rogers and the rest of his clan stay, eventually someone would find out where they were. A secret, no matter how well one tries to hide it, always makes itself known in time. But he also did not
feel right about sending them away. There was nowhere left for them to go.

He could truly be their last hope.

T'Challa sighed noisily, his frustrations growing further. Shuri would be returning soon and then he had no way to stash the Avengers away. He looked out the windows of the study, staring out over the vast jungle, at the skyline cloaked in its blackness.

He prayed for strength, for guidance, for some kind of foresight of what may come.

If only his prayers had been answered. He would have been able to see what the Gods had in store for him. How his life was about to be shattered.

Nothing would ever be the same. His world would forever be changed, and he didn't even know it. All because he had offered another sanctuary.

But he couldn't see, so instead he prayed.

Prayed to see something, a glimmer of light, a blur on the horizon.

Anything but the vast darkness looking back at him.
He stood on the terrace, looking out over the lush gardens, the sights and smells of home drifting over him. It was still early, the sun barely peeking above the horizon. He had the world to himself, at least for the moment and he could bask in the peace of nature. Letting his mind drift for a bit he closed his eyes. The smell of wild ginger and the blooming Vlei Orchid drifting over him.

He enjoyed this little routine in the mornings. The calls of the birds, the drops of the early morning dew falling from the palm fronds onto the jungle floor. A cup of Ajiri tea to start the day. The calm before his storm.

Opening his eyes, T'Challa looked slowly around. His mother had planted this garden and he always felt like he could feel her here. She had loved flowers. The monkey tails had been her favorite, and it was evident because the grounds were full of them. They thrived here like nowhere else. He liked to believe it was because her spirit tended to them.

_The human spirit may leave its body but it will forever watch over the loved ones it leaves behind. Until they meet again behind the veil._ T'Chaka had told him once.

He often wondered what his life may have been like if she had lived. How he wished he could have at least been given time with her. Would she be proud of him? What could he have learned from her?

All he had were her pictures, the only link he would ever have to his Umama. He had never heard her voice, her laugh, would never see her smile or hear her say his name. Some days he would give anything to change the past, to have that chance, but he could not. So he came here morning after morning, the one place he knew his Umama would always be.

"Intsasa emnandi, Umama," T'Challa spoke softly. "Ndiya kuthanda.. "

He turned around to go back inside when he caught movement out of the corner of his eye. Turning back he scanned the edge of the treeline. There was a small patch of ferns that were gently moving as if by the breeze, but he saw nothing else. Shaking his head at himself he started to turn again. As he turned he now saw the same thing on the other side, close to the path that lead into the jungles.

But this time there was the unmistakable figure of a man.

Shrouded in the shadows, watching him, even with his enhanced vision he could not tell who the man might be. It could be one of the servants, but they were never here this early and rarely in this part of the palace, unless called upon. He didn't want to accidently attack a groundskeepers. Wouldn't that spread like the walking dead through the palace.
He could see tomorrow's headlines now, "**King throws landscaper into duck pond for coming to work too early. Are budget cuts possible?**" He shook his head at that thought.

But no one but the Royal Family really came into this garden. Whoever this was, they were trespassing. The man continued to stare at him, eyes shining, not speaking. Waiting. It was starting to make him nervous.

"A little early for you to be here, isn't it?" T'Challa called out. He received nothing in return but the dead stare.

Hmmm..

"Hello?"

"Are you lost?" He tried again. The figure continued to stare. Well, definitely not a groundskeeper.

"Cat got your tongue?" he smirked.

Nothing

Damn...

"Well, I can assume you have come here for me. Why don't you come out and state your business? I have a busy day ahead of me," still there was nothing.

He walked down the steps preparing for a fight. It may have been early, but he was never unarmed. He slid his hands into his pockets, slipping them into his gloves. A panther always had its claws.

"Let me assure you if you're here for a fight it will not end well for you."

At the bottom he slowed. The sunlight finally rising enough to where he could get a glimpse of the figure. He froze in his tracks. The breath left his body. It was not possible..

"Papa.."

This couldn't be.. He was there when he died, knew it couldn't be. He gave a speech at the funeral. He took a deep breath, forced himself to breathe. **Use your brain T'Challa, Think**, he told himself.

This, this was a cruel joke, and whoever this was they would pay. He could feel the anger building in him. No, he would not allow some coward to dishonor his father. Not when his body was barely even cold. He started forward, ready to bring the imposter to his knees.

"You have the gall to dishonor the Crown! You would DARE to steal the Kings face!! How dare you? You must be a very arrogant creature, but that arrogance won't help you here," he pulled out his claws, ready to pounce.

The man turned and started down the jungle path, disappearing into the cover of the trees. Completely oblivious to the furious fighter behind him. **Unbelievable**, T'Challa thought. The man had courage, he could say that. There was only one place the path led to. It led to the ancient Temple of Bast. It was forbidden to everyone, except for the oracle that lived near the temple. Even the Royals were not allowed to enter.

Inside the temple walls a special Heart Shaped herb grew, the only place on earth it was even known to be. It was only meant to be consumed by those who took the reins as the Panther. This man must have a death wish. It was also known that the jungle cats frequently roamed the grounds of the
temple. Anger growing further, he started his pursuit.

The man could move, he thought, it's almost like he was floating through the forest.

T'Challa ran harder. Leaves and branches slapping his face. Birds flew in fear. There was no way this man could outrun him, but he was.

Who was this? The closer he got to the temple the darker the sky seemed to get. The rising sun had seemingly vanished, and he could here a rumble of thunder overhead.

He really hope Thor wasn't about to descend into the realm on top of him, his day was already going to shit. Rain started falling in blinding sheets. He could barely see anything in front of him but he pushed on. Lightning flashed, a spike hitting a nearby tree and toppling half of it to the ground.

What the hell was happening? He could still see the an up ahead, almost at the temple now, he had to hurry. He couldn't let him enter. He raced harder, heart beating erratically, the clearing was just up ahead. He could see the opening. He roared the last few feet to the clearing, blinded by rain and covered in leaves.

He burst through. Right into the bright sunlight and gentle breeze. What? What is going on. Something is really not right, he said to himself. He looked toward the temple, the man sat on the steps watching him. He walked forward, ready to arrest him. In the light of the clearing he looked closer at the man.

No...It's.. Not. Possible..

"Papa?"

"Hello, my son," T'Chaka said

Deep breath, deep breath, deep breath.

"How....? You.. I was there. You can't be.."

"Remember, the spirit will forever watch over the loved ones it leaves. Always."

"You..Are you? A ghost?"

" I like to think that I have merely moved on to the next phase of existence. I am still myself, just in a different form. A form usually not shown to the living."

"Then how are you showing it to me?"

"It's reserved for special occasions. I am not able to show myself for long, my energies are still short. Sometimes, T'Challa, the spirit must come to offer a bit of guidance, or in some cases, a warning to the still Earth bound souls."

"What guidances are you here to offer, father?"

"I'm not here with guidance."

*Oh boy, that didn't sound good for him.*

"A warning then. What could be so dire that you have to come back from the dead to warn me?"

"Oh, I am just the delivery man on this visit, my son. They, are the warning," he pointed behind
T'Challa, "You should pay attention."

A growl came from behind. He knew that sound, it owned these jungles. You heard it's call through the night. The screams of it chasing down whatever poor prey had gotten in its path.

He turned oh so slowly, knowing a sudden move would be his death. Slinking toward him were two panthers. Teeth bared, ready for blood. Both were a deep dark brown. Each one bearing glowing red eyes.

A growl came from the side. This panther was the color of sand. Purple eyes piercing through him. A scream came from the opposite side.

Bast, how many were there?

The brightest red fur he had ever laid eyes on was coming for him. Blue eyes gleaming.

Oh shit, I'm going to die... He thought. By panthers. Wasn't that irony

"Father.. What?" He risked a glance back, but his father was gone.

Oh God...In his place was a panther. But it was unlike any he had ever seen. No black silk fur was to be seen. This one was frost white, with the brightest blue eyes he had ever seen. It was huge, as big as a small car. It roared. He could feel the breath from the great beast blast his face.

Shit. Shit. Shit.

He was surrounded by them, circling him, they were closing him in. The smaller cats tightening up so there was no way he could run. He was stuck.. The white beast walked down the steps toward him, slashing a paw, razor claws barely missing his neck.

Fuck.. It slinked closer, forcing him back toward the others even more. He had to try something, but there was no way in hell he could take on 5 panthers. Fuck. The big cat looked at him hungrily, then it looked at the other cats in turn. They growled. He could have sworn they were smiling. The white panther leaned back, preparing to jump. This was it. He would try his best.

It pounced, he didn't even have a chance to dodge it, it was to fast. He landed with the mighty beast on top of him, trying to get his throat. The claws were slicing through his shirt, his pants, he could feel the knives piercing his flesh. He prayed it would stop, Bast, it was torture. He clawed at its eyes, anything to get it off. But the second he had tried the others decided it was time to join their leader.

They all came for him. He was tossed around like a child's toy. Every movement was an agony. He could feel his blood gushing from his wounds, he was weakening, he could feel himself slipping. The fight was leaving him. The beast stopped, it looked at him knowingly. Stared into his eyes for but a moment. Then it opened those murderous jaws, sinking them down on his throat.

And there was blackness.
Chapter Notes

Nkiru

This one is a bit of a short one but I can't seem to stop the flow from my brain right now. So I'm writing before it farts out. I can't believe I have almost 1000 hits on my little story. Thank you all so much. I hope I'm doing a good job :)

Nkiru is an African name meaning "the greatest will come"

Nkiru unlocked the entrance to the servants quarters and headed straight for the coffee machine. Lately her early workdays were starting to take their toll on her, she was starting to feel her age. It was a good thing she didn't look it. Barely a wrinkle on her face, the only way you could tell her age was her shock white hair.

She thought about just taking the whole carafe with her but there were others who may want some.

But damn, her headache was pinching at her brain this morning. She hadn't slept well, her aches and pains keeping her awake. Still, she shouldn't complain, she had her life and was very fortunate to have lived a good one. So many souls never had their chance. But maybe it was time to consider retirement. She had been on staff at the palace for almost 50 years, starting here as a teen. She had worked her way up to Senior House Maid years ago, so she earned the pleasure of not doing much cleaning anymore. She had been here through Wakandas triumphs, and its trials.

She had served three of its kings, and had suffered the loss of two.

Drinking her coffee, she went over her mental list of things she had to accomplish today. First there were the Royal chambers to attend to, linens needed to be changed and the toiletries stocked. After, the rest of the staff should have arrived by then so there would be their weekly staff meeting. Then she had several guest rooms to prepare in the south wing, which was a little odd.

That wing hadn't been opened for use in years. T'Challa had come to her to have her personally take care of that. She wondered who would be arriving. It was obviously a group, as she had six rooms to prep, but not one of influence. Otherwise he would have her preparing the north wing suites. The south wing was the most secluded section of the palace, never used.

Nkiru couldn't remember the last time anyone had actually cleaned it. Her work was cut out for her today.

Sighing, she pulled out the Thermos she kept on hand here. She would just take her drink with her, she was going to need it. She walked down the hall to the supply room and found her basket, then went over her stock list and started loading.

Royal Chambers first, she thought. The sitting area wasn't in need of much, just a few touches. The bedroom would need fresh bed linens, the draperies needed to be changed and blankets would need to be washed. The bathroom needed to be fully supplied so she took a bit of everything then set off upstairs.

She did her routine in Shuri's chambers first, before she arrived back home. She would be back shortly and Nkiru wanted everything to be nice and clean for her. Shuri was naturally tidy so it took at
most half an hour to finish hers. Then she set off for T'Challas.

He should be up and about by now, she thought. He wasn't exactly a morning person, but he had meetings scheduled in Cameroon most of today. On days like that he was usually up before the sun.

She opened the door and set her supply basket down. She did her best with tidying the sitting room but, Gods, why couldn't that man be more like his sister. It was what she liked to call unorganized chaos.. Picking up her basket she went into the bedroom. There was a lamp burning on the bedside table, the curtains were drawn but like she thought he was not there.

*Good God look at this mess... I'll need more damn coffee.*

His bed was in complete disaray. The blankets were hanging everywhere off the bed and in the floor. The sheets looked like they had been pulled halfway off. A pillow had feathers popping out. She cast her eyes to the Heavens.. Bast, give her strength...

*The man must fight even in sleep*

She went over to start on the bed, shaking her head. Bending over to pick up a pillow, she thought she heard a small whining noise. She looked around, seeing nothing. She went back to work. There it was again. This time it sounded more pained. Looking around the room she still saw nothing.

*Huh. This is what happens when you hit 70, she thought.*

Leaning down for a blanket, it came again, this time a moan. It seemed to be coming from the opposite side of the huge bed. Where she couldn't see. Slowly, she started to make her way around. As she made it to the end the noise stopped. Rolling her eyes at herself she started back to the place she was working on. Before she could barely move a blanket shot up letting out a bloodcurling scream.

She screamed herself. Tripping back over the blankeet she was carrying and falling hard on her ass. The figure was screaming and thrashing about under the covers, knocking the lamp and most of the contents of the table to the floor. She scampered back, letting out ear shattering shreiks of her own, trying to get away.

After what seemed like an eternity the screaming stopped and the figure stilled. Working his way out of the mass of blankets, T'Challa appeared. Breathing harshly, drenched in sweat with a thin line of blood dripping from his nose.

"Oh thank Bast.... It was just a dream, " he flopped back to the floor as he said it, panting.

"A DREAM!!"

He slid back across the floor yelling "Mother Fucker" as she spoke, he must have thought he was alone.

"More like a fucking nightmare!! What the HELL are you trying to do give an elderly woman a heart attack!!"

"Shit, Nkiru, I am SO SO sorry! I thought I was alone. Are you alright? Did I scare you? You didn't hurt yourself did you?"

"SCARE? SCARE? Are you kidding me. I nearly killed myself trying to get out of here!! I am to old for this shit. OH my GOD..." she got up slowly, rubbing her sore behind.
"The next time you want to scare the life out of someone make sure they're younger!! Why must you and your sister insist on terrorising each other?"

"I apologize, I did not mean to frighten you."

She let out a huff of breath, "That must have been a hell of a dream." she said

"Yes, yes it was," spoken so light she barely heard him.

"You don't have to finish this Nkiru. I will get one of the other maids to handle it. You should go take a break. I am sorry for frightening you. Apologies"

"You don't have to tell me twice," she picked up her basket and turned to leave. "Your nose is bleeding Highness, you should be more careful falling out of bed."

"Thank you Nkiru, I'll try to remember to tell myself that that next time I fling myself into the air while I sleep."

"Always were so sarcastic.. I swear to Bast, even as a child he had a smart mouth," she mumbled under her breath but he still heard her. He smiled.

"Wait, before you go, has Shuri arrived yet?"

"Not yet, but she should be here within the hour. Her plane was do at 5 this morning."

"Thank you Nkiru, you can go now."

She nodded and headed for the door. She glanced back at him once, worriedly. Nightmare, she thought. More like terror. He woke like the hounds of hell were ripping him apart. So young to have so much to fret over. She left to go about the rest of her day.

T'Challa hadn't even realized he'd fallen asleep. Last he remembered he went to his rooms to wait for Rogers return. Rogers.. The bastard still wasn't here. If he were lucky maybe they had all flown off somewhere else, but that was doubtful. Luck wasn't his friend lately..

Damn he had nearly scared poor Nkiru to death. But God, it had felt so real. Everything had been so vivid, he could still taste the tea on his tongue. His hair was damp like he had been out in the rain. The scents, the colors, he had never had anything like that before. Now, his heart ached for his father. Leaning back against his bead he wiped the blood from his nose. Damn.. He must have hit it when he fell out of bed. He didn't know what to make of his dream.

Was it just a dream, or was his father really trying to tell him something? And why the panthers, why were they all different, some more feirce than the other as the ripped him apart. All their eyes..Then the big one...It definitely led the pack. What did it all mean? His head was too swimmy to think much about it now. He would need to reflect on it later. When he felt better. Now he had a day to prepare for.

He rose up slowly, his body was aching. It was like he had been crushed by the huge panther, God how he hurt. His throat was burning, almost like he could still feel the grip of those massive jaws. He limped toward his bathroom for a drink. There were glasses on the counter so he poured a glass.

His hands shook as he lifted the water to his mouth. He swirled the water around to rinse his mouth out. As he bent over to spit he felt a sharp pain in his stomach. Gripping one hand on the counter for
balance he used the other to lift his shirt. There, scored across his abdomen from one side to the other, were 5 gigantic claw marks...

Shit...
The Cat who got the Canary

Chapter Notes

This may be the last update for the week, but I may get another one put out but I won't promise anything. I've been doing pretty good with them so far but the rest of my week will be kinda busy, so I won't get to work on it as much as I have been. I hope you all like it :) Cedarwood soap can be bought on amazon for like 8 bucks a bar and it smells soooooo good. I buy it for my man.

I must have done this during my nightmare. He thought numbly. It was the only way it could have happened. It was just a dream, there was no way a dream could do physically harm you like this.. He'd heard tales of people falling out of bed and maybe breaking a bone but never trying to claw their own chest open.

He stared dumbly at the raw, red scratches across his torso. They were slowly oozing blood, swollen to the touch. God what a night. he'd never had anything like that happen to him before. His stomach felt slightly queasy and he was more than a little lightheaded. He needed to try and pull himself together, he had to leave soon for Cameroon, he had a very important meeting with their government today.

They were asking for some input with their educational system and they wanted his assistance. He was running late already, he glanced up at the wall of glass that seperated him from the jungle, early morning light was peeking in so he should have been boarding a plane right about now. Good thing the he owned the plane, he thought. At least it can't leave without me.

Bracing a hand on the wall to help him balance, he made his way toward the shower. Maybe the hot water would ease his body this morning. Luckily his personal assistant had enough foresight to get his clothing ready the night before.

One less thing he had to worry about. Setting the water temp as hot as it could get, he stepped under the jets.

Being rich had its perks, he thought with a smile.

He wondered if anyone else out there had a 6 person shower/sauna with 40 spray jets and over 50 different water functions. Probably Stark.

The walls and ceiling of it were lined with watertight LED tiles, once the door closed you had any view your heart desired. From the summit of Everest to the depths of the Grand Canyon. Today he was bathing from top of Machu Picchu, looking out over the valleys below.

It was his own design, his own piece of heaven created from his own mind. There was even a wind function for drying, and a day or night setting so you could shower under the stars.

Being a genius had its perks too.

But both...Both also had their problems.. No matter what, people always thought you owed them something. Complete strangers, people you'd heard of only by name. They would always want a
piece of you. No matter where you went in life, no matter what you accomplished someone would always want something from you.

Money was always the most popular option, or using you to try and influence politics, businesses or just trying to gain fame. They would pick at your brain for ideas and then try to take them from you. His personal favorite though... Trying to work their way into your life while their colleagues stole Vibranium from under your nose. A lesson his father had learned the hard way.

T'Chaka had never managed to get that bit back from Howard Stark. After that incident Wakanda had closed itself off, letting no one in. And of all the things Howard could have created, he made a huge frisbee...He did wonder what the Captain had done with the shield, he would like to have Wakandas property back.

He stood under the spray a few moments longer, letting the scent of his cedarwood soap drift over him. Sighing, he turned off the water and reached for the towel. Nausea finally seemed to have passed but his chest was still sore. He bandaged himself up enough to where the scratches wouldn't bleed through his clothes, then got dressed and prepared to head out. He left the bathroom rubbing at his tired eyes, so he didn't see the person standing at the window.

"Good morning, brother." He jumped and scowled at her, he had enough scares this morning. "A little late are we?"

"Good morning Shuri. Please do come in. I swear, one day you're going to waltz right in here while I'm having sex and you'll be sorry. And I wonder why I can't walk around naked. I have no privacy. How was your flight? Any flight attendents traumatized this time?" He smiled at her. Her eyes narrowed at him.

"That was only once, I do believe you should let it go... And besides, as I recall, it was you who hid those spiders in my quarters. It wasn't my fault they all quit after.." she smirked, "You haven't had sex in ages. If I didn't know better, I'd think you a monk."

"Oh please. You tore through that plane like a banshee. Screaming about little furry demons.. If I remember, and I always do, that plane looked like you'd actually bombed it after you were finished with it. How did you manage to get that book embedded in the ceiling?" He paused, squinting his eyes at her, "And just how would you know about my sex life. God, don't you have anyone better to stalk?"

"Ass.. My brother is an ass. The Kingdom would be much better off with me leading them. I am much more concerned for their wellbeing than you are. You'll just scare us all to death. Or bore us to death with your lack of sex. You know you can hire someone for that, right?"

"Me? Which one of us nearly sent father to his grave by filling the ducts above his room with firecrackers.. The palace was full of smoke for a week. And I've been busy, It hasn't been a priority lately."

"In all honesty that wasn't meant for father.. I thought I was above your room, I miscalculated," she gave him a wicked smirk, "Your poor hand must get very tired."

He sighed, "I am very late Shuri, we can talk about my scare tactics and sex life later. So if you will please excuse me, I must be going."

"Very well, be off then..
"Thank you," he made to leave.
"We'll discuss why the Avengers are having breakfast in our kitchen, looking like the cat who had his canary, when you get back..."

"..."

Shit. He stopped at the door, closing his eyes to the heavens. In the past two weeks his life had completely turned around, and about to again it seemed. He hadn't even known Rogers was back. He turned back, "Shuri, I."

"NO, if your about to give me some ill thought explanation, I don't want to hear it. I want to know why, WHY there are MURDERERS IN MY HOUSE!!" she screamed at him.

"They aren't...," He tried to say.

"If you say they aren't killers I will throw you out your widows.. Have you not seen the news reports, T'Challa? Have you not saw what they have done. Have you already forgotten about Lagos? Have you not seen the death tolls. How many Wakandans were lost? That the little witch killed!! And all those hurt and killed in Romania. Which may I add you had a part in. You were there!!! You KNOW!! These people care only about themselves, their actions prove that, they do not care what they do as long as they get their way. And now they are here. In our home. What are you thinking?"

"Shuri...If you just.."

"And how are they even here? I thought most of them were locked up like they should be. The only ones who weren't in custody were Rogers and Barnes. You had said they went missing after that fight in Siberia," she paused a moment. "OH MY GOD please tell me you haven't had them here this whole time...? You were lying to me! Please, by all that is holy, tell me the truth. You didn't break them out of prison did you? WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?"

"ENOUGH!" he shouted. "I have a very busy day today so I just need you to trust me on this for now. I'll tell you everything as soon as I get back, I promise. But I need to go, I can't miss this meeting. I need you to keep them out of sight just for a bit, Nkiru is prepping rooms in the south wing and I don't want anyone to see them here yet. So just.. Keep them busy..Or something. I don't know."

"You want me. To help you. Harbor terrorists?"

"Only til I can come up with an alternative" he stated.

"I'm going to KILL YOU!!" She started toward him, he backed up knowing she meant business.

"I'm going to rip your eyes out. I'm not going near those monsters. What do you think I am T'Challa? Stupid? They can't stay here, they're wanted fugitives. Their face is all over news channels worldwide!! They basically told half the planet that their voices did not matter, that the Avengers knew what was best for them. Our father was one of the main proprietors of those Accords!! And YOU signed them!! So why would you bring them here?"

"I was only going to bring in Barnes because I nearly killed an innocent man.."

"Not completely innocent."

"..Rogers won't let him out of his sight, so I let him come in as well.."

"What about the rest?"
"Well. I may have... Loaned a jet for Rogers use to break them out of prison."

"....."

"Shuri, let me."

"Stop. Just. Stop," she closed her eyes. "If this is your first decision as King we are all doomed. I want no part of this T'Challa. This. This is of your own doing and I do hope you realize what a mistake this is. This will come back to haunt you. I hope you realize that..That man..All he cares for is Barnes. Anything that stands between them is doomed to fall. If people find out, where they are, they will come for them. And Wakanda will be in the crosshairs. Do you really want to doom your people that way?"

"It won't come to that."

"Yes, T'Challa, it will."

"You don't know that."

"Yes, I do. You can't keep them a secret forever, eventually someone will find out, then they come. When they do, I will not stop them. You are my brother, and I do love you, so I am going to let you have your way with this. And when it comes back to haunt you, when they drag away our King for harboring international terrorists, remember that I tried to warn you.." she walked to the door "You should go. You don't want to be to late."

With that she turned and left. Leaving him to wonder if she was right.
He made his way swiftly down to the family kitchen, his mind a jumble of thoughts after all the events of the morning. T'Chaka's face, so clear to him, almost as if he were actually standing there. Close enough for him to touch. Then the look of betrayal, of hurt on Shuri's face. He loved his sister dearly, she was the only living family he had left. He would never do anything to put her in harms way. But as he thought of her words his heart felt heavy.

What if she was right? What would he do then?

He assumed all the anger and hate toward the wayward Avengers would calm down soon. It usually did after they did something reckless and stupid. It seemed to be a pattern with them every few years. Destroy a city fighting evil, angry public for a few weeks, then everybody forgets and life goes on.

But the way Shuri had spoken, calling them murderers, terrorists, speaking of the news channels worldwide calling for their heads..

He really needed to get caught up on what had been happening. There had not been much chance for him to view news lately with everything he had going on. Despite being so technologically advanced in Wakanda, he didn't constantly carry a tablet with him. Sure his phone was always there but that didn't mean he kept it glued to his hand like most people did now. They reminded him of zombies from the stories he read as a child, just walking, oblivious to the world around them. He liked to observe his surroundings, you never knew just what could happen if you were always looking down.

There wasn't always time for him to do such mundane things like watch TV, so on the plane this morning he would just have to catch up a bit. Surely things weren't as bad as Shuri was claiming. He knew Rogers was currently considered a fugitive, but he thought that terrorist was a bit extreme. The last two weeks had been nothing but crazy.

Gods, had it really only been two weeks since this started? The bombing, his fathers death, his funeral, superhuman battles, T'Challa's own inauguration. Taking over all the duties of running Wakanda..No wonder he couldn't seem to think straight. There were so many things to see to each day, his father had made it seem so easy..

He hated politics, but by the laws of the Kingdom he had to take over as King. He would rather it be Shuri, honestly. But the only way that would happen is if he died or was forcefully removed by the people of Wakanda. Another possibility was being overthrown and cast out by the Royal family, but seeing as Shuri was the only one left he didn't think that would ever happen. They cared for each other to much. So he would do his best to be the King that Wakanda deserved. A King his sister would be proud of..

He slowed before coming into the kitchen doorway. Pulling out a tissue he swiped at his nose, he couldn't seem to get it to completely stop bleeding. It was becoming an annoyance. Silently he
prayed he'd cleaned himself up well enough, he'd actually had to use a little makeup to hide the bruising forming around his nose. Didn't that just scream manly...

One more check mark in his shit day box. This was not the morning to answer a thousand questions about why he looked like he'd just went ten rounds with the Hulk, and he didn't feel like answering any more questions from this group than he had to.

Stopping at the entryway, he took in the scene before him. Rogers sat at the head of the table, a place usually meant for the King, smiling and laughing as he joked with Agent Barton, who was seated at his right.

Barton was chowing down on some curry left over from last night, grinning back. T'Challa wondered how Barton felt about leaving his family behind to fend for themselves. Three kids without their father. By looking at him he didn't seem to bothered.

Next to Barton was Maximoff, who didn't seem to have a care in the world at this moment. She was eating her way through a large bowl of Wakandan fruits and fresh cream that he assumed had been made up by the cooks for Shuri.

Apparently Shuri had been angry enough this morning to leave her beloved breakfast behind..

Wanda was smiling to herself, as if she had told herself something funny. She made him wary, he would have to keep an eye on her. Across from Barton was Sam Wilson, drinking a cup of T'Challa's favored tea and browsing on a tablet he had procured from somewhere.

Oddly enough that actually made him feel a bit angry, the sight of someone drinking his tea.

Finally he laid his eyes upon Scott Lang. Lang was the only one who looked more than worse for wear. His hair was a mess, his clothes were dirty and his eyes were red-rimmed and bloodshot. He was the only one who wasn't smiling. He had a bit of a glassy look about him, almost like he was slightly stoned.

This is only temporary, he reminded hisself. After everything blows over they would all move on.

"Good morning," he spoke. All conversation immediately died and he had 5 sets of eyes turn to him.

"Your Highness," Rogers said as he rose from his chair. "I can't thank you enough for doing this for us. We don't know what we would have done if it wasn't for you. Thank you.. Have you had breakfast? Would you like to join us? Come in, meet my team," he stated as he walked over to join T'Challa.

"I am afraid that introductions will have to wait til later Captain. I am running very late this morning, so I must be on my way. I just needed to have a quick word with you before I leave. If you would please follow me, we will have it on my way to the plane. A good day to you all," he said to the rest. He received nods and smiles in return, but he could feel the weight of their eyes on him as he made his way out. It made him feel small, like a bug under the microscope.

Luckily, he didn't have to far to go since there was a heli-pad and a private airstrip within the palace grounds. He had a plane to catch and some news to watch. After, he would look more deeply into this current situation. He would find out what had been going on with the world of the heros, then he'd advance his decisions from there. He walked down the hall stopping once he was sure he was away from the ears of others.

"I will not keep you from your friends long Captain. But I must ask you where you have been. You were gone nearly two days. The timing we had worked out was nowhere near that long. It should
have been no more than a 13 hour journey at the most. Did you run into trouble?"

"I had a bit of trouble with the guards at the Raft. They were more armored than I'd thought. But I managed to subdue them easily enough. After that it was smooth sailing," Steve said.

"May I ask how they were subdued Captain? After the recent events if any of those men are seriously hurt it will cause you far more problems than you already have."

"I promise you, Your Highness, that I would never use full force of my abilities on civilians. I took them down in the easiest way I could. They'll be alright, might be sore for awhile but that should be all. And probably a hell of a headache," Steve smiled.

"Then where were you? I must remind you that you are a wanted man right now. You need to remain hidden until this blows over."

"I'm sorry I wasn't back earlier but I had a stop I had to make."

"..... A stop?" T'Challa asked.

"He means me," a voice spoke from behind him. He'd never heard her coming, even with his enhancements.

"Miss Romanoff.." he said stiffly. He was still angry about being electrocuted by her Widows Bites at the airport.

"King T'Challa," she smiled softly. "Good to see you again."

"I managed to get through to Natasha while I've been here," Rogers said, 'She's also trying to stay hidden from Ross , so when I went out to get the team I made a detour to pick her up."

"That would have been insightful information to have given before you left Captain. Where exactly did you detour to?"

"Small town called Wrigley in the Northwest Territories," Steve said flatly. "It's very cold."

"I bet it is.." he sighed.

"I hope it's all right. I should have asked and not just assumed, but she's my family to and I couldn't just leave her."

"It will be fine Captain. But I must ask you to not got to your rooms yet. The maid is preparing them for you but if you are seen by anyone I cannot guarantee your safety here. If you are seen you will have to leave. So please stay in the kitchen for now, she will be done shortly and you can all settle in. I must be off. I will speak with you again when I return."

"What about the woman who was here earlier?" Romanoff asked. "She saw us. Could she be a threat to us?"

"That is my sister, Shuri, and she will be no threat to you, I promise. So please leave her be. I will not have her a victim of the famous Black Widow in her own home." T'Challa said tightly. "Should any harm come to her, Romanoff, your bites won't stop me again."

"Still sore over that one, are you?" she smiled cheekily.

"Yes, I am. I will speak to you all when I return. Enjoy your wing of the palace."
With that he left down the hall, Rogers and Romanoff watching him go.

After the door closed and Steve was sure they were alone, he turned to Natasha.

"Well he didn't seem any worse for wear," Rogers stated, "I have to admit I was a bit skeptical about that drug. Some of SHEILD's methods were a little questionable."

"I only had to give him enough to keep him out til I could finish hiding the jet. And your "accomplice," Romanoff smirked at him knowingly. "I was a little confused about the dosage. I'm not familiar enough with T'Challa's biology but it looks like I did pretty good. And do you have any idea how hard it was to squeeze my ass through those vents. It's a good thing I went in, Clint would have been stuck in a heartbeat. So will you be sneaking out for some midnight "fondue"."

Steve sighed, Ignoring her question, "Did you get everything set up?"

"Yeah, yeah. She's all settled in. I made sure we weren't followed, and that area is sacred ground to these people so no one ever goes there. She'll be fine. She's out of sight and a big girl Steve. She can handle herself. Even against big jungle cats."

"I know, but it was a risk to go get her. I just want to make sure it's all safe," he said.

"It will be fine. She's settled in, got everything she needs. No one saw her, so she's safe. They'll never look for her here."

"What about the dart? Is it still in T'Challa's room?" Steve asked.

"As far as I know. I still don't have a good layout of this place, so I wouldn't risk going in to get it. Not without knowing if the cameras have rebooted. I did what I could but, you never know, the tech here is Stark level, maybe even higher. Obviously, he didn't find it, I'm pretty sure he would have said something about it. He's not usually the type to let that slip by him."

"Ok, I'll see if Scott can go in and retrieve it soon. Is the jet secure?" Steve asked her.

"All stashed away and ready for flight, should we need it. Stop worrying. I took care of everything. We're all safe for now."

"What's the word on Stark? He still out?"

"Last I checked he was still in the hospital, but he had regained consciousness. Apparently your letter was too much for his poor, broken heart to handle."

"Funny.. Your full of sass this morning. What's got you in such a good mood?" Steve asked.

"I don't know. I just feel... Free."

"Well, let's go enjoy our freedom and have breakfast together."

"You read my mind," she said as they made their way back to the kitchen.

Through the window, all six watched as T'Challa's jet lifted off. Steve and Natasha shared a knowing smile with each other, then it was gone and they dug in.

So they ate, and laughed, and joked. Not once giving a thought to the man they used to share their mornings with. A man who gave them anything they had ever asked for, who gave them a life filled with luxury. A man who doted on them and spoiled them like he would have his own flesh and blood, who had considered them his family. A man who was currently lying in a hospital bed,
recovering from a heart attack. A man, a genius, who had already figured out where they were.

But this morning, they gave no thought to that man, it was all in the past for them now. They were only worried about themselves, their happiness. In their joy, they had already forgotten about T'Challa, the man who had taken them in. A good man with a heart made of gold. A man who they would also end up betraying very soon. But little did they know, T'Challa already had someone who was watching his back. Someone who would be ready to step in and fight for him when the so called heros decided to drive the knife into his back.

Someone who was currently watching their every move.
Sorry it took so long to get this up but life happens. It's kinda short so I apologize for that as well :)

Alone in his hospital room, Tony Stark watched the scene on his screen before him. It was odd, really. They were supposed to be the good guys. Now just look at them, he thought, like life is all peachy keen.. He'd figured it would hurt him more, seeing those he had thought had cared about him, who he'd fought with, bled for, acting like nothing had happened. Like they had done nothing wrong.. Like the lives of all those people maimed and murdered the last two weeks didn't matter.

Truth be told he felt some relief. Relief that, for the time being, they were out of his life. He wouldn't have to put up with their shit anymore. Always bringing up his latest failures. Especially Rogers, he didn't know what had happened there. They used to be the best of friends, hell he'd spent more time with Steve than he had with Rhodey the last few years.

After Ultron though, it seemed all Rogers wanted do was rub that in his face. Every single time something happened since then Steve always blamed it on Tony. They seemed to forget Bruce helped him with that program, but hey, apparently Rogers was smart enough not to piss off Bruce.

So he went after Tony instead.

It didn't matter what it was. It could be something so stupid, like the time somebody (Thor) clogged up the drain in the towers kitchen. Steve blamed Tony. Never mind that for some fucked up reason Thor had taken to using the kitchen sink as a personal bathtub..

Wasn't that a sight to remember.. Walking in to find a naked Thor up on the fucking counter trying to take a fucking bath..Tony had thought he was taking a shit in the dishes..

Thor had his own room, with a HUGE fucking bathtub!! But nooooo, Thor said the icy blue color of the tub made him think of Loki and he felt that, "to bathe in it would be disrespectful to his beloved Brother.."

What the actual fuck?

So Tony had given him a new one, shiny black marble..In which Thor stated that, "Nay brother Stark it is the same color of Loki's long glorious locks of silken hair " and a bunch of other shit that made Tony think they were a little more than brothers, but fuck it, who cared. He'd slept with men more than he had with women, so he wasn't one to judge.

Hell, he thought Loki was kinda hot in a weird goth wannabe kinda way.

But the drain was apparently all on Tony even though there was so much fucking blonde hair in that thing he could have built a big blonde Hulk with it.

Asgardians were weird..
And Steve, God love him, had said, "Maybe if you had built better drainage systems into your tower we wouldn't have to deal with shit like this all the time Stark." Why could the man never use his first name?

Thor had more hair than a fucking yeti on his body and was in the kitchen sink. He had to suck out 3 feet of hair, yet somehow it was his fucking fault..

Rogers was just a dick..

They'd show up again, he was sure. When that time came he would do his best to deal with it like a responsible adult..

Fuck it!! Who was he trying to fool. When he saw them again he'd probably repulsor their asses to the fucking moon.

Bunch of fucking moochers..

Right now he was mainly focused on trying to get out of this fucking bed. Pepper wouldn't let him leave yet, and there was only so much he could do with his Starktab. He needed to get to his lab and get to work helping Friday with Extremis.

He knew his heart was bad after everything he'd been through but never thought it was weakened to the point it was. His doctors were making noise about a transplant..

Extremis was almost ready. He hoped.

But in order to find out for sure he needed a test dummy. By dummy he meant himself.

He figured that even if he went BOOM at least he'd tried something. He was pretty sure the boom part of Extremis was almost worked out though.

If he could just get the fuck out of here...

Damn Pepper. Woman breaks up with me then still trys to run my life, he thought. He needed a way past her but she'd even conned Rhodey and Spiderling into keeping an eye on him.

At least there were some things he could do from here though.

Like keep an eye on the rabid dogs he'd chosen to call family the last few years.

When he'd heard about the break in in the raft he had instantly known Rogers had some help. There were only a few people on this planet smart enough to get him in there. He was one, Bruce was another, and then it narrowed dramatically after that. Not many people had the resources to pull that kind of thing off. So being a genius, it wasn't hard to figure it out.

And when he did...He went to work.

It had taken a bit of time to get himself into Wakandas security systems. They were a bit more complex than he'd thought but if he could build a suit out of scrap metal he could hack a camera.

Sadly, his view didn't include audio.

Yet.. He had Friday trying to work her way completely into the system, he wanted her everywhere. He needed to know every move these assholes were making. If they fucking farted he wanted to know.
So far he had views in over half the palace. Fri was currently trying to wheedle her way through the wing he hoped his asshole teammates would be in.

Right now, watching them all from here, he honestly felt fear. Fear for the man who had no idea what kind of monsters he'd let into his home.

He was worried about seeing Natasha pop out of nowhere. He wondered where Steve had picked her up from. After his collapse he had lost track of her and now watching her and that smug little smile on her face had him feeling worried.

He hadn't realized she was even there until she popped up in the hallway. Where had she been when the rest were in the kitchen?

He had missed something, he just knew it. He hoped to God it wasn't something massive. He tried to read their lips but he just couldn't make much out of it. He thought he managed to make out the words "big girl" and "sacred" but he wasn't sure.

God, he needed to get the fuck out of this bed.

He wasn't going to let them do the same things to T'Challa. He didn't know why he cared at all, but something about the new King just called out to him. The man just seemed so genuine, from the small amount of interactions they'd had with each other, there was something about T'Challa he just couldn't shake.

He needed to know everything. Rogers was the man with the plan, after all.

Now Tony just needed to figure out what that plan was.

He watched as the group got up from the table. Lazy fuckers couldn't even be bothered to put their dishes in the sink.

Fuckers..

His eyes followed them as they made their way through their new home. Laughing and smiling as the picked out their rooms. Probably thinking they were all safe and free. The gears in his head started turning as he watched, an idea building in his endless mind.

"Friday, you there?" he spoke to his tablet.

"Always Boss, what can I do fer you?"

"First, find me a way out of this fucking hospital. Then get Pepper on the phone. I need her to set me up a meeting with what Avengers we have left. We've got some serious shit to do."

"Go ahead guys," he spoke at the tablet. "Enjoy it while it lasts, cause we'll be seeing you reeeal soon."
"an update on the conditions of the guards involved in the incident at the Raft yesterday evening. We will be keeping you updated with the new information coming in to us as soon as we receive it. If you are just tuning in with us we'll give you a quick recap of the situation. Yesterday, in the evening, the highly secure facility known as The Raft was apparently compromised."

"Authorities are stating that Steven Rogers, better known as Captain America, infiltrated the facility and attacked the guards who were on duty at the time. For those of you who have no clue what's happening in the world, recently Captain Rogers was involved in quite a few incidents around the globe that have led to the deaths and serious injuries of numerous civilians and law enforcement officials."

"Now, most of us remember the events of DC, where it was revealed that a supposedly extinct WWII group known as Hydra had infiltrated the US Government Division known as SHIELD. Nearly 800 people lost their lives that day and thousands more were injured. During that time it was also revealed that, and this is still somewhat hard to believe, Sergeant James Barnes, who was Captain Rogers best friend and his second in command back during the war was somehow still alive and apparently was working as a Hydra agent."

"Barnes was believed to have been killed from falling off of a train while trying to apprehend a Hydra scientist known as Zola. Now, you can still look up most of this information by clicking the link on our page we have provided for you. It will redirect you to the UN website where you can find all the information on these events."

"As for the current events we've been following, we all know what happened in Romania and Germany recently. Police were sent in to an apartment complex in Romania to apprehend Sergeant Barnes for the UN bombing in Vienna, Austria, and the death of King T'Chaka of Wakanda. Somehow Captain Rogers was alerted of this mission and tried to get Barnes out before police could get there."

"Rogers and Barnes fought their way out killing 8 officers and wounding many more in the process. From there there was a chase into a busy tunnel which partially collapsed during the battle, killing several civilians including two small children. After they were finally apprehended by War Machine and members of the Joint Counter Terrorism Center, only to escape again a few hours later."

"We still don't have much information about what happened afterward, but Rogers, along with Barnes and several other Avengers had apparently fled to and Halle Airport in Leipzig, Germany. There they were confronted by Tony Stark and the rest of the Avengers. A battle ensued between the two groups which destroyed the airport, and I have to give praise to the German authorities for evacuating the airport before all this happened. The death toll could have been well into the thousands, but thankfully no one was killed there."

"The battle, or as the public is starting to call it, the Superhero Civil War, left Colonel James Rhodes, or War Machine, severely injured. While Rogers and Barnes managed to evade capture..."
again, several members of his team were apprehended and moved into the high security prison known as the Raft."

"Everett Ross, the head of the JCTC, stated that sometime after fleeing the scene Iron Man managed to track them to an abandoned base in Siberia, in which a fight broke out between Stark and Barnes/Rogers. The fight left Mr. Stark badly injured and unable to move in his Iron Man armor. Ross states that Stark was found by the Avenger Vision and was taken to a hospital but he could not give us any information on his condition at this time."

"Now, this place, The Raft, was originally designed to house the worst of the worst, mostly international terrorists. It was only recently converted into a facility to house people with enhanced abilities. Basically, it's a floating fortress. Supposed to be impenetrable."

"But sometime in the past two days, we're not exactly sure on the time because we haven't been given all the information, but in the past two days Captain Rogers, somehow managed not only to find this place but to raise it from under the water, get in and break out the members of his team who were arrested in Germany."

"I am by no means a genius, but in my honest opinion there is now way Rogers could do all of this by himself. It's basically impossible. The technology he would have to have to even find the place would have to be incredible. Which leads me to ask the question, Who out there aside from the government has the ability to do this. To find this untraceable fortress somewhere in the depths of the ocean, raise and breach it, then make it out with barely leaving a trace?"

"In a recent statement released from Ross states that, "Rogers indeed had help infiltrating the Raft facility. There are also indications of a one of our own CIA agents aiding in his escape from our custody with his shield and Sam Wilson's Falcon gear. We do know the identity of the suspect in this situation but we cannot make that identity publicly known to you at this time. I can tell you that we know the person was picked up by Rogers after the Raft infiltration before the JCTC could apprehend them and we haven't been able to pick up their trail again."

"Ross also stated that anyone with information on the whereabouts of Rogers or any of the missing Avengers are urged to contact the JCTC immediately. Do not approach them under any circumstances. They are EXTREMELY dangerous! Two guards were killed and three more are critically wounded following the breach. An update on their condition was given to us by Ross. One man apparently suffered a broken neck and severe head trauma after his head was slammed into a wall, another had to have a leg amputation after sustaining injuries from being thrown over a catwalk, and the third man who was the only one who managed to regain consciousness has a collapsed lung and various internal injuries."

"He was able to confirm to the authorities the assailant was indeed Rogers since the security feed at the Raft had been wiped out. We will keep you updated as we receive new information, for now my hour is up so let's turn it over to Robin over in our New York studio. Robin, take it away."

"Thank you, Tom. In other news a masked man wearing a red suit with what appeared to be swords strapped to his back was terrorizing a local highway today..."

Click.

T'Challa stared blankly at the television. His brain trying to process the info he had just heard. Two men dead.. Three critical.. Rogers had assured him no one was hurt.

He clenched his hand, his nails digging into his palm hard enough to bring blood. Anger raising up inside him. He hated a liar, why would Rogers lie to him. He had to know that T'Challa would find it
out eventually. The tech in the Wakandan jet had aided in their escape..

Maybe he thought that none of those men would ever live to tell, T'Challa thought sadly. He had no idea what he was to do. The thought of turning them in was starting to look very appealing to him. But if they were tipped off in any way they would most likely fight and flee. Then any hope of justice for those men could disappear.

He wracked his brain trying to think of someway to get out of this horrid mess he had put himself in.

*I'm definitely not coming out of this one without facing some consequences*, he thought to himself. As soon as someone finds out where they were he was going down with them. There was no way around that. He only hoped he might be able to lessen the blow.

He looked out the window of his plane, nothing but a vast blue sky. He would be landing in Cameroon very soon, and he could tell his day was going to be awful.

His body felt horrible, he was starting to get rather weak and trembling. His mood was turning dismal. Why the hell hade he agreed to let Rogers in Wakanda? He wondered if he was suffering from a bit of loneliness and depression after T'Chakas death.

He had Shuri, and he knew that she did love him but she had always had that little spark of jealousy toward him. He knew she always felt like second place to him no matter what she did. It had followed them into their adult years. He knew she would be there, but he also knew that when it came down to it, Wakanda would be first in her eyes.

His gut instinct was telling him that very soon Wakanda may no longer be his. His first choices as King were not good for Wakanda, and that would more than likely be his downfall.

He wished for once he had more people in his life, just someone he could talk to about his father or his mother or about what the hell he was supposed to do with the killers he let inside his walls. About how he felt and things he desired. Being a Royal was in all honesty a lonely life. The fear of those using you made you not let many close. He wondered if this is how Stark felt.

Stark..

The report said he was badly injured. He needed to find out if the man was ok. Worry stirred in his heart. How bad was badly? Could he be like those poor guards? Could he be lying in a coma?

He quickly opened his tablet to the Avengers page but there was no new information on there. He tried Stark Industries website.

There was a statement from CEO Pepper Potts about Mr Starks condition. It was just a small one that said Stark was expected to make a full recovery and thanking his supporters for all their love and prayers.

He wanted to know more, wanted to see for himself that the man was ok. He didn't think a call or text would be enough to make him feel better. If he hadn't let Romanoff slow him down he could have caught Rogers before Stark was hurt.

He wondered if it would be inappropriate to just show up on his doorstep, or in this case probably a hospital room. But now that he had the idea he didn't care, he needed to see Stark to apoligize, for letting him be injured in battle.

He sent a quick text to his assistant Afia to let her know exactly what he needed. No one was to know where he was going, not even Shuri. He didn't want Rogers and his misfits to find out about
his visit to the States. Hopefully Wakanda would be safe for a few days without him. If anyone asked he was held over in Cameroon then had business elsewhere. He had her make the travel arrangements knowing he could trust her with this. Probably one of the only ones aside from the Dora he trusted. He planned on staying for 2 days, a small amount of time for what he hoped to accomplish. But it had to be enough.

He closed his eyes and tilted his head back against his seat, sending up a silent prayer for all those lost, for Stark and one for himself. He had a feeling he'd need all the help he could get.
I apologize to you all for my slow writing habits. It should not take a human being this long to type 2k words. I hope you enjoy this one :) And if you haven't yet you should go read The Humanity of Spider-man by JustmeSpidey. It's an amazing fic and I love the writers style!

Sgt Tibbs is from 101 Dalmations icydk

When he had planned out his little side trip to the states T'Challa hadn't expected to find himself here. He had thought he'd be spending the two days of his trip sitting in a hospital in NYC, not staring up at the towering peaks of the northern Tetons.

"I should consider myself lucky I'm even here at all. If Potts finds out who's hiding out in my Palace she'll likely burn my face off with Stark's repulsors.." he thought to himself.

His flight had been long and tedious. After a successful but extremely tiring day in Cameroon, he had boarded his jet with every intention of sleeping all the way to New York. Yet, no matter how he tried he couldn't relax on the way. His herbal tea, meditation and even the in-flight jacuzzi tub couldn't seem to calm his nerves. He had even considered taking one of his altered sleeping pills but he only used medication as a last resort. Far to many people relied to much on pills for every miniscule thing these days. He would rather have sleep come to him naturally than try to force it.

After several hours of tossing relentlessly in his bed he had given up trying to rest.

"I didn't deserve to rest anyway." he told himself. "I left a man to possibly die alone and beaten in a frozen wasteland and I'm hiding the people who put him there."

About halfway through the flight his assistant had informed him that everything was set up for him.

Bless his assistant, she had managed to get through to Pepper Potts, who had grudgingly agreed to speak with Mr. Stark about his visit. A few hours later she had returned the call via video conference and unenthusiastically informed him that, "yes he was allowed to see Stark, but in order to do so he had to comply with every rule and regulation she had lined up for him." All the while glaring at him as though she could reach through the screen and strangle him. It made sense, she probably knew he was in Siberia and didn't do anything to help Tony.

She reminded him of Shuri.

Her list of requirements was very exhausting. She was obviously very devoted to Tony. He felt like if he blinked wrong while he was here she'd make sure no one found his body.

Before she would even let him land he had to sign 12 (yes 12) NDA's. Under absolutely no circumstances could he mention anything about Starks location, his physical and mental condition or anything about the events that happened during the "War".

There were several other agreements he had to make about Colonel Rhodes, the Spiderman and the video that Miss Potts assured him that she knew he had seen.
After nearly two hours of reading and signing the NDA's Potts had reluctantly informed him that he would not be landing in New York. Apparently Tony had been released from the hospital that morning and was going home to finish his recovery. She had given him a very detailed list of instructions that he had to follow "to a T".

He would not be landing in NY, but a small private airstrip just south of New Haven, VT. After which, he would switch to a different unmarked plane where he would have a change of clothes and a holo-imager to change his face. After takeoff he was expected to change flights 3 more times in West Virginia, Mississippi and Oregon before finally landing in Missoula, Montana.

From there he would find a waiting nondescript Hyundai Elantra that he would drive himself to the area of Big Sky.

Potts sure as hell doesn't mess around.

That was how he found himself driving up a winding backroad that was, thankfully, fairly well maintained, staring up at the huge snow capped peaks above him. America was indeed a very beautiful place. If he hadn't spent the last four hours on the freaking highway he would probably appreciate it a bit more.

Finally, after what seemed like eternity, the winding road surrounded by trees began to open up a bit more. He came around a small curve and stopped. It appeared as though he had hit a dead end. The way ahead was blocked by a large group of rock. No, rocks wasn't the word. These were boulders, some taller than his small car.

He cast his eyes skyward.

"Please just give me one small break today. I know I am an idiot who has made some really bad decisions lately, but up until all this shit happened I was doing pretty well."

Curse all these unnamed American roads. He was getting tired. The lack of rest was catching up to him quickly.

He'd been travelling for around 24 hours and now he was lost, hungry and almost out of gas. He hoped this wouldn't be his end, to die out here, lost in the American wilderness, probably eaten by a wolf.

Oh the irony in that.

He felt horrible. He hadn't felt this weak since he was a child. Head aching, a queasy stomach and slightly shaky and lightheaded. He prayed he wasn't coming down with some sort of sickness. That was the last thing he needed. Despite his enhancements it was still possible for him to contract some illnesses, just not very often. He may be enhanced but he was still human.

He still wasn't completly over his nightmare ordeal from yesterday. At least the nose had finally stopped bleeding. The scratches on his stomach were still raw and irritated, slowly seeping blood. He had to change his bandages before he got off the plane in Missoula. God, they burned. He couldn't figure out why they hadn't started healing yet.

He needed to find some soothing salve or balm if he ever got out of this fucking forest.

Sighing, he turned off the car. He needed some fresh air before he ruined the interior, it honestly felt like he was going to vomit. The open door let in some much needed cool air. He breathed in deeply for a few moments before getting out to stretch his legs a bit. The slight movement of going from sitting to standing made his head violently spin. He grabbed on to the side of the car to try and keep
himself upright.

It didn't work. His knees hit the dirt of the road and he crawled forward a few feet trying to get his bearings. Damn, what was wrong with him.

_This was not how I was hoping this trip would go_, he thought, sitting down on his ass. He'd just give it a few moments before he tried standing again.

There was a phone in the car, not his personal phone. Part of his agreement with Potts was that he bring none of his personal belongings. "I will know if you bring them and you will be sorry" she had said.

So his phone, tablets and even his luggage were still back on his jet in Vermont. The only thing she had provided him with was an older style flip phone in case he had an emergency on the way here.

Huh, I hope I don't have to use that damn thing, that would just be the icing on the cake.

Ever so slowly, he tried to stand up. The world was still tilting but at least it was more manageable now.

He leaned against the car a moment more before taking a few hesitant steps away. The coolness of those boulders in front of him looked appealing, he was burning up and just wanted to rest his head against those icy looking rocks a while. As he made his way to the wall of rocks his foot presses against something with a small click. Like a button being pushed.

He froze.

"Mother of God, please don't let there be land mines in Montana.." he said.

He moved his foot slowly back, silently praying he wasn't about to be blown to bits by some long forgotten explosive. He must be hallucinating, America didn't have such things.

Did it?

As he slowly stepped back a small box like device began rising up from the ground. Before he could take a breath a bright blue beam of light ran over his entire body.

"Good evening Your Highness, Mr Stark has been expecting you. If you would kindly return to you car and pull forward I must scan the cars contents before I can allow you entry to the compound."

"What...?" he asked in a raspy voice.

"Forgive me for startling you sir. I am Friday, Mr Starks personal AI. I am in charge of overseeing Boss's safety while he resides here. I have already scanned you and determined that you have complied with Miss Potts wishes but I must also scan your car to be sure. After, if you have been deemed safe you will be able to enter Boss's home. Please return to your car and drive forward. I am detecting an increased heart rate and an elevated temperature from you sir, as well as symptoms of nausea and extreme fatigue. It would be in your best interest to get to the house as soon as you can, sir"

He nodded slightly and somehow made his way back to the car without falling. After being scanned there was a low humming, he watched as the large boulders in front of him parted, revealing more road behind the.
He crept forward, not willing to risk going fast with the way he was feeling. The boulder style gate closed up behind him.

Up ahead, through the remaining trees he could see a very large open clearing and the distant outline of a house.

Apparently he wasn't lost after all.

Following the dirt path he went around a small bend in the road and then stopped in awe. This place was massive. The clearing was nestled down in a valley that looked to go on for miles between the massive mountains. There were gigantic pines all around the property and a curvy river tucked into the northwest corner. What looked like a barn was set near the entry road. He hoped there were horses here, he'd never actually had much chance to ride anymore.

But the main attraction was the house. It spread out across the valley in every direction, three stories of logs and glass with those heaven bound snow tipped peaks as its backdrop. There was even a small lake on the property.

He made his way down the long drive, barely able to keep his head up. The dizziness was coming on again and he hoped he could at least make it to a bathroom before the meager contents of his stomach decided to come up.

Pulling the car in front of a six car garage, he took a deep breath, said a prayer and stood up.

Like a snail he walked to the entryway, up 3 small steps and he was here. A beautifully carved door with horses stared back at him.

He smiled slightly, he loved horses.

He was looking for a bell or a knocker when the door pulled itself open before him.

"Please come in your Highness, Boss is on his way down."

Placing his hand on the doorframe for support he staggered his way into the home. Vision blurring in front of him.

He looked around for a chair, he needed to sit but he would force himself to stay standing meeting Mr. Stark. The nausea was beginning to be unberable, it was taking all his strength to swallow the bile that kept rising back down. Sweat was starting to drip off his forehead.

Was it that hot in here? What's wrong with me?

There was a table to his right and he leaned against it weakly, placing his free hand on his stomach he tried to rub gently to soothe it a bit but it just made him feel worse. Dizziness was starting to overtake him, he'd be on the floor soon. He bit into his hand trying to stave off the urge to vomit.

Glancing up tiredly he saw Tony making his way onto the foyer.

Stark met his eyes and with a sly smirk said, "What's up Sgt. Tibbs, how my family like their new sugar daddy?"

T'Challa stared at him blankly, trying to make his mouth form words to answer. But the only thing he could get out was a small whimper.

Stark looked at him worriedly, "Are you alright T'Challa?"
But he couldn't answer, couldn't do anything. Spots were dancing in front of his eyes and the world was tilting dangerously on its axis.

He saw Tony open his mouth to say something and move toward him and then there was nothing but the tiled floor rushing to greet him and the table falling on top of him.

He wasn't sure if he imagined the pair of worried brown eyes as his vision began shrinking or the sound of his name repeated over and over. The cold floor felt pretty good.

Giving in to the rapidly closing darkness he felt himself being lifted off the hard ground and something cold and damp pressed to his head.

Then the darkness overtook him.
Cat Scratch Fever

Chapter Notes

My way of celebrating my upcoming birthday this weekend was to write another chapter for you :) Enjoy
Also, I apologize for my spelling errors. I think I fixed them all..

"...t about cat scratch fever? That's a real thing, isn't it Friday?"

"Boss I don't think his illness has anything to do with him dressing like a cat."

"Oh, for... That's not how I meant, Fri.. I meant because he has claw marks across his stomach and some kind of teeth marks on his back. What the hell was he doing before he came here, trying to recreate the Jungle Book."

"There has to be something I missed. Did the blood test come back yet?"

"Dr. Banner says he should have your results in a few more minutes Boss."

"Thanks Fri. How about you send him a thank you from me. Send him those stretchy pant we've been working on."

"The purple ones or the ones with you face on the ass boss?"

"Let's go with purple. I'm saving me for a special occasion. Like Brucies wedding day."

"I think he's startin to wake up Boss!"

"Finally!!"

T'Challa could vaguely make out the sound of voices chattering around him. The mere sound of them made him want to cringe away. His throbbing head only intensified with each little word.

Couldn't they tone it down a bit. He was trying to sleep here..

Wait, why were there voices in his private chambers? The only person allowed entry was Shuri, or the Dora Milaje, should he be in some kind of danger.

He tried to speak but all he could manage was a pained groan.

He mind was still caught somewhere between dreams and reality, and right now reality sounded just a bit to loud. In his half conscious state his body felt heavy. Trying to move his limbs sent searing pains of agony through his entire body.

Another pained whimper escaped him.

"Easy there Simba.. You might wanna take it slow cause I have no idea right now what the fuck is wrong with you."
He knew that voice... Remembered it from their brief encounter a few weeks ago. Tony Stark...

The sound of his voice began to cut through the thunderstorm raging through his brain. He couldn't seem to remember what had happened.

Why was Stark in Wakanda? Why couldn't he get his eyes to open and his voice to work? Why did his body have the weight of a sinking ocean liner?

His skin felt like fire...The softness of the sheets underneath him did nothing to ease his discomfort.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, he weakly managed to crack his eyes open.

Immediately he squeezed them shut again with a groan. The light was blinding. It was like staring into the sun. Doing nothing to help the thunder in his head.

"Friday, could you dim the lights to 20 percent please?" Tony said.

"Come on kitty-kat, open those pretty brown eyes again. Lights are down, sorry bout that. Didn't think that might be a problem for you. I've had enough hangovers so I should have realized it."

Cautiously, he opened them again. They felt swollen and watery. He took a moment to take in his surroundings. He was in a huge comfortable bed, propped up on the softest pillows he'd ever lain on. There was a large floor to ceiling window in front of him, with stunning views of the Teton's.

On his left sat none other than Tony Stark himself. He looked a bit worried but also looked like he was trying to downplay it.

"Mmnm... Mr. Stark? Whhat...Where am I?" T'Challa tried to ask, but it was mostly slurred. It came out in hisses and hums. His tongue was like lead in him mouth.

"Huh, ok...I think I got most of that..Ok, Yep thats me, the worlds most awesome superhero, billionaire, genius and now apparently nurse to ailing kitties. As for the second part of that question I have no idea what you said so, moving on.. Your in my house, in Montana. Made it here about six o'clock on Friday barely able to stand up. It's currently about 3am on Sunday morning."

He could practically feel what was left of his blood drain from his face..

Sunday!! He'd been out for almost two days. Shuri would be furious with him.

As if Stark had read his mind, he gave T'Challa a knowing smirk. "Now don't get your tail in a twist, I, or well, Friday, got in touch with you sister. She knows what's going on, she was a little worried at first but she seemed to deterine that you're in good hands, honestly no idea why she thinks that cause you're with me, but , I mean you could be in worse places."

"She's pretty pissed at you by the way. Not happy about being left with backstabbing murdering leeches she has to babysit while your not there. But, we did manage to have a nice little chat while you were floating somewhere in the stratosphere. We also brought in a few others for our little chat, mostly just the remaining Avengers, and two newbies, informed them of the current status of my wayward sons."

"Coming up with a plan of action on how to handle this shit before Ross finds out. Also, trying to find a way to make sure your sweet ass doesn't end up spending the rest of it's beautiful life locked up in The Raft...I'll fill you in more when you feel a bit better but I'm gonna tell you right now Whiskers, this situation doesn't look good for you."
T'Challa already knew that. He had realized what a mess he'd gotten into on the way here. He would face whatever punishment that would be thrown at him, but truthfully he didn't want to spend the rest of his life behind bars. The thought made his gut churn queasily.

At least he'd probably be alive. Rogers and the rest of his clan would likely get a death sentence.

He tuned back in to Starks voice. Apparently it hadn't ceased while he was spacing out.

"I mean, I found out by hacking into your security, not gonna lie you really need an upgrade, and basically watching your cameras for the past week. Little concerned about Romanoff, I had no idea she was gonna pop up there. I have no idea where she came from because I didn't see her get off the jet with the others."

"Really unfortunate that I couldn't get an audio feed. Cause I know those assholes have to have some kind of backup plan in case shit goes south for them."

T'Challa was a little amazed even in his hazy state of mind, at just how much Mr. Stark could talk. It was rather fascinating. The man constantly seemed to go from one subject to another, then back again.

"Not gonna lie I thought you were shit faced drunk when you first got here, could totally understand that. I mean, hell I lived with em for two years so I know how it goes. Honestly, I'm suprised I still have a liver left!"

"Honestly though, you may wanna lay off the booze. You don't wanna let your guard down any with Rogers and Romanoff skulking about your kitty-castle."

"Mmm, I'm not a drunk...I don't know what's wrong with me. Usually my body manages to fight off a sickness before it amounts to anything, but I have no idea what this is. I have never felt this ill before."

"Huh, well that is interesting. I checked you over as best as I could, I have some medical experience but I'm not actually, you know, liscensed to practice medicine. The claw marks on your stomach don't seem to be infected and what the hell were you doing to end up with those? Do you wrestle panthers in Wakanda? Is that a thing?" Tony rambled on, not giving time for T'Challa to open his mouth to speak.

It was oddly appealing to him. Had T'Challa been in better spirits he would have tried to appreciate it more. Despite his constant talking, Tony's voice was very calming.

"You do have something that looks alot like teeth marks on your back, kinda hard to tell for sure though. It kinda looked like what I think a vampire bight might look like, you know not the sparkly ones but the real badass ones with huge freakin fangs. It's like two small holes with a few lines between them. I was curious so I took some swabs of the punctures, Brucies running a few tests on it right now. And your blood too cause I had no clue what to do with you."

"Drug? I don't take anything except a sleeping aid sometimes. I only take that as a last resort. I'm not fond of medicine."

"...Drug? I don't take anything except a sleeping aid sometimes. I only take that as a last resort. I'm not fond of medicine." T'Challa offered weakly.
He was feeling very sleepy, whatever this was must be a super bug. He hoped he didn't pass it on to Stark.

Wait a minute..Hadn't Tony just been released from the hospital? He didn't look like a man who had spent almost two weeks in a hospital. If anything he looked younger than when T'Challa had first met him.

"I honestly came to see you because I was worried for you. When I couldn't find out anything about you afterward, I decided I needed to physically see you to make sure you were well. I didn't even know you were injured until I saw a newscast on the plane.." T'Challa admitted weakly. "I am ashamed to say that back in Siberia I gave no thought to your wellbeing after the battle. I assumed that you would be fine, because you are always fine. And after I returned home I had so many other things to deal with that I had completely forgotten about you. I am sorry, Anthony."

Tony simply stared at him. As if he weren't sure to trust T'Challa's words as truth or not.

T'Challa didn't blame him. After all he was guilty of doing he honestly didn't trust his own self right now. Ever since T'Chakas death his mind just hadn't seemed to function correctly..He was honestly starting to believe he may be suffering from a form of PTSD.

"Well I can tell you now I was totally not fine.. The only reason I'm standing here now is because as soon as I managed to get out of that hospital I injected myself with a new version of the Extremis virus. Which I had to work on from my wheelchair, because my heart was too weak to handle standing...It was in such poor shape they thought the only way to save me would be a transplant." Tony laughed softly. "So it was either that or become my own test subject. Either way I was probably going to die, but as you can see my genius won out once again." He gestured to himself.

"Boss, I hate to interrupt but Dr. Banner has sent his findings to your tablet."

"Thank you kindly, Friday" Tony smiled. "Well Whiskers, let's see what old Brucie has found out." He said, opening his tablet.

T'Challa gazed at him sleepily as he read. He noticed the more Stark read the more the smile began to disappear from his face. His frown deepened and his eyes took on angry glare.

"Shit on a stick, they don't waste any fucking time do they.." Tony tossed the tablet onto T'Challa's lap angrily and started pacing the room.

He tried his best to pick it up to read what had made Tony so mad, but his limbs were still far to sluggish to even lift the feather weight piece of equipment.

"I'm sorry, I cannot pick it up.." T'Challa rasped.

"Oh shit, my bad.. Sorry bout that." He bit his lip and stayed quiet for a moment before setting back down.

"Bruce got the analysis of your blood and the vamp marks back. According to him there's a foreign substance in your bloodstream. He wasn't familiar with whatever it was, and Bruce is basically a chemical genius, so he input the data into our system to see if he could find a comparison in our database. He uh, well he got a hit."

"This substance is what's making me sick then?" T'Challa mumbled.

"Yea, the uh, substance in your blood matched an entry from the old SHIELD files that Romanoff dumped onto the web a few years back. Apparently it was used by SHIELD as a means to subdue
their enemies, a tranquilizer, but the drug had some pretty bad side effects. Extreme cases of nausea and vomiting, hallucinations, uncontrollable shaking, internal bleeding, nosebleeds and seizures to name a few. They eventually had to stop using it because it ended up killing quite a few people it was used on. As the drug brakes down inside the body it seemingly starts breaking down the body's organs too..

"Oh fuuuuck, is it killing me!!" T'Challa felt like passing out again.

"Possibly..."

T'Challa wasn't ashamed to say that the sound that escaped his mouth was like a whimpering child.

"Bruce thinks that because of whatever enhancements you have, your body is trying it's hardest to fight off the effects. According to him the levels of it in your blood were very high, if you were a normal human you'd more than likely be dead by now. He's pretty sure he can come up with an antidote for it and he said he can have it here within the day."

"How.....? How did it even get into my blood?" T'Challa whispered

"Ok, you wanna hear my totally not suprising theory?" Tony asked

T'Challa shook his head meekly.

"So, the swabs of those wounds on you back contained traces of the same substance. I think, and I'm always right, that they aren't actually bite marks but needle punctures. SHEILDS files have everything documented, even photos of what the injection sites look like. We compared those with yours and they are a match. Now, when did you start getting sick?"

T'Challa had to think for a moment. His mind was fuzzy. Today was Sunday, he had gotten here Friday and he'd spent almost a day before traveling. So that meant...

"When I woke up on Thursday morning.. I had a very bad nightmare and woke up with these marks."

"The same day all the Avengers showed back up?" Tony looked at him knowingly.

"....yes, it was." His breathing felt a bit labored.

"Kay, here's my theory. I think one of your fugitives shot you while you were sleeping. More than likely Romanoff. She would be the one who would have had easy access to SHEILDS weaponry. More than likely she has stashes of their old crap hidden around the globe. I think that whatever she was doing, before she magically appeared out of nowhere, she was afraid you'd find out about. Think about it, you were the only one who knew where they were, so whatever she did she wanted to make sure you wouldn't wake up for."

Tony continued, "I don't know if it was her intention to do this to you. She probably thought since you're enhanced maybe a high dose would be more effective keeping you knocked out, but after everything...I honestly don't know if she wouldn't truly try to kill you... I think she went up into the air duct or maybe you had a window open and shot you with the drug while you were sleeping, then did what she had to do. She needed to make sure you didn't spoil her plan. And now you're paying the price for it."

He shook his head, "I knew the would do something to hurt you but I didn't think it would be so soon..And I need to find out what she's hiding in Wakanda."
T'Challa began to speak but was interrupted by a coughing fit. He brought his hand up to cover his mouth but when he pulled it away it was covered in blood. He stared at it dumbly..

"Oh, Gods.." the longer he stared at it the more panicked he became. His breath started coming in short, rapid huffs..

"Friday tell Bruce to step on it!! I need that antidote as fast as he can!!" He stood up, leaning over the bed to look directly into T'Challa's eyes. "Listen to me, I promise you, with everything I have, that you will be ok.. I'm not going to let the same thing happen to you."

Tony placed his hand against T'Challa's cheek, rubbing it softly.

T'Challa could only nod. To weak to do much else. He could feel his body beginning to heat up again and the shakes came back in full force. He couldn't tell if it was from the drug or the stress of the situation he was currently in. A small drip of blood fell from his nose once more.

"I'm going to give you an IV to try and keep you hydrated. Bruce gave me some recommendations earlier for a sedative in case you may need one. Luckily I'm a well prepared man." Tony opened a side drawer and pulled out a large box and a syringe.

"I'm gonna give you this, to help you rest until Bruce gets me the cure, the longer you're awake the more you're going to panic, ok"

"Please...please don't.." T'Challa tried to say.

He was too terrified to close his eyes now. He didn't know if they would ever open again.

"I promise you, you will be ok.." With that he slipped a needle under his skin, staring right into T'Challa's eyes the whole time.

He could feel the effects almost immediately. Tony had barely finished when his eyes started to close.

He fought it as long as he could but in the end he gave in.

The last thing he saw were Tony's warm brown eyes looking at him tearily, and a soft whisper of "Rest well, it will be ok.."

As the embrace of darkness claimed him he knew Tony was wrong.
"Shit, shit, shit... SHIT!!"

Tony screamed. "MOTHER FUCKER!!!"

He ran his hands through his hair and pulled at it violently, leaving it sticking up in every direction.

"Ohhhh, fuck you Steve.." Tony said rubbing his face, "Just couldn't sign the damn thing could you, just had to make it difficult.. We could have fixed them together.."

He placed his hands over his eyes and just stood there for a moment. He took some deep breaths, trying to calm himself. He didn't yet know his limits with Extremis, but was 99.9 percent sure he had it fixed. He didn't want to take any risks right now.

Not with T'Challa lying there..

"Aaarghhhh"

Fuck it, calming down was useless. He picked up the closest thing to him at the moment, his tablet, and threw it with all his force at the wall.

"Huh. How bout that.." he said a little stunned.

He never been that strong without the suit but he was definitely packing a little extra firepower now.

The tablet stared back at him, embedded halfway through the wall. Like a sword through a stone, he thought with a huff.

Well that was something new. Granted, he had only injected the virus 3 days ago but he was pretty sure he hadnt been able to do that before. That could come in handy pretty soon.

"Boss you're showing elevated levels of blood pressure."

"Yea, no shit Fri, how about telling me something a little more helpful. Like how the fuck to get an antidote here right now." Tony said snarkily

He turned around and walked to the bed, bending over to rest his hands on the mattress.

He stared sadly at the unconscious form of T'Challa. Sweat was dripping off of him. Tony placed a hand on his forehead but felt no heat, if anything he was icy. A thin ring of blood was present around his lips from the coughing fit he’d had not ten minutes ago.

God, that was a sign he was bleeding internally. Tony only had enough supplies here to deal with
minor medical issue. He needed to get him out of here. He might not make it until Bruce got here with that antidote.

He already looked like death.

"Uuuugghhh.. Alright Tony, think!! You're supposed to be a genius. So, genius, dumbass! Come on!!"

He wracked his brain for everything he had learned about T'Challa these past weeks. Anything that might help him. T'Challa had enhanced strength and stamina. Tony had thought that T'Challa also had a healing ability, but obviously it wasn't working. Whatever poison SHIELD had concocted that was flowing through his veins had to be tampering with it. He would have been able to fight it off the effects of it otherwise. Right?

"Boss I must inform you that T'Challa's body temp has been steadily dropping over the past hour. And his heart rate has slowed down. It would be in his best interest to seek some form of medical assistance. If he keeps declining at his current pace I estimate he will be deceased within the next four to six hours."

"Shit."

Fuck... That's not good. There was no way to get him transported to the tower that fast, and regular hospitals were in no way equipped to deal with supers. He was down a quinjet and by normal plane it would take at least three hours. The probably another hour or two just to get from the airport to the tower.

That wasn't fast enough... He needed fast.

A thought struck him.

At full speed the Iron Man armor could be across the country in less than an hour. But in his current condition Tony didn't know how safe it would be for T'Challa. Carrying him that far at that speed would kill him.

Not if he's inside the suit, he thought.

"Alright, Friday call Bruce, tell him to stay there in the tower and keep working on the cure. Tell him not to leave. I'm bringing the patient to him. Get Pepper, tell her to have the staff prep the med wing for a trauma patient. Send any and every detail you can on his condition to the towers servers. I want every medical personal available in the tower in the wing within the hour."

"How are we planning on moving him Boss? Air travel will take at least 4 hours."

"Get me two suits from the Malibu house, doesn't matter which for me but I need one capable of keeping him alive til he gets to the tower. Set a flight plan for that one to the tower. He'll be inside it, and you're gonna pilot it. As soon as it gets here I want it in the air in less than two minutes."

"Go ahead without me and keep me updated on his condition. When you get there fly him straight to the med bay. I'll be coming right behind you"

"Done sir. Armor ETA is five and a half minutes. Estimated arrival at Stark Tower is forty-two minutes. Miss Potts has informed the staff, everything should be ready when you arrive."

"What about Bruce, how's he doing?"
"Dr Banner wishes to inform you that he has made some headway. His estimated time to complete the antidote is two hours and twelve minutes. With no interruptions. But he said "emphasis on estimated"

"Damn, that's still pushing it a bit. Ok Fri, it's what, about 10am in Wakanda? Shoot Shuri a quick text. Tell her to find somewhere secure, away from any prying eyes. I want to do a video call and I can't risk the leeches seeing me yet."

"She needs to know what happened to her brother."

He looked at T'Challa. "Just hang on. I've got you."

______________________________

I am going to kill T'Challa, Shuri thought angrily. I can't believe he just left me here with these clowns.

I could make them "disappear" before T'Challa returns, she thought. I would be the only one who knew, it's not like they would be missed by many.

But no, she had told T'Challa she wanted no part in this. That if something should happen she did not want to be connected with these monsters. To be honest, she wasn't sure if she would be able to handle the little witch by herself. She'd rather not have her mind played with.

And then he up and leaved. Making her angry and frustrated. Giving her no choice in the matter now. She was involved whether she wanted or not.

Underneath her anger, though, Shuri was worried for T'Challa. Lately her brother had not made the best decisions. He hadn't even bothered to take Nakia and Okoye with him on this trip. The King was never to be left without his guards, yet T'Challa had ordered them to stay behind.

Clearly, something was off with him.

After T'Chaka's death he had seemed a bit more detached from the things happening around him. She understood how he felt, she loved her father dearly. He was a rock for both of them, he was the foundation on which they stood. Now, he was gone, leaving a very large crack in their life no one else would ever fill.

But if T'Challa couldn't pull himself out of this mood he had fallen into soon, Shuri would have to step in and take action. Wakanda couldn't be allowed to suffer because it's King was being careless.

Letting Steve Rogers and the rest live within these walls was by far the most careless thing her brother had ever done.

Rogers was not one to be trusted. A man who viewed the world as Rogers did, believing that he knew what was best for it, completely disregarding any force that may tell him otherwise. No. A man like that should never be trusted. Too shortsighted to see the bigger picture in front of him.

And now that man was here. With his loyal band of miscreants by his side. Her home, her heart. They were both at risk.

Shuri made her way through the halls. There was a meeting with a local women's group she would be attending later, but for now she had some free time to do as she pleased.

Planning to treat herself to a manicure she began making her way to her chambers. A vibration from
her pocket stopped her.

It was a text from Stark.

Shuri had been surprised when she received a call from the man yesterday. Apparently her brother had planned a little side trip without having the courtesy to inform her. Although it was possible he may have been worried about his new houseguests would react to that. Their disgust for Stark was not something they tried to hide, and if they knew T’Challa had contact with the man she could only imagine what they might try..

The call yesterday was a bit troubling, Tony had informed her that her brother had shown up at his home and that he appeared to be quite ill. That he had basically fainted as soon as he came through the door.

It was perplexing to her. She and T’Challa were able to fight off most any virus or illness he came into contact with. There was always a possibility they could have a few symptoms from one but it was usually never more than a sniffle or a cough.

Mr. Stark told her at the time he called T’Challa had been unconscious and very feverish for about 12 hours. He had him on an IV drip trying to keep him hydrated and that they were doing some tests on his blood to see if they could find the source. He assured her that he had it under control and if anything would change he would call her.

They had also had a discussion about the current whereabouts of his former team. In which she had the pleasure to meet most of the current Avengers roster, via video. She had to say, Pepper Potts was her new hero. That woman knew how to make things happen. Hopefully, in less than a weeks time, the rogues would be locked up where they belonged.

When Stark had informed her he knew their current location she was a bit shocked. The man had managed to figure it out before Shuri had found them in her own kitchen. He truly was a genius.

She opened the message, frowning when she read its contents.

Need to talk ASAP
Emergency
Find somewhere secured
Text me when you're ready

Well that definitely could not be good, she thought. The most secure place in the palace was her father’s office. He had outfitted it years ago with a hidden panic room. The only ones who knew were the Royal family.

She began making her way to the office, but was immediately waylaid by none other than Steve Rogers himself..

Dammit. She really wasn’t in the mood to see his face.

"Mr Rogers. Is there something I can help you with? Like reminding you that you do not have free reign in the palace. My brother may let you have your way but you will not have that courtesy with me."

His face took on a rather pinched look, Shuri thought it made him look constipated. He must have not been expecting her to be such a bitch. The thought made her very happy.

"Sorry to bother you..? Princess? I'm not sure what I should call you."
"Well, Captain, for you I will answer to Your Majesty, Your Highness. You can even address me as Empress. After all we can't have a commoner not knowing his place here." Shuri stated proudly.

Normally she would never talk down to anyone, she was raised far better. But there was a hatred here she just couldn't ignore.

"Umm, ok, majesty. I was just wondering when T'Challa would be back from his trip?"

"He'll return home after his business is concluded Captain. He is a very busy man right now." Shuri replied haughtily.

"It's just that, I need to speak with him, on where we stand on us being able to return home. He mentioned there was a possibility that there could be some loopholes in the Accords that we may be able to use to our advantage. He said he would have a lawyer look into it for us."

"Hmmm, well that is interesting." Shuri tapped her finger against her lips, "May I ask Captain, how you plan on paying for this lawyer. I wasn't aware you were currently drawing an income. I was under the impression that what assets you had were frozen. All of them."

She couldn't resist the small indirect stab at Barnes. If Rogers caught on to it he didn't let on.

"I just thought since T'Challa offered it was his way of apologizing." Rogers said.

"Hmph.. From where I stand, Captain, He isn't the one who needs to apologiz. Now, excuse me but I've wasted enough of my time here. There is business I must attend to. Goodday, Captain. Oh, and I need not remind you to stay in your wing, your freedom does depend on it."

She walked past, leaving a Steve sputtering behind her.

Walking into her fathers office, she entered the passcode and fingerprint to lock the door behind her. In the far corner of the room on the heavily lined bookcase, set a family photo in a glass frame. Walking to it she placed her thumb on the corner. The case slid outward, behind it was a large vibranium door.

Stepping up to the access panel she placed her hand to scan, bright blue light flashed over her and she felt a small prick in her finger on the panel. Her DNA was needed to open the door as was a retina scan. She stepped inside, everything sliding back into place behind her.

The room was impenetrable, it was completely lined with vibranium. There was an emergency phone, enough supplies to sustain their family for a year and an untraceable internet connection.

It was a fortress within a fortress.

She pulled out her phone, texting Stark she was ready.

His response was immediate. The face that came on the screen looked tired and worn.

"Mr. Stark." she greeted with a smile. "I know I'm irresistible but I wasn't expecting you to call so soon.” She couldn't resist a little flirting, the man was utterly charming.

To her suprise he didn't return the smile. Dread churned in her stomach.

"What's wrong?" she asked

"Ok first I need you to stay calm."
"Alright.."

"Ok, I'll get right to it, your brother is very, very sick.. Like on the verge of death sick."

"What!?" she brought her hand up to her mouth in shock. That couldn't be possible.

"That can't be, he doesn't get sick Mr. Stark."

"Are you sitting down, you need to sit down. You need to know this and it's gonna be hard to deal with, please sit."

"I'm sitting. Now what's wrong with my brother?"

"You know how he was sick and passed out and we were doing blood tests. Well we found something. A drug that use to be used by SHIELD to completely knock out their enemies, basically a massive tranquilizer. SHIELD stopped its use because the drug had some nasty side effects, death included. As it breaks down in the body it starts shutting down the organs with it. T'Challa had extreme levels of it in his system."

"...But..He.. He should be able to fight it off... His body rejects almost every drug he's tried, the only thing he has that works on him is a sleeping pill that he created himself."

"Not this drug, apparently SHIELD had engineered it to work on enhanced humans. With the correct dosage it could take down Thor. According to SHIELDS calculations a normal human only needs to be pricked by a needle laced with it to subdue them. But the numbers in your brothers blood are almost quadruple the dose an enhanced should recieve. Most likely he was injected with a syringe full. Basically, it's an overdose and it's overtaking his ability to heal."

"That's absurd!! T"Challa does not take drugs!!" she yelled

"He didn't take it..He was shot with it.."

"WHAT??"

"The best explanation we came up with before he went comatose, is that someone, and I'm gonna guess Romanoff, shot him with a dart full of the stuff while he was sleeping. Probably from a vent or an open window. We think she wanted him out of the way for some reason. He didn't even know he'd been hit til we found the mark on his back."

"She did something, but I have no idea what it was. She didn't arrive with Rogers, she showed up on her own. We need to find out what that was," Tony said

Shuri stood, her chair clattering to the floor behind her. "ROMANOFF! She did this? WHY!? T'Challa has done nothing to her, even though she deserves it!"

"Listen to me, I don't have a lot of time here. I need to tell you what I know and get going. Friday estimates he's got about five hours unless he gets an antidote. T'Challas in route to the tower in my Iron Man armor as we speak, where Bruce is working on the antidote for this."

Tears began to form in her eyes.

*Five hours...It was like a knife to the heart.*

"Noo.. I want..Please let me see my brother....Please.." Shuri cried. Tears flowing down her face.

This could not be happening to her. She could not lose her brother too..
"As soon as I get to the tower I will call you, I promise. But right now I need your help. You know how when we talked last we had worked out a plan? To get them out of your home? To try and find a way to keep T'Challa from going to prison."

"...Yes..Next week.." Shuri started.

"We're gonna have to move that back just a little bit." Tony said, "I know you want to bring them in but right now your brothers health is the most important thing. I know right now you probably want to go out there and take them all down by yourself, but please don't. We need more manpower. If you try to take them on they may kill you, and I can't live with that. So please wait for us. Peppers working on it, she's has a meeting planned with Everett on Monday. The ARMY will have our back should something go wrong. But right now I need them to stay there. If they leave Wakanda, I may not be able to find them again."

"I need you to make sure they stay there!!" Tony said

Shuri sobbed openly in front of the screen, her composure completely gone. "Please.. my brother..."

"Hey look at me..I promise you he will be fine. I swear on my life I am doing everything in my power to make sure he comes home to you.."

Shuri could only shake her head, to distraught to do much else.

"I have to go, but as soon as I get to New York I will call you. By then Bruce should have the antidote ready. I promise you, he will be OK!"

They disconnected the call. Shuri sat on the floor a few moments more, sobbing openly, before her tears began to turn to rage.

How dare they come into her home a do this..To a man who's heart was as big as the sky..

**Demons.**

They would pay, Shuri would see to that. One way or another..

**They. Would. Pay.**

Saying a small prayer for Bast to watch over her brother, she tried to regain some composure.

Exiting the panic room, she returned to the office.

She sat down at the big desk in a daze. Reaching underneath, her hand pressed a small button. A few moments later the Dora Milaje entered, the door locking behind them.

"Princess Shuri, are you alright?" Nakia asked

"No.. No I am far from alright, Nakia.." she said, an edge to her voice that made the two warriors glance at each other.

"We have some...Unwanted pests in the southwing. I need you to shadow them. They have brought grievous harm to my family. The King is near death in America because of them.."

"Miss, what..?"

"Do NOT interrupt me! Shadow them, these arrogant little monsters, deep shadow, make sure they never see you. I want daily reports from both of you. I want to know their every move, their ever
breath. Every word they speak I want to know."

"Leave them be for now, by this time in a week they should be no more..But if you see any, and I mean anything that even looks strange to you..."

"Kill them.."
Little Green

Chapter Notes

UThixo abe nani=God be with you
A thousand apologies for the errors
If you get squeamish at the thought of blood you may not want to read this chapter.
Personally, I think it's ok but my limit for blood and violence is non-existent when it comes to writing and reading. I'm actually not very happy with this one, I feel like it didn't really express all the things I wanted it to. It should have, this chapter has taken me the longest so far. All my other ones were written within about an hour each and this one actually took me two days so I'm a bit disappointed. I feel like it could have been so much more but I just couldn't get it right.
Oh well. Enjoy anyway, the next one should be better.
Tony is a man with many talents so in my fic I want him to be able to speak some Xosha

4 hours...18 minutes...36 seconds..

After the 45 minute flight from Montana, that was how long it took for Bruce to get his antidote finished. Even after, he still wasn't completely confident that it would be fully effective. Bruce had wanted more time, but time was something T'Challa did not have right now. He was already well into the projected limits that Friday had calculated.

*Death estimated between four to six hours. Hour number five had just rolled over.*

Christ. They had really pushed the limit here.

Tony looked at the man currently lying on the bed in the towers med-wing, barely visible underneath all the wires and tubes. These past four hours had been horrifying.

After the suit had released T'Challa, it became obvious he was in very, very bad shape. Doctors had begun scrambling to keep him alive until Bruce could step in.

There had been blood coming out of his mouth, his nose. Even his eyes and ears. Small drops had slowly seeped out from underneath his finger and toenails. He had probably been bleeding from more private places but Tony had, at the time, been too distraught to ask. His skin had taken on a dark blue hue to it, as if his blood were trying to find a way to escape through his pores, making his entire body look bruised and swollen.

The towers ER was a mess. Hours after managing to stabilize him the room was still in shambles. No one had the stomach to go in and try to clean it right now. The doctors, who dealt with blood and death on a daily basis, had even been looking pale and sick. Everyone seemed to be in some form of shock.

Blood had saturated the gurney T'Challa had been lying on and had pooled onto the floor underneath. Bloodied footprints crisscrossed the room, evidence of the doctors urgency to keep the mans heart beating. Gauze, gloves, trachea tubes and several nasal cannulas littered nearly every surface. The tubes and cannulas had kept filling with blood, making it impossible to get air into his
body, so they had to keep replacing them while simultaneously siphoning blood and some kind of greenish liquid from his lungs.

The sheer number of drugs they had used to try and clot his blood would later turn out to be incredible, unfortunately none of them had worked. According to Bruce the only reason the sedative Tony had given him had worked was because it was designed specifically for Captain Rogers super enhanced metabolism. Regular drugs would not cut it here, even with the poison flowing through his veins T'Challa's body still metabolised things fast enough with his enhancements to reject normal drugs.

The severe amounts of lost blood had sent him into cardiac arrest twice. The doctors had been getting desperate at that point.

Friday had actually been the one to suggest trying large doses of Vitamin K to try and slow the bleeding. Low and behold, it had actually helped, but not completely stopped the bleeding.

While in the ER he had flatlined twice, received 14 pints of blood and had his lungs drained of fluids 6 times.

There was a trail of blood leading from the ER all the way to Tony's workshop. Blood had pooled into the legs of the armor, and when Friday had walked it out blood trickling out even through the tight seams.

He had had to flee to the nearest toilet when nausea overtook him. Tony had never seen anything like this in his life. He'd been to war zones that were less traumatizing than this. These poor doctors would need some type of therapy after this was over.

Tony could only believe that the reason T'Challa was hanging on was whatever was left of his healing ability. Some small glimmer that SHIELD's poison hadn't managed to destroy.

There was no way he'd still be here otherwise.

After being stabalized they had moved him to a private room to wait for Bruce. Tony had slid to the floor in the corner and hadn't moved since. He was afraid to take his eyes away from T'Challa, he felt like if he did it would be the end. Every fifteen minutes since being moved a doctor had been coming in with a fresh pint of blood, two syringes full of vitamin K and to suck out his lungs to make sure they weren't filling with fluid.

Despite the high doses of the coagulant there were still traces of blood coming out of his nose and mouth. The ventilation tube helping him breath had a pinkish color to it now.

Tony felt useless. All he could do was sit there with his back against the wall, praying to any and every God he could think of. God, Allah, Buddha, Bast. Hell he'd even sent a prayer up to Loki. At this point he'd bend over and be Loki's freaking sex slave if it would save this man's life.

Bruce entered the room while he was telling the Panther God that he'd gladly go out and start saving cats and build them shrines if he/she could just spare T'Challa. Finally T'Challa was injected with the first of what Bruce said would be many vials of his serum. It was a pale purple color and made the room smell a bit like honey. He unconsciously started singing Purple Rain in his head.

"...ony? Tony, can you hear me? Friday, is he alright?" Bruce was asking.

Tony had apparently been so inside his head he hadn't heard Bruce speaking to him for the last few minutes. He slowly glanced at Bruce, who was looking at him worriedly. It wasn't surprising, he didn't exactly look or smell his best. He hadn't showered since injecting Extremis, a few days before
T'Challa had arrived in Montana, so that was last what? Wednesday, Thursday? Shit, he couldn't remember. His hair was a bit scraggly and he didn't remember the last time he brushed his teeth either. Oops. Better not breath in Brucies face today, Tony thought.

Oh well. There were other, more important things to worry about.

"...ony! Earth to Tony Stark, come in!" A paper cup full of water smacked him in the face. Effectively bringing him back to reality.

"Damn! What the hell Bruce?"

"Sorry. My voice apparently wasn't working. I was just going to smack your face but Hulk thinks you look funny when you're wet, so I went for that. It makes him giggle. Honest to God, it's a giggle. You should hear how that sounds in my head. It's hilarious."

Tony gave Bruce the fish eye. "Are you kidding. You try to drown me just to hear him laugh...Tell Hulk to fucking bite me."

"He can hear you Tony. I don't have to tell him anything." Bruce said.

"I can't believe I'm surr...Wait, what? When did you know you've been working on getting better control but since when can he hear me? That's a bit disturbing, I mean, it's only a matter of time before I offend him. What if he tries to smash me? And are you two having conversations now? Giggling? Really? What the hell did you do when you left us Bruce?"

"...I, uh. Nothing, just..Hung around, tried to relax..Went to Asgard and kickstarted the apocolypse." Bruce mumbled.

What the hell..

Tony gave him the fish eye again. "Care to repeat that Banner, I thought I heard you say you went to Asgard. Where Thor is... You.. In Asgard? How?"

"Well.. After Ultron, Thor went home and asked Heimdall where I was, I guess he was worried about me, which is crazy, then he came back and got me, we went to Asgard. He thought I might fit in better there...Then Hela came and Hulk smashed, Asgard was pretty much destroyed..Then there was a Gladiator battle, a flying horse and Loki and I saved Thor...And now, here I am saving your boy over there."

"...."

"WHAT THE SHIT BANNER!!" Tony screamed. "You couldn't have said something weeks ago when you came back here? And LOKI? Hulk hates Loki! Remember my floor? Smashy, smashy. Puny God, any of that ring a bell?"

"Well, yeah he used to, but now I think he considers Loki a, uh, uh friend." Bruce rubbed at his neck sheepishly.

"....WHAT!?"

"Uumm, yeah he even calls him Little Green now. Sometimes it's Big Horn... It's...Yeah, I don't know..I just wanted to talk to you about T'Challas condition, I wasn't really ready to talk about my role in Ragnarok.." Bruce said.

"I'm to tired for this shit." Tony said, leaning his head back against the wall.
"You should try and sleep."

"Can't Brucie..I'm to stressed to sleep. It's a good thing you helped me get extremis ready, or I'd probably be dead from a heart attack right now."

"How are you adapting to it?" Bruce asked, sitting beside him.

"To be honest I can barely tell it's there. I get a little buzz in my brain, mostly when I'm around anything electronic. It feels like static in a phone line, like a call is trying and failing to connect. I don't know what that means. I haven't really had much of a chance to see what it can do besides repair my dying heart."

Bruce hummed. "How about after we get everything settled with T'Challa and after we bring in our former teammates, we sit down and try to figure out everything it can do?"

Tony smiled. "You really wanna help me bring them in?"

"Yeah, I do. After everything that's happened, everything they've done. We can't just leave them out there to do whatever they want. I saw on the news that there were kids killed in Romania. What kind of person has no regard for the life of a child...Even Hulk, at his worst has never killed an innocent child. And this.." Bruce gestured to T'Challa's battered body. "This has turned in to a whole new level of horror."

Bruce continued, "I know that I've never even spoken to the man, and that you said you barely had a conversation during the whole 'war' thing. From what I can gather, he did have a part in that tunnel collapse and he did help destroy the airport. He didn't even bother to see if you were ok in that bunker, so he's definitely not innocent in this situation. But that.."

Bruce pointed to T'Challa, "No one deserves this kind of torture."

"Bruce.." Tony started

"What they've done to him, if we can't save him, If he dies..What happens then Tony?"

Tony gave a defeated sigh, rubbing his hands through his hair and over his face. "If that happens, then Shuri and Wakanda will likely rain fire down on all of us. I've met her, and let me tell you she is waaay more ruthless than her brother..But that's not going to happen. The best doctors in the world are in this tower, working to keep him alive, and so far he's still kickin. Friday estimated that he could die in 4 to 6 hours..That was five and a half hours ago. The man is truly a fighter, it's kind of amazing really."

"Five and a half! Shit he needs another dose!" Bruce exclaimed, jumping to his feet. He pulled another purple vial and syringe from his pocket and went back to the bed.

"That is one big ass needle," Tony said, eyes wide.

Bruce huffed, "Well he needs a big ass dose. It's a 10 mililiter syringe and he's getting two of these every half hour. If my calculations are correct we should begin seeing some improvement within the first four doses. If we don't, then I'll start him on an IV bag filled with the antidote that we'll need to change out every fifteen minutes, along with the injections. But I'm hopeful this will be enough. I wanted to go over some of the problems this drug has caused to his system with you. If you'd like."

"I'm almost afraid to ask Bruce." Tony replied.

"I know.. I just want to let you know how things look right now. There's alot of damage done to his
body and if for some reason his healing factor doesn't kick back in he is going to have a very hard and likely a very short life in front of him."

"Oh God.." Tony whined.

Bruce looked at him thoughtfully. "I've never seen you this worried about anyone Tony. Not even Pepper. When you got to the tower earlier you were a mess, you still are. I thought you barely knew him but he obviously means something to you. Can I ask what that is?"

Tony closed his eyes tiredly, "Honestly, I'm not sure myself Bruce. He just..I feel connected to him someway. I don't know why. Maybe it's because we both lost our parents violently, so I feel like I can identify with him. He reminds me of myself after Afghanistan, trying to do the right thing but having it blow up in your face. Maybe that's what it is, I don't know. I just know that there is something there.."

"Alright Tony..I think I understand." He pulled the chart from the bed and came back to sit with Tony. Flipping through the pages he began, "Umm, there's a lot of damage done here. Basically he's bleeding from every part you can name. His kidney and liver functions are at around 40 percent, that's far to low for my liking, they're also showing signs that there's internal stomach bleeding, an engorged spleen, it appears that his muscle tissue is riddled with tears and bleeds. Jesus..

Bruce continued, "He has ruptured blood vessels in his bladder, pancreas, prostate.. There's bleeding in his brain, that's a cause for concern if he doesn't start to improve. He could suffer permanent brain damage. But the worst part is his lungs and his eyes."

"His eyes..?" Tony asked

"Yeah, according to this the retinal veins, the central retina vein and the retina artery have all ruptured. The interior of his eye is filled with blood, luckily the poison hasn't caused any damage to the optic nerve itself, but when he wakes up he may suffer from blindness for awhile. With or without his healing. But his lungs are by far the worst. The initial impact of the dart or syringe he was shot with was very close to the lungs. The doctors believe as the serum began to invade his body it managed to somehow seep through the lobes of the lungs, then it began attacking the bronchioles, and finally the alveoli so his lungs aren't able to exchange the carbon dioxide for oxygen. Even when he starts improving we may have to put him in a medical coma because he's not going to be able to breath without help for a while."

"Fri, can you relay all that to Shuri. Make sure she knows to read it privately."

"You got it Boss."

Tony sighed, sometimes he wondered what his life would be like if he never made Iron Man. Lately all it was was a fucking shit show..

"Tony, you need to sleep. You're not doing yourself any favors by running into the ground. Go upstairs, eat, shower and for the love of all that's holy brush your freaking teeth, I can't stand the smell much longer."

"My God!! Asgard made you an asshole!" Tony blew a huge breath right into Bruce's face just because he could.

"TONY! Please, I promise if anything changes I'll send for you. But there's nothing you can do here but wait. You need to rest. He'll need you when he wakes up.." Bruce glanced at T'Challa.

"Fine!!" Tony gave in, "I'll go, but promise you'll alert me if anything. .."
"I will. Now go, sleep. I'll stay with him."

Tony sighed again, Lifting himself from the cold floor. His ass was numb. He walked over to give Bruce a hug, "Thanks Bruce."

"You're welcome Tony. Go! Don't make me get the Hulk." Bruce smiled.

"Yeah, yeah.. Smash, smash." Making his way to the door he took one last glance at T'Challa.

"UThixo abe nani" he said softly.

Bruce watched him leave, then looked at the man in the bed, wondering what was so special about him that brought Tony Stark near tears.
Sunday: Part One-Tony

Chapter Notes

I was bored today so I wrote a new chapter. The next few may be kinda snoozers but it all leads to the climax :) Enjoy

Sunday-11am

Tony made his way to the waiting elevator, Friday sliding the doors shut behind him as soon as he stepped in. He rested his head on his arm up against the glass walls, closing his eyes. Lack of sleep, meals and his nervous anxiety catching up to him. At times like these he really felt all of his forty-four years.

He sighed sadly. T'Challa is only 37, Tony thought. He shouldn't be lying downstairs barely breathing in some foreign place. He should be at home, running his kingdom and petting kittens and all that jazz. Doing whatever it is that a King is supposed to do.

"Boss, would you like me to take you to another floor? You've been staring at the wall for the past five minutes."

"No, Friday. Thank you, I'm just extremely tired and spacing out. Sorry."

He stepped out into the penthouse. Down a short flight of steps to his main living area. The whole top floor had just been recently remodeled again to repair the damage from Ultron. This time though, he hadn't had Pepper's help, so the design had been left entirely up to him.

He probably could have asked Rhodey or Bruce but the only thing Jim had in his apartment was a futon and his clothes. He didn't even own actual dishes, he just used paper plates. If Bruces fashion sense was anything to go by then the entire penthouse would have ended up a drab shade of purple with sad, depressing artwork everywhere.

He'd ended up replacing anything that could remind him of his failed relationship with Pepper. So the whole penthouse had been practically stripped to the studs and rebuilt. This time he'd opted more for comfort over style, but he thought the overall effect still looked pretty good. But what did he know, he basically just told the designers what he wanted and then let them play.

Floor to ceiling windows, two stories high, lined the entire wall, so as soon as one left the elevator they had a breathtaking view of the NYC skyline. To his left of the elevator were a set of thick glass floating stairs leading to the second level bedrooms and his office. Instead of the black marble floors, the living area, minus the kitchen and dining, was covered in a nice plush slate colored carpet. The kind your feet just sinks into. It helped on those days when he spent to much time standing.

The new couches were custom made, the same color as the Iron Man armor and each about ten feet in length. They were much larger than the average homes. The backs were higher so you could lean your head back without breaking your neck and the seats were wide enough to sleep 3 people back to back. At the push of a button the whole thing could recline back turning it into one massive bed. He wasn't sure what his designer had picked out for the fabric but it was like sleeping on a freaking cloud. Damn, it felt good.
The tables in front of each couch were a gloss black, his own design, which were able to display whatever project he was working on at the time and control every system in the penthouse. In case he didn't feel like leaving home for the day and just wanted to lie on the couch.

The walls had been stripped of their previous brick look and replace entirely with titanium alloy like his suits, they weren't quite black but neither were they grey and had a sheen like a mirror. Making the lights from the city reflect beautifully throughout the first level. LED light strips lined the top and bottom of the walls. When they were on the room had a very space like appearance.

Call him crazy but he really loved the look of the metal walls.

Last, what was probably the largest in-home TV on the planet could slide out of the ceiling if one was in the mood. It was bigger than the screens in most cinemas. Blocking out more than half the view of the city.

The home he once shared with Pepper was now the worlds swankiest bachelor pad.

He'd done away with all the art and flowers Pepper had insisted be everywhere. In their place were rocks of various shapes and sizes, some as tall as him, giving the room an earthy feel. Abstract paintings of various inventors and fellow geniuses he admired lined the walls now. Einstein, Tesla, Newton and a rather large portrait of Brucie in shades of green and black took the place of Peppers Van Gogh and Pollock.

Luckily Bruce hadn't seen that one yet..He'd probably smash it when he did and Tony was pretty fond of that one. It had been painted by a fan of the Hulk.

Hulk would probably love it.

He'd even commissioned someone from the NY Academy of Art to paint a portrait of Jarvis. The real one, not the AI.

Tony made his way to the right of the living room, into his million dollar kitchen. He was going to make himself a sandwich then shower and try to sleep a few hours. Normally, he'd order takeout but he'd been changing his habits lately.

After Ultron, after leaving the Avengers, he actually had begun to take much better care of himself. He had more normal sleeping patterns, sometimes managing to sleep a full six hours a night. He made an effort to eat at least two meals a day, even adding some fruits and veggies in there and not so many grease soaked cheeseburgers. He had cut his alcohol intake in half, usually only drinking wine or scotch when he was at a fundraiser or meeting. The in-house bars at all his homes barely being touched unless Rhodey would stop by for a visit.

His body had actually started feeling pretty good.

Then all the shit with Rogers went down and his hard work was shot to hell.

His good habits had taken a hit at that. It had taken him almost a week after to get Rhodeys leg braces finished. He'd barely slept or ate the whole time, but he felt responsible for bringing his best friend, his brother, into this mess.

No sooner than he'd finished those that stupid letter had came, with that disgrace of a phone. That was the biggest bullshit apology he'd ever heard. Saying the Avengers were more Tony's than Steve's. The asshole..

His body was just to stressed from everything and that shit had been the final straw. His heart
couldn't handle it. Then he was stuck in the hospital for a week, before sneaking out and jetting to MT where Bruce had been waiting to help with Extremis. They had been working on perfecting the virus to take away the overheating problem. With Pepper he had gotten as far as getting rid of the kaboom, but she still got hot and glowed if she was mad.

He was eager to run those tests with Bruce to see if he could do more than just heal himself and embed tablets in walls.

He thought back on Steves letter again, laughing to himself while rumaging through the fridge. *Well guess what Steve, they're really mine now, so go fuck yourself! Where the hell is the hummus? Damn you Rhodes! Everytime I want hummus it's gone.*

"Fri, did Jim eat all my hummus again?"

"**No sir. I believe this time it was Mister Parker.**"

"Damn, really? That was like a gallon sized tub. Hey, how long has this cemita been in here?"

"**In his defense he is a growing boy. Eight days Boss, you might want to throw that out. The Dept of Health recommends you toss it after 5 days.**"

"Fuck it, I'm hungry. I'll eat it any way. Where did this even come from?"

"**They came from Puebla, Mexico, Boss.**"

"Oh for fuck's sake!! Are you just messing with me? Not it's origin story Fri! Who brought it here?"

"**It came from Queens, Boss. Parker brought it in.**"

"Well, fair is fair. He ate mine so..You know what I think I'm gonna take a bath and just eat mt food there. I wanna sit."

"Ya sure Boss? Won't you get crumbs in the water?"

"What does it matter they just go down the drain anyway. Go ahead and start filling the tub for me Fri. I'll be up in a minute."

"**Sure thing Boss. Would you like bubbles?**"

"Hell yeah! And make them pink, put glitter in them to. I feel like a diva today."

Plating the sandwich, he set it to heat in the microwave. While he waited he gathered some chips and a glass. He had a craving for tea. Hopefully he had some in the pantry.

He grimaced when he walked in "*Yeesh.. Friday order some groceries, this place is empty? Tea, tea..*" He muttered rummaging around, "Come out wherever you are! Aha, here we go! Huh, what kind is this?"

"All of our black tea blends are sourced from a cooperative of farmers in western Kenya." he mumbled to himself. "The tea is grown on small-scale shambas. Yada, yada. All of the tea is handpicked--Yada yada. The high altitude, abundant rainfall, and fertile volcanic soils make Kisii, Kenya, an ideal tea-growing region."

He looked over the label, "Ajiri tea..Fri, where did this come from?"

"Dr. Banner brought it Boss. It's one of his favorites. The labels are handmade by women in western Kenya. Each label is made using dried banana leaves. The bag inside of each box is tied with twine made of dried banana leaves, and decorated with brightly colored beads made of recycled magazine paper. All profits from sales pays the school fees for orphans in western Kenya. He says it's delicious and enjoys the fact that kids benefit from it."

"Alrighty then, order me like 10 more" he said, kicking the pantry door closed. "And make a donation to that foundation in Bruces name for me."

"There are ony two tea bags per carton Boss, and a variety of flavors. Dr. Banner drinks it quite often."

"Shit, ok gimme like 50 boxes of each flavor."

"Would you like to try their coffee Boss? It's available in whole beans or pre-ground "

"Sure, why not, toss it on the order too. Get me ten pounds of the beans." he said dropping his tea bag into the hot water. He found a tray to carry everything upstairs.

"Bath is ready Boss."

"On my way babygirl."

He was itching to sink into that hot bubbly water. Balancing his tray of sustanence on one hand he snagged a tablet on his way to the stairs. I could have totally been a Hooters boy, Tony thought. I got skillzz.

He was definitely getting tired if he was spelling that with z's in his mind. On the second floor landing he turned left to go down the hall, Friday lighting up the baseboard lights as he went.

Why did he have to put the master at the end of the freaking hall..Shoulda made that first and my office waaaay down there. Ignoring everything else he made his way straight for the master bath. He was greeted with a face full of steam and his custom sized tub overflowing with pink glittered bubbles.

"Bring down the shades, Friday. And light up the stars."

Thousands of tiny little lights came to life on the ceiling and the walls, reflecting down onto the shiny floor below. It was modeled after the Andromeda galaxy. He wondered it there was anyone else in the world who had a bathroom that could let you visit anywhere in the world with the touch of a button. His favorite setting was definitely the stars, but he could go anywhere he wanted. The Pyramids of Egypt, Chichen-Itza, Machu Picchu, Stonehenge. He had even created his own underwater paradise that he called Atlantis. You could lie back in the tub and look out into the ruins of the lost city.

But the stars, well they were the best.

Eh, he was eccentric. What can ya do.

People seemed to think that he was terrified of space ever since he flew a nuke up there, but he
wasn't. He wasn't scared of space itself, he was scared of what lies within it. He knew it was only a matter of time before that thing he had seen during the Battle of NY made it's way here. Maximoff's vision only made it more real. Whatever that creature was, it would come eventually. He could only hope it was in a galaxy far, far away and not getting ready to break down their door.

They weren't ready for that yet.

Setting his items down he stripped off his clothes and hopped right in. "Shit, shit!! Hot as Hell, hot as Hell!!" Damn why did he always do that, His body would look like a lobster now.

He leaned back against the tub wall and looked up at the swirling stars above him. He made a grab for the sandwich, bits of lettuce and tomato flopping into the water. He took a few bites and drank some tea (it really was delish) feeling himself relax a bit before getting down to business.

"Alright Fri, what do you have for me?" Tony didn't even have to tell her what he meant. This time she knew.

"Captain Rogers and former Agent Romanoff have apparently got their hands on some holo-imagers Boss. They left the palace about an hour ago. I tracked them into the city where they appear to be enjoying an evening of shopping and a meal at a very swanky restaurant. I don't know who's footing the bill for that one, so I cancelled you credit cards just in case. New ones will arrive tomorrow."

"Shit, I can't believe I forgot that. Thanks Fri. If they pay by card get me all the info you can. I want to have a way to track them if they split. Are they still authorized to enter the tower or the NAF?"

"Sure are Boss. You haven't changed their clearance yet."

"Ah, fuck me! I forgot. Strip them from everything Fri. Absolutely no admittance for anything. Although.. If they were to show up by chance, let them in. Then tranq them to hell and back til I can get to them. You know the protocol. Kay, what else you got baby?"

"Done and done Bossman. Former Agent Barton and Miss Maximoff have stumbled onto King T'Challas personal wing of the palace. They are currently sunning themselves by his swimming pool, sharing what appears to be mojitos. Since I was unable to get an audio feed I can't tell what they are saying, but the video suggests they are very happy and laughing."

"You've got to be fucking kidding me..." Tony growled angrily. His meal turning sour in his mouth as he thought of the King lying a few levels below him.

"I'm not sure where Barton aquired his swimwear but if I had to guess I'd say it belongs to the King. Wanda made use of Romanoffs holo-imager earlier and bought herself a new swimsuit and more clothing in the city. She paid with cash."

"Any idea where she got the cash?"

"Yes, sir.." the AI replied lowly.

"Fri?"

"Romanoff managed to disable most of the cameras in King T'Challas personal chambers this morning. I was only able to catch a small glimpse of her before the cameras went blank for a moment, then came back online playing looped footage. However, I had discovered that the
King has some very small cameras hidden throughout his room, all functioning on different frequencies. I was able to piggyback onto one of them without being detected."

"And?"

"And after the main cameras had been disabled I was able to catch Miss Maximoff sneak into the Kings quarters. She appeared to use her magic to find His Highness's personal safe. After which she used her ability to open it and take an unknown amount of cash Boss.."

"Fucking, theiving little witch.." Tony was burning with rage. What the hell had happened to his team? He couldn't believe it. When had they become so fucking heartless? When did they all go insane?

"How did she even know there was a safe in there?"

"It is a common practice among wealthy folks, Boss. They usually have a hidden safe somewhere in their bedroom. Like the way yours is hidden in the floor under the bed."

"Huh, I forgot that was there. What's even in there? Shit, did I forget to combo again? Fuck! Did she take anything else Fri?"

"No, but she did amuse herself by trying on the jewels in the safe. I think they belonged to T'Challas mother...And you don't have a combo boss, it open with a retinal scan."".

"She tried on jewelry?! What kind of a sick bitch..." Well this just gets better and better, Tony thought.

"I gotta say Boss. I'm not capable of feeling human emotions but if I could describe how I'm viewing this situation I'd say I feel disgust."

" I know babygirl.. I feel it to.. But I can't do anything about it yet. I need more help. Anything else?"

"Earlier Barton, Romanoff and Rogers found T'Challas personal gym and made use of it. Along with the sauna, rec room, where they shared a game of pool and a library. All in T'Challas personal wing. I am getting the impression that they believe since he isn't there, that it won't be an issue of being discovered."

"Well, now the jokes on them, isn't it. Make sure you save the data from all the videos. Store it on my private servers for now. After Pepper meets with Everett tomorrow I'll start forwarding the data to him for evidence. Does Shuri know what's going on?"

"She does Boss, and she's not feeling very happy at the moment. If her "guests" continue with their current actions you might not have to wait for more manpower. I believe she may kill them as they sleep.""

"If that happens make sure you delete the evidence. But show it to me first, I bet she's a firecracker when she's pissed."

"Noted, Boss. And while none of them have seemed to notice, I have caught small glimpses of who I presume are the Dora Milaje watching them from a distance. They were barely a shadow on the lense but when reviewed and the resolution clarified there was a partial match to Nakia, one of the King's personal guards."
"Good, the more people keeping an eye out the better. What about the rest Fri? What are they up to?"

"Currently, Sgt. Wilson and Mr. Lang are residing in their rooms. They haven't left them since having dinner last night. Neither joined the group breakfast they have shared since their arrival and when the Captain came this morning to Wilsons door, he was turned away. No one has bothered to check on Mr. Lang. If I had to voice my opinion about them as of right now I would say they seem distressed."

"Distressed how?"

"Last night after dinner the group were watching television in the lounge. Sgt. Wilson switched to a news channel which was showing a special report on all the events of the "war", after watching he and Mr. Lang appeared very angry."

"Which report was it Fri?"

"It had all the details on the events of Romania and Leipzig, as well as the break out from the Raft. Given the timeline, they became very agitated when the deaths of the children in Romania was broadcast, as well as the deaths from the Raft. It appeared as if Rogers and Barton tried to calm them down, but Sgt. Wison actually took a swing at the Captain then left. He hasn't spoken to anyone since."

"Wilson? He hit Rogers? Lemme see, lemme see!!" Tony said.

The video floated to life in front of him, showing a very angry and red faced Wilson snapping Steves head back with a mean left hook. Scott was standing back from the others shaking his head sadly. That was something he'd never thought he'd see. Wilson was stuck to Rogers like glue. As long as Tony had known him, he had never once went against anything Rogers said. The man idolized Steve.

"Any clue as to why that broadcast set him off?"

"I can't read their lips Boss, but I get an impression that Wilson and Lang had not realized the number of people killed or that there were children present. I am going to assume that they didn't know they had a hand in their deaths. They both seem very distraught."

"How much you want to bet that Rogers has been withholding some details from them. Theres not a chance in hell that Barton and Romanoff didn't know about that, but maybe Wilson and Lang really didn't. Sam's always been level headed. Finding out he helped in the death of a child is going to eat away at him. Doesn't he have some nephews?"

"Definitely not the first time Rogers would keep a secret." he continued, "Kinda hypocritical if you ask me, since he's all about sharing. The dick..Keep a watch on Wilson and Lang Fri, let me know if anything else happens. I may be able to use this to our advantage. Send what you found to Shuri in case she didn't see it. Maybe she can find a way to get them to crack. Ask her about the palaces cameras too. Find out why I cant get audio."

The water in the tub had started to cool, so he figured it was time to get out. He made quick work to finish his meal so he wouldn't get crumbs all over the floor. That way they'd just go down the drain. Then he hurriedly scrubbed himself with his soap and got out, wrapping himself in a huge towel.

His reflection in the mirror looked a bit haggard. The bags and circles under his eyes more
prominent than ever. *Could always try Botox..But I don't want to end up looking like Kenny Rogers after that bad facelift.*

"Her Highness replies that all cameras in the palace have an audio feed, but for currently unknown reasons, none of them are working."

"Freaking Romanoff...Fri, see if you can get in there and do some diagnostics on the system. Stay invisible though, I don't want Natasha to find you."

"I'm on it Boss."

"Friday, has the cleaning staff taken care of the ER yet?" Tony asked. Drying and slipping into his pj's.

"Not yet. They seem to be avoiding it, no one wants to go back in just yet. Would you like me to call a crime scene cleaner?"

"Shit.. May as well. Just make sure they sign all the NDA's and the privacy warnings. And find one that's very discreet. What about T'Challas jet. Is it still in VT? And what's the situation with Laura and the kids? Can you find out for me, I haven't been able to check in."

He walked toward the bed, it looked so good right now.

"Miss Potts has arranged for the pilot to land at a private airstrip just outside the city. Mr Hogan will be retrieving his belongings and bring them to the tower. His pilot will stay with the plane. All the Barton familys assets have been frozen and the JCTC has seized the family farm. Laura and the kids are currently residing in a motel near their home."

"Fuck..Alright, I'll deal with that tomorrow," he said crawling into bed. "Any word from Vision?"

"Sorry Boss. He's still MIA. I haven't been able to contact him since he left the compound."

"Okay...Wake me up if anything changes with kittycat."

"Will do, Boss."

Damn he was so tired, but after lying down to try and sleep it just wouldn't come to him. He tossed and turned for the better part of two hours before giving up and going back down to the med-bay.

He dug out an old cot and a shabby looking pillow and blanket from a storage closet. Placing it in the corner of T'Challa's room he tried to sleep again.

He was out as soon as his head hit the pillow.
Chapter Summary

Scott POV

Chapter Notes

Another snoozer chapter. So boring I fell asleep writing it.¯\_(ツ)_/¯

Sunday-4pm Wakanda

God he was such an idiot. When he had answered that phone call in the middle of the night almost a month ago he never thought he'd end up like this. He thought he would end up fighting a few bad guys, save the world with Captain America and get a nice pat on the back from the President for all their good work.

He was dead wrong..

Now here he was, stuck in a some foreign country he'd never really heard of, a wanted man once again. Governments around the world were out for their heads, and the man he had chosen to follow seemed so sure that they'd all be fine if they just laid low. If they wait, eventually it would "blow over" as Steve had said. Then he could go home and be with his daughter..

Cassie..

As he sat on his bed in this stunningly beautiful room in Wakanda all he could think about was Cassie. How he'd let her down again, even after promising her that he wouldn't do anything that could take him away from her again. After promising Maggie that he would be a better father..God, she would never let him near Cassie again.

What the hell had he been thinking?

I wasn't thinking, he told himself. When Captain America asks for your help you don't ask questions, you just do it. He had been so excited when Barton called, saying Captain America needed him that he dropped everything and left. He didn't even question it. His childhood hero needed him. Anyone in his shoes would do the exact same thing.

Wouldn't they?

I should have asked for more details, more information, should have gotten gotten some kind of proof of what the Captain had been saying was true.Anything but diving headfirst into a situation he knew nothing about.

But he hadn't. He just ran off with nothing but the word of a man he'd never even met before. Captain America was supposed to be the model American everyone wanted to be. A moral man,
compassionate and wise.. The icon of the free world..

Wasn't he?

He honestly thought he was going to help Rogers fight some long forgotten super soldiers. Not level an airport facing off against half the Avengers.

Rogers had told him Stark was trying to stop them from protecting the people against a possible global threat. That Stark had turned his back on the people that the Avengers had sworn to protect by siding with the government. That he wanted their right to defend innocent people taken away from them.

But it wasn't Stark..

Stark hadn't turned on anyone. He hadn't abandoned the people. That was as clear as day now to Scott. Stark was only doing what people from around the world were asking of them.

Stark was the one who was listening.

While the Captain seemed content to ignore them..

Scott thought he had been doing the right thing at first, going out to fight and defend those that can't defend themselves. But 117 countries that approved the Accords, 117 governments that were chosen by those people. Those countries were all screaming for them to put an end to all the unwanted destruction. Unless there was some kind of a global catastrophe.

Now after seeing all those news reports Scott wasn't sure what he was supposed to do. Because on one hand the people were right, but on the other.. There were some things that regular law enforcement just couldn't fight against. Then what happens? Would those who signed just stand back and wait to be told to help. What if they waited and numerous lives were lost? What then?

What if they could do something to diffuse the threat quicker than law enforcement?

_I probably should have actually read those Accords before I went through all this shit_, Scott thought.

He stood up and began pacing restlessly around his room. It was definitely the best place he'd ever had the privilege of staying in. Had he not been worried he could be drug away at any moment he would have enjoyed it more.

The palace itself was nestled halfway up a sloping jungled hillside. Trees that had been cleared away probably centuries ago for the construction had crept their way back up to squeeze against the palace walls. From a distance it was hard to spot it out, naturally camouflaged by nature.

The palace grounds were massive, boasting five swimming pools, tennis courts, three basketball courts and a baseball and soccer field. And those were just reserved for guests at the palace. Each member of the Royal family had their own private wing, for their use only. And a private runway with hangar. They probably had private pools and lush gardens just for themselves.

The room he had chosen was rather oddly shaped, almost like an octagon. Even the ceiling was slightly rounded. The walls and floor were made from some bamboo that was native to Wakanda and windows went from the floor to halfway onto the curved ceilings. It was done in a classic African style with some really cool art and animal skin rugs.

All the statues and paintings made him nervous.. They were probably antiques and worth a fortune.
He sighed to himself, thinking about the others.

Yesterday, Wanda and Clint had asked him if he wanted to snoop around with them to see if they could find something fun to do. He had told them no. He was a guest in this place and he didn’t think it was right to go prying through someone else’s personal space. Plus, he had heard T’Challa tell the Captain before he left to stay in their wing he had set up for now.

He’d also heard bits of Rogers and Romanoffs conversation after the King had left.

That had been his first clue that he had fuuuuucked up.

He had left the kitchen to thank T’Challa for letting him stay here, but before he rounded the corner where they were he heard Romanoffs voice pop out of thin air. So he did what any smart, handsome, former criminal would do.

He eavesdropped.

As quietly as he could manage.

He was pretty sure they didn’t know he was listening. People thought he was a little on the stupid side, but appearances were deceiving. It was better to be labeled a fool sometimes, because people tended not to think much of the fool. They were usually ignored.

And being ignored could have advantages.

Like hearing Rogers discussing the fact that Natasha had shot the King while he slept with some weird tranquilizer drug to make sure he wouldn’t wake up. While she apparently concealed a plane and a person somewhere in the jungle. The fact that Rogers was ok with that made his skin crawl.

Or hearing Rogers say he would ask Scott to go in and find the tranq dart she’d left behind and dispose of it. To get rid of any thing that could jeopardize their sanctuary here in Wakanda. A safe haven given to them by the very man they shot.

Then she mentioned Stark. Making his breakfast turn nastily in his stomach. Stark was down. He had a heart attack because of something the Captain sent him. He was in the hospital and they didn’t even seem to give a shit about the man.

Hadn’t they all lived in Stark tower together? Did they really hate him that much? Scott knew that Hank hated the Starks but that was mostly because of Howard. He only despised Tony because he was Howards son.

But that conversation was his first wake up call. His first sign that he had fuuuuucked his shit up. Bigtime.

He thought about the dart he’d stuffed into a bag and shoved under his mattress. After hearing the Captain, he made the decision to go in and get it before Steve could ask him, then tuck it away for safe keeping til he could figure out what he should do.

So he’d put on the ant suit and snuck in under the door. Found the evidence and slipped back out to his own room, where he carefully hid it. Hopefully Rogers wasn’t smart enough to figure it out. Maybe he would just think a cleaning crew tossed it when they straightened up the room.

With luck he’d send Romanoff back in and someone would catch her snooping.

Scott was pretty sure that Rogers had tried to approach him several times to ask to go in and find it,
but Scott had managed to hurriedly excuse himself before the Captain could get the chance. He tried to avoid them as much as possible since that first morning but he knew he'd look suspicious if he stopped talking to them completely. So he had continued to share breakfast with them each day.

For now he had chosen to keep all he found out to himself, just in case he might need it. He wasn't afraid to use it as some blackmail material.

Last night, after dinner, they had all went into the lounge area to relax and watch some TV. Their rooms weren't equipped with them and Sam had wanted to catch up on the news to see what had been happening in the Avengers abscence. At first everything was fine but then a special report had come on.

The UN had branded them all as international terrorists. They had illegally crossed the borders of many countries, leaving behind a trail of destruction in their wake. All but Wanda, since she wasn't a US citizen, were wanted for treason against the United States. Their faces were being broadcast 24/7 across every news channel around the globe. The US, Romania and Germany all wanted their heads.

Scott was scared. This was by far the worst thing he'd ever gotten caught up in. VistaCorp was like a childrens game compared to this. He was glad he only had a small role in all this. They could try to charge him with terrorism, but in his defense that airport was empty so there was no one to terrorize. He'd defintely get charged with illegal border crossing and violating his parole, he wasn't even supposed to leave the US. The destruction of the airport would likely fall mostly on him too, since he went gigantor and smashed shit up.

Thankfully he wasn't being charged with any deaths according to the news.

But he was now a traitor to his country, to his family..His daughter..

Hope.. Well that was over before it really even began. She would beat him to death if she saw him. At least he wouldn't have to worry about prison then. He had taken the suit out of the country without their permission.

He thought of the reports from Romania. Eight men dead, two children.. The Raft...Rogers had killed those me trying to get them out.

Sam had become furious..Apparently he hadn't known about the amout of people who died on their quest to save Barnes. Or that there were kids involved. Sam had two small nephews about the same age those kids had been. He had nearly broken down then and there in the lounge, then had started screaming at Rogers, calling him a liar and a hypocrite, then took a swing at him.

Poor Sam..He was facing the possibility of a life sentence or even the death penalty..The reports said he was being charged with 10 counts of accessory to manslaughter, including the two kids, harboring a known terrorist (Barnes), one count of aiding a terrorists escape (also Barnes) and 3 counts of international terrorism. Not to mention all the destruction of property charges.

The others weren't fairing any better. Rogers new rap sheet was far worse than Sams. There was talk of trying to enforce the death penalty, but given his abilites the governments weren't sure if it could even be done. Not humanely anyway.

After hearing all this, then finding out Rogers had known about all those deaths and not saying anything, Sam had blown a fuse.

He had socked Rogers in the face, cursed at him til he was out of breath and left the room. Scott hadn't heard from him since. He wondered if Sam's view on this was starting to change too. Maybe
he could talk to him and see if they could work out some kind of a deal. To help each other out.

All Rogers assurances that it would die down and they would go home were bullshit. If they were found out here, they were all going away. Some may be permanent.

Neither of them had left their rooms since dinner. Sam was too angry and Scott was too depressed. He missed his daughter so much. And now he may never see her again.

Cassie was only 8. If he got lucky he might get to see her again by the time she was 40. He would be going away for a long time. He knew he would, after seeing everything in a different light he knew he had made the wrong choice. It was too late now, there was no way to fix this.

But maybe there was a way to at least try.

Groaning irritably, he threw himself down onto his bed. He wanted to get his hands on a copy of the Accords, so he could decide for himself if this had been worth it all.

And there was only one person he knew who might have one.

He made his way to the door, peeking out to make sure none of the others were around. Seeing no one, he went back to put on the suit, he'd rather do this small than to risk being seen by Rogers.

Then he went to the bed to retrieve the small bag that housed his evidence. Right now he'd do almost anything to help plead his case. And after all he'd seen with his "teammates" the last four days, he just wanted to do what he thought was the right thing.

He shrunk down and left his room for the first time in almost twenty-four hours. Determined to find the only man who might be able to help him save his life.

Now, if he could just remember where T'Challa's office was. This place was so large it was impossible not to get lost.

_Screw it. I'll just slide under every door until I find him_, Scott thought.

He set off in a random direction, unaware of all the eyes watching his every move.

Shuri leaned back in the chair behind her father's old handcarved desk. The screen in front of her showing the new "guests" having quite the wonderful time. The witch and the archer lounging by T'Challa's pool. Laughing and drinking with not a care for the world around them.

She was fairly sure the archer had stolen her brother's swimwear, but he would have had to have entered his personal chambers for that. She had not seen anything on the cameras so she wondered where they had come from. The mere presence of these creatures was already starting to test her will.

Then there were the others. The ringleaders of this circus.

The Captain and the harlot had honestly had the insolence to leave the palace grounds.

The nerve of them. Walking out as pretty as you please to go window shopping and dining out in the city. Donning some sort of tech to change their appearance.
They should be awaiting their trials from a prison cell. Not out shopping.

The cowards. Innocent people didn't hide themselves away and wear masks. They went out and tried to prove their innocence.

They were probably waiting for T'Challa to do it for them, Shuri thought. If she had her way they wouldn't be coming within a mile of her brother again. Not after what they've done.

She hoped that T'Challa had not given them any money. Surely her brother wasn't that stupid. The thought that it was possible troubled her. He had seemed extremely troubled recently, he had many things on his mind so it was entirely possible that he may have unconsciously given Rogers money if he asked.

But if he hadn't... If her brother had not given them money then where did they get it?

She sighed tiredly. Now she was the one with entirely too much to deal with. She hadn't spoken with Stark since he arrived at his tower this morning, giving her a quick update on T'Challa. At the time it had been too early to really tell her what was happening, but moments ago she had opened the email from the man with an update on his condition.

The news had nearly brought her to tears again. While Stark stated that while Banner had concocted an antidote, there was a massive amount of internal damage her brother was suffering through. The sheer size of the list took up her entire viewing screen.

According to his doctors, his lungs were only functioning around ten percent, he was currently being assisted by a ventilator, having massive amounts of oxygen pumped into his system. And there was cause for concern over the state of his eyes. Apparently he may suffer from temporary blindness for a while. And even after his vision returned he may have some permanent loss. Needing to wear glasses for the remainder of his life.

While her brother's condition was her main concern, she also had to worry about Wakanda in his absence. Eventually the members of the Parliament would start asking questions if T'Challa didn't return soon. He was only to have been gone a day at most. Such a long trip so soon after being crowned King would not sit well with them. He'd already been out of Wakanda for five days, and he hadn't bothered to tell the cabinet members where he was going.

If their calls went ignored for too long Shuri would either have to tell them what's happened or step into T'Challa's place. She didn't want to do that to her brother but there may be no choice...If something happens to T'Challa she would have to take the throne.

Wakanda came first.

Always.

The ping of her tablet brought her from her thoughts. It was another update from the Dora Milaje. Luckily, Nakia and Okoye were very good at their jobs. They had been tailing the pair all day, slinking back into the shadows. Sending Shuri every little detail about what they were doing.

She knew the two Dora were hoping they would make one wrong move so they could "dispose" of them. Okoye especially. She and T'Challa were the same age and had been the best of friends since the early years of life.

After revealing to them the King's current condition and his whereabouts in America, the two had been a bit too eager to shadow the monsters. While Shuri knew she could trust them not to disobey her orders, she hoped this one time they would defy everything and just kill the bastards.
It would be easier since practically no one knew they were here. Well, except for Mr. Stark and his remaining crew. But she could just say they disappeared and no one would be the wiser.

But no.. She had made a promise to her brother, so for now the filth would remain.

She had been sitting here in his study since she left the panic room this morning. After dismissing the eldest members of the Dora with their orders, she assigned the remaining ones the tasks of shadowing the others. Some of the younger members were not as well equipped to deal with the Captain and the Widow, so she had given them the task of watching the archer and the witch.

They did have special instruction not to get to close to the witch. Just in case she may pickup on the thoughts in their heads. Shuri was not sure how far her powers were able to go, but deep down she knew none of them would be able to handle her. They needed someone with a similar ability, someone who could move and manipulate things with their mind.

A wizard, or an enchanter. A sorcerer or a trickster..

There had to be someone out there somewhere. Surely Maximoff couldn't be the only one with this kind of power on the planet.

She went back to watching the screen. Clenching her fist so tight a thin line of blood slid out from her nails cutting into her palm. But she barely even felt it.

Look at them. Not even bothering to hide their arrogance. Flaunting around as if nothing had happened. Laughing and drinking, like they rule the world. She couldn't wait to wipe that smile off the witch's face..

The palace had cameras everywhere. Multiples in every room, hallways, they were even in the floors and ceilings. There was hardly an area where one couldn't be seen.

Or heard..

Unfortunately, the audio feed on nearly every camera within the palace grounds had all mysteriously went out. Shuri wasn't naive enough to believe that her new guests had nothing to do with it. Everything worked perfectly until their arrival.

Luckily, several years ago T'Challa had insisted that all the cameras be upgraded to run on more than one system. He had been the target of an assassination attempt and his would be killers had somehow taken out the palaces camera systems and power grid. Managing to lockdown his section of the palace, leaving him to fight them all off by himself.

He hadn't been able to get to his armor in time and had suffered some extensive injuries.

After, T'Challa had come up with his own design, creating a small, yet extremely efficient product. They were tiny cameras, barely larger than the face of a wristwatch. Looking at them with a naked eye, one would believe that the AV feed ran on the same line. So anyone wishing to disable them would only have to sever the connections with the main server.

All the camera footage looked to be fed into the same server room, but her brother, with his genius mind, had created backups within the system.

While the footage did go to a main server, T'Challa had designed each tiny camera with what was probably the worlds smallest memory card and battery, equipped with a wireless transmitter whose signal changed every two seconds. The total size of the two were no bigger than the camera lens of a phone. The vibranium casing covering the cameras made them impossible to pry into from the
Outside.

If the main line into the cameras were cut or if access to the main server cut off, the cameras would continue recording everything by immediately switching over to the small battery backup. The footage transmitting through the wireless signal to a different set of servers that were hidden beneath the panic room she was in earlier.

If the wireless signal was somehow disabled, the footage would be stored inside the small memory card held within the device. It had the capacity to store months worth of footage and the battery power supply was similar to that of Starks reactor. It could power the cameras for years to come. The card could only be removed by the members of the Royal family, or the senior members of the Dora Milaje, the only way to open the casing was by a built in retinal scanner.

T’Challa had even installed some hidden cameras throughout his and Shuri’s quarters. They were far smaller than the main ones, not visible unless one knew where to look.

The brightest minds in Wakanda were currently trying to find the cause of the audio problem, but so far had come up with nothing. Whoever had tried to tamper with them had some skill with technology. If they had taken out both the feeds instead of just one, it would raise suspicion. But they had managed to get far enough into the palace’s security to be able to separate their connections.

If tried and convicted for crimes against the crown, the penalty in Wakanda, was death.

She had absolutely no problem with that.

Another ping sounded from her tablet. Glancing at the screen she saw it was a message from Tony. Please don't be more bad news, she thought.

Under normal circumstances she would have been more than happy to be receiving messages from Tony Stark himself. The man was a known charmer, and Shuri had no doubt that all the tales she’d heard of him being a phenomenal lover would be true. She’d like to find out for herself.

Plus, he was very easy on the eyes.

She let out a long hiss of breath. The timing for her never turns out right. Maybe one day.

She opened Starks latest email, glad to read that it wasn't any more bad news about T’Challa. But it was an enquiry about the state of the audio of the cameras. Tony had not hidden from her that he had snuck into the palaces security. It was the first thing he had told her when they spoke for the first time. At first it had been a bit unnerving to know the man had been watching her without her knowledge, but once she realized Tony was only concerned for their safety she had no trouble with him being there.

(Do your cameras have any audio or are they strictly visual?) TS

Well at least he had noticed, she thought, opening her messenger

[ All the audio feeds in the palace are not working for "unknown" reasons. Senior analysts are working on it, but nothing yet] PS

She wasn't the least bit surprised to receive an immediate reply.

(Freaking Romanoff. I'm having Friday doing some diagnostics on your system. Let uknow if I find something) TS
[Thank you Tony] PS

(NP, btw did u know TC has hidden cameras n his rooms? Fridays sending you something, wasn't sure if you'd seen it yet. She caught something repulsive) TS

[Yes I knew. Suprised you manaaged to find them. TC has them very well hidden. I'm almost afraid to see what she found. I'm already angry enough, Stark] PS

(Well then ur gonna love this..Might wanna prepare yourself.) TS

Son of a bitch..That sounded bad..

There was a second ping letting her know the new email had arrived. But before she could open the file Scott Lang in his Ant-Man suit materialized out of nowhere right before her eyes.

Before he even had a chance to speak, she had pulled a dagger out of her dress and threw it full force at his head. He dodged away just before it could embed itself in his skull. Shuri was up and over the desk in a flash. Her cat-like reflexes had him against the wall with a knife against his throat before he could blink.

"Aaahhhh!! OH MY GOD..SHIT!! I am so sorry, I thought this was T'Challa's office! I couldn't see your face behind the screens so I just assumed it was him. Please don't kill me. I come in peace!!" Scott pleaded, trying to raise his hands in surrender. "Hi, I'm Scott, nice to meet you."

"Have you never heard of knocking Mr. Lang? Are all Americans so disrespectful? Or is it just the Avengers?"

"To be honest, it's mostly just the New Yorkers. I was born in Florida, we tend to be more mellow.." He grimaced when the knife pressed harder against his throat, piercing through the protective layer of material covering his neck, he felt a small drop of blood slide out.

"You do know that threatening a member of the royal family could lead to your death Mr. Lang. I do believe I feel threatened, very threatened. Traumatized even, throw myself to the ground, maybe I should shed a few tears, play the damsel in distress. Perhaps I should cut myself with this knife, it would be so easy to say it was you who attacked me, after all no one would believe I did it to myself. My word against a terrorist, perhaps I should call in the Dora Milaje."

"Uuuhh, ok um. You're totally not what I was expecting..." Scott gasped, his air was being cut off. This woman had a hell of a grip. "Eeeeuucaahh!"

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't have you tossed to the panthers." Shuri said, eyes glinting viciously. Keeping the knife hard against him , she took her free fist and punched through the wall right beside his ear.

Wood splintered, as she pulled her hand out, small pieces sticking to Scotts face.

She actually growled.. Moving her face to within an inch of Scotts. Fuck, she was scary!

He cringed back against the wall, a whine escaped him. "Because I'm an idiot who didn't think about what I was doing before I followed some guy I never met, to save some other dude I never met who was gonna be killed because of some documents I didn't read but I should have, and I feel like a total ass for destroying that airport and smacking that little red bug dude, and I'm never gonna see my daughter again, my ex-wife is gonna hate me even more, then I found out the people I was working with are total dicks and one of them shot the King and I need help, and I don't know what to do..."
Scott ranted.

Shuri backed off instantly. "You know what was done to T'Challa?"

"Yea.. And a few other things too..Look.. I screwed up bigtime. I want.." Scott paused taking a deep breath, "I want to read the Accords. I want to see for myself what they are, how they work for the Avengers. I want to know them inside out. Everything. I feel like I've been led in the wrong direction. I wasn't told the entire truth about anything that's happened..I'm not like them..This is not me.."

"Why now?" Shuri asked. "Why suddenly have a change of heart?"

"Because some of the things they do..No person with a conscience could do that shit. I may not seem entirely bright to you, but I know the difference between right and wrong." Scott hung his head sadly, "I want to be able to see my daughter again. Even if it's from a prison cell. I want to apologize for all the damage I caused, to anyone that I hurt..I want to make things right again."

Shuri eyed him warily. "And how do I know you speak the truth? What reason do I have to believe you?"

Scott gave her a determined look, then reached into a compartment on the suit. Pulling out a small bag, he held it up for Shuri to see.

"I know Romanoff shot T'Challa with this. I have no clue what it did, but I know why she did it. And if you help me...I'll tell you everything I know.." Scott paused, "I really don't know alot but what I do could help. But I want you to promise me you'll try to help me. I can't live like this, it's eating me up inside. I don't wanna end up like them..Please.."

Before Shuri could open her mouth to reply the door burst open and Sam Wilson burst in. Looking more haggard than Scott had ever seen him.

Scott quickly hid his baggie back in the suit and jumped far away from Shuri. Folding his arms behind his back trying to look innocent.

"Is this a bad time?" Sam asked. Giving them a weird "wtf" look. "Cause, you know.. I can come back if ya'll need some privacy, or whatever." Looking back and forth between the two.

Scott and Shuri had nearly matching scrunched up expressions of confusion on their face as they stared at him. Then it dawned on Shuri that Sam must have thought he walked in on some private romantic moment. Eew..

She simply place her palm on her cheek and blew out a long breath, wondering what she had done in her pastlife to be saddled with such idiots now.

Someone out there must truly hate her..
I'm not really feeling this chapter, like at all. I honestly could not remember if Sam helped fight Ultron or not and I was too lazy to go watch it again. Soooo, if I goofed, I so sorry \( \overline{\nabla} \overline{\nabla} \) Also my finger dyslexia was really bad in this chapter and Sam was repeatedly typed as Sma, sooo, ya know, oopsie.

**Sunday: Wakanda, 4pm**

Betrayed.

That was only one of the feelings going through Sam's mind.


Terror...

*What the hell had he done?*

Sam sat on the floor by the big windows, staring out at the tops of the trees, trying to will his body to stop shaking. Trying to figure out where the hell he went wrong..

He hadn't felt this out of control of his life for a long, long time..

Never in a million years would he have imagined he'd somehow end up becoming a terrorist. To see people screaming their names on TV, as they protested in the streets across the globe. Calling for justice for those hurt, demanding they turn themselves in, to stop hiding like the cowards they are.

Holding posters with their once smiling faces now defaced and covered with horns and fangs. Depictions or fire drawn behind them making them look like devils. There was one of Wanda someone had turned into a grim reaper. Complete with a cloak and scythe..

Then there were the really disturbing protesters..

Waving effigys of the Avengers, of Sam. The dummies tied to poles with a noose around their necks. The one a young girl in Romania had set up in the middle of the street, and then proceeded to set on fire. More protesters joining in, throwing bottles and rocks at the burning lifeless body. Screaming obsenities directed toward its living counterpart.

The fake wings added to the back flaming up toward the sky, making it look like some medieval dragon ascending up to the heavens.

An angry man in NYC had tied up effigys of them all in his front yard, then stood by them encouraging people walking by to seek out revenge in their own way. The dummies were now covered with burns and bullet holes. There were numerous amounts of knives sticking out of the chests and heads. Some people had gotten a bit aggressive and even cut off some limbs. Captain Americas had been replaced numerous times already, people kept cutting off his head. The man had
even set up a camera with a live feed on them 24/7, so the world can watch "justice be served" on those who were left running out of control for too long..

Apparently in was now the most viewed footage on the internet..

Then there was his personal favorite.

In Washington, a group of protesters had taken even more effigies and decided to tie them to the backs of cars. Dragging them through the streets with people shouting at them as they drove by. Hanging them from light poles and stoplights, the bodies swaying gently with the breeze.

At one point the news showed a group of men dislodging a Falcon dummy from one of the cars. Repeatedly stomping and punching it until whatever stitching and stuffing holding it together had come undone. Leaving it spread all across the street..

The group of men had been members of one of his group sessions at the VA in DC..

That was when his shakes had started, and they hadn't ceased since.

Sam had seen more effigies of himself than he ever wanted to..

Screams calling him a murderer, a monster... Child killer.. He knew that people could be vicious, but this was a whole new level of violent.

His world was falling into chaos.

He hadn't felt this bad after his dad was killed and he fell into a deep depression, pretty much just giving up. He had went running around with a bad crowd, doing work for the mob..Not caring if he lived or died. It wasn't one of his finest points in life, but between his mom and his sister they had somehow managed to help him straighten his ass up.

Joined the military when he was nineteen, spent the next fourteen years working his way up through the ranks. Applying for the pararescue program, where he met Riley.

The only common interest they shared was a love of flying, so it was strange how well they had hit off. They were a bit of an odd match but they worked together like a fine tuned machine. They must have flown hundreds of missions together.

Then Riley was shot down..

Sam didn't feel much like staying in after that. So he retired his wings, became a counselor for vets, he thought he was doing pretty good for himself.

Then he had his life turned upside down after one of his morning runs.

Looking back at it now, he probably should have questioned Rogers ability to judge certain situations when he had only met Sam twice before recruiting him to help save the world.

*Twice!!*

He spoke to him for a total of like ten minutes.

Then BAM!!

Hey Sam, everyone's trying to kill us but you're a good friend, wanna help me take out this old Nazi organization? I trust you to have my back even though I really have no fucking clue who you are....
Hell, for all Steve knew Sam coulda been some kind of a crazy serial killer or some shit.

He couldn't understand, he had worked side by side with Steve for nearly two years. They'd saved the world from a respawned Hydra, criss-crossed the globe on their search for Barnes.

True, he didn't get to help stop a murderoues robot bent on global extinction, but he would have been there if Steve had asked.

They trained together, ate together, went on their morning runs together.. They worked together everyday, went out to the movies, their apartments were right beside each other in the NAF..

Sam had begun to see Steve as more of a brother than just his best friend. He thought they could tell each other anything, that's how close they had become.

Hell, he'd seen more of Steve than he had his own mother over the past few years.

So why had Steve lied to him. Was he not important enough that Steve felt it would be better to leave him in the dark. To let him find out what had happened from a freakin newscast.

Well, if you want to get technical, he hadn't really lied, Sam thought. He just left out some very freaking important details.

Like not telling Sam that eight men..Eight members of Romansias police force, died when he went after Barnes. Sam couldn't figure out why Steve hadn't said anything. Why di he let Sam go on believing that everything had been fine. Sam had been his lookout, he had told Steve when those men were coming in. To hurry and get Barnes out of there before shit escalated to far. He didn't think Cap would use a bit to much of that super strength and snap their necks.

They were just normal humans, Sam thought sadly.

Steve would have known that. So why would he not hold back when he fought those men. Steve could have just grabbed Barnes and jumped out the window. Hell, he did back in DC, fell from like 10 stories then got up and just ran off. Why couldn't he have done that shit here?

He held back when they had their sparring sessions and when he trained the new recruits, so why hadn't he held back this time? Then pretending like everything was fine..

Fine.. Fine my ass, Sam thought angrily as he stared at the vast jungle outside. If everything was fine I wouldn't be hiding my ass out in some Godforsaken jungle.

Then there was the fight in the tunnel.. A section of the roof collapsing and those two little kids..

Sam had already been second guessing himself about all the shit that had went down. Wondering if he had made the right choice.

Lagos, which come to find out they didn't even have permission to be in that country.

Bucharest, the only reason they even knew to go there was Carters tip-off.

Germany, Colonel Rhodes' falling from the sky. If Sam hadn't moved that would have been him, but just thinking about what Rhodes was going through disgusted him. It was his fault. The more he replayed it all in his mind the more convinced he became that he had done the wrong thing..

But hearing that report on the news last night, that was the last fuckin straw..

It made him sick. To know that he had a hand in causing the death of a child.
He had two small nephews, those kids were probably around the same age. All he could think of now were them. What if it had been them? What if it were his nephews in that car in the tunnel when Rogers, Barnes & T'Challa brought part of it down.

He kept seeing their smiling little faces, riding along, watching a movie or playing a game in the back of the car. Then he kept seeing concrete and rebar and God knows what else falling on top of them.

Sam had helped Rogers get out of there, told him where Barnes was heading. He sent him into that tunnel with all those people. Those lives. Those babies. That was on him.

And he didn't think he could live with that.

Then that shit with Stark.

Steve had told him Tony was fine when they left Siberia. That he had snapped and attacked Steve and tried to kill Bucky, so Steve had to take out the suit.

But the news report said Stark had sent a distress signal from that base in Siberia, that he was badly injured and unable to move. Vision had apparently taken him to a hospital, but that was all the news said. There had been no other reports on Tony since.

Tony was never out of the public eye for that long, so something had to be seriously wrong with him.

That had Sam worried.

He was probably one of very few people who actually enjoyed being in Tony's company. They had spent hours together in Tony's lab designing and building Redwing and they really just hit it off. They'd even hung out a couple times when Sam went into the city.

He hoped Tony was ok.

Last night was a real eye opener. It was like all the shit he should have seen before, just came out and smacked his dumbass right in the face.

Then there was Steve trying his best to calm Sam down, saying that sometimes bad things like that happened, that they couldn't save everybody.

Bullshit.

Rhodes had told him about Sokovia. About how Steve wouldn't stop until every person there was out of harm's way. Til the city was clear.

Fucking hypocrite.

If Barnes had been in Sokovia, Steve would have torn that city apart like a freakin tornado, taking out anything in his path, trying to make sure he got to safety. God be with anyone who stood in Rogers way if his beloved Bucky was involved.

As long as Bucky was safe, no one else mattered...

Sam wiped at his teary eyes. He had been feeling pretty shitty lately, and last night just iced the cake. The first morning he was here he had been fine, but guilt and doubt had been slowly eating away at him.

He was ashamed to admit he hadn't showered since his first night here, or shaved, and his hair was
starting to go a little to fro-ish since he hadn't had a cut since before Thunderbolt brought them the Accords. He always took pride in his good hygiene but now he couldn't be bothered..

He hadn't felt this fucked up since Riley died..

From his place on the floor he could see the tops of the skyscrapers from the nearby city, shrouded in a misty haze. It reminded him of the time he had been stationed out in California and hiked up to see the Hollywood sign. The views were strikingly similar. Except for the gigantic ferns and palms here.

The sun had actually been shining for most of the day but he could see dark clouds forming far back on the horizon. Flashes of lightning flickering through the clouds.

He honestly kinda hated it here. The heat, the humidity, the fucking mosquitos the size of a bird..

The big jungle cats he could see staring in his windows at night.

Thanks to the current phase of luck he was having, the room he had chosen was like right on the fucking ground. There was the floor, then a window, then grass. He could almost touch the grass through the glass. There was like no damn buffer. All the other assholes had taken rooms at the farther end of the wing, which was built on a downward slope, so their windows were actually pretty high up.

Not him though, he got the pleasure of being stalked by panthers at night. About six of them from the looks of it.

And all that was seperating him from those massive jaws was a thin little pane of glass.

That was some freaky shit, man.. Some of those cats were twice as big as he was.

At night, they would stalk back and forth outside the window, watching him. He couldn't figure out how to pull the damn shades so he could block them out.. They ran on some kind of remote or something but he couldn't find one anywhere. His attempts to pull them by hand failed. They wouldn't budge..

So for the past week he'd been lying awake most of the nights keeping a watchful eye on those damn things. One of them had actually smacked the glass with it's massive paw, leaving a claw mark behind..

That's all he needed, a freakin panther crashing through his window at night and draggin his feathered ass out to the jungle.

He was startin to wonder if he was more bird than just his codename.

*I mean, damn, I know I wear wings and fly but do I smell like a freakin bird or somethin?*

In truth, it was a nice set of rooms he had here, but it was nothing compared to the ones Tony had built for them back home.

He wanted to go home, back to that sweet little apartment of his at the NAF.

Home to see his momma who was probably going to beat the livin hell outta him when she saw him. She might be nearin sixty, and him creepin oh so closer near forty, but she still wasn't afraid to whoop his ass if he went outta line.

*Hell, she definitely goin whoop it this time, shit, she'll probably knock my teeth down my throat.*
He wouldn't be surprised if she had people on the lookout for him. No doubt she'd seen all the news footage by now. She had probably already organized everyone she knew into some kind of a phone tree or some shit. So if he was spotted she'd haul ass right to him and drag him to jail herself.

He had thought about calling her since he got here, but he couldn't get the nerve. He was afraid to hear what she would say to him. The last thing he wanted to hear now was how disappointed she was in him.

He was already disappointed with himself.

Closing his eyes, he rested his throbbing head against the glass.

*Maybe if I just follow Steves advice and ignore it, it will all just go away, Sam thought. It seemed to work out good for Rogers everytime he just ignored things.*

*Maybe if I just let it go, everyone will forget. Hell, that damn news report coulda been lying anyway. We're the heros here, we save people, not hurt them. Maybe it was all exaggerated, maybe there really weren't any kids..Sometimes news wasn't even real, just made up for ratings.*

"If there is a God out there just give my dumbass some kinda clue cause I got no idea what the hell I'm gonna do" Sam whispered softly.

*BANG*

No sooner than the words left his mouth, a thunderous boom sounded right by his head, waking him out of his stupor. He jumped back from the window, ass sliding across the floor as he looked toward the cause.

A large (large my black ass, that things as big as a fuckin grizzly) black panther, teeth bared, glared back at him. Ears pinned back against it's skull as it savagely growled at him, still swatting at the glass in hopes of getting an evening meal.

"Aaah shit man!! Fuck it, that's..Was that my sign?" he asked, looking skyward, flailing his arms in every direction. "Cause you know you coulda sent like a police man or some shit to the door, not freakin Cujo out there. DAMN!! Screw this shit, my ass is done, I can't deal with this shit no more. I'm from Harlem man, I barely even been in a zoo!! Biggest cat I've seen is in tha alley man. Hell no!! I ain't goin die in no damn jungle by no big ass pussy cat!! HUUUH UHHH!! My ass is goin home!! Fuck. This. Shit! I'm out! I quit! I surrender! Is that what you wanted cause that's what I'm doin!" Sam ranted.

He jumped up from the floor and practically flew to the door, glancing back at the big cat who was now raking it's massive claws down the window.

"AWW, FUCK THIS!!" Sam screamed, trying and failing to open the door in his panic. "I hate this damn place I swear to God, damn cats all over like they fucking own this shit. HELP!!" He pounded on the door. "Lemme outta here!!!

In his mad scramble he forgot he had locked the door the last time he entered. Slipping back the lock he finally pulled it open, tripped out into the hallway, falling face first into the plush carpet, then he just rolled to stare at the ceiling. He could hear the big cat still trying to get through to him. He crawled back to the door an pulled it shut, then just lay against it, panting heavily.

"Gimme a dog any damn day! Scary ass bullshit goin on here! This shit ain't right, what the actual hell!! This place is my fucking nightmare, I swear to God!!"
"Are you alright Mr. Wilson?" a voice asked.

"AAAAARGGGHH!!" Sam screamed, smacking his head against the door, the sound coming out more feminine than he liked. One of the Dora Milaje was looking at him amused.

"Hunky-dory.." He gave her a thumbs up. "Thanks for asking"

He got up slowly, embarrassed by his girly scream. "I'm just gonna.." he pointed vaguely in the direction in which T'Challa's office was, "go that way. Kay, bye."

He didn't wait for a response. He took it slow til he rounded the corner then he started to run. The sooner he got himself out of here the better. He was done.

He hauled ass toward T'Challa's office, not stopping for anything. Members of the Dora Milaje looked at him warily as he passed, but made no move to stop him or slow him down. Finally finding the door he was looking for, his brain apparently forgot everything his momma had taught him and he burst right in. Manners be damned, he just wanted to get this over with.

The two figures already in the room jumped back away from each other.

He was surprised to see Scott standing there with a guilty look on his face and hands hid behind his back like he'd just got caught doing something naughty.

The woman, who he recognised from that first morning, was T'Challa's sister, Shuri.

Both looked about as haggard as he felt. There were wood splinters on the floor and a hole in the wall. Bits of wood were stuck to Scott's face and in Shuri's hair.

Oh shit. Sam thought. Did I just walk in on some kind of lovers spat?

"Is this a bad time?" Sam asked. Glancing between the two. "Cause, you know.. I can come back if ya'll need some privacy, or whatever."

They both looked at him as if he had three heads. Then the Princess let out an irritated sound and rubbed her face.

"Doesn't anyone know how to knock?!" she asked angrily, "Were you raised in barns?"

"He's a New Yorker." Scott replied. "They're natural a-holes!"

"Lang..What are you doing here?" Sam asked him.

"Me..What are you doing here?" Scott said, "Are you following me? I know you love me Sam, but even the astounding Ant-Man needs some alone time, you know."

"Dude, I'm not followin your dumbass, I needed to talk to T'Challa. I assumed this was his office, I apologise Princess, didn't mean to bother you. Wait, is he botherin you? You want me to make his ass leave? Scott get your ass outta here. Come on, man let's go."

"No! I'm in the middle of a conversation here, so ..You know... go away." Scott said. Shuri cast her eyes to the heavens and mumbled something he couldn't understand.

"Both of you shut up. Come in Mr. Wilson, and close the door. I have a feeling you are both here for the same thing." Shuri said.

"What are you here for?" Sam asked Scott.
"Nuh uh! You first!" Scott said.

"No way man, I don't trust you. You go first"

"Back at ya birdman! And I was here first, so come back later."

"Birdman? Really, we gonna play this way cause there's no way in..."

Before Sam could finish his sentence a large, very sharp spear flew between the two of them. Nearly piercing the wall beside them.

They both froze, then slowly turned to face the woman who had moved to sit back at the desk. She sat with her legs crossed and her hands folded in her lap. Clearly not at all amused with the two of them.

"Both of you sit down. And Shut Up." Shuri hissed between her teeth. "I am in no mood to deal with such behavior. If I wanted to put up with this, I would have had kids by now."

Sam and Scott looked at each other, then at the desk in front of them. There was only one chair.

"Rock, paper, scissors?" Sam asked.

"Uh, sure."

As they went to make the fist Scott made a beeline for the chair, dropping into it and smiling triumphantly.

"Really?" Sam asked.

"Eh, I got here first." Scott smiled.

Sam pinched his lips together. "Alright then, if that's how you wanna do it."

He walked over to Scott, smiled, then sat down on his lap.

"What the hell, man!!" Scott exclaimed. Trying to push the heavier man off of him to no avail. Sam just pushed him right back.

"ENOUGH!! Stop with your childish acts or I'll cut out both of your tongues and feed them to the panthers!" Shuri shouted.

All sound cut off immediately, plummeting the room into an eerie silence.

"Now," Shuri said ferociously, "One of you please tell me what exactly it is that you want."

"I want to turn myself in!!" Both shouted out at the same time.

Sam and Scott looked at each other, "Really? You too?" They said in unison. "Huh, how bout that?"

They looked back to the Princess. "We want to turn ourselves in." they both said.

Shuri leaned back in her chair, giving the men in front of her a long, silent study.

"Well." she finally said after several minutes, "Maybe not all of the Captains followers are so stupid after all."

She opened a drawer beside her, pulling out a huge leather bound book tossing it in front of them.
"Now, I will promise you nothing, but, since you both seem to be coming to your senses, I may be able to help you not spend the rest of your lives rotting in a prison cell. But the first order of business. Read these, ALL of them, I know you have not bothered to do so before or you would not be in this situation. If there is something you do not understand or just can't comprehend come to me, I will explain it to you or have one of our lawyers assist you. Once you have finished, and you understand everything in here, then we will talk of your surrender. If you cooperate with me, then I shall do everything within my power to help you, but you must be willing to work with me. And believe it or not there are others out there who will help you as well," she thought of Stark, knowing that despite all, the man would still do everything in his power to help these ingrates.

"This is the only copy I currently have, so you will have to share since you are not allowed access to the internet while you're here. Even though some of you seem content to ignore that rule. It may take you many days to get through these. After you finish come find me, then we talk. Now I must ask you to return to your chambers. I have a very important call I must take."

"Thank you your Highness." They say in unison again.

"You are welcome.. Oh, and Mr. Lang. May I have the evidence, for safe keeping?"

"Oh, hey yea. Here you go." He handed her the bag. "Sorry I almost forgot."

"Thank you very much. Now leave!" Shuri said

"Evidence?" Sam questioned.

"Yeeaaa, I got some things I should probably fill you in on." Scott scratched at his head awkwardly. "You're probably not gonna be to happy when you hear it. But hey, just look on the bright side, we get to go home soon, and all this will be a distant memory. Well as distant as it can be when your reminded of it every single day while we're rotting away in our prison cells. But it could be worse, right? " Scott smiled widely, looking between Sam and Shuri as if hoping they would agree.

Sam just stared, "Are you high, man?"

"What!! No, jeez..Why would you? Ya know what, nevermind..Come on feathers, we gotta talk!"

"Just what I needed to hear, more bullshit." Sam looked at Scott as they walked to the door. "Is it ok if I crash in your room for this? I've got cats trying to kill me in mine."

"What the actual fuck." Shuri heard as the door closed. Sighing and shaking her head she finally managed to open the video Stark had sent.

She sat silently, not moving, barely breathing, watching the women on the screen.

One no more than a glimpse, the other not even caring she could be caught.

Anger seethed inside her..

That disrespectful little bitch..

She would not hold her tongue any longer, she could not let that hideous creature think she could get away with this.

Such dishonor. Such a disgrace of a human being.
Shuri rose from her seat, snapping her fingers as she walked to the door. The Dora who had been in the room the whole time left their places of hiding, following close behind her, weapons ready if need be.

Anger coarsing through her body, she set a course for her brothers wing.

She had a witch to hunt.
Sunday: Part 4- Shuri

Chapter Notes

My original plan was for this one to be longer, but I got tired. So the next chapter will have all the good stuff with Shuri and Wanda :) Enjoy!
Apologeezz for any highly noticable errors here, my brain went a bit cray cray.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Sunday, Wakanda 5pm**

She was a woman with a mission. It may be a stupid mission, considering neither herself or any of the Dora had any kind of magical powers. So if she managed to anger the witch to much there was no doubt in Shuri's mind that her entire entourage could meet their demise today.

*It couldn't be helped,* she thought.

She cannot let something like this stand. If she did, they would start to believe they can get away with anything. Which means as their time in Wakanda went on, they would only become more brazen, likely stealing more and more from them.

Or something far worse.. They had already shown that they had no qualms about committing horrid acts against a person if T'Challa's current situation was anything to go by.

Bast only knew how much they had taken already..

Before she made her way into the pool area, where the "happy couple" were playing, there were a few other stops to make.

She must make a stop in her brothers personal chambers, to check the contents of his safe to see exactly how much was taken. Then she had to search the witch's chambers..

As she strode through the halls on her way to T'Challa's wing she could not help but feel a sense of animosity toward her brother. Had he not decided to suddenly go off the deep end none of this lunacy would be happening.

*I should have just stayed in Lagos,* Shuri thought, *or taken that long overdue vacation to Espiritu Santo like I've been meaning to.*

The south pacific was much more appealing right now than being left behind to deal with T'Challa's epic failure.

*Well, we wouldn't even be in this mess to begin with if T'Challa hadn't felt the need to be so kind hearted to Mr. Barnes. He should have left them wherever he found them, let some other country deal with the barbarians. Or fed them to the panthers.*

With the Dora following close behind, she made her way into her brothers rooms.

Looking around, all the chaos she had seen from her previous visit, the morning she had discovered the Avengers, was gone. The maids did their jobs well.
Hopefully not to well..

At a glance, everything seemed to be in complete order but she knew better. There could be so many things in this room that could help her incarcerate these people.

She took a moment to breathe, to clear her mind and let herself think.

There could be evidence in here, she thought, looking calmly about the room. Her eyes landing on the small ceiling vent. The AC systems had only been added in the past sixty years or so, by T'Chaka's father.

Her grandfather, or what she knew of him from her fathers stories, had been a very paranoid person. The vents were some proof of his paranoia. Shuri had been in them herself a few times, to try and scare the wits out of her brother.

They were very, very small. One had to basically be a contortionist to maneuver through them. She did manage to get stuck once, and part of the ceiling had to be removed to free her.

Allegedly, her grandfather had ordered the ducts built small as a deterrent to assassins who may try to enter them. Although it would seem he hadn't taken into account that a child or woman could have tried to kill him.

The man must been slightly delusional to feel that women couldn't be able to kill him.

There was no way a man could fit in them, but a child or a very small woman could easily work their way around in there, should they be flexible enough.

*I have the cam footage of Maximoff and the dart*, she thought, *but even with Scotts tale of the events it could be more safe to back it up in court without more evidence there.*

"All of you, touch nothing!" she ordered sternly, "Adisa!!" Shuri looked at the nearest Dora, "Go fetch the head of security. Tell them to send up the forensics team, I want every inch of this room, including inside the vents, dusted for prints, stray hairs, anything! If there is a drop of sweat to be found, find it!!"

"Yes, madame." Nodding the warrior left, not questioning as to why the King's rooms were being searched. No doubt Nakia or Okoye had filled them in on the King's current state.

"Give me gloves." Shuri held out a hand, a pair practically flew into it.

While she knew Maximoff had used her power to crack the safe, she felt it better not to touch it with bare hands. Just in case something may linger.

She went through the whole process of the retinal and print scans, then input T'Challa's combination. They had made sure early in life to have access to each others personal properties. It was most practical for them should something bad befall the other. Along with the cash on hand, their safes held valuable family jewels as well as their will and testament.

She gave a small huff as she entered T'Challa's combination.

They knew better than to use family birth dates or anything one could associate with them easily, so they had taken to using numbers or dates associated with people they had been inspired with.

She wondered how Stark would feel about T'Challa using his birthdate as his combo.
No one but Shuri, and T'Chaka when he was alive, knew of T'Challa's idolization of the older genius inventor. Even though there was barely ten years age difference between them. Whenever Starks name was mentioned at a gala or political meeting, T'Challa would always show nothing but disdain towards the man. Not wanting to show how he really felt, when secretly, he was fascinated by him.

T'Challa himself was a genius of his own accord, but had often found himself enamored by Starks ability to create. There had been rumors for years that Stark had programed a fully functioning AI that could hold conversations with you, but Stark had never really confirmed it. T'Challa had tried valiantly to create his own version, but to no avail.

He tried installing his blemished version into a small robotic cat he had built, but somehow he failed miserably. The little robot had never gotten any smarter beyond being able to greet people with 'Hello' and was constantly walking into their legs..

Growing up, he had read everything about the man he could get his hands on, every book or article Stark had written, he followed all of his wild antics through the tabloids and when Stark had went missing in Afghanistan, T'Challa had been tempted to go there himself to help find him, dead or alive.

T'Chaka had killed that idea very swiftly. There had always been a deep seated hatred for anyone named Stark. Obviously it went back to Howard Stark and a small amount of stolen vibranium.

He had no doubt his son could find him, but he put his foot down about going after a man he had never met.

Shuri remembered the fight they had. T'Challa had been bitter about being forbidden to leave, stating that, 'what good is it to have these abilities if he wasn't able to help someone who truly needs it'.

T'Chaka had retaliated with something about the Black Panther was meant to protect Wakanda, not spoiled, rich, war mongoring Americans. That Stark had dug his own grave. Saying it was unsuited for the future King to show more interest in a complete stranger, than he had ever shown for Wakanda.

T'Challa had the gall to try and strike at his father at that comment. Shocked that he thought he didn't care for his home. He loved Wakanda, it's people and it's ethereal beauty. It was the politics, the thought of becoming King that T'Challa hated, but that was not something he had much choice in.

It had finally ended with T'Challa being knocked out with one punch from T'Chaka. In all their lives their father had never once raised a hand to them, but T'Challa's complete disrespect had made something inside their father snap. Shuri had stayed by T'Challa til he had awoken, not wanting to leave him there should something be wrong. When he awoke he had merely stood up and dizzily made his way to his chambers, barely acknowledging her prescence.

She hadn't seen him for a few days afterward.

After that, he had never mentioned Stark in the prescence of his father again.

Come to think of it, after that he had never mentioned anything of his interests to his father or Shuri again. Choosing to speak only of issues with Wakanda or things pertaining to the crown. They still shared much, being so close to one another it would be hard not to, but T'Challa kept anything that brought himself joy close to his heart. As if he were afraid his feelings on any matter other than Wakanda would be tossed aside.

T'Chaka had apologised profusely to T'Challa after, but whatever damage had occured that day
was never truly salvagable.

She knew her brother loved his home, but being King was something he had never truly had in his heart. He thought he was ill-suited for the throne.

\textit{Well, if the current events are anything to go by he is most definitely right}, Shuri thought, \textit{Maybe I should take over, I was groomed for this as well, it is a better fit for me anyway.}

Opening the safe she took a cursory glance inside. She would need to look at the jewelry they had cataloged to make sure it was all here, but with a quick inspection all appeared to be accounted for. She made a quick mental note to check her own safe, just in case.

She held no trust for these people.

All of T'Challa's personal papers appeared to be fine. Birth certificate, a copy of his will and all his updated medical records were here.

The safe wasn't large by most standards, it stood about five feet tall and was designed to flawlessly blend with the wall.

\textit{Not flawless enough apparently, if the witch could find it.}

It mostly contained the gems and jewels of his mother, and emergency cash.

\textit{Well, well.} Shuri thought, looking at the stacks of currency, \textit{maybe the witch did touch something after all.}

Her brother had a bit of OCD, it was one of his oddities. He liked for things to be even or lined up, if not it would drive him slowly crazy until he would fix it himself.

The man was a hindrance to live with. He couldn't stand to see an odd number of eggs in the carton or he would cook one just to fix it.

But now seeing his usually equal stacks of money missing a few bundles off one side, made her glad her brother was a little odd. The stacks were shorter than normal, as if they had been maneuvered into a position to make them look less suspicious. But the off number of bound bills gave it away.

One side was just to short.

From the look of it there were two bundles missing, but each bundle contained five thousand dollars each. What in Bast's name was she going to do with 10k?

It just made her more angry, that their supposed safe place was being overran by a bunch of heartless fools.

She would get them out, one way or another.

Shuri made for the door, leaving the safe open. Trusting the Dora she'd leave on guard here to stay away from it. Her mind set to her next destination.

"You two!" she looked at the two Dora near the door, "Stay here and wait for forensics to come. Make sure every inch is covered! I want the inside of the safe scanned as well!! Report in if something is found! The rest of you come with me."

Making her way to the south wing, and the witches chambers, she pulled out her phone. Sending a quick text to Nakia.
Inform me when they start to return-

Then another to Zalika and Zula, the twins watching Barton and sticky fingers.

Alert me if they leave the pool area-

Receiving affirmative responses, she marched with the remaining Dora back to the far side of the palace. Stopping in front of the witch’s lair.

She tried the handle. "Well, a locked door. I must say this is such a shock to me." Shuri said dramatically, looking at the warriors behind her, their faces set in stone. "She must be so concerned for her safety here in such a horrid place. Why, the child has every right to be terrified in a strange land. So sweet, so innocent..So many of us just dying to take advantage of her honesty and integrity.." Shuri mimed wiping a tear away, "Why we could rob her blind of all her hard earned possessions. The poor girl is barely able to defend herself against us barbarians."

She bared her teeth, then kicked the door in so hard it flew from the hinges.

"My God.. What an absoulute slob!! How can any respectable human live in this slop? Pigs are cleaner creatures!!" The once pristine room that Nkiru had prepped was now littered with empty plates and cups. Crumbs covered the floor, not to mention the bed. Half eaten take out cartons were on every surface, meaning she had left the palace more than once..

Damn, how had she managed to miss that.

There were numerous shopping bags lined up underneath the window, all shiny and new. She would look through those in a moment, for now she let the state of the room sink in..It was disgusting!

Walking to the bathroom door she grimaced, The floor was layered with towels and cloths, even with a perfectly good laundry chute on the far wall which sent them to the basement. Several brand new high end hair appliances lay on the counter, along with local handcrafted brushes and combs.

She scoffed at the brands.. A T3 iron, Turbo Ion Croc straightner... A Harry Josh dryer! Really!! Apparently this cretin thought herself far above her station. There was nearly a thousand US dollars setting here.

Bottles of creams and perfumes waiting to be used, mostly expensive imports from other countries. They weren't very popular here, but were brought in nonetheless. Local creations were far superior in quality and price. Around the massive tub, numerous bottles of soaps and shampoos, all high end, salon quality sat waiting to be used..

Her fingers were digging into her palms again. At this rate by the end of the week she would have a hole through her hand.

She made her way back to the pig's pen, prepared to rifle through those bags. If the bathroom was an indication she would likely find some very expensive items here..

"One of you go get some baskets," she told the women behind her. "I want all the items in the bathroom packed up and taken to my quarters. Everything! Every bottle, every appliance, anything she was not provided with when Nkiru stocked is considered stolen. MOVE!"

Now for the bags, she thought. There wasn't time to search throughly, so for now she was content with a quick check to see what's inside.
"My God!" she spat. Bag number one was filled with lacy lingerie sets, a silk robe and matching pajamas. *I wonder if she'll be wearing that for Barton*, Shuri thought. *But isn't he married?*

More than half the bags were filled with new skirts and leggings, cool tops to combat the heat of the jungle and several pair of shoes. She would look over the tables later to tally up a total, it would be a miracle if there was any money left.

The remaining few had various items, mens clothing, probably meant for Barton by the looks, a few odd trinkets and one of the finest tablets Wakanda could create. Shuri wondered what she intended the tablet for. No doubt it was going to be used for nefarious purposes. She would have to verify that there was indeed no wi-fi in this wing.

She stood just as the Dora came back with a stack of woven baskets. "Good. Three of you stay here, all the bags, anything in the closet pack it up. She only came here with one set of clothing and thats what she'll have. Everything in the bathroom as well, even I'm not spoiled enough to own a $300 hair dryer! Now, who's left?"

About fifteen warriors stepped forward, ready for their commands.

"Even better," she smiled. "Are you all well armed?"

"Yes, Your Highness." they said in sync, each placing their hands on the butt of their guns.

"Alright, follow me! When we reach the Kings wing, disappear. You know what to do. The farther the better in this situation, I know not the extent of her power so keep your minds clear. If you see her raise a hand with her voodoo, shoot it off, I care not what happens to her." she said as they walked. "I want a dozen of you on her, the rest stay on Barton. He is less of a threat. If it looks like it may go bad, you have my order to shoot to kill. She has already shown she has no care for others, give her that same courtesy. Now, vanish!!"

At once they parted ways, leaving Shuri alone but still within their sight.

She waited until most would be in position before heading to the set of glass doors leading to T'Challa's indoor pool/sunroom. She paused in front of them, staring at the happy faces on the other side.

A fresh wave of rage washed over her.

She knew she had to be careful here. If she pushed to hard, they may leave before Stark and the JCTC could come apprehend them. The last thing she wanted was them running rampant through Wakanda or terrorising some other country. And Stark had said, if they leave he may not find them again.. *Tread carefully, but be stern Shuri.*

No one steals from her.

She schooled her face, placing on her most pleasent smile.

*Now, she thought with a smirk, let's have a bit of fun, shall we.*

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this one :) It may be a bit longer for my next update, I want to have
Shuri confront Wanda and I want to do a POV with Romanoff to. But I don't want them in the same chapter together, so the next time I update it will hopefully be two chapters :) No promises though.
Sunday: Part 5-Romanoff

Chapter Notes

I admit I have slacked a bit on writing lately, but I managed to get another one out :) Shuri Part 2 will follow in a few days :) Enjoy! All spelling and punctuation mistakes are on me :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The evening was rather peaceful.

The weather was nice, for once the heat and humidity were on the low side. One could actually go outdoors today and not suffocate in the unforgiving heat. That would probably be changing soon though, the unmistakable rumbles of thunder could be heard farther off in the distance. Then the drowning, wet heat would come back with a vengeance.

She could feel that hint of electricity in the air, making little goosebumps form on her arms.

It felt so good to be out, enjoying a nice evening away from the palace. Away from the eyes she constantly felt watching her, even now as they strolled through the streets, she could feel the stares at her back.

Out, away from the enraged glares from Sam and Scott, who currently weren't speaking to any of them.

Away from the Evil Queen guarding her kingdom.

Well, more like a fire breathing dragon, Natasha thought, who would be more than happy to rain that fire down upon them at any moment.

Natasha hadn't actually seen very much of Shuri, but in the brief moments they had passed by each other the other woman had done nothing but glare daggers at her. Her bodyguards, always following close to her heels, didn't even bother sparing her a glance.

One of them had given her a firm bump of the shoulder as they passed her, nearly sending her into the wall. While the others had tried their hardest to hide their happy smirks.

With T'Challa away she hadn't dared to retaliate against them. While he seemed fine with them being here, the sister no doubt felt the exact opposite. One wrong move with her could put all of them in danger. So she couldn't risk lashing out at her or the Kings bodyguards, not until they found away out of this mess. Hopefully, the King would return soon. Then maybe they could start working on a way to return home.

Wherever that was now.

New York, Russia, Budapest..

Iowa maybe, with Clint's family, that was admittedly the closest to home she'd ever had. She wondered how Laura and the kids were doing. It had been way too long since she had checked up on them. Clint hadn't mentioned them so he probably hadn't tried contacting them. No doubt he was
worried about someone finding out their location. The farm was probably being heavily monitored, even a letter could be risky.

In the back of her mind she hoped Stark may have the decency to check up on them, but in reality he probably didn't give a shit. The kids were always asking about him, which was a bit odd because as far as she knew they had only met the one time, but had latched on to him like a magnet. Everytime she visited it was Tony this, or Tony did something awesome, he's so cool Aunt Tash! When is he going to come see us?

She mentioned it to Tony once, but he just waved it away and said he was to busy to go see them right now. As usual.. The man couldn't be bothered to spend time with anyone else.

They barely saw him after everything with Ultron and all the others moved into the NAF. Avoidance should be his middle name.

She truly hoped they were ok.. That they had enough money left to see them through all this til Clint could come back. Everyone else's assets had been seized, but Laura had always kept a separate bank account under a false identity. Maybe the US government hadn't found out about that one.

For now she could only wait, and hope that the King would return from his business soon. They needed to get the ball rolling, it wouldn't be possible for them to hide away like this forever, they all had families to return to. Well, except for herself and Wanda. Steve's family was wherever Bucky was.

But today.. Today she would have to be content with waiting. Hoping for some kind of a good omen. Today, she was just very glad to be outside those walls. Even if she had to do it disguised.

She wasn't sure how much longer she could tolerate being here. The vile glares continuously aimed in her direction were making her antsy. Her gut instinct was telling her something was wrong, that she needed to leave while she could. In reality though, there was really nowhere left to go.. This was the safest place for them to be. If they did have to hightail it out of here, they had an extra jet stashed deep in the jungles.

But what good would that do if you have no safe haven.

The world was out for their blood.

It was highly unlikely Tony would welcome any of them back. Not after her letting Steve and Barnes get away, then them nearly beating him to death in that bunker. Plus trying to get past Potts to even see him would be like trying to infiltrate Ft. Knox. Pepper would probably catch wind of them as soon as they stepped foot on American soil. That was a woman who knew how to make things happen. She would have made a perfect SHIELD agent.

Pepper was the only woman she knew who had a better resting bitch face than her.

Then, to add the syrup to the sundae, Rogers had to go send him that letter.. They may truly need Tony's help one day, but after Steve's half ass apology that didn't seem likely anymore. Stark would probably go full super villain to get to them now. There was no doubt that he would be pissed.

She wondered if he was still in the hospital. Most of her contacts that were left refused to speak to her now, not wanting to chance being seen with her, and it was getting harder to get information. Her attempts at hacking into his hospital to find out how Tony was had ended up with her facing a firewall even Jarvis wouldn't have been able to squeeze through.

There was a chance she may have to risk going stateside, to see if there were any new developments
with the Accords and their arrest warrants. Being labeled as an international terrorist with her picture everywhere was making it difficult to hide. News in Wakanda was lacking, and there was no one here to talk to to find out. Fury wasn't answering any of her calls, and while Maria had spoken to her she made it clear where she stood on the matter.

And it wasn't with Natasha.

Maria was mad as hell at what they have done to each other, and if they didn't have support from her then Nick would be impossible.

She could always go back to Russia, but her home country was not kind to those who deflected. If she would return now, and they found her..Well, that wouldn't be good for her. Even with all her skills.

Russia was an unforgiving place..

Her best option was staying here, but she could still use the holo-imager and scope out the surrounding countries. Angola to the south or the DRC to the north. If needed, she could disappear into those thick jungles, or blend in with the crowds of Luanda.

She had been there once, she wondered if the Veneza was still there. Their food was delicious.

She still had to avoid as any cameras as possible, even with the imager. To the naked eye it was fine but on cameras it had a small glitch, moving too fast made the image flicker in and out. Showing off their normal faces. But they were HammerTech, if Tony had made these they would be flawless.

Lightning flashed above them, hopefully the weather would hold until they made it back to the palace. They would have to take a bus to get back close to it, then walk up a long winding road to reach it. Only authorized vehicles were permitted on palace property. There was no open door policy like with The White House, with guided tours and gift shops, you needed special clearance to enter here.

Strangely enough there weren't any taxis or Uber like services here, there was also a distinct lack of cars. Mainly buses and trains that were powered with solar energy. Most of the locals preferred the use of public transportation, or they would just walk or bike where they needed to be.

Wakanda was mostly a green nation.

This definitely wasn't America anymore. The evening rush hour had just gotten underway and you could actually stand in the middle of the street without being ran down by a car or shouted at by angry cabbies.

Damn, she missed New York..

"Penny for your thoughts?" Steve asked. "You look like you just ate a fly, care to share what has you looking so sour."

Natasha huffed out a breath, "I just..I was wondering how it all went sideways, you know. We're the good guys!! I mean, we saved the planet from an alien race, we stopped Hydra, you for the second time. Took down a psychotic robot who wanted everything dead, which, may I add Tony created! Yet somehow we're the ones who ended up the bad guys."

Steve paused in front of a storefront showcasing local artists. "I know.. It just doesn't seem fair, does it? I found news from home on that tablet you gave me, It looks like everyone else is just moving on like nothing happened..I saw that Colonel Rhodes met with the UN last week, he had some kind of
"Yeah, I saw that report too, it's nice to see he's doing ok," Nat said. "The little red and blue guy is apparently a New York vigilante, who's back to fighting crime since the airport fight. They're calling him Spiderman." she laughed. "Leave it to Tony to find more masked crazy people to let in the group. Have you seen that guy running around Hells Kitchen? The one with the horns? They're actually calling this guy the Devil of Hells Kitchen. Or Daredevil. Word is he only comes out at night and some of the local gangs are trying to move their operations out of the Kitchen, because he never strays outside its borders. Bozhe moi, I mean.. Where do these guys even come from?"

Steve was looking longingly at the art in the window, "With us not there to help stop these people, it will only get worse. They clearly have no idea what they're doing. They need to be trained. Tony clearly isn't capable of handling things like that! He'd just add them to the Avengers without even checking them out! Did you see how small Spiderman was? He has to be a kid."

"He did look on the young side. But who am I to judge, I've been doing this since I was a child." Natasha sighed. "Correct me if I'm wrong but didn't you just make Wanda an Avenger during the Ultron fight?"

"Yeah, but that wasn't your choice Nat. You were forced into that, these guys have decided to go out and look for the fight." Steve managed to pull himself from the display, continuing down the sidewalk. "And Wanda was a completely different situation." he continued, "She knew she had made a terrible mistake and she wanted to fix it. These people now..No one knows anything about them. For all we know they're extremely dangerous, does anybody know anything about this Spiderman?"

"Steve..Not trying to be a bitch here, but you put Wanda on the team after she attacked all of us, multiple times. She let the Hulk loose on a highly populated city. You chose to take her word over Tony's, whom you knew for five years, while Wanda was a Hydra operative, who you met for like five minutes."

"Not to forget," Natasha added, "She actually chose to work for them. She volunteered to become a test subject, so she could get revenge on Tony. Does any of that seem familiar to you Steve?"

Steve let out an annoyed grumble, "Look! I was hoping just to have a nice time out away from everything, I have enough on my mind as it is. When we get to go back home, and everything is back like it should be, you and I will sit down and go over everything!" He snarled at her, making her take a step back. "Right now I just want to have a nice dinner, not hear about Tony Stark anymore!! He's the reason we're here in the first place!"

"All the blame can't be on him Steve, we made mistakes too."

"The only mistake we ever made was letting him anywhere near us after Ultron! Clearly he's not stable, he signs those damn Accords not even thinking about what the consequences of those are. Joins forces with Thaddeus Ross of all people, who's known for his hatred of enhanced humans. He went after all of us at that airport, he didn't care if there were people there because he's so blinded by whatever delusions Ross has filled his head with.."

Steve shook his head and gritted his teeth, turning he walked over to a nearby tree. Letting out a snarl of rage he punched his fist right through it. Causing people passing by to give them wary looks and rush away, frightened.

"Damn Steve, calm down, we're all in the same boat here."
"No we aren't Natasha. We're stuck here, hiding like some evil villans, while Stark is just going to go on with his egotistical life like nothing even happened. Bucky is frozen, Sam is losing his mind and won't speak to anyone! Last night I heard him screaming about panthers trying to eat him! Scott shouldn't even be here, he doesn't really know or like any of us, and I think Clint is sleeping with Wanda...."

"Take a breath Steve," she tried.

"Which is, let's be honest, a pretty shitty thing to do since he's freaking married and has three kids for fucks sake! Oh, and Wanda is either becoming a klepto or she's doing something illegal because there's no way she should have the amount of money she does."

Steve leaned against the tree he just murdered, finally drained from his rant. "Did you know she went shopping this morning and came back with a shitload of stuff? And she gave me about five hundred Wakandan dollars so we could go out tonight.."

"...."

"Nat?"

"Well..I may have given her the idea to, uh..Aquire us some emergency cash.. I didn't think she'd use it for a shopping spree though" Nat shrugged

"Shit....From where, Natasha?" Steve said, covering his face with both hands. He slid down to sit on the ground underneath the mauled tree. Reminding Natasha of a petulant child.

"Before you get really mad..Just know that we weren't caught, but it was something I couldn't do myself, so I enlisted her magical assistance." she said, chewing on her bottom lip, looking anywhere but Steve.

"Oh God..Things are about to go from a shitstorm to the apocalypse, I can just feel it." Steve looked up at her, anger and irritation clear as day on his face. "I'm only gonna ask this once, and you better give me a freaking straight answer Nat, or so help me I will make you sorry. What did you two do?"

Natasha let out a long suffering sigh, sitting down beside him, "We're broke Steve, we have no access to any of our cash, all of our aliases are compromised, our safehouses are all compromised and more than likely we're all going to have to run sooner rather than later. Money will help if we want to survive, we can't just steal everything, it leads to suspicion. So the most logical thing I could think of to get some was to take it from the palace..Specifically from the King... Rich people always have alot of cash on hand, usually in a safe. Most of the time, in their bedrooms."

She continued, "So I disabled the cameras in his suite, but I knew there was no chance of cracking that safe, so I asked Wanda if she would use her abilities to help me out. She agreed with me."

"WHY!! We're safe here Nat! No one knows where we are, we have access to food, water..We have a safe place to sleep at night. We have everything we need! We don't need any money! !WHY would you compromise that? Why would you let Wanda do that? What the hell were you even thinking?"

"Steve, you can't be that naive. You honestly think that eventually someone won't figure us out! It will happen Steve, and when it does we will need more than a stolen jet and Agent Carter as backup!! We have nothing Steve, no way to get resources, our only defense are Sam's wings and Scott's suit. But right now I believe they'd rather just give up than fight with the rest of us. We have no weapons, no way to fight. You know as well as I do Wanda would try to help us out if we need
it, but she's not exactly in complete control of herself. And she can't do it alone."

Natasha leveled him with her icy glare, "You think this will all just disappear, but Steve...Be honest
with yourself, it's been close to a month. Nearly every country on this planet is looking for us,
everyday more and more people are joining them. Our options are extremely limited. Money, even in
small amounts, will get you far if you find the right people. There are still some people on our side
Steve. People we can pay to help us if we need it. That's why we need it"

"Nat, T'Challa has been nothing but kind to us. What you two did is all kinds of wrong...." Steve
laughed softly, "I thought things would start to look up...If he finds out that we did this we're done
here, we won't be able to stay."

"If we have to go, I know a place where we probably won't be found in, The Queen Elizabeth
islands... I have a place there no one ever knew about. But even I can't guarantee that it's not fail
proof." Nat said.

"I swear Nat, sometimes you're just unbelievable.." Steve barked. His face pulled into an angry
grimace.

"I'm trying to keep us ahead of the battle Rogers, one of us has to. I don't regret taking it, money
greases the wheels Steve, and what little we took still isn't enough. Especially since Wanda was
dumb enough to go on a shopping spree...I can't just sit down in the labs staring at Barnes all day like
a lost puppy! We need a better backup plan Steve, it pays to be better prepared."

Steve just stared, the muscles in his jaw clenching tightly. "Leave Bucky out of this."

"Why should I? Everything is always about Bucky to you Rogers. Bucky is what got us into this
mess. We may have started out fighting over the Accords, but you totally forgot about them as soon
as Barnes's name came up. You are so sighted on Bucky," Nat spat at him, "on his safety, that you
overlook the needs of the rest of us. 'Bucky' is all that matters to you!!!

Bringing up Barnes was obviously not her best choice. Even though she didn't say anything really
bad toward the man, her words only made Rogers angrier. Before she could blink a hand was around
her throat and she was pinned against the tree. Feet dangling useless above the ground. She barely
saw Steve move, he had them on their feet so fast.

"...Shit...Steve, what.." she gasped in a short breath, the hand around her throat gave a hard squeeze,
cutting off even more air. A little longer and she'd black out, Rogers wasn't holding much back here.
She coughed, trying to get her hands to pry loose Steve's grip.

"Shut it...Here's what you're going to do. We are going back to the palace, then you are going to go
find Wanda and whatever shit she bought and you're going to return it. Every. Last. Piece. And if I
ever hear Buck's name pass your lips again I'll kill you," he gave another tight squeeze, "he's been
through enough shit in his life, and I'm not going to let you or anyone else make his life any worse,
asleep or not."

"...Steve, I.." she tried, eyes heavily watering. Bright dancing dots were shining in front of her.

"Don't fucking interrupt me Nat. I don't want to hear it. You went to far this time, and for nothing.
We don't need the damn money, so after you return everything, you're going to put the money back
where it should be. Before anyone finds out what you did, and you cost us our sanctuary. I'm so
disappointed in you Nat. This is by far the dumbest thing you've ever done."

"Steve...please.."
"Shut your mouth. Maybe I am sighted on Bucky, but that's because he's the only person who has ever truly had my back. No matter what. So yeah, he will always come first. But that doesn't mean I just ignore the rest of you. I hear everything you all say to me, just because I don't give in to your every demand, doesn't mean I'm ignoring you" he spat at her, "Now I'm done talking. Let's go! We have a long walk back."

He tossed her roughly to the ground, making her a bit woozy as her head hit the street with a thump. She watched as he made his way back up the street, not checking to see if she was following.

Natasha rubbed her watering eyes. Never once since she'd known him had he ever physically harmed her. She got shakily to her feet, keeping herself a good distance behind Steve. She pulled the collar of her shirt up to try and hide the marks she knew would be forming around her throat.

In the back of her mind she recalled the conversation between Steve and Tony at that airport. *I'm trying to keep... I'm trying to keep you from tearing the Avengers apart,* Tony had said.

_You did that when you signed_, Steve had shot back.

As she watched him stalk angrily ahead of her, she thought that it maybe it wasn't Stark who had ripped them apart.

It was Steve...

"Bozhe moi.." she muttered. Knowing she had made the biggest mistake of her life when she walked out on Tony Stark.

Chapter End Notes

I know most sources place Wakanda on the eastern part of Africa, but I have mine settled between Angola and the Democratic Rep. of the Congo. I wanted mostly jungles here, and that part of Africa has the most :P
Stripped

Chapter Notes

I am sorry for the long lag between updates, but I have been crazy busy. I'll do my best to update more often and I promise I'm not going to abandon it. It will be finished :) Any mistake is my own fault :) I'm sure there are plenty.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Shuri pushed open the heavy glass doors that led into T'Challa's private little oasis, and stepped inside. She was greeted by the warmth and humidity of the indoor jungle. It was one of T'Challa's favorite places in the palace, he spent most of his free time out in their mothers garden, but quite often he would come into what Shuri called his "Panther Paradise" and spend hours just relaxing.

The room itself was massive, a high dome of glass and vibranium, with an Olympic size pool set dead in the center. Being the nature lover he was, T'Challa had designed it to look more like a small lake than a pool. The deep cerulean water was surrounded by a small sandy beach on one side, while the rest of the pool was surrounded with whisper soft grass, shrouded with palms and ferns. Large boulders took place of diving boards, rising at various heights towards the massive glass ceiling. It was quite the experience, climbing to the top of those massive rocks to reach the water slide that was hidden within. From the top, you could look out to the horizon and see Birnin Zana, the capitol city of Wakanda.

Large, smooth river stones made pathways throughout the room, each leading you off to a hidden gem within the towering tropical trees and plants. Shuri's personal favorite was a floating bed that was suspended between two large ironwood trees that offered a lovely view of the Wakandan sky and a glimpse of the city in the distance. A small recirculating stream that was actually the pools filtration system wound throughout and fed itself into the pool.

The extreme humidity within the room told her that it's current occupants hadn't figured out how (or possibly they were just not smart enough) to work the rooms cooling system or the retractable roof. The jungles outside were probably cooler at the moment.

The stones beneath her feet were slick with moisture, the air so thick and heavy it was difficult to breathe.

She paused momentarily, letting her eyes sweep the room. There was no doubt in her mind that the Dora Milaje were already in their positions, but it was better to be safe than sorry.

It would have been child's play for them. Infiltrating the room without a sound, surrounding Barton and Maximoff, their eyes keeping a close watch on their prey. The two rogues having no clue that their lives could be over in the blink of an eye.

Well, Bartons could anyway. Maximoff probably had herself protected by her power.

No doubt as soon as a shot went off she'd throw up a forcefield to shield her. Then more than likely turn on the Dora.. Her patience with these people was at it's end. Despite her telling T'Challa that she wanted nothing to do with this fiasco, she was now (thanks to him, unfortunately) right in the middle
of this fight.

If Stark and the new Avengers didn't get here soon, well, the Captain and his entourage may disappear from this life entirely. It would be oh so easy, so swift, for her to dispose of Barton, Rogers and Romanoff. With Wilson and Lang opening their eyes and on the verge of turning themselves in, her only hindrance would be the witch.

The witch was the only thing blocking her way...

But, regrettably, no one in Wakanda, or anywhere else that she knew of, was capable of taking on Wanda's telekinetic powers. Magic wasn't something they had been trained for, but there had been no reason to believe it had even existed.

Until a few years ago.. When the Incident in New York had taken place, T'Chaka had been visiting the city for business at the time. He had witnessed firsthand the powers that the pale skinned alien harbored. Ever since, he had tried and failed to come up with some sort of training for Wakanda's army should the need ever arise. But with no one out there having any similar capabilities nothing ever came to be.

And now they desperately needed someone... There had to be someone out there somewhere.

So all Shuri could do was wait. Wait, and hope for her brother to wake and help fix his mess. Wait for Stark and his Avengers to come rid Wakanda of it's unwanted guests, and pray the witch didn't devour them all..

If the powers that be were on their side, maybe they could gift someone to them to battle the witch.

If only..

Giving a small signal of her hand to let the Dora know she was ready to proceed, she made her way forward. Her eyes scanning the vast palms and greenery, seeking out her warriors. To an untrained eye, they would never be seen, but Shuri knew exactly where to look. Satisfied that they were all in position she plastered on the best smile she could muster. Her face probably looked a bit like that Joker character in the comics her brother had read growing up but it was the best she could do with these delinquents.

Pushing her rage to the back of her mind, Shuri made her way down the rock pathway, her stiletto heels not making a sound as she moved with cat-like grace.

Barton was swimming lazy laps through the water while Maximoff lounged in one of the bamboo chaises, sunning herself in a brand new African style two-piece.

Just one more item I'll be taking back from her, Shuri thought.

Barton was too preoccupied with swimming and Maximoff to preoccupied with Barton to even notice her approach. Despite their talents, neither were very aware of their surroundings. She sat down and made herself comfortable on the chaise near Wanda's, watching the pale girl as she followed Barton's every move through the water, a soft smile on her face.

The younger girl was obviously harboring some kind of crush on the archer, any fool could see that. Shuri was curious if Barton returned the sentiment or not. She would have to check with Stark to make sure, but she thought she remembered something about the archer being married.

*If he's a married man and he abandoned his wife for this cheap whore I'll gladly pay her ALL his wifes legal fees.*
She sat and waited just a bit more..

*I'm literally three feet from her and she still has not even sensed my prescence*..

She may be easier to take down than I thought. One swift bullet and this nightmare will be over..

But, no. Stark wanted to handle this, to have them face justice. So Shuri felt she could oblige the man this one little thing. After all, he was the one currently making sure her brother stayed amongst the living.

It wouldn't be much longer til they came to drag them away.

The thought of her brother made her anger bubble up to the surface again. Lying unconscious in a foreign country, hooked up to tubes and monitors. It didn't seem possible that someone so strong could be brought down so easily, and by something so small, but even superhumans had to have some weakness, she supposed.

Shuri tapped her fingers together, waiting for one of these buffoons to see her.

After a few minutes of absolutely nothing she cast her eyes to the skies above and cursed her luck at being saddled with this shit.

"It's a beautiful day isn't it Miss Maximoff?" she spoke, causing the witch to jump in her seat.

"Princess Shuri, I... I apoligise. I didn't hear you come in." Wanda stuttered nervously, giving Shuri a large bright smile.

"That was the idea." Shuri retorted with a smile, causing Wandass smile to falter a bit. Shuri let her smile go as well, glancing at Barton drifting through the water. "So many large fish in the seas, yet you would settle for the sardine.." she said menacingly, " A rather small, tasteless fish if you ask me, I would much rather enjoy a nice large salmon, myself. But I suppose something so tasteful and fulfilling is beyond reach of a bottom dweller."

" Excuse me?" Wanda spat back at her.

"Please, you heard me just fine. Don't try to pretend you didn't know that was an insult." Shuri waved a hand carelessly in the air. "Not a very good one, I will say, but I haven't exactly been up to par lately."

Shuri gave her a knowing stare, " I have eyes child, I can see the way you look at Barton. I've looked at quite a few men that way myself. I've never let myself go after married man though. I wonder how his wife feels about that. What was her name again? I believe I should call and ask her opinion."

"... I am NOT in love with Clint." Wanda snarled defensively, "I don't know why you would assume that. Given the circumstances it may seem that way to you Princess, but I can assure you that I'm. "

Wanda tried to argue, but Shuri cut her off. "Love? I never mentioned love. No need to be so defensive, child. But that just goes on to prove my point even more. I just notice the way you constantly stare at the man, like if you don't have a taste soon it will drive you insane. As I said, I have been there many times, it's easy to notice those looks of lust."

Shuri gave a brief pause. "And I know nothing of you and your "circumstance". Honestly I don't care about you at all. To me you and your group are nothing more than an infestation that I hope will soon go away. Until then, you are stuck under my roof, so very unfortunate for me." Shuri
complained.

Wanda watched her darkly, as if she were trying to get a glimpse of Shuri's thoughts but found nothing.

Shuri smiled smugly, keeping that blank state in her mind.

"Are we going to have a problem here Princess? That would not end well for you, I hope you know." Wanda declared confidently, her signature red glow slowly starting to emit from her hands as she stood, reading for battle.

Shuri gave a satisfied little smile, standing, she placed herself nose to nose with the witch. "Oh trust me, I'm not worried about you." she near whispered venomously.

She could hear the small pings of guns getting ready to be fired when, "Ladies, ladies.. What seems to be the problem here?" Barton said as he emerged from the pool, dripping wet.

"Clint, we have a guest." Wanda said, hand falling back to her side. "An irritating one."

Shuri would later find the entire scene hilarious as she was in a dress and stilettos and Wanda and Barton were almost naked in their skimpy swimwear.

"GUEST?" Shuri spat, getting further in the witch's face. "You need to remember who's roof your hiding under, bitch."

"If I remember correctly, it is King T'Challa's roof." Wanda said, smug. Not backing down from the viscous hellcat in front of her. "It is so nice that he let's his underprivileged sibling stay here. It just shows how compassionate he really is."

Red, raw rage passed in front of Shuri's eyes, "You ungrateful little tramp. I will show you my compassion!!" Shuri yelled, flinging her arms to the sides two long sharp blades seemed to appear from nowhere. Within a second they were pressed to Wandas neck.

Barton had apparently decided to intervene as the red glow came back with full force and Wanda raised her hands. As he took a step toward them his eyes grew incredibly wide as he noticed the laser sights aimed at the two of them.

"Shit!! Wanda, STOP!" Two soft pings sounded through the room, barely even audible unless you were listening for it, then Wanda screamed and dropped like a stone to her knees. Gasping for breath as she held both hands up against her chest. The red glow completely gone now, replaced by bright red blood.

"What. The. HELL was that!?" Clint barked at Shuri. He knealt down and took Wand's hands in his, checking them over. "What the fuck!! You shot her!! Energy bullets!! Really? Was that necessary? She wasn't going to hurt you! Are you crazy?"

"My hands... Oh God, my hands.. Clint.." she sobbed.

"OK, it'll be ok. Their both through and through. It's ok, we just have to patch them up. You'll be fine." He hugged her and kissed her head. He gave Shuri a look so hot it could melt the vibranium walls.

"Well, if you would like to get technical about it, I didn't shoot her. I was going to behead her." Shuri smiled, "See Miss Maximoff. I have compassion to. Instead of killing you I let the Dora Milaje disarm you. You should be grateful you're still amongst the living. They usually don't give warning
shots. And, as you can see.. You're always in their sights."

She gestured at Clint. He glanced down then lifted his own hand. Three small blue dots followed his every gesture as he turned his hand from side to side, then they came together as one in the center of his palm.

Clint blanched, lowering his hand and put on a pouting face "Grateful! Are you even real? You're the one who came in here and picked a fight. We were here minding our business and you attack us! I don't know why you feel the need to single us out, lady but we haven't done shit to you!" He cradled a crying Wanda against his wet chest.

"Hmph, haven't done shit. Really? Are you so sure about that?" Shuri deadpanned. "Oh, the other 12 guns are aimed at her back in case you were wondering."

"What the hell, lady!" Clint cried, pulling Wanda tighter against him.

"Now that we have all the pleasantries out of the way, let's get down to business. Shall we?"

"How about you just leave us the fuck alone, you psycho!" Clint barked.

Shuri waltzed over to the chaise and sat, crossing her legs. With a mere flick of her wrists the long blades disappeared again, letting her place her hands in her lap. She was nothing but the pure picture of the regal, elegant princess she was.

Completely ignoring Barton she started, "When all you hellions first arrived you were given orders on where you could and could not go."

"....That's not.." Clint tried but didn't get far.

"Do not even try that lie with me Barton, I know what my brother told you. If you think he doesn't have someone always watching his back then you are quite delusional." She thought of Stark currently watching over him and smiled.

"You were told, ALL of you, that you were to stay within your wing of the palace. Everything you need is there, even a pool and a small, well stocked kitchen. You were also warned not to leave the palace grounds. Now, I'm not saying you have, but some of you.. Miss Maximoff.. Have chosen to directly ignore those orders."

Wanda looked up at her angrily. "Yes, that's right child. I know you donned a disguise and went on a shopping spree. A very expensive one, if I may add. If you thought that I wouldn't find out then you are mad."

"Fuck you!" she bared her teeth at Shuri.

Shuri gave her a disgusted face in return. "So sorry, I do prefer the company of men. But even if I didn't I'm so sure I could do better than you.." she smiled again.

"Wait, shopping spree? Starks cards still work? Hell yeah!! I need new underwear!" Clint crowed happily.

Shuri gave him a distasteful look. "Actually, she went on a spree with a massive amount of money she stole from T'Challa..."

Wanda paled, knowing she had been caught, "I did not steal anything, I.."
"DON'T try and lie your way out of it wench!!" Shuri screamed at her, making the younger girl cringe away. Good, you should be afraid. "You were captured on camera using your power breaking into his room!! I also know you gave some money to Romanoff, who in turn, took the Captain out for dinner tonight. Two more ingrates who have no respect for orders."

She took a deep breath, "Now, in my brothers absence, I am the one who oversees the duties of the Kingdom, so I have already taken measures into my hands and reclaimed all the stolen merchandise from your quarters and it will be kept for evidence, and yes, I can and will enter your rooms if the need arises, as will the camera footage, should it be needed."

Shuri was getting tired, it had been a long few days, but she still had some fire left in her. "Now, I imagine that the good "Captain" won't be very happy when he finds out you jeopardized the safety of Mr. Barnes," They both grew deathly pale at that, "so being the compassionate woman that I am, here is what I will do for you."

"Are you both listening?"

They nodded in unison, the idea of having Captain America angry at them making them very compliant.

"First, if I ever catch either of you attempting to leave your wing or the palace grounds again, I will give an order to kill on sight. Even you, Maximoff, can be killed. Don't think you're eternal, you all have weakness" Shuri gave a bright smile, "Understood?"

They nodded.

"Next, as I have seen the horrid state of your rooms, Wanda.. I see it fit to give you some form of punishment until T'Challa returns, so.. Starting tomorrow you will both cleanse your entire suite from ceiling to floor, until it shines, and that horrible stench you have left in there is gone. After which, you will be doing the rest of the entire south wing. Are we clear?"

"Yes, mam." they said.

"You will address me properly or I can make it much worse." Shuri said sternly.

"Yes, your Highness." Clint spat.

"Yes, Princess." Wanda growled.

"Good.. I'm glad we all agree. Just imagine how much worse it could be. I could have had you killed earlier, but chose not to. I could have turned you all in to the JCTC, yet here you are still. I will be telling your Captain about your actions. Hopefully he is still competent enough to punish you as well, if he is not then I'm sure my brother will be." Shuri looked them over, "Now get the hell out of my my brothers wing.. I can't stand theives like you"

Clint rose from the floor, bringing Wanda with him. "This isn't over," he said as he led them down the path.

Shuri lifted the corner of her mouth in a smile, "I should hope not.. Where would the fun be if it were..?"

She watched them go thoughtfully when the thought came to her.

"WAIT, just one more thing." Shuri added.
"What now?" Wanda asked darkly, holding up her bleeding hands.

"Your swimsuit is purchased with stolen money, and yours Mr Barton, belongs to my brother.. Take them off."

"What? Right now?" Clint asked dumbfounded. "You want us to walk back to our rooms naked? No way, uh-uh. That's not happening, you can just kiss..SHIT!!"

He cut off as an energy bullet grazed his head, a trickle of blood rolled down his face.

Wanda looked weak, like she could pass out at any moment, "Clint, please.. My hands wont stop bleeding and I can't feel my magic."

"NOW." Shuri said. "And please don't get your blood on that Miss Maximoff, it was very expensive."

"FINE!! You crazy bitch!! Here!!" Clint pulled off the speedo and stood proudly in his naked glory. Shuri had to bite her jaw to hide the laughter, he was rather small.

Wanda just glared directly at her, probably trying to will Shuri's death through her eyes. "I don't think I can take it off without getting blood on it. I will return it to you once my hands are cleaned."

"Oh, well, that's just won't do. I'm sure your lover there will have no trouble helping you. I'm sure he's already quite used to it."

"Screw you..." Clint retorted.

"If that's all you have to screw me with I wouldn't feel anything." Shuri shot back at him.

She stood by as Clint helped Wanda take off the suit and toss it at her, both baring all for the world to see.

"Thank you, so much, you're free to go now. And please remember not to go where you aren't welcome. Bye, bye now."

Shuri couldn't hide the wide grin as the sight of their naked asses walked away from her. She was suprised that Barton hadn't chose to carry the witch to protect her modesty.. As soon as the were out the door, all the while trying to cover their nakedness with their hands, Shuri heard the uncontrollable laughter of the warriors behind her.

"Thank you, Thank you." She gave a series of bows and curtsies. "I'll be here all week!"

Now she had to go check in on her brother..

Chapter End Notes

I wasn't super happy with the ending half, so apologises if it sucked.
You Came Up With the Breeze, On Monday Morning

Chapter Notes

So I'm back with another chapter for you guys. I hope you like this one :) Sometime soon we will be coming to the dramatic ending of this monster, but don't worry! There's going to be about 10 more chapters, so there's still so much more to go through. I pretty much live on a farm down in the valley between all these mountains, so I haven't really had much time to write like i should. But now that the season is almost over and the weather here gets colder I will be trying to get more updates out for you for all my fics :) Anywhos.. I do hope you like this chapter, it's a bit slow, but hey, what can ya do amiright!

Bruce stood against the open doorway to T'Challa's room in the med-bay, taking a long drink of coffee, his eyes checking over the man on the bed. Looking for any changes. The past 24 hours had been nerve-racking, but after several doses of his concocted anti-poison T'Challa seemed to be slowly improving. Already his skin had returned to it's normal tone, no sign of the blueish tint it had when he first arrived. His body no longer had a bloated appearance, the swelling basically disappeared in the past few hours.

There had also been no sight of blood seeping out of his body, which meant his internal injuries were slowly mending their way back up. The antidote slowing down the poison enough to let his healing kick back in.

He was still on the ventilator, there was no way with the amount of damage his lungs had suffered would Bruce be taking him off anytime soon. More than likely he would suffer long term lung damage from this, as well as vision problems. FRIDAYS scans had shown improvement in his kidney and liver functions as well as the bleeding in his brain having disappeared, but his lungs and eyes were barely showing any progress.

Bruce had went to check for pupil dialation earlier, but lifting the eyelids revealed nothing but red. The sclera were completely overtaken by the blood from the ruptured vessels, and the soft brown of T'Challa's iris as well as the pupil had a thin sheen of blood covering them. There had been some dialation underneath that film, but Bruce wasn't sure how much light was actually able to get through.

When T'Challa did wake up he'd probably need guided help for a while.

He had been on his own in the med-bay since the past evening. The Doctors and surgeons having done all they could possibly do, had been sent off to rest (like he needed to) and probably seek therapy after what they witnessed. Despite not being a licensed Dr., Bruce had more than enough experience and knowledge for the doctors to feel safe leaving T'Challa in his care.

But, damn..He was really feeling his age today..

To say he was tired, well, if he said that he would be lying through his teeth. Tired was to delicate a word to describe how he felt right now. Haggard maybe, broken down or burnt out. He might even say he felt wasted, but it's been so long since he's touched alcohol that he doesn't remember what that feels like.
So no, he wasn't tired, what he was was flat out dead on his feet. He's had at maximum about six hours of rest since Tony called him panicking on Friday. Three days with basically no decent sleep was beginning to take a toll.

And not just on him.

Even the Hulk lurking in the back of his mind couldn't be bothered right now. He had tried prodding at the big green behemoth sharing his brain, tried coaxing him to come out and have some fun in the unbreakable room Tony made for him. But no, the only response was to have Hulk slap back at him with a weary, 'Leave Hulk Alone. No Talk Now. Hulk Sleepy. Banner Need Sleep To. Make Hulk Angry. Go Away' then there was nothing.

Apparently he had so overworked his body he wore out the Hulk.

Bruce took another long sip and glanced at his watch. It was a little past 8am. Pepper had a meeting with Everett Ross scheduled for 7 this morning. He wondered how that was going. Pepper was supposed to relay every piece of info Tony had on the current whereabouts of the Avengers, as well as the plan the remaining and new members had come up with to bring them into custody. Tony was supposed to be the one doing this but with the events of the past few days Pepper offered to step in, making Tony promise he would be available for a video conference should it be needed.

They were also going to discuss Thunderbolt's abuse of the Sokovian Accords for his own nefarious purposes. Even after all the destruction and death they caused, it was still their legal right to have a fair trial in a court of law. Ross, however, hadn't seen it that way, and took it upon himself to lock them away, with complete disregard to their civil rights. A little of FRIDAYS snooping through Ross's personal computer uncovered in great detail what he had hoped to do with the improperly imprisoned heroes. After reading a few lines Bruce had to stop, or risk the Hulk going on a rampage.

It was the hope of both Tony and Pepper that with Everett's help, Thaddeus would be stripped of all relations to the Accords.

"Good morning Bruce." He was lost in his thoughts, going over his mental to-do list when a voice made him jump. Sending what was left of his coffee into the air to rain down on his face and shirt.

"Gaaaa!! SHIT!" He wiped the drink from his eyes, then turned to face Rhodes. "Normally, Jim, I'd be going green after that, but I'm so freaking tired that if aliens invaded again Hulk would just flip them the bird and go back to sleep."

In his mind, Hulk answered with a grunt.

Colonel Rhodes looked a little embarrassed, "Sorry...I didn't mean to, uh, scare you. I thought you heard me come in." He kept a hand against the wall to steady himself as he slowly walked toward the room. Tony's leg braces were genius but still couldn't make up for the feeling of nothing.

Bruce gave a huff, "I'M so tired if aliens invaded I'd just let them take the planet." He rubbed his dry eyes, "So what brings you down here, I thought you had therapy this morning?"

"I did, started at 6. Been finished a while, I just wanted to see how T"Challa was doing. And to see if you knew where Tones was. I can't find him and every time I ask, FRIDAY just starts playing the chorus to 'Sweet Dreams', and not the Eurthmics version, the Manson version. I think she likes fucking with me."
"I do Colonel, very much so!" Came the amused reply.

Bruce had to hide the grin for that, it was pretty funny to watch FRIDAY poke fun at Rhodes. She didn't do it with him anymore after one unfortunate moment involving the dishwasher on his floor.

Bubbles...Bubbles everywhere.. In his anger he threatened to smash her servers and she's been wary since.

"In all honesty, I like the Manson version better." Bruce admitted reluctantly.

"My God...You're a heathen!!" Jim joked.

Bruce laughed and motioned him forward, gesturing to the room behind him. "Tonys in here. Came down about 12 or so yesterday and he's been asleep since. FRIDAY said he couldn't sleep upstairs. I guess he just has way to much to worry over right now."

Rhodes took a few steps in before coming to a stop, his nose scrunching in disgust, "Oh my sweet baby Jesus.. What in the name of God is that smell?!"

Bruce paused, having no idea what he was talking about. He'd been here all night and all of the morning so far and he didn't smell anything. He followed a few steps behind Jim.

"I can't smell anything, Jim."

"That's just because you've gotten used to it or something. JEEEEESUS!! It's like.." he sniffed the air and heaved a bit, "It's a mix between bad cheese or rancid fish.. DAMN!!"

Bruce took a deep sniff. There was something there..Something a bit familiar.. But he couldn't quite place it. He squinted at Tony snoring on the cot in the corner, mouth agape with a thin trail of drool sliding out.

_Hmmmm..._ 

"FRIDAY?" he inquired, a thought coming to mind.

"Yes, Master Yoda?"

Bruce chose to ignore that little remark entirely. "Did Tony brush his teeth before going to sleep?"

"That would be a big fat nooo, green bean. I believe his dinner from last night has added to the stink factor. He ate a nearly 10 day old cemita that Mr. Parker brought in. Scans showed there was a bit of mold on the bread but Boss ate it anyway. In his defense it's not the worst thing I've caught him eating."

Bruce just sat down in the chair by the door, leaning back as far as the space allowed, closing his eyes. "I'm really getting to old to deal with all this shit.." he mumbled, "Always eating weird shit...Damn near fifty and can't brush his own damn teeth for a week...I swear to God.."

Rhodes eyes looked as if they would pop out any moment, " Sweet merciful mother of God..That smell is coming from Tony!!"

He looked like he was about to shit a brick. "Awww hell no!! I left this shit back in college! Ain't no way I'm going back to those days again. Uuuuh-uhhh!!" He began rummaging through his pockets for something.
Bruce was just too tired to move, he wondered what Jim was searching for.

"Freaking EUREKA!!" Rhodey exclaimed. The fact that Tony didn't wake from his raised voice just showed how worn out he was.

He cracked open one eye, and had to laugh when he saw what Jim had in his hand. "Are those breath strips? Are you planning on waking him up or you just going to shove those in his mouth?"

Jim slowly but steadily made his way to Tony, "Hell no, I'm not waking his ass up. One thing I learned after all these years is it's best to catch him sleeping for this shit. One time he went for about three weeks with no shower or anything. Smell was UN-BE-LIEVABLE, let me tell ya."

He leaned over Tony and slid out a few strips, "So I caught him while he was shit faced drunk, dead asleep. Hauled his pasty ass to the shower and washed God only knew down the drain. Had to burn the sheets, everything smelled like the pigs barn at the state fair!"

Bruce watched amused as Jim pulled a corner of Tony's mouth and slid one of the strips in. "How many of those are you gonna put in?"

"Five, baby! One on every side, top and bottom and under the tongue. I feel like I need hazard gear for this.."

Bruce pursed his lips, humming thoughtfully. "Hundred bucks says you can't get all those in without waking him up."

Rhodes turned, considering. "You're on!"

"Hey everyone.." Came a soft tone from the door.

Bruce turned to the timid voice of Tony's new intern, who had also turned out to be Spiderman. It had been quite an experience when they had first met. The younger man had been so nervous at meeting Bruce Banner (Peter had completely forgotten about the Hulks existence) that his brain to mouth filter fizzled out.

The first thing the boy had blurted out was 'Hooh my Gawd.. You're Dr. Banner!! Hi, I'm Spiderman! Shit, no, I didn't say that! Crap, Hi I'm Parker. Peter. Peter Parker..' 

After the young man's panic at ousting his secret identity had subsided, Bruce had assured him he had no desire to disclose his identity and his secret was safe. Then upon finding out from FRIDAY just how smart Peter was, he asked if Peter would like to assist him in the lab for a bit.

Peter had promptly fainted, leaving a bewildered Bruce with no clue what to do.

All their encounters since had been smooth sailing and now Bruce had gained a new friend as well as a lab partner.

"Peter. Good morning. You're here awfully early, shouldn't you be in school?" Bruce inquired.

Peter just shrugged, "Power was out so no classes today. I thought I'd stop by, I have something I want to ask Mr. Stark about. Hey, Mr Rhodey!" the boy stopped, tilted his head strangely, "What's that smell?"

Bruce just rubbed at his face roughly, "My God, it never ends."

"Hey kid, how's it going? That smell would be Tony's swamp breath.. Let this be a lesson Pete,
always, always brush your teeth!” Rhodey hissed at him.

Peters stare could have burned a hole through Tony, "There's no way that can be breath. It smells worse than roadkill, it must be something else."

"Really..." Rhodes smiled, "Come closer.."

Peter walked over to Jim, "Now lean down."

Peter eyed him warily but complied. A few seconds later he was on the ceiling.

"Mother fudging...Shiiiiit! What the hell?" he cried, "Do something!! Make it stop, God!! I never knew someone could be killed with stink breath, but I think it may happen! Oh God, here it goes.. I'm dyyyyyying."

He slowly slid from the ceiling from a web in a dramatic display of death, coming to a rest at Bruces feet.

"Bruce..Save yourself, Bruce.. And just know that you were the best lab partner I've ever had.." he mimicked a choking sound and lay lifeless on the floor.

Rhodes laughed, "He's probably the only lab partner you've ever had! Now get your ass up, me and Bruce got a bet going to see if I can get these breath freshners in Tones mouth without waking him up."

Peter hopped up, "Cool, how much we talking here?"

"Hundred bucks."

Peter cringed away, "Yeah, no I'm poor. But hey, I got some Twix in my backpack, can I use those?" he began to dig through the chaos inside. "Jackpot!! I got some Blowpops and Skittles to. That work?" he glanced between them.

Bruce and Jim shared a glance, "Hell yeah baby, let's do this! You guys ready to watch the master at work?"

"Alright Jim.. Show us what you got!" Bruce declared.

"Mmm hmmm, that's right. Goin win me some money." Rhodes took a step toward Tony but before he could even attempt to put another strip in Tony shot up in bed, scaring the shit out of them all. Peter went back to the ceiling, his spider sense not detecting anything. Bruce fell back into the chair and Rhodes ass ended up on the floor.

His eyes, usually a deep chocolate brown, were almost the color of his arc reactor.

"Tony.." Bruce started, worried.

"Mr Stark..?"

"Tones, you ok?"

But Tony paid them no mind, those eyes zeroed in on T'Challa and widened drastically. He opened his mouth to say something but was cut off by the piercing shrill of the monitors a second later as T'Challa, too, bolted upright, gasping for air and trying to claw at the tube down his throat.
What Dreams May Come

Chapter Notes

If you have never seen What Dreams May Come, you need to watch it!! It's flippin amazing!!

Once again, I apologise for any errors in this. I use no type of spellcheck or punctuation check. So everything effed up is on me.

T'Challa ran harder, leaves and branches slapping at his face. Birds flew in fear.

*Why does this seem so familiar?*

The closer he got to the temple the darker the sky became. Wind violently thrashing, rain falling in blinding sheets. He could barely see anything in front of him but he pushed on. Lightning flashed, a spike hitting a nearby tree and toppling half of it to the ground. Thunder shaking the ground beneath him like an earthquake.

*Have I did this before?!!*

*Why the hell is this happening?*

He pushed on, heart beating erratically. His body felt like fire, every breath igniting like tinder within him. The clearing was just up ahead. He could see the opening. He roared the last few feet through the trees, blinded by rain and covered in leaves. He burst through, the agony in his chest nearly sending him to his knees. The storm was gone, now there was just bright sunlight and a gentle breeze. Birds were singing joyfully from their perches.

He looked toward the temple, at the man sitting on the steps watching him. He walked forward slowly. It finally began to dawn on him.

*Please, no. Not this again?* He knew what would come next..

He rubbed at his aching chest, it felt as though there was something stuck there and affecting his breathing.

"Papa?" he choked out.

"You did not heed the warning the first time, did you my son? Was it not obvious enough for you?" T'Chaka questioned.

*Deep breath, deep breath, deep breath.*

"How..? The dream? Tis just a dream, I don't understand.. It made no sense to me!"

"Well, if you can't see what's right in front of you, then perhaps you were not the right choice for the panther, my son. Or to rule Wakanda.. They, are the warning." He pointed behind T'Challa, "You should pay attention this time."
"What were you trying to show me? Why would they attack me?" he asked confused, "Papa...?"

"Always know that I do love you and Shuri, no matter the outcome."

With that, he vanished.

_Pay attention, how am I supposed to do that if I have no clue what I'm looking for?_

Turning behind, he was greeted with the familiar sight of two panthers. Teeth bared, ready for blood. Both were a deep dark brown. Each one bearing glowing red eyes.

_I don't know what to do!

A growl from each side...Piercing purple eyes on one, followed by the bright red fur from the other.

Something was tingling at the back of his mind, something he wasn't grasping.

_I'm supposed to be smarter than this..._

He braced himself, knowing that when he turned he would be face to face with the one who would bring his demise in this dreamscape. He risked a glance back, expecting to see the massive white beast towering above him.

Only to find himself in his father's study...Or what was left of it. It was like a bomb had went off.

"What in the name of Bast...?"

Horrified, he took in the destruction around him. The windows were blown out, a gentle breeze blowing through the shredded curtains. The ancient desk overturned with half of one side missing. Holes riddled the walls, the pictures left were barely holding on, their glass broken and cracked.

Making a slow circle, he turned. Smoldering fires scattered across the floor and the walls. Reaching toward several bodies lying lifeless before him.

"Oh no." He scrambled over the debris to reach the closest, donned in the familiar red Iron Man armor, and slowly rolled it onto its back.

_Gods, please no..Please don't let it be Tony.. I have already failed you once..._

The faceplate had been ripped away, large jagged claw marks covered the surface of the armor, and the face that looked back at him was not Tony, but that of Colonel Rhodes? His eyes were open, staring at nothing. There was a small puddle of blood underneath him.

_Oh God, he's not breathing..

He looked helplessly to the others, recognizing the familiar faces of Vision, Scott Lang and Sam Wilson. None of them were breathing. Wilson's body was crushed beneath a large chunk of ceiling, and Lang's neck was bent at an unnatural angle. The yellow glow of the stone in Visions head now void of color.

A man with long dark hair who he didn't recognize, had glass embedded in his neck, his bright green eyes staring accusingly toward T'Challa.

Two women, one encased in some sort of black and yellow body armor, was lying next to Scott. Her skull appeared to have been crushed. The other was clad in SHIELD's old tactical gear, a smoking gun still clutched in her hand. There was an arrow lodged in her chest.

His eyes wandered the rest of the room.
"No..No, no, no!! Shuri!!" he cried, stumbling toward her lifeless form. She was flanked on each side by Nakia and Okoye, their skin burned and blistered. Their deep chocolate eyes now ghostly white.

"Shuri!!" he dropped to his knees, tears were starting to leak from his eyes. Her eyes were closed, but she had some sort of electrical burns on her body. They looked like the shape of a fist.

He cradled her head tenderly in his hands, "Shuri!! Shuri, please.. Wake up, wake up, wake up, wake UP!!" he screamed.

"Why?! Why is this happening? What am I doing wrong?! Father forgive me, I don't understand!" he wept over his sister, his tears falling onto her face.

T'Challa bent over, intending to rest his forehead upon hers, when her hand shot out and grabbed him viscously by his throat.

"Shuri!!" he sputtered, trying to pry her hand from his neck.

"Traitor." she hissed, "You have brought death to us all..

"Ple..Please, I.." he tried. He couldn't breathe.

"It should be you here.. I was innocent in all this, but you.. Always believing you're doing the right thing.. This time you couldn't have been more wrong. This is all your fault.. We are lost thanks to you.. Wakanda is lost.. Traitor."

She let him go, falling back to the floor. T'Challa scooted away, rubbing his neck. Her nails had pierced the skin, drawing a thin rickle of blood.

"I'm so sorry.." he began.

She gave a cruel little laugh, blood leaking from her mouth "Never have you been sorry, T'Challa. But.. It matters not. Soon, my dear brother," she spat at him, "Soon, you will join us. The first lesson of the panther, brother.. Never lose sight of your enemy"

"What..?"

Her head fell to the side, eyes wide, gazing behind him.

"Oh, no.." He turned, knowing what awaited him.

There they were, the beasts from his nightmare. He dared not to move, he knew it was only a dream this time but he couldn't seem to wake himself up.

The big white cat was lounging lazily on the overturned desk, surrounded by his pack. Red was on his left, while the eerie purple eyes of the sand colored cat stalked him on it's right. Directly in front of them all, the smaller one with glowing red eyes watched him warily.

_there's one missing, he thought, the other dark furred cat isn't here._

T'Challa took a small step back, hoping he could just back out of the room through the door behind him. The panthers watched him, he thought they looked a bit amused. He took another step, then another. Only a few more and he could escape.
His hope of leaving unscathed, however, was short lived. Two paces from the door he felt a nudge against his back, accompanied by the unmistakable hiss of a snake. "Shit."

He turned, hanging from the ceiling and blocking his exit was what looked like a rock python. A very large rock python.. A very large white python..

T'Challa froze up as the snake thumped heavily to the floor, lazily slithering right to him. He was more than capable of outrunning a snake but his legs just would not move. It was like he was being held in place by some unseen force. He couldn't move a muscle as the massive creature wound up his legs, then over his abdomen and chest. As it twisted around his neck it brought its head out in front of him, staring directly in his eyes. The tongue flicked out with a hiss as it moved closer to his face.

*Why can't I move!!!*

The big white cat moved into his line of vision, watching eagerly as the snake closed in.

"Please... Please don't.." He started, then clamped his lips shut.

The serpent pressed it's nose against his mouth, trying to push its way in.

All he could do was whimper and close his eyes, trying to keep the serpent out.

Fate, however, must have had other plans. He felt something pull at his jaw, prying his mouth open in invitation. When he opened his eyes, there was nothing touching him. Only the sinful gleam of the snake eyes as it began to slide its way in, squeezing his torso as it did.

The other panthers in the room came to join in the fun, playfully pawing at him as he choked for a breath. The serpent was in no hurry it seemed, it was like it wanted him to suffer. He felt the snakes head hit the back of his throat and start a painful slide down his esophagus.

He heaved, he gagged, choking slowly as the creature forced its way further in, but there was nothing he could do. As he felt it near the center of his chest he was hit by a sharp exploding pain in his heart and he fell into a hazy blackness.

He could hear muffled voices talking around him.

"What's that smell?"

Awareness was creeping back in.

"Come closer.."

He could see a thin veil of light.

"Oh God, here it goes.. I'm dyyyyying.."

He could feel the snake still in his throat. Suffocating.

He tried sucking in a breath.

"Tony.."

And another..

"Mr Stark..?"
Wakefulness hit him like a speeding train. He bolted upright in a bed, gasping. All he could see was red. Everything looked red. All he could feel was the snake lodged in his throat. Helpless, he clawed at his neck, trying to pull the beast out.

Oblivious to the shouts of terror surrounding him.

For a few tense moments, all Bruce could do was stare. Peter was still clinging to the ceiling, eyes searching for a sign of danger. Jim was sprawled across the floor, trying to get his legs to function so he could get to Tony, who had made a mad dash to get up from the cot and ended up tangling himself in the blanket then face-planted against the wall.

Bruces eyes honed in on T'Challa, who was upright in bed and trying to pull out the endotracheal tube in panic. Guttural sounds coming from his throat as he fought to take a natural breath.

*Shit!!*

He leapt from the chair, nearly tripping over Rhodes. T'Challa could do more damage to himself if he managed to pull the tube out improperly.

Bruce glanced up, "Peter, help me now!"

The young boy dropped down immediately. "What do I do?" he asked nervous.

"Help me get him back down, " Bruce grabbed at one of T'Challa's arms while Peter took the other. "How is he even awake right now!?"

Apparently grabbing his arms was not the correct thing to do because as soon as they made contact he lashed out, knocking Bruces glasses off and cracking his nose.

"Fuck!!" he cursed as he let go.

With one arm free, T'Challa took a hard swing at Peter, punching him right in the chest. He fell back into the monitors and IV stand with a loud crash.

To have been on the verge of death he was still remarkably strong. But that could have been adrenaline.

"Dammit! A little help Big Guy?!" He asked the air. In the recess of his mind he felt the Hulk stir and Bruce made a grab for the flailing arm again.

*Just a little bit, Big Guy. We don't want to hurt him any more than he is.*

Hulk grunted in agreement.

"Peter, grab the other one! Use more strength if you need to, but don't hurt him!" The teen nodded, swiftly grasping his wrist.

They tried to pin the arms above his head but T'Challa was not having any of it. He began to thrash wildly in the bed, kicking and bucking in an effort to break away. Rhodes scrambled to his feet, throwing his body over T'Challa's legs but it wasn't enough. He was putting up a hell of a fight.

Bruces eyes shined green as Hulk put out more force, trying to keep him still. "He is seriously going
to hurt himself even worse!! Tony!! We need you!"

Tony was still entwined in the blanket, trying to break free. His cheek and head were red from his stumble into the wall, "I'm trying! Just.. Hang on!"

Fed up with being stuck he ripped the impeding throw in half. Staggering to his feet he took in the situation before him. The arms holding him, the panic stricken look..His eyes glossed with red. Fuck.. He couldn't see them..

"Shit! Everybody let him go. NOW!"

"Tony, if he pulls.." Bruce tried to say.

"He's panicking, and we're not helping. Let him go.. He's scared.. Just let me handle this."

"Tones, he..

"Off. Now. All of you, move!" Tony barked.

They all released him at once and backed away, T'Challa made another grab for the tube but Tony grabbed his hands.

"Stop. Stop, T'Challa. You're ok." he said as T'Challa tried to pull his arms away. "It's Tony, do you remember me? Can you nod if you remember?"

He made no move to answer, just continued to fight him.

"Bruce? Were his ears damaged?"

"Uum, a little, I think. I..

"Ok, ok. Good enough for me." Tony interrupted.

He thought for a moment then used some of his newly found strength to pin his arms down. The man was struggling to breathe with the tub in his throat, so that needed to come out. Bruce would just have to find an alternative.

He bent close to T'Challa's ear as the man gurgled and tried to break away. Tears of pain and panic dripping from his eyes.

"T'Challa," he said a tad to loud. The response was instant, he stopped fighting and turned toward Tony's voice.

"It's Tony. Can you hear me?"

A nod..

"Good," he smiled, "Ok, listen to me! You're in New York City, in Stark Tower. You've been very sick and that feeling in your throat is a breathing tube. I'm going to get that out but I need you to stay very still, ok?"

"Tony he needs that to help him breathe." Bruce pleaded. "I can put him back under sedation, he shouldn't even be awake right now..

"Well find something else, it's coming out. And we'll only sedate him if he asks for it, he's terrified enough now." Tony snapped at him.
He went back to T'Challa, "I'm going to let your arms go, ok. But I need you to not move, alright? When you feel the tug, I need you to exhale, ok?"

He nodded briskly.

"Bruce, you ready?"

"This is a bad idea.."

"Isn't everything we do?" Tony gently pulled T'Challa's arms to his sides and let go. Placing a hand on his chest he rubbed in soft slow circles. It seemed to help comfort the man even more.

"Peter, stand next to him just in case he freaks out again."

"Yea, sure thing Mr. Stark." he moved back beside the bed.

"Ok, ready?" Bruce asked.

They agreed and Bruce started to pull out the tube, leaving T'Challa gagging as it came up.

"Huh, now see. That wasn't to bad, was it." Tony smiled.

"You fuckin dumbass.. You tryin to jinx us?!" Rhodey shook his head.

"What. Nothing happened, it's.." but that was as far as he got as T'Challa rose up in bed and vomited all over Tony. Then turned to the side and had a second spew on Peter. Throwing up a pale purplish color. Even getting it in his face. Peter was stone still for a second, then glanced down at himself. He looked a little pale as he looked back at Tony then proceeded to lose his stomach contents on Tony as well.

"Oh...Fuck me.." Rhodey ran as fast as his braces would allow from the room, covering his mouth so he wouldn't puke.

"Well.." Tony said with purple liquid falling from his hair, "At least it doesn't smell to bad, kinda smells sweet. It could be worse.."

Bruce gave him a hateful glance, "Don't even say that again.."

Tony kept sniffing the air, scrunching up his nose, "But what the fuck, is that other smell?"

Bruce just rubbed his sore nose and sighed.
"Seriously Bruce, what is that stench. It smells like Barton's socks. gack!" Tony pinched his nose like he could keep that smell out.

Bruce looked around sadly. He was not going to be the one cleaning this mess up. Tony was doused from his head to his waist with purple vomit, most likely his antidote was working to expel itself along with the toxin from T'Challa's body. It was a possibility that may happen, but he hadn't been entirely sure. He designed it to overpower the chemical, but without more extreme research he wasn't sure if it would dissolve the chemical compound or adhere to it and force it from his body.

Well, force it did.. Everywhere..

"Oh, so now you can smell it? It was pretty rank yesterday and you couldn't smell it then but now it miraculously invades your nostrils..."

"Uuh, excuse you! Yesterday was a hectic day for me. My nose didn't have time to take in all the glorious scents of rotten fish around me.."

"Rotten fish? Yea, if it ate bad Mexican food before it died, but that's... Wait, you know what." he waved his arms around. "The smell has to wait Tony! There are more important priorities here. I'm sure Jim will take care of the smell very soon after he supresses the urge to vomit, so just forget about it!" Bruce scolded him.

He turned his attention to Peter who was still shock still beside the bed, looking a little green. There was vomit up in his hair and over his face, up his nose. He must have had his mouth open when the projectile hit him, no wonder the poor kid had puked. Tony didn't seem very bothered, all those years of binge drinking must have made him a regular aquaintance with stomach contents. He looked more annoyed than anything.

"Peter, are you ok?" Bruce asked.

The intern shook his head forcefully, sending small splatters from his hair, his mouth was clenched so tight Bruce could barely hear his words. The way his cheeks were puffing in and out made Bruce think of frogs.
"Hmmm mmm... S'n my mof."

"It's in your mouth? Oh..Ok, that's.. That's disgusting.. Are you going to throw up again?" Bruce asked, noticing the way his throat was bobbing up and down.

"Mmmm hmm.." he hummed as he bent at the waist, he was trying to hold it back.

Tony made a grab for the nearest trash can. He had vomit on his shoes and was making an even worse mess sliding around the floor. He shoved the can in front of Peter just as he lost what little composure he had in this situation, upchucking whatever was left.

Well, at least it was contained this time.

Bruce walked over and took him by the arm, directing him to the tiny bathroom. He pulled out some soap and cloths from the cabinet. "Here, wash up and change your clothes. There's a toothbrush in here and some scrubs in the closet behind you. Put those on and just leave your clothes here, I'll deal with them later." he took few more cloths and a set of scrubs with him , then he pulled the door shut, leaving Peter alone.

He could hear mutters of 'Aunt May's blackberry pie' as he walked away.

Marching back to Tony he ordered him to strip.

"Well Bruce, you could at least buy a lady dinner first before you try to...

"I'm not in the mood Tony! I have a patient to tend to, I'm sleep deprived and I'm starving. I don't have time for your sexual innuendos and I know you! If I don't make you change you'll walk around in those nasty clothes for the next week because you're to damn lazy to change. Now wipe the goo off and put these on!" he tossed the scrubs in the empty chair.

"Fuck it! Fine, Mr. Buzzkill! Have it your way." he said as he ripped his clothes to clean himself up. "Uugh, did you have to pick em so tight Brucie-bear. I'm gonna have camel toe up the backside.

Bruce gave a lazy smile as he turned to check T"Challa's vitals, "I'll will have it my way, and you'll be lovin it!"

"Wait, did you just make a fast food sex joke?!"

Bruce had gotten really good at ignoring him, "His oxygen level is still way to low, I need to go find something to assist with his breathing. Everything else seems more stable but we'll need to run some tests to make sure. He's not taking in enough air, I'd prefer to keep him venti.. "

"No! Out of the question! You didn't see how terrified he was before he got here. He was afraid he wouldn't wake back up if I sedated him. I know firsthand how that feels.. He's been out of it long enough, he can just try to rest naturally a while. If he can't, then we'll figure something out. So, just find something else to help, I know there has to be something here.. Just not the tube, ok."

"...Fine. But if he shows any signs of complications or his levels don't go up he will go back on the vent. Stay here with him, talk to him, keep him calm. Let him sip some water if he can. I'll be back soon," he left the room.

"Thank you.." came the weakened voice from the bed.

Tony turned and grabbed the chair and set it beside the bed then found some bottled water and a straw in the little fridge underneath.
"Hey Kittycat, how you feeling?" he said softly, sitting down.

"Like I have been smashed by the Hulk," T'Challa moaned.

Tony chuckled, "Well I can promise you that Big Green did no smashing while you were out in Wonderland, but you have been pretty sick there, Felix. For a while we thought you weren't going to make it. You went into cardiac arrest twice, lost a shitload of blood and I think you may have used up about 5 of your lives. Shuri is worried sick about you, so you know. She's terrified she's going to lose you."

"Shuri.. Thank Bast, it was only another dream.."

"Is that what brought you awake? A dream? Must have been a hell of a dream. You're on some mighty powerful tranqs there furball."

Tony almost laughed at the scrunched look on T'Challa's face. "Please do not call me a furball. I am a very dignified animal...When I'm not dying. Why is everything red and fuzzy?" he rasped.

"Well, your hearing seems to be doing better, I don't have to scream in your ear now."

"Mmmpp, it's muffled. It keeps going in and out, almost like being underwater. My.. My throat. May I have some water, please?"

"Oh shit, I'm sorry. Here, take a sip. It's plain water, barely even cold." He held the straw against T'Challa's lips, "Small sips, ok. Your breathing is still really shallow so take it slow, it's not going anywhere."

In his eagerness, he must have either not heard Tony or he thought he could handle a larger drink, because he inhaled a little too much and went into a coughing fit.

"Oh, Gods.. My chest is on fire. How- How badly injured am I?" he inquired.

"Well-This is one of those times when I say it could have been worse, but no, worse would have been death, that's how bad you are. Well, you were. Some of that pain is probably from the ventilation tube, but when you were shot it hit real close to your lungs. The drug seeped through the lobes of the lungs, attacked the bronchioles, and then the alveoli so your lungs aren't properly exchanging the carbon dioxide for oxygen. So we need to get you some breathing assistance. Bruce is off searching for it."

T'Challa brought a feeble hand up to rub at his chest, took a short breath. "Is it getting any better?"

Tony shrugged, "Some..But we think because of the severity there could be some permanent damage. Your uh-Your eyes too. Those seemed to be the two worst hit areas. Your vision is like that because of all the ruptured veins. The interior is filled with blood, luckily the poison didn't damage to the optic nerve itself, but Bruce and the other Doctors are sure you'll have vision loss."

T'Challa closed his eyes, letting the news sink in. His keen sense of sight gave him an advantage in battle. It would not do him much good if he couldn't see his enemies coming.

"I brought this upon myself," he whispered. "I should have listened to Shuri when she told me what a grave mistake I was making. This.. This is less than what I deserve."

Tony crossed his arms and flopped back in the chair, irritated. "Ok, no. We are not doing that self blame bullshit. Yes. You made a mistake. A few of them actually, but you did not deserve this. Those people that you tried to help, this is their fault. This is what they do."
He rubbed at his tired face, continuing. "They are the most vindictive, malicious group of assholes I have ever met. I spent five years with them, five years dealing with their hate and lies. Steve..When he sets his mind on something there is no changing it, it's like it's frozen there in carbonite. He lets nothing block his way. Especially where Barnes is involved.." he said sadly.

_I'm sorry Tony._

_But he's my friend_  

_So was I._

"Tony..?" T'Challa asked.

"Yes, dear?"

"How can I fix this? Fix everything? Please.. Please I.." His breathing was getting more ragged as his anxiety increased. What the hell was taking Banner so long.

"Hey, hey, hey! Calm down, ok. Just breathe for me ok, Bruce is coming. Friday where is he?"

**"Yoda is on the way Boss. He's aurired the proper equipment for his Highness."**

"Oh, good! You feelin tired kitty-cat?" T'Challa's eyes were doing that rapid rolling thing they do when your trying to stay awake. He looked to be losing the battle. "We're going to get you fixed up then you can relax a while. Sound good?" Tony asked.

"No-no more drugs. Please." T'Challa panted out.

"I promise, no drugs unless you get desperate. It's just oxygen."

T'Challa nodded slowly, "I'm sorry Tony.. For all this."

Tony just sighed, "It's not your fault, ok. Don't worry about it for now, just rest. We can hash out everything when you feel better."

He fell back into a light doze while they waited for Bruce's slow ass to get back.

Tony leaned back to stare up at the ceiling and nearly fell backward at the face above him. "Jesus, shit!! What the hell!!"

He clutched at his heart, glad he had his problem fixed or he might have just died at the hands of a fifteen year old.

Peter was clinging to the ceiling just above his head, looking guilty.

"I'm sorry, So sorry Mr. Stark. I was trying not to interrupt you guys. I thought I could get by without you seeing me."

"Damn, kid. Just use the door like a normal person. I'm old and my heart's feeble. Are you trying to get rid of me? You wanna take over SI or something cause you don't have to kill me to do it. Fuck! It'll be yours one day anyway, just wait til I'm old and die. Let me live!! I want to liiiiiive!!" He over dramatized.

Peter was gaping at him then fell off the ceiling with a loud thud. "Owww.. Why?"

"You ok Pan the Man?"
"What.. Was that some kind of joke? Ha ha, that's a good one Mr. S, you almost had me there." Peter stood to face him.

Tony's mind was running a little slow this morning, he hadn't had coffee yet. "Joke? What did you think was a-Oh, ok! No that wasn't a joke, aside from myself, and Bruce when he's not lighting up his huge bag of weed, you're the smartest person I know. I've already got you lined up for several of the company scholarships we give out, so your college education is basically paid for."

".....Gnnnnhh..."

" to any college you choose, but I'm kinda hoping you'll try for MIT. I know, it's not my decision to make but I know you'd be amazing there. And I've already changed my will, so after you hit the old age of 21 and finish college, well if I'm dead, then SI is yours."

"....Hnnnp..."

"Course you can always have someone else as CEO, but I would like to at least show you how the gears turn. You feelin alright there mini-me? You look a little red."

Peter was staring at Tony like he had grown an extra head. "What's wrong? Is my camel toe showing?" He tried to look down at his ass.

"Why. Why..?"

Tony was trying and failing to pull the tight pants out of his crack. "Cause Bruce gave me the tightest pair he could find," he looked down, "Holy fuck, my dick is like out there. Doesn't leave much to the imagination, does it? Ah, well, everybody's seen it anyway. Damn sex tapes."

"NO!! Not why the pants! Why would you do that? I'm just..." Peter gestured vaguely, not knowing what to say. "I don't deserve any of that.. Are you nuts?"

"Just what? Amazing, talented, extremely trustworthy. Kind, caring, you picking up what I'm throwing down? How about selfless? That's not something you find much in the world today, everybody's all 'me, me, me, no on else matters, it's all about what I want'. Jury is still out, by the way."

Tony huffed, "But you.. I've never seen anyone who does so much for everyone else, you never ask anything in return. You neglect your own self more than half the time and I've seen you give every cent of your allowance to homeless veterans camped out under the bridge. You made Rhodey cry, bee-tee-dubs. Anyway, point is I may have only known you a little over a month, but I have followed you for the past six and there's no one else in the world like you. You deserve the best life can offer. If I can make that happen, then I damn well will!"

Peter was frozen, "What if I turn out to be a disappointment?"

"Not happening kid.. So get used to it, you're stuck with me, oh future heir to my kingdom. Wait, why aren't you in school? It's a school day isn't it?"

"Heh heh. No power, so we have the day off. I came by to talk to you actually. I was hoping for some advice on something." He was biting his lips pretty hard.

"Ooooh, mentoring advice! Lay it on me Charlotte!" Tony was always ready to help Peter out with any problems he might have. He rubbed his hands in glee.

"Uuum, it's...dating advice."
Oh. Ooh

Uh-oh..

Fuck.

Why couldn't it be something easy?

Rhodey entered the room as he was saying it, something small wrapped in his fist.

"You want dating advice from Tony?! Tony Stark? Are you crazy? That's the worst idea in history. He can barely tie his shoes, and we all know how he is with relationships. You're better off asking me. I'm the mature one here." Rhodey said.

"But you just tried to stuff-" Peter began.

Rhodeys eyes grew wide, "SO, Tones. How's T'Challa doing? He snoozing again?"

"Well I'm trying to but something smells horrific in here. Please tell me that it isn't me." was the reply from the bed. "Even my diminished senses are picking it up. It's rather nauseating and I can't seem to sleep, so I am just lying here thanking Bast that I still live."

Rhodes and Peter shared a knowing look, then Rhodey showed him the strips in his palm, causing Peter to grin.

Tony looked around, exasperated. "See! I told Bruce I could sme-Gaaah. Hmmmmp!

As soon as he opened up Rhodes shoved them in, pulling Tony close and pinching his mouth shut till the strips were dissolved.

"Oh thank God," Bruce said as he came back. "It was drifting out into the hall."

"What the HELL Rhodes! Are you trying to choke me to death?!" He spat out some pieces of the breath strips, glaring the whole time, "What the fuck was that?!"

"Do I still have to give up my candy stash since he wasn't sleeping?" Peter queried.

"Hmph, this aint college Tones. You're old enough to take care of yourself. That stench is your breath, when's the last time you brushed, dumbass?"

"....Saturday?.."

"Bullshit, it wasn't no Saturday! No smell can be that bad after a day and a half."

"...Saturday at the hospital..." he coughed.

"Tony that's disgusting!"

"Gross, dude!"

"Really Tones? That's nasty.. Damn."

"I did not know that Americans had such poor hygiene skills.."

"If I may, Boss hasn't really ate much since the hospital. The stink factor is likely caused by yesterdays cemita."
"Not helping there Fri..

Peters eyes bugged out, "You ate that thing!! I found it in the bottom of my backpack, why would you eat it, it was like a week old! I forgot it was in there. Lemme tell ya, May was pissed, I had to get another new backpack it smelled soooo bad!.."

"Oh my God..

"Tones we talked about eating weird shit, man..

"Americans truly have no self preservation skills..

Tony was looking furious, "Why the shit would you put it in the fridge, then??"

"I'm sorry I was distracted!" Peter exclaimed.

"By what?!!" Tony yelled.

"By what I need your advice for!!"

"Why are we yelling?!"

"I don't know!!" Peter cried.

Tony pinched the bridge of his nose, "Ok..Why do you need my advice on dating. You're young and hot, you should have no trouble getting a girl to go out with you."

"This is a bad idea kid," Rhodes said.

"I agree with that." Bruce responded as he placed what looked like an alien mask over T'Challa's face.

Peters face scrunched, "Its uh, it's not a girl..

Tony paused, "Ok, a guy then. Luckily I am well experienced in both areas. Lay it on me, what do you need?" he rubbed his hands eagerly.

"I need to know how to get him to go out with me. I asked and he refused..

"Well, kid if he's not interested you can't really-

"No, no, no," Peter cut in. "He's interested. He comments on my 'fine ass' enough times for me to know he likes me back, plus he said he likes me, but he uh, he won't.."

"Well the guys got to have a reason. Could be a family thing. Maybe his parents don't approve and he's afraid to come out to them or something." Tony said

"Uuuh, he doesn't have any parents.." Peter seemed reluctant to say it.

Rhodes was squinting at him. "Pete, how old is this guy?"

"......Older.." he said nervous.

"What, like 20?" Tony asked.

Peter gave a shake of his head and pointed a finger skyward.
"Twenty-five?" Jim guessed.

The finger went higher.

"Thirty?!" Tony shouted.

Higher..

"What the fuck kid! Thirty-five!!"

"Well.. You're getting close.." Peter conceded. "Seriously, all of you stop looking at me like that!" he felt small under all the goggling eyes and open mouths. Even T'Challa was gaping at him.

Tony fell onto the end of the bed, earning a nasty glance from T'Challa. He looked like the creature from Alien with that mask over his face.

"How well do you know this guy?" Tony asked.

"We see each other everyday. We work together a lot." Peter replied.

Tony, Rhodes and T'Challa all turned in unison to stare at Bruce, who looked angry that they would even think it was him.

"Bruce please tell me it's not you cause I really can't deal with that shit right now.." Tony pleaded.

"If you three even remotely believe that I am some kind of a sick pedophile I will sick Hulk on you!"

"What!! No, it's not Bruce! Geez.. Uuuugh, ok ever since we met we just really hit it off. It's like we were made for each other, but he refuses to go out with me no matter how many times I try to persuade him, because he says I'm way to young. Which I think is crap! I know what I want and so does he but there's some stupid law in the way, which he actually follows, when he never let any laws stop him before. Of all the times for the idiot to grow some morals.. I just really, really like him so please tell me what I can do, cause he's being a donkey about it."

"Kid. Pete." Tony began quietly, "You're fifteen, this guy's what, forty?"

"...Thirty-seven.."

"Sheew.. Ok, he's old enough to be your dad.. If he's influencing you some way-"

"He's not! I'm the one who's trying to get him to go out with me remember. He says I'm to young-"

"He's right!"

"-but I know how I feel. And I know how he feels. And even though I'm asking you what I should do, I'm still going to pursue this."

Tony was really, really getting to old for this kind of shit. He wondered if there was some universe out there where he didn't have to put up with all this stress everyday. These people were going to be the death of him.

"Boss, I hate to interrupt but you have a flight scheduled soon."

"Fuck..I forgot." He rubbed his face, "Ok, kid. Here's my advice to you. I feel like I'm in some way going to regret this later... Stop asking! He's already said no many times, if you really like him and you want to Netflix and Chill or whatever you kids do nowadays, then stop trying to force him to do
something he doesn't want!"

"But he-"

"Yeah, yeah, likes you too. I know! Just wait, if you two really want this to go somewhere then just wait until you're older. You're already almost sixteen, in two years when you finally hit old age-"

That got a smile from Peter.

"-and if you both still feel the same then maybe you can try again and see what happens. But don't try and force it kid. Trust me, if you keep pushing this guy, it will eventually push him away.. Ok?"

Peter sighed, "I guess you're right.. As usual.. Thanks Dad. I'll stop stalking Wade.. For now.."

"Wade?" Tony inquired. "Do I know him, that sounds familiar."

Peter blanched, "NO!! Thanks for the help, gotta go, kay bye!" He bolted from the room, leaving them all speechless after his confession.

Rhodes was the first one to speak. "Huh.. That was weird man. I'm Just glad he wasn't trying to bang Bruce. Damn, I forgot to get my candy."

"I can't believe he's after an old man." Tony said, "What the fuck is he thinking. Is this what we were like as teens? So smart, yet so dumb."

"Heh, you were, and he's just like you! I had more sense than that. Are you not going to say a thing about him calling you Dad?"

"No, he doesn't realize he does it, and I don't want to freak him out about it. Or scare him off."

"Boss, your flight?"

"Shit! Fuck, I gotta go! You two have this handled? Kay, thanks, bye!" He flew out the door.

"See! Just like Tony!" Jim pointed accusingly.

Bruce just looked around at the mess, he would have to clean after all. Might as well get started. He looked at Jim.

"I'll go get the mops, will you stay with him?"

"Yea, my back hurts anyway." He sat down, prepared to relax before he helped clean up, when he noticed T'Challa staring at him strange from the bed.

"Your Highness?"

"...I know this is an odd request but I can't ignore it any longer."

"What can I help you with?"

"I am lying in my own vomit, and I really, really have to pee."

Shit....

"....Bruce!!"

He was not aiming sombody elses dick today. No way.. Huh-uh.. Bruce would just have to sleep
Half an hour later Tony was landing in front of worn out motel in central Iowa. The kind of place one might take a hooker to. Peeling paint, missing shingles. Most of the lights on the vacancy sign shot out.

*Oh, look. Needles.*

Friday said the kids had left for school already, so it would just be Laura and the baby here. Tony had no idea what he was going to say to her. Should he tell her where Clint was, what he was doing. Should he let her watch the live feed from Wakanda.

Maybe he should call Bruce...

He stepped out of the suit and up on the cracked walkway, thinking over what he should say. For the first time in forever his mind was blank.

As he was raising a hand to knock the door flew open and he was violently yanked inside. He landed on the floor with a hard thump to the face.

"Get up!" his attacker barked.

"Hey Laura, long time no see-" he mumbled into the grungy carpet.

"I said get up!!" There was the unmistakable click of a gun being cocked.

"Oh *fuck*! Don't shoot, I'm not your husband!" He rose, raising his hands in surrender.

Laura Barton stood before him, holding a gun to his face and murder in her eyes. She looked tired and worn down, no doubt having many sleepless nights since her husband's betrayal.

"Now. I'm only going to ask you once." She hissed, I'll know if you lie, because I know, that you know, where they are." She moved in, pressing the SIG against his head. He cursed inwardly at his bad fortune lately..

"*Where. Is. He?*"
Do You Like Fords?

Chapter Notes

I really want to say thank you today to each and every one of you who have read and continue to read this fic :) I have a lot of fun writing it and I hope you have as much fun reading it :)

Also sorry for any mistakes..

"Where. Is. He!"

The barrel of the gun was digging into his forehead. It wasn't the first time he'd been in this situation, but the feeling that your life could be over in the next second never got any less terrifying.

*Ok, think Tony! How do I diffuse an angry housewife?*

"Laura, honey, I know you're mad but-

*BANG*

*Obviously that wasn't the right way!*

Tony felt his life flash before him. Luckily she hadn't blown his brains out, but he wasn't expecting her to actually fire a warning shot either. He stared down the smoking barrel once again aimed at his face then glanced at the wall behind him.

"You know there could be someone on the other side of that wall."

"There's no one in this shithole but me," she growled, "Well, until nighttime when the whores and druglords come out to play. It's exactly how I always wanted to raise my children, to the sounds of the bed next door banging the wall and the shouts of 'Daddy, daddy fuck me harder' that are basically in the room with us."

"And lets not forget all the drug paraphernalia just lying around everywhere! I had to waste money on bleach and cleaners with the hope that the kids wont contract hepatitis!! Would you like to know how many needles I found under the bed?"

"Please don't kill me..I came in peace!"

"Seven, Tony! Seven used needles, because this is the only place I can afford to stay in since my husband flew over the cuckoo's nest! I'm now truly living the 'American Dream'. Would you like me to continue?" she screamed at him.

"...I'm afraid to say no..." he deadpanned.

"I only managed to grab a few clothes before the CIA took our house, we're all running out of clean ones because there's no money to do laundry. I'm down to the last twenty dollars of my emergency cash, I have two diapers left for Nate and I haven't eaten in four days because I'm trying to keep the kids fed."
"Laura, please just let-"

"Then there's Lucky whos locked up in the bathroom because the kids couldn't bear to leave him. And would you like to know what happened to me yesterday? I went to the DHHS to try and get some help for the kids, get them food and, and some clothes but you know what they told me?"

"I don't-"

"They told me that I have been locked out for any forms of help because of my association with wanted terrorists! And! AND that my children, my kids, are in a potentially dangerous situation and I'm supposed to expect a visit from CPS by the end of the day today!! Because I'm-"

Tony cursed to himself, fucking Thaddeus. That had his name written all over it. No doubt he'd found some way to influence the system.

"-considered a 'person of interest' to the government all because they think I know where Clint is!!"

The fiery rage was slowly burning out of Lauras eyes. She lowered the gun and collapsed onto the floor. "Oh, God.." she cried, tears welling up. "Oh God, how could he do this to us..? He abandoned us.. He left without even a word, I didn't even know he was leaving," she sobbed into her hands on the dirty floor. "There was a call and then he was just gone.. He didn't even say goodbye.. He always said goodbye because he was afraid he wouldn't see us again. Why...? Why did he do this to us..?"

Tony never really knew how to deal with crying, it was the one emotion that whenever he saw it he hauled ass in the other direction. Tears scared the shit out of him, but seeing Laura bawling on the floor, well he just couldn't do that to her. He remembered back when Ultron happened, how kind and caring she was to him. To everyone, she didn't blink an eye at Bruce when he said he was afraid to stay because of Hulk. She had just smiled and patted his cheek.

Laura just had that mothering vibe no matter how old you were. While he was there she always made sure he ate, always asked if he needed anything. Love was just her nature..

Tony came over and slid down beside her, pulling her into his arms in a tight embrace. For a minute she was still, openly crying into her hands. Then she seemed to accept the hug and wrapped her arms around him, burying her face against his chest. He could feel her tears dampening his shirt, his muttered assurances not doing anything to ease the pain her husband had left her in.

As he rocked her from his place on the floor he took a look around the room. Little Nate was sleeping on the bed, what looked like noise cancelling earphones on his head. Tony recalled Clint saying something about the baby only being able to sleep in total silence. Laura had stripped the sheets from the bed and covered it with plastic trash bags, probably afraid of hidden diseases lurking in there. She'd piled her clothes on top of them so Nate could sleep comfortably. Two small sleeping bags were on the floor for Lila and Cooper, bags underneath those too.

Food for the past weeks must have been McDonald's if the empty wrappers in the trash meant anything. Other than that and Lucky scratching on the bathroom door there wasn't much here belonging to the Barton's.

But when the government takes your shit, they really don't leave you with more than the clothes on your back. Tony's suprised she got as much out as she did.

After what felt like eternity, Laura finally seemed more calm, "I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to let loose on you," she sniffed, rubbing at her runny nose.
Tony grinned, "I don't mind. I helped get you into this situation, so if you need to punch me, go ahead. Totally won't try to stop you, if you want you can even hit me with that dead rat in the corner!"

"WHAT?!" she screamed.

"Kidding! I'm just kidding, sorry," he was trying to lighten the mood a bit. He gave a short pause, "Actually it's under the nightstand.."

She jumped to her feet, arms flailing about. Loud screeching noises coming from her mouth. "Oh, fuck!! I want out of this whorehouse, I want to go home and sleep in my nice, clean bed. I want to eat an actual meal, not fake chicken from McD's! I want to take a bath and not worry about catching syphilis!! And son of a bitch, I want a divorce!!" She screamed the last part.

"I'm going to kill Clint!! I'm going to shove his arrows so far up his freakin ass they come out of his freakin throat!! Then, then I'm going to cut off his dick and use it for target practice after I shove it down his throat!! Then I'll go find Thor's hammer and smash his balls to bloody little bits! Over and over and over, til there's nothing left!"

"......"

Tony looked like a deer caught in the highbeams.

"What?" She yelled.

"....I don't think you can lift Thor's hammer...," he mumbled.

"You just freakin watch me!! Uuuhhhhhhh!!" She pulled at her hair and belly-flopped on the bed.

He felt like he was in one of those chick flicks that Rhodey watched when he thought no one was around. Joke was on him though, cause Friday had taken to recording everything when it came to Rhodey. For some unknown reason she liked to mess with him. Tony now had way too much footage of him watching Romy and Michelle and binge eating junk food.

"Laura, eat a Snickers.."

"What? Why the hell would I want a Snickers, Tony?" Came the reply.

"Because you're not yourself when you're hangry!"

She rolled over and stared, then the beginnings of a smile came on her face followed by full blown laughter. She laughed so hard more tears were running down her face.

"I can not believe you just commercialized me," she said between her giggles.

Tony sat beside her, pulling her into another hug, "Eh, it wasn't my best but it worked didn't it?"

"Seriously though, I'm here to bring you guys back to the city with me. I only found out about the farm and everything else yesterday. I would have been here faster but things have been pretty shitty at the tower the past few days.."

"Tony... That's," she paused, pulling back from him. "I can't ask that of you. Do you know how crazy that would be, three kids following you around, driving you nuts. And a dog! Pestering you hour after hour-"

"Technically, I did the asking, not you. If I didn't want you to be there, then I wouldn't even be here
now. Believe it or not I care about you and the kids. If New York doesn't work for you then I'll just buy you another farm somewhere! Hey, I have a ranch in Montana, how about that?"

"Tony.."

"Please.." He begged. "When I screwed up with Ultron you didn't even blink an eye when we came to you. You made us feel like we belonged there.. Made me feel like I belonged.. Please let me help you, I know I'm not exactly a stand up kinda guy but I just want to do the right thing. I'm tired of messing everything up.. Please.."

"From where I'm sitting you're not the one who messed up," she kissed his cheek. "Alright, we'll go with you. But I'm telling you, three kids.. And a dog, Tony. Who loves to eat pizza. And then proceeds to get the shits.."

"Eh, we can just stick him on Caps old floor. It would make it smell better anyway. Gotta get rid of the stench of his misguided American logic anyway.. Thank you," he hugged her. "Were you really serious about a divorce?"

She nodded, " Dead serious, I've had almost a month to think it through, a month since Clint left us in the dark. The kids, they don't know what's going on, they can't figure out why Clint abandoned them. For some reason they think it's their fault. So yes, I want a divorce. Well, as soon as I can afford a lawyer. Oh, God! I'm going to have to get a job!"

Tony nodded, "I know a guy, SI just hired him on recently to take some cases for us. He usually does pro-bono work but he is really, really good and I made him an offer no one would refuse. If you want, I can get him to meet with you. He's one of the best I've ever seen and I know a lot of lawyers. Name's Matt Murdock, he tore Wilson Fisk a new one in court a few months back, you might have heard about it."

"Mmmm, the blind guy, right? He's hot," she smiled.

"....."

"What, it doesn't hurt to look. I've checked out your ass a thousand time since I've met you."

"I knew that's why you kept knocking things to the floor the last time I was here!!" he squawked.

He took out his phone, "Fri you with me?"

"24/7 Boss!"

"Is there a car rental close by?"

"Sorry Boss, the closest one is in Des Moines, about two hours away. There is a Ford dealer just a few miles away from the motel though, if you don't wanna wait."

"Awww, no Audi? Eh, I guess Ford will do, do you even like Fords?" He shivered. "Find me a nice roomy one, something that will haul three kids and a furbaby."

"This is Iowa, Tony, most people here don't know what Audi is," Laura said. "Wait, you're not buying a car are you? Tony!!"

"You're good to go Boss. It should be here in the next twenty minutes. I made sure to have them install a safety seat for Nate as well as a crate in the back for Lucky. The nearest airstrip is in Waterloo and you should arrive about the same time as the Quinjet. I made sure to send
the one with the cargo hold for Ms. Bartons new car. I've also secured a floor of the tower for you Miss, it should be fully stocked by the time you arrive."

"Tony!" She smacked at him.

"Ow, what? Are you not a Ford fan? I can get something better, how about a nice Cadi, huh? And it's just clothes and diapers for you guys, geez!"

"Don't forget about the in suite playground for the kids, and the multi-level condo for the dog Boss!"

"FRI!! TMI Fri, TMI!"

"When we get to New York we are going to have a serious talk about your spending habits!"

He just laughed, "So you ready to blow this truck stop? We'll go get the kiddos from school, book it to looneyville-"

"Waterloo."

"-and be in Manhattan before the baby bird in the bed even wakes up. Geez, that kid can snooze."

"I'm so ready to go, but I do have one question."

He cocked a brow.

"What kind of car did you get me?"

Tony just laughed, and if she went a little ballistic when the fully loaded Explorer pulled up, well she'd get used to it eventually.. Now he was ready to go back home, and see how T'Challa was doing.
They made the trip back to the Royal Palace in record time, hitching a ride on the back of some sort of hover-bus that took them nearly all the way. After managing to sneak past the guards and the Dora Milaje that were lurking about, they entered the safety of their wing without being noticed.

Or so they thought.

Little did they know, Shuri's entourage had been on them since they left the city, she already knew about the Captain's outburst and Romanoff's confession of thievery.

Now her Highness was simply waiting in the wings, watching. Wanting to see if there was any sense of morality left in the man.

As they rounded the corner to go to Steve's room they came face to face with a very naked, and very angry Clint and Wanda.

"Oh my God! Why are you both naked?" Steve came to a stop and tried averting his eyes.

Wanda looked absolutely livid, she was trying and failing to cover herself with her arms, small streams of red were littering her body from two holes in her hands. Her teeth were grinding together so hard Steve thought they may snap. She seemed to be trying to use her magic but was only giving off small crimson puffs from her fingers.

Clint wasn't even trying to cover himself. He was dripping wet and pounding on the door to his suite. Penis wiggling around wildly with each bang on the door.

"Clint," Steve demanded. "Why the hell are you both naked?"

Clint momentarily stopped his hammering, turning his fierce eyes to his leader. "Why!! I'll tell you why! That crazy ass bitch attacked us while we were swimming, she fucking shot Wanda, tried to shoot me and then had the audacity to force us to walk back here like this," he shouted. "Now the psycho has us locked out of our fucking rooms! I swear to God she's like a female Tony! I'm not going to put up with this shit again Steve, you need to do something! That bitch is crazy!"

Steve turned a worried gaze to Wanda, no longer concerned for the fact that she was naked. His only concern now was that she be ok. She had suffered through so much in her young life, she didn't deserve to be treated like this.

"Wanda, are you ok? How bad are you hurt? Let me see, please.." He took her hands gently in his, looking over the seeping wounds, "Nat, do you have anything to patch this up with?"
The redhead nodded, "I've been stockpiling supplies since we got here Steve, I have everything we need in my rooms. But if we can't get in then it won't do us any good."

"Nat? What happened to your neck?" Clint asked, stepping forward.

Steve gave her a cold glare.

Natasha had forgotten she would likely have bruises from her altercation with Steve.

"I uh, I overstepped a boundary I shouldn't have. My fault entirely, I learned a lesson and it won't happen again. Don't worry about it Barton, and keep your dick over there away from me!"

"Are you sure..?"

"I said I'm fine! Now what the hell is going on here? Why are you locked out? What did you do?" Natasha asked.

Clint looked very offended, "Me!! I haven't done shit, I was minding my own freakin business, swimming laps in T'Challa's pool when psycho-sister came in accusing Wanda of stealing a bunch of money and then she said she went in our rooms and..."

"Shit!" Steve threw Wanda's hands away roughly, drawing a small cry from the girl. "You've got to be kidding me," he rounded on Clint, ""She already knows.. Dammit!"

"Steve, there's still time to..." Natasha cut off as Steve punched the wall.

"No, Natasha, there isn't any time!" He pressed his fists to his eyes then pulled aggressively at his hair, "This is unbelievable.. I can't believe you two were stupid enough to steal from the King of Wakanda!!" He turned toward's Nat, "and you of all people should know better than to go in somewhere where you haven't done proper recon! Now there's no way to fix this Nat," he growled.

"Steve, I was the one who went in," Wanda said, still trying to cover up. "It is as much my fault as hers. I took the money.

"It's not about the money! I don't care which one of you came up with the idiotic idea! It's about jeopardizing our safety, our sanctuary! I don't give a damn about the money, I give a damn about us! I could care less about what you two took, but you put our safety at risk by doing it and being dumb enough to get caught. We can only hope T'Challa will be forgiving when he hears about it, because if he throws us out, then what are we supposed to do? Sleep in the jungle and eat grass!!" Steve raged.

"Well, that is very interesting...," came Shuri's unamused voice from behind, causing them all to jump. No one had even heard her approach. She was flanked by Nakia and Okoye.

"From the sound of your little tirade, Captain, it appears that you have no sense of guilt that your teammates are thieves.. No, the only guilt you feel is because you were caught red handed.. Or well, red headed in this case."

"Your Highness.." Steve began, only to fall silent as Shuri held up one finger.

"It is a shame. I actually thought there may be a shred of dignity left in you Captain, I can see that I was oh so wrong."

Steve huffed, "Dignity, you mean like how you shot Wanda and Clint? Is that what you call dignity? Attempted murder?"
Shuri just smiled, striding forward, "If I wanted you dead, Captain, you would be. All of you. You have overstepped your bounds one to many times with me, simple words would be lost on you, so a show of force was very necessary. Might I remind you that you are guests here, you do not have, nor have you ever had permission to free-range throughout the palace, or Wakanda. This is not your home. You are not free to do as you please. My brother explained to you in detail where you were not allowed to trespass. Yet, every single one of you have blatantly chose to disregard his orders. You all have a great problem with authority, don't you?"

"We haven't hurt anything by exploring the palace. We're just trying to get a feel for our surroundings, it..."

"I do not care! You directly disobeyed orders from the King, small orders they were, but orders nonetheless. And yes, you have hurt something, you invaded the private chambers of the King and then proceeded to steal from him, an action punishable by life imprisonment. You are not in America, Captain. This is Wakanda, you have no right to anything here but what we choose to give you. Apparently my brother was not stern enough with you, or like usual, you just don't care. Your sense of entitlement baffles me, I have never seen such a spoiled group of children, and this is the wealthiest nation on the planet."

She turned her angry eyes to Clint and Wanda, "Why are you two still standing around naked? Please have some decency and go put on clothes!"

Clint barked, "Well if you'd unlock our doors you nutcase, we could. You talk about spoiled and you do shit like that, come on lady!"

Shuri laughed, "I can assure you I have better things to do with my time. I have no interest in seeing you more than I have to, so if you think that I'm playing a prank you are dead wrong Mr. Barton."

"Bullshit! I've been trying to open the door for an hour!" He walked over to the knob to show them, "No one else would be so...," he trailed off as he turned the knob and it opened.

Shuri raised a perfectly arched brow, clearly unamused, "Like everything else in the palace the doors can be controlled from the security room. Perhaps when Ms. Romanoff tried to damage our camera systems she damaged that system as well."

Romanoff's already pale skin grew even lighter. The woman had no doubt thought that her espionage skills were beyond exceptional.

"What? You didn't see that coming? You underestimate us Widow.. Here in Wakanda there is always someone watching you." Shuri grinned, the Captain looked furious if the redness of his face was anything to go by. His rage pointed directly to Natasha, who couldn't seem to believe she had been caught.

Secretly Shuri knew the doors were in perfect working order, the only explanation as to why they weren't permitted entry was most likely FRIDAY. Tony told her he had FRIDAY running diagnostics to all the security systems after the cameras started fritzing. She could have taken a look herself but her area of expertise ran more toward weapon crafting than tech.

Tech was her brother's domain..

The lovely FRIDAY was likely having a bit of fun with her creators tormentors.. Shuri was overly fond of the idea, she had grown to enjoy Tony very much over the past few days. The man was absolutely delightful.
She tapped her claw like nails together, "Now, I would like to point out, Black Widow, that I have known about your sabotage for a few days. I can only wonder, since it did take a bit to figure out, what you need to hide so desperately that you would risk your protection for?" Shuri gave a pause, glancing at each Avenger, "That you would risk their protection for?"

She looked the Captain dead in the eyes, "What would you risk Barnes's protection for?"

Whatever fight had been building in him, deflated away at the sound of Barnes's name. "Alright, enough! I get it, we all messed up, I'm sorry! I'm sure there's some way we can come to some sort of solution for everything, maturely," Steve looked at her pleadingly.

Shuri just scoffed, "After the events I have witnessed from you and your clan these past weeks, maturity is nowhere in your nature. Any of you.. But, no need to worry Captain, I have already devised a suitable punishment that will sustain you all until the return of the King."

Steve tried to hide a snarl, but he knew when he had no way out. "Given the circumstance, I believe that's fair... What do you have in mind?"

She smiled wickedly, "Those two," she pointed to Clint and Wanda, "have already been given their punishment, and you should best rest up, you have a busy week ahead of you!"

If looks were capable of killing Shuri would be facing her death right now. The two nudists turned to their leader, as if they were hoping he would come to their defense. The Captain merely gave a shake of his head and pointed them to their rooms.

Clint left the hall with a bang, slamming his door shut.

Wanda gave them one last icy glare before retreating to her rooms. Shuri would have to watch her very closely the next few days. The young witch was no doubt already plotting her retaliation.

She turned her sly grin to the spider. "Aah, Miss Romanoff.. There were so, so many things I could have you do. You are after all, the ringleader in this particular situation. However, nothing I came up with seemed suitable for someone of your...caliber. So for the forseeable future you will serve as a personal servant.. I mean assistant, to Nakia and Okoye."

Natasha opened her mouth to protest, but fell silent at Steve's harsh look. Behind Shuri the two warriors looked a little to smug.

"If you have any objections Miss Romanoff, I can always get in touch with Everett Ross. I'm sure he would love to come up with a punishment for you. He's just one call away! By all means, please, tell me no."

"That's fine!! She'll be happy to, won't you Natasha?" Rogers gaze could melt vibranium.

The Widow looked like she was sucking a lemon, "I would be honored to assist the Dora Milaje, Princess."

Shuri clapped joyfully, "Fantastic! I'm so glad we have an understanding. Now they are very early risers so you'll want a good nights sleep. Oh, and they expect their breakfast by 5am. You are required to do anything and everything they ask of you.. Really it's not very harsh, but I will let T'Challa have the final say when he returns."

"Where is T'Challa, we still don't know where we stand with dismantling the Accords and we need to try to get our names cleared before something happens and people need us," Steve said.
Shuri gave a brief pause, considering how to play this. She thought about using the Cameroon excuse but decided to go with her gut instinct.

"His trip is going on longer than expected. My brother has fallen a bit ill on his journey, he was apparently bitten by some irritating little pest before he left. Most likely, a spider," she stared right at Romanoff when she said it.

Shuri didn't think it was possible for her to get any whiter, she'd never seen that particular shade on a person before.

From the corner of her eye she saw the Captain freeze, jaw clenching tightly and nostrils flaring.

"Yes, that's right.. I know.."

"It is rather odd, T'Challa's immune system can fight off anything, but this nastly little poison he can't seem to shake. I'm told they are close to figuring out exactly what kind of spider it is.."

"I hope he's ok," Steve said faintly.

"Oh he will be fine, I assure you. He was in America when the full effects hit, and your country has some of the best Doctors in the world. Especially in New York.."

Steves breathing was picking up, "Why is he in New York?"

Shuri merely shrugged, "Accords business, our father was after all, the founding father of the Accords. So rest assured they won't be going away any time soon," she glanced at her phone, "Well, I do have somewhere I need to be, so Captain, would you like to hear what I have in store for you."

The soldier just nodded. Shuri was disappointed he wasn't trying to fight her on it. Yet.

"Your punishment is a bit more personal. Even though you didn't have a hand in Miss Romanoff's scheme, I still feel as though you have done nothing to keep your team in line. You knew what was allowed and what was not, yet you made no move to enforce any boundaries on your teammates. If anything, your neglect only seem to encourage them more..

She gave a knowing grin, "Now we all know that there is nothing I could physically do to you to make sure you fall in line. So, I have taken the liberty of moving Sergeant Barnes to a more secure location, away from the Palace. And away from you..."

Natasha paled further, "Bozhe moi..

"WHAT!!" he roared, "You have no fucking right to do that, I have an agreement with T'Challa! He promised Bucky would be safe here! You can't just take him away because you're pissed at us!"

"I can and I did, Captain. You need to know your place here. You all consider yourselves above all authority! Above the King of a foreign nation, you have shown no respect for T'Challa, even after he stupidly let you hide behind Wakandas walls. So yes, I took your precious Barnes from you, and until you learn to show respect for those around you and until you learn what your past actions have caused, you won't see him again..

The Captain was raging, "Clint was right, you are crazy!" he lunged forward, grabbing her arm. Shuri took her free hand, both were encased in her gloves, and drew her claws, bringing it up to his neck so fast he didn't have time to react. She squeezed, the tips of the vibranium drawing blood in five thin lines down his neck.
He may be strong, but Shuri was very skilled. As he brought up his hand to try and pry away the claws she gave him a hard kick to the abs that had him flying back into Romanoff. Both fell with a loud thud.

"Do not touch me again, Captain. Attacking a Royal is punishable by death. As you can see, they are very eager..." she gestured.

Steve glanced around, somehow he was surrounded on every side by the Dora Milaje. There were at least a dozen, maybe more. Their guns trained on he and Natasha, all looking ready to fire if their Princess gave the order.

"I suggest that you return to your rooms now, and think very hard about everything you have done. We wouldn't want anything bad to happen to your Barnes now, would we," she let the threat hang.

Steve rose, bringing Nat with him, "I'm not going to let you get away with this. T'Challa is on our side, he won't stand for this kind of treatment."

"Well, T'Challa isn't here, is he.. And until he returns, you have to deal with me.. I suggest you remember everything he told you, because if you are caught leaving the Palace grounds again the Dora will kill you," she turned to walk away, "Enjoy your evening, Captain. Miss Romanoff, I expect you to be awake by 4am."

She gave a snap of her finger and the Dora all fell in behind her, guns still drawn.

Steve watched them go, then pulled Natasha to his room and threw her inside.

"Steve...!"

"I need you to find me a safe way to Sharon, I need to make sure she's ok, and to see if she can help locate Bucky."

"No..." she shook her head.

"Yes, you will Nat. You did this! And you owe it to me, to Bucky! Who knows what the hell they've done to him! So you will find me a clear way out."

"No Steve!! Did you not hear what she said! She knows that I drugged T'Challa, and I'm not going to risk..Guuuuuhhh!"

He had her pinned to the wall, almost like he had done in the city earlier. Her feet dangling above the floor.

"Yes, you are. You are going to risk it. We've lost nearly everything Nat. Sometimes you have to take those risks in order to get it back. You've cased this place from top to bottom, I know you can find a way. I need to see Sharon, and you're going to get me there."

He drug her to the door and tossed her into the hall, "Find a way, and be back here by midnight. If you don't and something happens to Bucky.. You're going to have bigger problems than the Dora Milaje to worry about!"

He slammed the door in her face, leaving her gasping on the floor with no idea what to do for the first time in her life..
Tony staggered sleepily out of the elevator and onto the medical floor. His adventures from yesterday had kept him from being able to check in with T'Challa's progress, so that was the first thing he was doing this morning. He hadn't even had coffee yet! He figured nothing major had happened while he was away though, or FRIDAY or Bruce would have alerted him.

Laura really hadn't been joking around when she told him how crazy things could be with three kids. And a dog..

The return trip from Hicktown didn't end until nearly 11pm. After, Tony had been so tired he went straight to bed and slept the past ten hours away. At least now he knew what to do whenever he had insomnia, he'd just go borrow Laura's kids. He wasn't this tired after the Chitauri battle.

After Laura had finished her freakout over the brand new car that rolled up in front of that cheap ass motel, Tony helped her pack what few belongings they had salvaged from the farm and they took off on their mini journey. He could tell she was trying to act stern with him over the impromptu car purchase, but underneath he knew she was in heaven. He could see that happy gleam in her eyes, no matter how hard she tried to hide it.

Despite Clint's years working for SHIELD, who Tony knew paid pretty damn good, Laura had spent the last eight years rolling around in a swiftly aging Chevy Trailblazer.

Did they even make those things anymore?

No matter, now she had one of the most up to date SUV on the market, complete with GPS, rear entertainment system for the tiny people and parallel parking assist. She would really need that in NYC, even he had trouble sometimes, parallel parking in New York was always a bitch.

As soon as he had the time he'd be tricking it out with his own version of safety and convenience features he could come up with. He wondered how she would feel having her own AI.

But it would do, for now.

Laura drove them to the kids school to sign them out, while Tony had waited outside with a slightly stinky Lucky. He was never much of a dog fan, they were cute he would admit, and lovable, but he always loved cats. They were just so independent, which was good because he wasn't exactly the best at taking care of himself, let alone an animal.

A poor dog would probably starve with him, where as a cat would likely murder him in his sleep and eat him if he forgot to feed it.

Cats also smelled better.
While he waited for Laura to gather the kids, and inform the educational powers that be that they would be transferring elsewhere for the remainder of the school year, he couldn't help but shudder at the wet dog smell Lucky was giving off.

He spotted a Kum & Go just up the street, wondering if they sold some sort of cheap cologne that would cover up stinky. He was glad it wasn't him this time, he remembered to shower and brush his teeth before he left that morning.

But still... Shew, wet dog! Way worse than his breath! He didn't care what Rhodey said, his breath wasn't that bad.

He was getting pretty hungry too, he skipped breakfast that morning and his stomach was starting to show it's rage at being empty.

Didn't those places usually sell food?

He was in the mood for some pizza, and Laura and the kids were probably hungry too. He looked at the time. Laura would probably take a little longer, she had to change Nate's diaper while she was in there. Tony may have slightly panicked (actually he freaked the fuck out) at the words 'could you change his diaper for me'. Aliens he could handle, sentient robots, no problem. But diapers.. He'd rather run buck ass nude through Times Square with a unicorn horn sock covering his dick while being chased by Justin Hammer than change a diaper.

So yeah, plenty of time to get food. He debated taking the dog, he really didn't want to leave it alone in the car, even if he rolled the windows down. But he knew pets weren't allowed in those places unless they were service dogs and if he tied him up outside someone could take him, or he could run away.

Well, car it is then, he thought as he rolled the windows down and made sure Lucky was secure.

"Sorry rat breath, I'll bring you your own pizza as an apology. Sound good? Huh, what do dogs like on pizza? You like weird stuff right?" Lucky just tilted his head. "Sardine pizza, is that a thing? I know I've seen that somewhere. Eh, I'll figure it out."

He made his way to the Kum & Go, grabbed a shopping basket, went past the half baked looking stoner behind the counter and began his scavenger hunt.

He was kinda out of his element here, what do you need to get when you have three kids, and stink-o on a car trip? They were all going to be trapped in a car for the next hour, then another hour or so on the Quinjet, sooo... Ooh, hey! Cologne!

"Aqua Velva.. Fri, what is this?"

"I think the term you used for it was toilet cleaner Boss," came the muffled response from his pocket. "It's a cheap aftershave that's wildly popular among lower income Americans. I don't know if it is safe for animal use Boss. You might wanna re-think that."

"Well people use it so it can't hurt, right?"

"Have you ever used it, Boss?"

"Uuuuh, no. Wait, is this what I cleaned Banners toilet with that one time?"

"Mmmm hmmm, Yoda was not amused. It left a permanent stain in the bowl and when he lit
a candle in the bathroom the vapors caused a flash fire. Luckily DUM-E was on scene with the fire extinguisher. It's why Banner shaved his head after your encounter with Killian. Dr. B has been using your toilet ever since."

"I knew my toilet looked green the other day! Yeah, I probably shouldn't use this on the dog."

"My thought exactly.. How about some baby wipes? You could wipe down his fur and reduce the smell and they can come in handy for the kids as well."

Tony shrugged, "Sounds like a plan."

He didn't know how many he might need so he just took them all. Next he went on to find some diapers for Nate, FRIDAY assisting him choose the right size. He thought about the older kids, they didn't wear them did they? He grabbed a pack of adult diapers just to be safe. Remembering an article he read about car sickness and kids he hit up the medicine isle and took six bottles of Pepto and six DiaResQ.

He took his basket back to the stoner at the counter, "Can I leave this here, I need a few more things?"

Stoner just stared, "Trolls, man..The trolls are everywhere. Did you see them? They won't leave me alone. They keep drinking all the Dew..."

"...."

"Dude you beard is like spot on!! I've never seen a blue one before! You're one of them aren't you!? You're a troll!! Only trolls are that tiny!" he swayed back and forth.

"I'm just gonna go get my stuff now.." he backed away warily, "Hey, I think there's a troll on your back! You'd better grab it, I've heard they eat brains but don't worry, I'm pretty sure you're safe!"

Stoner screamed and started spinning to grab at the imaginary critter. Tony got another basket and made his way back to the deli to grab himself three big pizzas, some burgers and grabbed some snacks and soda for the kids.

Stoner was drooling against the window when he got back. Jeez this guy looked about the age of Peter, and his life was already shot to hell.

"Yo, meth age, how much do I owe?"

"Uuuuhh, you just gotta scan those thingys with that ray gun and, voila, dunn-o!"

"...What?..Fri? Little help, I haven't spoken stoner since college."

"I think he means it's a self serve checkout Boss. You scan and put the money or card in. Pineapple Express is only here to assist you."

As she said it, the stony got tangled up in his own feet and fell back to the floor with a *whump*.

"Let me rephrase, 'try to assist you' "

"And people say New York is bad.. Jesus.." he rang up his sale and slid the card through, "Hey Willie, word of advice. Lay off the drugs dude, you could be so much better if you wanted to."

"Uuuuhh, dude you mean I could be like Captain America?" stony said from the floor.
"You mother fucker..!" Tony exclaimed, he knew the moron was trippin but damn, that was rude.

"Aim higher, Willie. Reach for the stars! How about Kim Jong-un, or Hitler! Wait! I know! The Red Skull, perfect role model for you!"

Tony took one of his fountain drinks and accidentally knocked it off the counter, dousing stony in sweet sticky goodness, "Oopsies.. So sorry, I thought there was a troll on you! Bye now! And I'm not that short!"

"Asshole," he muttered as he left.

He took his pissy mood and his bags of goodies back to the car. He opened the hatch and sat down, giving one entire pizza to the dog and starting on one of the burgers for himself. Lucky was in heaven it seemed, he destroyed the entire pie before Tony could finish his meal.

Hmm, must have been starving.

He wagged his tail eagerly so Tony gave him one of the burgers too. He finished his meal and dug for the wipes, cleaned Lucky off and wiped up any crumbs. He tossed his trash in the nearby can as Laura and the kids came back.

"Uncle Tony!!" they cheered, "We missed you!!"

He scooped Lila up into a big hug while Cooper chose to wrap his arms around Tony, "What? It hasn't been that long since you saw me! What, like three months ago? Did you guys like your gifts I sent?"

Cooper smiled, "Yea, but we had to leave them at the house, those people wouldn't let us leave with them."

Lila looked sad, "I had to leave Kendall, she wouldn't fit in my backpack."

"Well don't worry sweetie there's another one waiting for you at the tower," Tony had bought her the American Girl doll she'd been obsessing over.

"Tony, we've talked about the money thing!" Laura scolded.

He turned away, still holding Lila and whispered, "There may be a few new friends with Kendall too, and a nice big playhouse, just don't tell your mom. I like my head where it is."

Lila giggled, miming a shoosh noise.

"Cooper I got you a new tablet waiting for you, and wait til you see the basketball court. Totally gonna love it!"

"Tony!"

He held up his hands, "In my defense it was already there, totally a coincidence."

"Fine, fine.."

FRIDAY always seemed to choose the best moments to interrupt him, "Boss, the contractors have finished with the ball court and the batting cages, they want to know if you decided on the skate park?"

"TONY!!"
"...Would you believe me if I said I play basketball?"

"You fell asleep at the Knicks game Boss, you were a meme for weeks."

"Shut it Fri.. Ok who's ready to go? Food's in the car, now let's vamoose!!"

They piled in, stuffing their faces, the kids chatting eagerly about a new school and seeing the city. According to them Clint never took them to New York, this would be their first trip. He and Laura fell into easy conversation as she ate her first full meal in nearly a week. She asked him about Murdock and the Tower, how Pepper and Rhodey were. She never mentioned Clint, he guessed she'd bring that up when they got there.

About thirty minutes from the airport, a strange squishy sound started floating through the car.

"Cooper, what ever you're doing stop now. We're almost there, I know you're restless and want to see the city, but just calm down." Laura said

"It's not me mom, I swear!"

"Mom..." Lila cried.

"Just a second, baby. I smell something. Let me check Nate's diaper again. Maybe he has an upset stomach."

"But Mom!"

"Oh gross!! What is that?" Cooper puled his shirt up over his nose.

"I swear it's not me!! I brushed my teeth and everything!" Tony exclaimed.

"Mom!! Lucky's covered in poop!!" Lila cried.

"Oh nasty! It's everywhere!" Cooper gagged.

"Oh my God! Tony pull over!"

He didn't have to be told twice. A glance back in the mirror showed him Lucky's shit covered face staring back at them. He swerved off to the shoulder, braking hard and sending them all flying forward.

He glanced over at Laura, who was giving him a steely stare.

"Tony?"

"...Yes dear..?"

"Before we left did you feed him anything?" Laura questioned.

"......I may have gave him some pizza. You said he ate pizza!"

"I also said it gives him the shits! Oh, fuck! How much did he eat?"

"...."

"Please tell me you didn't give him an entire pizza, Tony!"

"No.. I gave him a burger to.."
"Tony!" she yelled, "Ok, kids, out of the car. Let's go. You to Tony! You're going to help clean this mess up."

"Yick...!" he replied but got out anyway. He walked around to the back and lifted the hatch.

"Merciful Mary, Mother of God..." he spat.

There was shit everywhere, the meaty pizza must have given Lucky a bad case of the runs. With him being inside the crate there was nowhere for it to go, and Lucky being the intelligent being he was, decided that rolling in it was the best option.

"Get him out! Out! Out of the car Tony!" Laura screamed.

Not wanting to anger her further he figured it was best to just relent. He clipped on the leash and guided Lucky out. The furry little mongrel must have been waiting for this because as soon as he was down he shook like a mad dog. The runny diarrhea covering Tony, Laura and both kids, and the back half of the car as well.

There was screaming, cursing, and a happy crap covered pooch jumping all over Tony. This day had been literal shit! Pun not intended..

From there it just went downhill. Lucky's crap fest didn't get better out of the car. Tony had to wipe the cage and cargo area out with the wipes he bought. He was glad he bought so many. Laura and the kids had to take the dog to a little shopping center just up the street, bathing him in a gas station bathroom. Then the had to get some new clothes at one of the little stores.

After he cleaned up the crap he drove up to join them. He had to get himself new clothes as well. Nate was the only one not affected, he just grinned and gurgled at their chaos.

Lucky was still running for the bathroom every five minutes, which inspired Tony to use the big adult diapers he bought to help the problem. It took them an extra two and a half hours to get to the waiting jet.

Not to bad, until they discovered that all the kids and Lucky suffered from air sickness. They had to land three different times on their way home to clean everything up, finally touching down on the towers landing pad at 10:30 Monday night. They went through two entire bottles of the Pepto he picked up, most of the adult diapers and all the baby wipes.

After they were settled in he had to shower to wash the smell of shit from himself, he could still smell it stuck in his nose. Then he had to check in with Shuri to make sure she knew her brother was awake. Which was how he learned about her naked punishment of Clint and Wanda the past Sunday, and she told him of Steve and Natasha's little misfortunes too.

She was very gleeful when she spoke of it.

He also learned that Shuri planned to meet with Scott later that day to find out some pertinent information the man had after he eavesdropped on a conversation between Rogers and Romanoff.

She also said that he should expect a delivery sometime Tuesday. She thought he would like her gifts.

She was estatic that afternoon when FRIDAY informed her T'Challa was awake and doing much better. She wanted to speak to him but FRIDAY told her he was resting and comfortably for the first time all day. Tony planned on calling her after he talked to T'Challa a bit.
Tony ended up falling into bed a little after 1am, more worn out than he had been in ages. Which was why he was now groggily weaving through the med wing at half past 12 on Tuesday afternoon.

T'Challa was sitting half up in bed, the sheet pulled up to his waist. The alien mask had been replaced by a nasal cannula, his oxygen levels and breathing must have risen enough for Bruce to be comfy removing it. The news was playing in the corner, relaying info Tony already new. There hadn't been any new reports coming in, so they just kept debating with what they had.

T'Challa looked like he had lost a battle with Thor. Most of the discolorations and open wounds the poison had caused had healed mostly up, but the normally well put together King looked absolutely haggard.

*Well, dying will do that to you, Tony thought. Been there done that. More than enough.*

After the fight to save him from death, the doctors hadn't bothered to redress the man in anything, so he was still sans clothing. Although someone had given him a pair of boxers to wear, probably Bruce.

His hair was sticking out in every direction and his slightly long goatee was plastered to his face. He needed a shower or a bath but he was probably still to weak to walk yet. He'd been give the typical hospital sponge bath but other than that he hadn't had a decent scrub down probably since Wakanda. There was dried blood stuck to his face and around his eyes, which Tony could see were still colored with red.

He was sitting back against the pillows, staring out into the abyss. One hand absently rubbing at the healing scratch marks across his torso while the other kept picking at the bedsheets. A sure sign of anxiety if Tony knew anything about it.

And he did.

The man had made a stupid mistake and it had cost him dearly. More than likely he would have to pay an even higher price for it after all this was over. But he didn't deserve to have this happen to him. T'Challa was a good man who had let his overheightened emotions control him, it could happen to anyone. Hell it had happened to Tony on a daily fucking basis.

He liked T'Challa. The brief encounters they had at the Accords assembly in Vienna had been fun. Their shared interest of science and technology led to some pretty snarky, but good humored banter. Tony did notice that whenever T'Chaka had come over when they were speaking that T'Challa seemed to lose any sense of humor he harbored, his face going from a genuine smile to polite disinterest and rapidly excused himself from Tony's presence, leaving Tony alone with T'Chaka.

He wondered what that was about.

At first he thought that T'Challa might have been embarrassed to be seen with him, it wouldn't have been the first time that happened, but he hadn't looked ashamed. He looked afraid. A look of fear that appeared whenever T'Chaka would speak with them. Tony didn't understand it. He watched them from afar before the bomb had gone off but their interaction seemed normal for a father and son.

It only happened when Tony was around, which meant it had something to do with him. He had met King T'Chaka a few times previously at different international functions, so he knew the man didn't like him. Mainly because of Howards theft of vibranium. Sins of the father, he supposed.

Tony had once tried to apologize a few years back and even tried to pay the King back a nice big
sum of money. Naturally the King had taken it the wrong way and concluded that Tony was only after more vibranium. Why did everything always backfire on him?

After a heated argument involving the two, the Dora Milaje and Happy (which had been hilarious) trying to intervene they managed to sit down and have a very long discussion about Tony not giving a shit about his freaking metal. He could totally make a synthetic version and market if he wanted to, true it wouldn't be as strong, but still. He could.

They had a pretty good time after that. Before he left T'Chaka had looked at him and said, "It appears as though I have greatly misjudged you Anthony, please accept my apologies."

He still didn't accept the check for two and a half billion dollars, so Tony did what any awesome person would do and donated it to Wakanda's School of Science and Technology.

T'Chaka had sent him a solid gold panther statue decked out in diamonds and gems as his thanks.

It was the last he heard from him up until Vienna..

So he couldn't figure out T'Challa'a aversion to him in T'Chaka's presence.

Oh well, that was a problem for another day. He had way to much to deal with now..

One of those things was lying in the bed before him.

"Hello Kitty," he said, causing T'Challa to jump slightly. He must have been deep in his thoughts. "How are you feeling today? You look only slightly horrible, let me tell you."

T'Challa smirked, rolling his head to look at Tony. He wouldn't say it out loud but the eyes were a little unnerving, similar to the instant kill action he installed in Spider-Man's suit. The lights from the ceiling reflected into them making the blood red shimmer.

"Well, I look as I feel then.. I haven't been this weak since I was a child and contracted pneumonia. Though I was never this close to death back then."

Tony scooted his way over to fall onto the bed beside him, jostling the larger man and making him groan in pain.

"Scooch on over, I'm tired and bored. That's never a good thing."

"Please do not help increase the pain level Tony.. I know I deserve every ounce of it, but please let me rest for one day. You can take as many shots as you want when I'm able to stand without being winded. Please, not now."

Tony rolled to his side to stare at him, "Kay, first off, you don't deserve this shit. Do you deserve to face some form of punishment for your hiding terrorists? Yes, you do. I wont lie to you there, you fucked up big when you let them in Wakanda. You'll be lucky if I can help you get off with a short prison sentence."

He snuggled down into the pillow. He really wanted to snooze some more, but he had a lot to do today. "But you don't deserve what was done to you by the hands of one dumbass super spy, who is really shit at that job, let me just say."

"Second, I would not under any circumstance, take any shots at you. Of any kind. I'm not Rogers, I'd rather see justice served like it should be, in a court of law. Not by my fists, and not like that shit Ross pulled with the Raft, that was a direct violation of the Accords. They should have been held in
prison in Germany until the could go before the UN for a hearing. Everett Ross is already working to get him removed from his position, permanently."

T'Challa was quiet for several minutes, staring up at the ceiling.

"Come on kittykat, what's going on in that big brain of yours. You should totally come work in the labs with Bruce and I when you feel up to it. We'd make an awesome science love triangle."

"There are many things going on in my head Tony, and none of them are any good.." he muttered downcast.

"I'm the last person who should be saying this but talking about it helps. Yeesh, feelings!" he shook dramatically.

It made T'Challa laugh, so he'd take it.

"While you were away yesterday and this morning, your doctors and Dr. Banner have been running me through your machines to see how I fare.. They tell me I'm greatly improving, my blood is clotting normally now, and the bleed in my brain has stopped. That was terrifying when they explained why they needed to do the scans, I had no idea how close to death I was."

"Hey, I told you back on Sunday I wouldn't let anything happen to you. See, man of my word! Suck on that Rogers!"

"They tell me my lungs should heal to almost normal levels, but that even with my enhancement I may still have some trouble occasionally. My eyes... They tell me that the damage is permanent, my body will not heal it. Eventually the veins will heal and the redness will disappear but the vision loss is permanent.. Surgery is likely to cause more harm because of the already delicate state they have been put in."

He rolled to face Tony, mimicking his cuddle with the pillow, "I will never be as I was before.. And I have no one to blame but myself.."

Tony sighed, "Between me, Bruce, and you, I think we can figure something out. May not be ideal but I'm not going to let you wander around blind if I can help it. I already have one blind guy running around here, no, I mean literally he can run. And jump. And kick some major ass, but anywho, we'll figure it out."

T'Challa rubbed at his eyes gently, "I can no longer see the redness but I know it is there, now everything is just...Wooly Willy."

Tony cocked a brow, "Wooly Willy? You lost me there Garfield."

"A toy, I think it was a toy. What I see reminds me of the magnet particles from it. Everything is grainy and.. And spiky."

"Oh thank God, I thought you meant a sex toy!!" Tony laughed.

"You must be thinking of a Wiggling Willy." he smirked.

"I have one of those upstairs, you can come play with it when you're better!"

"Hmmm, if I still live then I might just do that." T'Challa said sadly.

"Uumm, hello! You, there in bed, alive, talking etc. You getting this? You're not going to die."
"Maybe not here," T'Challa said.

"What?"

He chewed on his lip, "In Wakanda, if you are found to be guilty of treachery against the country, the sentence is death. It is the only death sentence we have. It was a violation of allegiance to Wakanda when I let the Avengers in, knowing what they had done. I jeopardized the safety of the people to hide terrorists. When I return home and things come into the light, my punishment is death. No one is exempt from it, not even the king."

"Not going to happen! I don't care what you think, I'm not just going to stand back and let that happen."

"I am prepared to face the consequences for my actions. The UN will turn me back over to Wakanda to face trial, there's nothing you can do to change that. I knew the risk I was taking, yet I did it anyway. I wish.. I wish I could go back and do it again." he cried, "I have only been King a few weeks, I have so many wonderful things I can do for my people, but I won't have that chance now.. I already know my outcome in this."

Tony sighed, taking his hand and giving it a gentle squeeze, "Well I'm not giving up til the sky starts falling. I won't let them do that to you."

T'Challa was silently weeping, "I don't want to die..."

All Tony could do for now was offer words of encouragement and hope for the man.

Tony had no idea how long they lay there until FRIDAY informed him that Shuri was calling, requesting a video conference. T'Challa's red eyes widened comically.

"No, no, no..! Wait..!" he tried, rubbing his tear stained cheeks.

"Put her through Fri."

"Please, no I'm not ready to--" but before he could finish the image of his sister popped up in front of him. He looked like he wanted to crawl away and hide. It wouldn't work though cause the floating phone call could follow him anywhere.

"--see her yet..Oh fuck me."

In the hologram, Shuri squinted her eyes at him, looking very displeased.

"You thoughtless bastard!!" she hissed at him. "Do you have any idea what you have put me through?!!"
Red Roses

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the wait. Errors are on me.

This is eerily like watching Pepper, Tony thought to himself as he watched several tense minutes of Shuri cursing at her brother in English. Then she switched to their native tongue, which seemed to have a much deeper effect if T'Challa's expression was anything to go by. The more she yelled, the farther he sank into the bed and tried to disappear.

He really needed to learn how to speak Wakandan..

Tony swept his widened eyes back and forth between Shuri and her brother, wishing he had popcorn. This was the most entertainment he'd had all week, he just wished he knew what she was saying, of course if the situation was reversed and he was the one being screamed at it wouldn't be nearly as enjoyable.

He looked toward one of Friday's sensors on the wall with a raised brow and received three quick flashes. Fri's way of letting him know she'd have a translation for him later.

He was almost afraid to hear it..

Almost.

She must have been holding that rant in all week. T'Challa looked sufficiently chastised, head bowed and avoiding any eye contact with Shuri. His grimace becoming more and more prominent as the words raged on.

Bruce had come to the door during a particularly violent scene where she actually threw something toward the camera. Friday, being the loving AI that she is, took it upon herself to make it appear as though the spear (Mother of Thor it was an honest to God spear) came flying out from the hologram and embedded itself in the bed between them, causing them both to jump.

He really needed to check her coding. Her sense of humor was unnerving sometimes..

Bruce froze in the doorway before raising both hands in a harmonious manner and slowly backing away. Behind him a crowd of doctors and nurses had gathered, Shuri's screams drawing them like a moth to a flame. Two seconds later Bruce came back to shoo them away and cautiously closed the door.

Shuri looked like a sexy, pissed off pixie, but Tony would never tell her that. Despite what everyone thought he didn't have a death wish.

After nearly twenty minutes of Wakandan babble her rage filled rant finally came to an end and she started crying.

"Asshole!" she spat as she wiped tears from her face.

"...Shuri, I.." T'Challa began.
She made a slashing gesture toward him, "Do not even attempt to try and placate me T'Challa! Not now.. Do you have any idea what you have caused!! To me and everyone else!"

She pointed one perfectly sculpted nail at him accusingly, "Or perhaps you don't even care. You couldn't even be bothered to take a simple call from me yesterday. Don't try to deny, I know you were awake! I tried six times to speak with you and each time I was fed an excuse by Friday! I know you weren't sleeping the entire time because she informed me of the tests you were going through!"

"I didn't know what t...." he tried, but Shuri wasn't going to give him an inch it seemed.

"I have been terrified all week that I was going to lose you, but you, you don't even seem to care enough to speak to me! To let me know that you are safe! Do you know how close to death you were?! Do you have any idea how that feels?! I am your family, you sister! A few moments on the phone are not to much to ask, T'Challa! So why were you avoiding me?"

T'Challa looked stubbornly down at the sheets, eyes shining, while Shuri waited, her eyes full of fire and brimstone.

"Answer me!!" She slapped her hands on the surface in front of her.

Tony openly flinched. He had never been very good at expressing his feelings to anyone, but he knew how horrible it felt to be on Shuri's side of things. The waiting, the uncertainty, the torment of not knowing what was happening. It was how he had felt with Jarvis when he had fallen ill all those years ago. The real Jarvis, not AI Jarvis.

Tony would have given anything to still have Jarvis and Anna here.. He could only imagine the relief Shuri felt when she was told T'Challa was going to be ok. T'Challa didn't seem to share the sentiment, staring down at nothing, avoiding everything Shuri had throw at him.

His quiet, withdrawn mood only seemed to make Shuri angrier.

She gave a disdainful huff, glaring at T'Challa, "I honestly believe Father was right all those years ago, you have no respect for Wakanda. You have no respect, nor concern, for your family.. You are so utterly selfish T'Challa," she spat at him. "He should have hit you harder that day, maybe it would have knocked more sense in to you!"

He let out a ragged breath, wounded eyes looking up into the hologram at the fierce image of his sister.

"You don't mean that..." he near whispered, "I know you are angry with me Shuri, but you do-"

"Angry!! T'Challa, I have long since passed angry! Now I've moved on to what Nakia is calling demonic possession! Do you know what I had to do this morning? I had to meet with the members of our parliment, who I assumed were extremely concerned with your unexplained absence this past week.. Imagine my suprise when I enter the chambers to be bombarded with questions as to why the Avengers are currently residing within the palace walls.."

"Oh boy.." Tony cringed.

T'Challa just closed his eyes.

"That's right T'Challa. Never had I imagined that our beloved Nkiru would enter the South wing to fulfill her duties, thinking your guests had departed, only to enter a room occupied by none other than our favorite little witch. Nkiru then proceeded to flee straight into the arms of our advisors with her tale of terror, after said witch threw a table at her, which in turn led them to me.." Shuri continued
on, "Not wanting to dig myself any deeper into the pit you have thrown me into, I, with complete cooperation gave them in great detail all of the events that have occurred in this fiasco. Wakanda comes first, you know this T'Challa. Our priority is the people, the safety and sanctuary of the heart of our country. So now, as the events unfold, our advisors have decided to take matters into their hands and rectify the situation themselves."

_That's probably not good_, Tony thought.

"Shuri, what are they going to do? They can't do anything unless they have input from the King," T'Challa asked.

"Actually, my dear brother, they can. If for some unimaginable reason the King or Queen puts the security of our country at risk, the advisors have the authority to step in to overthrow the King or Queen and oversee the ruling of Wakanda until they decide if the next in line is capable of ruling. And then, according to the laws, the prospective King or Queen must take place in a battle with the tribal warriors of Wakanda. If said King or Queen is defeated then the crown can be claimed by the last warrior standing, so to speak. It is a very old law, but still very much in effect, it hasn't been used for centuries.. until now, so as of this morning, T'Challa, you have been stripped of the crown and branded as a traitor to Wakanda."

T'Challa sucked in a breath. He had known this would come, but he thought he would have more time. More time to prepare for the world to be pulled from beneath him once again.

"Oh don't look so shocked T'Challa, you knew something like this would happen. But I haven't even made it to the best part yet."

"Huh, you mean it gets worse?" Tony inquired.

"Oh quite worse, thank you.." she beamed at Tony, "Now seeing as we have no King, and I can't officially take the throne and make any legal decisions for Wakanda until I defeat the local tribesmen, the advisors have moved to bring the Avengers into custody as soon as possible. They are making plans to bring in our army as we speak."

"Shit, they can't do that! Your army is going to walk into a slaughter!" Tony yelled. "Rogers is not going to let you take him in, he'll end up killing them all. We all know what happened to those officers in the Raft! They can't do this!"

"Agreed. Luckily given my outstanding record of honesty, I managed to get them to agree to wait, to have myself and the remaining Avengers along with the Dora to apprehend them, but they only agreed to a few days."

"How long?" Tony asked.

"We have until Friday. After that the full force of Wakandas army will descend on the palace.." Shuri said darkly.

"Damn, that's basically less than two days," Tony shook his head, "Alright.. Uh, Pepper will be back tonight. FRIDAY, call Everett, make sure he's available tomorrow morning for a conference call, tell him we need to make a move by this coming Friday. Have him start moving the army today, I want the borders of Wakanda surrounded. Don't leave them any room to run"

"On it Boss!"

Tony thought for a moment, "Ok, I can get everyone else here by morning, Shuri can you be available for a call tomorrow with the rest of us, we need to make sure we're all on the same
"Believe me, I will not miss it. My entire world is at stake here." She paused briefly, "There is more... After meeting the advisors, I met with Scott Lang. He informed me that Romanoff has secured a jet somewhere in our jungles for emergency take off. I have the Dora out scouring now, but they have had no luck. Also the Captain has managed to sneak in one of his allies, a woman whom is also hidden in the jungle, I would assume close to the jet."

"Fuck!!" Tony spat, "That has to be Carter, that little bitch tipped him off on Barnes, then gave him his shield and Sam's wings back.. Be careful there, she's sneaky and thinks she's in love with Cap, don't underestimate her. Her aunt was Director Peggy Carter, my godmother, one of SHIELD's founders, so she knows how to disappear."

"Noted, I shall inform the Dora of her status." She took a breath, "This pains me to say, but last night the Captain managed to sneak past the Dora guarding him and left the palace grounds again. He was a bit irate when I informed him of Barnes abrupt relocation from the palace yesterday. I assume he went looking, but he evaded the cameras very efficiently this time.. He made it back before dawn, given the timeframe he was gone close to two hours."

She sighed, looking to T'Challa, "Do you have anything to say to me?"

He looked up through reddened eyes, "Nothing I can say to you makes this any better.. I am sorry, this.. This is not what I wanted.. I only wanted to help them. Instead I have brought shame to my family, and fear into my country. You were right, I was never meant to be a King, I- Tony could you give us a minute alone please?"

"Sure, I'll be back in a few, both of you play nice now!"

Shuri laughed, "I will speak to you tomorrow, Tony. By the way, have you received my gifts yet?"

"Your presents arrived about ten minutes ago Boss. I had them bring it to your workshop. Happy is currently guarding it along with her Highness's guards. They are waiting for you to sign off on it."

He looked at Shuri, "No hints?"

"Hmmm, no. But I do believe you will love them, one more than the other. The spys aren't the only sneaky ones here, you know."

"I agree Boss! Happy is speechless, his gum fell to the floor when he saw it and he's still shocked!"

"Huh, ok this I gotta see, I'm just gonna-" he motioned toward the door.

"Bye Tony, and you're welcome." Shuri gave a sly grin.

Tony closed the door behind him, leaving the siblings alone for their chat. On his way down to the workshop he tried a few different scenario's for this Friday in his mind, he wasn't a strategist he was more of a 'jump right into the fire kinda guy' so he was going to need major input from the rest of his new motley crew.

He was still lost in thought when he exited the elevator and stepped into the short hall to his personal zen zone. FRIDAY opened the door without prompting and he walked into the newly renovated space.
Bruce and Rhodey were already in there, standing stock still and staring slack jawed at something across the room.

"Uh, Bruce," he waved his hand in front of Bruce's face, "you ok there mean green?"


Rhodey, who was holding himself up against Dum-E, who was beeping excitedly, laughed hysterically, "I am moving to Wakanda, and I am going to marry that girl! I have no words. I will kiss her feet! Worship the ground she walks on! FRIDAY, find a way to send some flowers to Wakanda, big, big bouquet of roses! Big! Add some bling, too."

"Oookay, what is going on? Shuri sent me something and you two and a drooling Happy are freaking me out here!"

Bruce just pointed, "It's over there."

Tony eyed them all warily as he made his way to the corner of the shop, he nodded to the two men guarding a golden chest and looked further to see about ten more surrounding a tall cylinder like device near the back.

One man stepped forward, "Mr. Stark, where would you like us to deliver the stasis chamber?"

Tony froze, "The what, now?"

The guard moved aside, gesturing to his fellow comrades to do the same. Tony walked forward, around to the side of the tube with a clear glass pane. His heart started racing. He took one small step, then slowly another, and another, till he came face to frozen face with James 'Bucky' Barnes.

He took a cautious step away, a buzz in his brain growing more persistent. He squeezed his eyes together and rubbed his head. He needed to slow his breathing. But the buzzing kept growing louder and louder. He lost track of how long he stood there, trying to gain control. His skin was tingling.

He opened his eyes and turned toward Bruce, who gasped and started running toward him.

"Everybody out!! Now!!" Bruce yelled, "Rhodes, get the bots out now!!"

Happy had broken out of his trance and was dragging U to the door, Rhodes was pushing Dum-E to get him moving. Butterfingers had taken one look at Tony and flew out the door before any of them. The guards had fled as soon as Tony opened his arc blue eyes.

"Go, go, go, go, go!!" Bruce tried, "Tony, Tony I need you to calm down."

"Bruce." The buzz was becoming unbearable. Before Bruce could reach him, a shrill scream from all the electronics filled the room, Tony covered his ears.

The room exploded.. The world went sideways.
He was still lying in his hospital bed, talking to his sister, when everything started going to shit. At least Shuri wasn't screaming at him anymore. After Tony exited the room, he and Shuri had managed to speak like somewhat civilized adults for a few minutes, they had apologized to each other for the things they had said and done. Most of it was on T'Challa's part, since he was the one who had been completely in the wrong.

They were in the middle of discussing his future in Wakanda when the lights went out and a flashing red alarm started blaring throughout the room.

Shuri looked to him with concern. "T'Challa? What is tha-" The call cut abruptly off in the middle of Shuri's question. He forced himself up to his elbows.

"Friday?!" T'Challa called into the eerie light, "What's happening?" He could see people running past the window in his room. The hallway outside was also shrouded in the eerie red lights.

He prayed to Bast he wouldn't have to flee the tower. If he had get out fast he was in trouble, he was basically nude, he couldn't see and the oxygen he was currently hooked to would definitely hamper his movement.

"I'm afraid I'm not sure Your Highness. An explosion of unknown origin was detected in Boss's workshop. My sensors in there have been heavily damaged an I am unable to determine the cause. Whatever caused the explosion is has also caused most of the tower's systems to malfunction, there is an unknown source of code I am detecting within the systems and within my own coding that is resistant to my attempts to disable it."

"The workshop? Friday, Shuri sent him something, he was going to the workshop. What did she send? Did it do this?" T'Challa panted out as he tried to rise from the bed. His body was sluggish from days of disuse. He ripped off the canula and rose to his feet, the room spun momentarily before settling into normalcy. The screaming alarm was not going to help his headache.

"The items Her Highness sent didn't register as dangerous during their scan, they are not the direct cause of the explosion. Your Highness, the reactor running the tower has gone into emergency shutdown mode to prevent any damage or tampering from outside sources. The
The tower is now in full evac mode. I need you to remain calm and proceed to the stairway, help is coming."

He braced himself against the wall, "Was Tony in the workshop when it happened?"

"Yes, he and Dr. Banner were the only two inside. Bruce, as well as myself, sensed some sort of interference before the explosion. He ordered the Colonel and Mr. Hogan, as well as the Wakandan Armor guard to evacuate before it happened. Boss was in distress over seeing the Winter Soldier and was not compliant."

"Wakandan Armor guards..?" He wall walked toward the bathroom to dig up some clothes. "We only use the guard to escort prisoners.. " It took him a moment to register Friday's words, "Wait.. Barnes? Shit!! She sent Barnes here?! What was she thinking!! Gods.. Are Tony and Bruce alright? Did Barnes do something?"

"That would be a fat yes, kitty kitty! As far as Boss goes, I'm not sure. I'm not functioning in the workshop or the lower sublevels. Barnes was still in they cryo pod when it happened so he wasn't the cause. Since I can't detect if there is any structural damage to the tower or arc reactor, full evac protocol was activated. You must leave the tower now sir. Spiderman has entered the building and is on the way to you, he'll be able to help you out of the tower."

T'Challa found a pair of scrubs in the small bathroom, Hello Kitty of all the things, and pulled them on, "I'm not leaving the tower until I make sure Tony is fine, I owe him more than I can ever repay, and if I have to crawl to where he is then I will! Now tell me where the workshop is."

"Sorry sir, but my main priority is to oversee the safety of all the towers inhabitants. I can't let you down there in your current condition. You can't get inside anyway, the blast doors are down and won't open until an override is given."

"Down? It's in the basement then? No power means no elevator. Great, what floor is this again?" He hoped he wasn't too far up.

"Ninety six," a voice stated as it ran into the room, "and I know I'm a smart guy but you don't look like your gonna be capable to trek down 96 flights of stairs and 12 sub-levels to get to the shop. Friday filled me in on everything." Peter tapped his ear as he walked forward to take T'Challa's weight against him, then half carried him out the door. "Let's go. The tower is almost empty, it has some wicked fast evac procedures. Although I'm kinda worried that the doctors just left you up here. I should probably mention that to Mr. Stark. Aren't you glad I'm in the neighborhood, you're the third cat I pulled from a rooftop today!"

T'Challa smacked at him, "You have spent too much time with Tony. I'll get down to that workshop, or I will die trying." T'Challa wheezed out as they made their way to the stairs.

"Yeah I thought you might be a stubborn one, so I'm gonna go against better judgement and 'assist' you. I'm just gonna repel us down the stairway til we hit bottom. After that, I guess we'll just wing it, I'm not sure how to get in when it's in boom boom mode. I'm not leaving them down there either, better two than one, soo."

Peter kicked the door open and peered over the rail, then up toward the higher levels. It was more quiet in the stairwell and dark. The emergency lights were flickering. "Ok, piece of cake, put your wrists together."

T'Challa frowned but did as he was told. Peter held out his palm and with a flick had his arms..."
secured tightly together.

T'Challa made a face at the white goo around his hands, "Is this substance coming out of you? That is disgusting."

Peter rolled his eyes, "You old people are all assholes, you know that! Put your arms around my neck, and hold on, I just want to make sure you don't fall off on the way down. I was gonna repel us down slooow, but since you offended my genius creation of synthetic webbing this way will work better. And please don't scream in my ear, my senses are still wacky from the alarm."

"Why would I scre-" he didn't get to finish since Peter grabbed him by his waist and jumped into the darkness below. Normally freefall had no effect on him but between his blurred vision and remaining nausea, the pull in his stomach had him screaming all the way down.

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*Jesus..What the hell just happened*, Bruce thought, trying to piece the last few moments back together. His head had hit the floor so hard he had been woozy for a minute. Hulk was rumbling in the back of his mind, not sure what had happened either. He lifted his head with a pained groan, shaking bits of glass and metal from his hair as he tried to take in the turmoil around him. There was something on top of him, holding him down.

Somewhere in the room an alarm was blaring. He could smell the scent of an electrical fire.

"Jeez Big Guy, you couldn't have, I don't know... Woken up and helped me?"

'Banner not in danger. Tin Man just scared. Needed Banner more than Hulk.'

"Be that as it may.. Can I get a little help with the monkey on my back here?"

'Hulk confused. Hulk not smell monkey'

Bruce grunted, "Not a real... I was just-  ugh, nevermind, the cabinet lying on us! A little help please!"

Hulk growled in response, but Bruce felt the surge of strength go through him and pushed himself up to his feet, sending one of Tony's many tool cabinets flying. He grimaced as it landed with a loud clang against the far wall, scattering tools and wires everywhere.

"Thank you.."

'Does Hulk need smash?'

Bruce gave a smirk, "Everything is already smashed!" He leaned back against the wall to catch his breath and take a good look around, extremely glad the others managed to squeeze out of the room before Tony had lost control of whatever new skill Extremis had blessed him with.

The blast doors on the workshop had came down, trying to contain the worst effects of the blast. It was like an actual bomb had gone off in here. Glancing around Bruce noted the cables and wires that carried power from the arc reactor had blown straight through the heavily guarded walls. That was a
cause for concern, something must have caused a massive overload for those cables to even move. Wires dangled from the ceiling, sparks occasionally flying from them. Smoke billowed from multiple places, the red light from the alarm gave the room an evil glow. Workbenches, cabinets and shelves were overturned. Debris was everywhere.

Holograms danced wildly from their damaged sensors, flickering through lines of code faster than Bruce could ever process them.

Barnes cryo pod lay on it's side, the door opened with a large hole in the glass.

He took a step away from the wall, "Friday?"

No response. Wasn't that perfect.

"Tony? Tony, where are you?" he called out. Oh God! Please let him be ok. He made his way through the mess, working toward the last place he saw him. Through the smoky haze he came into view, still crouched down on the floor, his arms were wrapped around his head. His remaining Iron Man suits surrounding him.

Bruce rushed forward to help him, but came to a halt when several sets of blue eyes turned at his approach. There were only four now, Tony hadn't been rebuilt many suits after Ultron, but these four all looked right at him and raised a repulsor.

Uh-oh.. That's a little unsettling.

He held his palms up as a peace gesture, "Friday, it's just me. It's Bruce.. I'm just going to make sure Tony is ok."

The suits gave no response, the eyes stayed on him as he took a step closer. The nearest one tilted it's head much like Tony did when he was wearing it, it seemed like it was thinking, but they never lowered their guard.

Ok, if Friday were controlling them she would have responded to me, Bruce thought. So maybe it's not her.. Dear God, please don't let these go sentient. I can't deal with another Ultron.

He eased his way over to Tony, who didn't seem to be aware of what was happening. The Iron Men were watching their every move. He crouched in front of his friend, ever so slowly he reached out, not wanting to trigger the man into another episode of whatever happened earlier.

"Tony," he spoke softly, "Tony, hey, come on Tones." Bruce grabbed his arms, trying to ease them away from his head. Tony didn't have a scratch on him despite all the broken glass and twisted metal.

"Bruce.." Tony whispered, "Bruce.. Bruce, it hurts.. God, I can see everything. It's all inside my head. It's to much, I, I can't.. Handle this. My brain is going to overload.."

"Hey, hey Tony come on. We can figure out whatever this is. What do you see? I want to help you, but I need you to work with me. What do you see? Is it Extremis?"

Tony tried to wrap his arms back around his head, "Everything.." He rocked back and forth before falling onto Bruce. Bruce immediately wrapped him in a hug.

"My head, I can see it all.. Friday, the bots.. Codes, files.. The buzz, Bruce. It's like my brain connected to wifi and everything is pouring in, from everywhere, and I can't stop it.. God it just
keeps coming. Peter.. Peter is coming down. Going in a vent.. Karen.. I can hear him talking, through his suit, in my head.. I can't get it out!!" Tony sobbed out.

"Tony, Tony come on, focus. Stay with me here! Deep breaths! Tony, can you look at me? Let me see your eyes."

He moaned painfully, but complied. Bruce bit back a breath, Tony's eyes were once again the color of the arc reactor. He hugged him tighter. He needed to try and calm him down, he was still breathing rapidly and most likely on the verge of another panic attack and another kaboom.

"Tony, I know it's hurting you, and I know you're scared, but I need you to calm down. Somehow, I think Extremis has mutated itself. Somehow, it's letting you control things, see these things, inside your own mind. Ok.. When you panicked before, you lost control over it. I need you to get that control back. Tony, can you do that? All these things you see in your head, can you see the alarm? Focus on that Tones. Focus and turn it off."

Tony shook his head rapidly, "I'm scared Bruce.. I don't know how this happened! What if.. What if I can't stop it?"

Bruce gave him a firm shake, "You can do this Tony, I know you can. I'm right here, I'm not leaving you. We will figure this out together! Find it, Tony. Focus on it. Shut it down."

Tony closed his eyes, breathing deep he tried to pinpoint one small dot of information flowing through his head. Bruce wanted him to shut off the alarm. Focus on that. Alarm. That particular alarm only worked if the reactor went offline. He needed to connect to the arc reactor.

Systems rolled by, he just needed to bring it forward. If this was like a giant file system he just needed to open the right file.

He pushed through until he found it. It was in emergency shutdown.

He focused, then pushed his mind forward, he latched on.


"Boss? Where are you?"

Would you believe your in my head? Or more likely my head is in your servers. Friday, begin a full diagnostic of every single system in the tower. Everything, lights, security databases, the works. Let's hope my meltdown only effected the lower levels. I want to make sure we're safe to stay here. I may have nearly killed us all. Get the architect in to check for structure damage. I'm not taking chances.

"On it Boss! I gotta say this is unusual for me. I feel like I'm being violated in my own server"

Unusual for you, my head might actually explode. I'll work my way out of your server baby girl, don't worry. I have no desire to stay here, my eyes feel like their popping out.

"Tony? God Tony, please answer me!"

He slowly brought himself out of brainer-net. He looked up at Bruce, "Ooowww!"

Bruce hugged him again, "Are you ok? Oh my God, that was terrifying!"

"My head hurts Banner, ease up a bit would you!"
"Sorry, sorry," Bruce let him go, "Your eyes are back to normal. Did that actually just happen? Tony, did you really just do all that with your mind?"

Tony moaned, looking around at the chaos. At least the lights were on, well the ones that survived his internal overload. And the fires were out.

"Oh shit, I'm like walking wifi! Why does weird shit always happen to me?" he visciously rubbed his face, "Why Bruce? Why me?"

Bruce chuckled at him, "You're just lucky I guess."

"Uuggghh.. Oh shit!! Shit!! Where's the pod?!" Tony looked around worried, eyes wide and frightened. "Shit!!"

The cryo pod had been knocked over and broken during the blast. Now Barnes was defrosting on the ground. Tony walked over and kneeled down to check for a pulse. Well he was still breathing, so at least Tony hadn't unintentionally killed anyone today. Even if he kinda wanted to.

"Is he alive?" Bruce questioned.

"Yeah, yea he's breathing, but we need to get him out of here before he wakes up. Cryo is toast, he's not going back in there."

Bruce pondered on it for a minute, "Is the Hulks room still stable. We can lock him in there, there's no possibility for escape and we can monitor him constantly."

"Yeah, yeah let's do tha-"

"Aaaaaaahhhhh!" Came the dual set of screams from one of the ventilation shafts in the shop.

Tony shot to his feet and the armors turned their repulsors toward the new target. Bruce wondered if Tony was unconsciously controlling them or if they were working on their own.

A few seconds later Peter and T'Challa came crashing through the vent, dangling and tangled up messily in Peter's webbing. And obviously deep in an argument.

"See!!" Peter gasped, "I told you I could lift the blast barrier!"

They were both upside down, swinging crazily in a circle.

"You almost cut off my head!! Oh, God! I'm going to vomit again.. Make it stop fucking spinning!" T'Challa cursed.

"Well, if you hadn't been crawling so damn slow I wouldn't have nearly dropped it on you!"

"I can barely walk!! What in the name of Bast made you think I could crawl any faster?! And as I recall, it was your ass that I got stuck on! Stop eating junk foods!"

"Me!! Your the one who can barely fit in the vents! What the hell do you eat in Wakanda? Elephants!!?"

"Are you implying that I am fat?!!" T'Challa spat at him.

"The vents are huuuuuuge!!"

Tony walked over to them and stopped their spin with a grin, "Ok, number one, T'Challa why aren't
you in bed? Two, Peter why aren't you in school? And three... What do you eat in Wakanda?"

Bruce growled behind him, "After this is all over I'm taking a vacation. I'm going back to Knowhere and Asgard and you idiots are on your own! Now can we please get moving and get Barnes out of here before he wakes up and tries to kill us all!"

There was a small shuffle behind them, followed with a very faint, "I.. I don't want to kill anyone.. I never have.. Please. Please I promise I won't fight you. I'm so tired.." Barnes mumbled.

The armors whined, ready to strike.

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Please just make it quick," he cried, curling into a ball on the floor, "I don't want to fight anymore.. If you're going to kill me please be quick. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!"

Tony studied the sobbing man before him intently. He was still a little blue, and had water drops dripping from his hair. It reminded Tony of a small, scared child.

"Well.. I wasn't expecting that."

Chapter End Notes

So i had this idea that at the end of each chapter I could start suggesting a story that I like that you may want to read. More than likely you've already read it, but I'll suggest them anyway. This chapter I'm recommending a series. It's by Ana (Anafandom) it's the Second Chances series and it's awesome!!
Trust

Chapter Summary

Tony 'confronts' Barnes.

Chapter Notes

Alas, I have graces you with a new chapter. I once again an sorry for how long it takes, but life does happen. All errors are my fault and I do try to correct them all, but remember I am human. We are all flawed.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony stared at the tight ball of human being curled up in his nearly decimated workshop. Yeah, that was definitely not something he was expecting. Hell, none of what just happened was anything he expected. Somehow he had managed to fuck up Extremis to the point that he was now a walking data processor. Or had his own internal wifi.. Hell he didn't even know!

And wasn't that some freaky shit..

At least he had gotten the healing part right, well he hoped anyway. His test showed his heart was one hundred percent functional and his liver was as good as the day he was born so now he just needed to figure out this little mishap he'd created. Well, then there was that episode of extra strength he displayed a few days ago. He really needed to get his shit sorted out and work out these kinks..

There was just to much junk on his plate and he didn't have time to sift through it all..

One thing at a time, he thought.

Well, let's start with the two heroic idiots swinging from the ceiling. If his phone weren't blown to pieces over by his workbench he could get a pic of this for future blackmail.

How in the hell these two (especially T'Challa in his current condition) managed to fit together in the vents he had no idea. He wondered if he could use his brain like a camera and upload an image.. Eh, he'd test it later. He didn't want to accidently blow Peter and T'Challa to bits.

Peter was wrong about the size of the vents. Maybe for someone as tiny as he is they were huge, but T'Challa was a pretty muscular guy so how they made it through without getting completely stuck was a feat. He was impressed that Peter had lifted the barrier that closed off the vents from the rest of the tower. Those were designed to keep any hazardous fumes or substances from reaching other parts of the building. Once they were down they had an airtight seal that nothing could get past. He knew, he tried about a hundred scenarios before he was satisfied. How the hell had the kid managed to lift it.

One more thing he had to wonder on and fix later, he sighed to himself as he walked over to his ruined cabinet.
"Bruce, can you watch him?" Tony pointed at Barnes.

Bruce looked toward the Iron Man armors that were still standing guard over Barnes. Tony hadn't even seemed to notice them, prepared to shoot anything that might be a threat to their creator, or if he had he just didn't mention it. Bruce wondered if they did that alot or if Tony was subconsciously controlling them.

He threw up his arms, "Sure, why not. We're stuck in here anyway. It's not like he can go anywhere, unless he makes a run for the vent these genius's fell from. You know, I should really update my resume to a live in babysitter instead of nuclear physicist. Lately all I have done is watch people. You, T'Challa, Thor! I'm tired, I need a break, Tony!"

"Can't walk, my legs are still froze." Barnes mumbled, "Wouldn't try to leave anyway, I'm always real sick a day or so after I wake up."

Bruce moaned, clearly irritated. "Someone please remind me to restock the nausea meds.. Laura cleaned us out last night. Something about pizza dog and diapers and she hates men."

Bruce rubbed his nose, giving Tony that 'what did you do' glare he had.

Tony ignored him for the time being and dug into the cabinet til he found some of the web dissolving fluid he and Peter had perfected, "Calm down green bean. I'll let you out in a sec! You know you could let Big Green out to play for a few days. I'm sure he's bored trapped in your pit of misery and despair day after day." He strolled back to the swinging duo.

"Big Green is content where he is for the moment. He knows everything that's happening anyway. He finds us amusing, he wishes I'd eat popcorn when we're all together."

"We still need to talk about that! Your built in hulkie-talkie thing, don't think I'll forget Brucie-Bear!" Tony wagged his finger at him.

"All in good time my pretty, all in good time." Bruce replied, as he moved to help him.

"Aww, you think I'm pretty! I knew you loved me! Ok, hold still you two. Bruce grab Felix, don't need him landing in his head. That's embarrassing for cats, he'd never live it down."

Bruce laughed as he finally took a closer look at the two 'heros'. Peter had somehow managed to get them tangled up in a big ball of his webbing. T'Challa was upside down and looked like he was nearly cocooned with it. Only half of one leg and arm were visible, as well as his head and neck. Peter, well, how he managed to get himself wrapped up in this he'd never know. His body was contorted in an impossible angle, his feet were touching the back of his head while his arms were dangling freely beneath his body. His midsection was stuck to T'Challa's cocoon and both were oh so slowly spinning.

"Oh ho ho! I wish there was a way to get a pic of this. This, this is just golden!" Bruce laughed as he steadied T'Challa, who gave him a glare.

"While I am tempted to expel my meager stomach contents on you just for spite, I will say that this is not one of the worst positions I have been in. This would not even be in my top ten, so feel free to take your photo Doctor. At least this time I am fully clothed and there are no monkeys chasing me."

Tony, who had been shaking the can of fluid, froze. "Naked, with monkeys chasing you...? Hmmm, sound like a good story but I'm pretty sure my trip to Jamaica back in 2000 has you beat. There was some kind of weird seaweed and a witch doctor type... person. I don't know, I never figured out if it was a man, woman or now that I know they exist it may have been alien. All I remember is weed,
smoke and then I woke up floating naked down a river in Brazil and my dick was growing yak fur and my nipples were pierced with bones."

The room became so quiet you could hear the faint sound of the subway rolling by two blocks away.

Tony looked at the faces staring at him with horror, "What? It happened, I swear! Just ask Happy, he was there! He had to go buy the razors! I swear it took six months for that fur to stop growing.."

"I was merely joking," T'Challa whispered.

Tony blinked at him, "Well, let's carry on then!"

He sprayed the web ball and Peter and T'Challa came crashing to the floor, Bruce managed to save T'Challa's head from smacking the floor but that was it, he landed with a hard thud. Peter landed on one finger and smirked at T'Challa. Tony thought he could sense some future friendly rivalry between these two.

Ok, two idiots free, next the door.. Friday obviously wouldn't be any help here, so he was going to have to risk blowing them across the rainbow bridge to get the door up. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. He opened his mind, felt the connection sync in, trying to find his way into the security features. Even with the main power down he should be able to bypass and go through the auxiliary backup.

He weaved his way through until he found it. It was an odd feeling, almost like his mind wasn't really attached to his body anymore. He keyed in his override and heard the door give a hiss as the locks let free.

"Wow," Peter was in awe, "that's pretty wicked! Creepy, kinda freaks me out, but pretty wicked!"

"Did you just..?" T'Challa gasped.

"Yeah, now is not the time for this conversation.." he clapped his hands together, "Bruce, Pete, could you two please help T'Challa back to the med floor and get him checked out please? I'll be up soon, just gotta take care of something real quick."

Bruce frowned, "Are you sure you want to be left alone with-" he gestured vaguely to Barnes, still lying on the floor. The man had made no attempt to move or flee.

Tony looked at Barnes thoughtfully, "Yea," he said softly, "we'll be fine Bruce. Don't worry. Go, I'll be there soon."

"What about them?" he pointed at the armored guards.

"Huh? Oh, yea they do that. It's a safety feature for me." Tony smiled. "Now go, I'll be fine!"

The three men were reluctant to leave, but at Tony's insistence, they finally relented. Peter and Bruce helped T'Challa to his feet, each supporting him as he walked. T'Challa looked back at him as they were leaving, "I know how you feel, but it was not entirely his fault."

Tony only nodded in return, then he was alone with Barnes. He paused to link up with Friday again.

Friday, find out if everyone's ok. Let them know the situation, get someone trustworthy to give a statement. Evac of Stark Tower is gonna be all over the news, let's get it handled. Come up with something good, make sure they know there was no attack from anyone.
Everyone is safe and accounted for Boss. Mr. Murdock is in the building Boss. He was here for his meeting with Laura. Would you like me to have him handle the police and press outside?

Double D is here? You know what, let's do that. Have him put those lawyer skills to good use.

I have informed him Boss. He would like you to know, and I quote, 'I am your lawyer not a damn PR rep, I'm not made to be in front of the camera Tony!'

Friday repeated Matt's words to him in Matt's voice. He sounded angry.

Tell him I'll pay him double for handling public relations for me.

He's happy to be at your service Boss. Feel free to call him for any future engagements.

MmmHmm, thought that would get him.

He made his way back to Barnes and crouched down. The man was shivering violently despite the high temperature in the room.

"Pl-ple-please," James stuttered out, "please just make, make it fast. I, I don't, don't want to do, do this anymore... Please." His teeth were chattering so hard Tony thought they might shatter.

Tony sighed and went to the overturned couch in the corner. He dug around until he found his old battered blanket, it was well worn and singed in many places but it was the warmest thing he had down here. He took it back to James and sat down beside him. The man flinched away as he leaned toward him.

"Are you ok James?" He asked as he wrapped the man up tight in the blanket.

"What..What are you doing...?"

After he was satisfied that James was cocooned in the blanket, he sat back on his ass, "Well, I've never seen anyone shake this fucking bad before, so I'm assuming you're either really cold or having a seizure. So I am trying to help you by wrapping you in this blanket. Please God don't be a seizure,because I can't deal with any more medical shit this week!"

"Why..?" He chittered out.

Tony sighed, "Because despite everything that happened, I know you had no choice in what you did. Yes, I was pissed, still am a little.. But I know you couldn't stop it. I've been going back through SHIELD's file dump, trying to understand.. I know everything that HYDRA did to you and.. I'm sorry.. If Steve had told me as soon as he knew, I wouldn't have reacted so bad.. I'm sorry I tried to actually kill you.. It was a blind rage moment.."

"I'm so sorry.. I never wanted this.. I-I didn't want to fight. In the Army.. That was always Steve.. I didn't even enlist like-like everyone thought. I-I was, was drafted. I lied, to ev-everyone. I'm, I'm a cow-coward." James cried out.

"No coward could have survived what they put you through.. But seriously, are you ok? Are you hurt anywhere I should know about. I wasn't expecting my house to blow up or you to be blasted out of a glass pod..

"No, no just, just cold.. Can't feel my legs yet. They, they never work when they thaw me.. Scary.. Feel sick. I hate, hate this.." James curled further in on himself.
Tony frowned at him, "So you can't walk at all right now?"

"No, no I won't be able, able to for a day or so.." the shakes were getting worse.

Tony thought about the cold, vast loneliness of Hulk's floor. The plan had been to move him there, but deep down he didn't think he would need to. His gut was telling him different. he hoped to God he wasn't going to regret this.

"Can I trust you?" Tony asked.

"Wha-what..?" James stuttered.

"Can. I. Trust. You? Can I trust you, to stay here, confined to the tower, to the penthouse, until I figure out the best way to help you, to help get the words from your head. Can I trust you not to run away, to stay here where you'll be safe from Thunderbolt or Hydra or anyone else who might be after you. Can I trust you, to stay here, where you'll never be cold or hungry and none of us will hurt you. Can I trust you to stay here, in my home, with my family and friends? Can I trust you not to hurt any of us? Can I trust you James?"

Barnes was staring at him in awe. The man had probably expected to die while he was vulnerable, but instead he was being offered another sanctuary. Another chance to start a new life.

"Can you trust me James?" Tony asked, staring straight into his eyes. "Can you trust me to help you, to keep you safe from harm, can you trust that I won't hurt you, that I just want to help you.. Can you trust me?" Tony held out a hand.

James looked at Tony's hand, and into Tony's eyes. His years of training had given him something of a sixth sense, he could always tell if he was being lied to. As he looked at Tony he felt no sense of betrayal or malice in him. The man was truly being sincere with his offer.

He stuck his remaining arm out from the blanket, grasping onto Tony's hand, "I trust you, Tony. And I swear to you, I will do whatever you need me to. I'll stay here, I promise, you can trust me..

Tony let out a sigh of relief and pulled James up to him in a strong hug. James didn't even try to resist, it just felt good to have someone actually comfort him. To touch him without pain. The sat there for a few more minutes, both felt relief, like a great burden had lifted from them.

Tony was the one who broke the silence, "So you can't walk, how much do you weigh?"

"Umm, I don't, don't really know. Around 230 I, I guess.. Why?"

"Cause I don't have a wheelchair or gurney here so I'm gonna have to carry you up through the basement levels and then to the elevator if it's working again. If not I have to carry you to the penthouse. I could fly you up in the armor, but that's a little to flashy and Ross could see. "

"Ummmm.."

"MmmmHmm, go ahead, laugh it up! Little man like me carrying big buff guy like you, but I promise I'm stronger than I look. Lately. Recently. About a week ago. Anyway, you ready? I'll get you settled in a room, and have Bruce check you over. He can give you something for the nausea. You're on my floor so I'll put you near me for now but there are like 15 bedrooms so you can pick a new one when you feel better."

Barnes nodded at him, even though he was sure he'd stay in whatever room Tony picked for him, "I'm ready.. I'm tired.. Can I sleep?"
Tony gave him a look, "You don't have to ask me if you can sleep, or eat, or bathe or even watch TV, you're not a prisoner James. I'm not a captor, this can be your home if you want it to be."

Before James could reply Tony picked him up with great ease in a bridal style carry, blanket and all. It was a little embarrassing but he was too weak to complain. Tony made sure the stump of his arm was away from his body so there was no pain as he carried him to the stairs. He wanted to say something about not being a damsel in distress but, fuck it, it felt good.

He snuggled deeper into the blanket, he was never giving this thing back. It was so warm and soft. He pressed himself closer to Tony as he walked, the man smelled like coconut and gunpowder, it was nice.

He let his mind drift away, feeling at peace for the first time in nearly a century. He was asleep before Tony made it up the first flight of stairs.

Chapter End Notes

So my recommendation this chapter is by Staubengel. It is called *The Wars we fight* and it is freaking amazing!! You have to go check it out. If StarAccuser isn't your thing it will be once you start reading this!! I love rare pairs, why can't there be more Peter/Ronan fics :(
Are These Goggles?

Chapter Notes

My mind is working overtime this week :) So you get two chapters!! Enjoy :) Ignore the errors, I do try my best!
And please remember, this is a story. If I write something that doesn't seem possible or may not make complete sense to you or isn't in line with the movies or comics.. IT'S A STORY :) See the end of the chapter for more notes

Stronger yes, more stamina.. Definite no!

He mainly wanted to test out his strength theory when he told Barnes he could carry him, and while he managed to pick Barnes up with ease he was only able to do so for a short amount of time before he started straining. The elevator was still locked down from the basement levels, so Tony had to carry Barnes up to the lobby before boarding the elevator. By the time he made it to the penthouse with the sleeping soldier Tony was feeling pretty winded and his arms were on fire.

He sure as hell wouldn't be able to fight very long this way without his armor. Maybe if he just punched twice as hard. He should probably do more cardio!

Apparently James Barnes was a cuddler.. And a snorer.. He was snoozing before Tony even made it up one flight, his face pressed tight against his chest. It was oddly adorable, there were these cute little whistling sounds coming from him.

Bruce was waiting for him in the penthouse with a huge medical bag, "I didn't know what I might need, so I just brought everything. And why is there a very large painting of me on your wall?"

Tony grunted heavily as he slipped past toward the bedroom, Bruce hot on his heels. Even though he was never up here much he put Barnes in the room nearest his. If he needed him, Tony could always be there in a flash.

"Tony?" Bruce asked.

"What?" he wheezed as he laid Barnes on the bed. Yep, definitely cardio. He wiped the sweat from his head.

"How did you carry him all the way up here?"

Tony flinched, "Wellll, it may or may not be a side effect of Extremis. While I was in Montana I got angry and threw my tablet at the wall.. I put it halfway through the wall Bruce. That's not normal!! Especially for my pint size frame! I must have made a miscalculation."

Tony started wandering around the room aimlessly. Touching things in a way that told Bruce he was anxious.

"I just wanted to fix my heart..I didn't want any of this other shit. I don't even know what I've really
done to myself Bruce. This.." he gestured to his face, eyes turning blue, then the lights started going off and on and the shades came down. "This is fucked up..

"Tony, we just need to run some te-" Bruce began.

"And I think I know why..."

Tony looked on to Barnes still snoring softly, they'd have to wake him in a minute so Bruce could check him over. But for now Tony wanted him to stay asleep. He wasn't comfortable with anyone seeing this, not even Bruce. But he had to show someone and Bruce was the only one smart enough to help him should he need it.

He pulled Bruce out into the hall and into his own bedroom. In one swift motion he pulled off his shirt then reached up to his heart. He gave a few scratches with his nails to loosen the seal then pulled the flesh colored cover off of the arc reactor. The blue glow filled the room. Bruce was speechless.

"That's the arc reactor.. Why? Tony why do you have that back in your chest?" Bruce held a hand up to touch it. "Tony.. What happened Tony...?"

Tony sat down on the bed with his head in his hands, "After the heart attack, while I was in the hospital, Dr. Cho ran a few tests to make sure the prosthetic sternum piece we implanted was still holding steady. It wasn't."

Bruce was quiet for a moment, contemplating.

"I don't understand," Bruce said, "It should have been fine, a simple heart attack wouldn't be able to do any damage to that Tony. They aren't connected, it was just there to fill in the space the reactor left behind. To help protect you heart if something hit you."

Tony laughed darkly, "Well let's be glad it did it's job then..

"So something hit you? For that piece to be damaged and effect your heart the force of the hit would have to be extreme. What aren't you saying Tony?"

"....I...In Siberia, when I went to talk to Steve, you know we got in a fight. Nobody knows all the details but Friday and Pepper, well T'Challa was there to so he knows what happened. Nobody knows about this but you though." He tapped the reactor.

"I didn't tell you everything. After I blasted off Barnes arm, Steve went ballistic. I told you he immobilized the suit, but I didn't tell you how. He managed to get me down, he ripped off the faceplate and raised his shield. At first I thought he was going to bash my skull in, then slammed his shield into the reactor. Hard.. The force of it even through the suit, impacted the prosthetic. It pushed it back so far it snapped..."

He laughed, "I knew something was wrong when i made it home, I felt strange but on my scans nothing showed, I just thought I was sore. When Dr. Cho did her scans she found it. Snapped right down the middle and snapped away from the ribs it was attached to. Everything was just floating around in there.. And I couldn't even tell because of all the nerve damage."

Tony let out a sob, "The heart attack wasn't completely triggered by stress.. One of my looey goosies in there nicked me, just a small scratch really, but it nearly killed me. Cho had to do emergency surgery on me. There wasn't time to build a new prosthetic so Pepper brought one of my old reactors. Cho put it back in, it was supposed to be temporary, to keep everything in place til a new sternum was made. Or I had a transplant, Cho didn't think I'd survive the injection. But... Now it's
permanent.."

"What do you mean?"

He sniffed, "Extremis.. It was injected after the reactor was put in. Somehow, I think Extremis saw it as a part of me. It latched on instead of trying to expel it, it actually regenerated parts of my ribs and sternum around the casing, it bonded them to it Bruce. I can't take it back out. The outer casing is covered in a thin layer of bone now. It showed up on Friday's scans, there's no way to take it out. The arc itself is wrapped up in nerves and tissues now, it's in there."

"Tony..."

"I'm just glad I upgraded it that last time to open from the front.. At least I can change out the core if I ever need to. All the internal components in the reactor that Friday can run diagnostics on, they emit a signal via wifi, I think that's why I can.." he pointed at his head. "Extremis is manipulating the signal somehow.. Through my central nerve system. But hey, at least I can bench press 500 pounds now, right? Thank you, Steve!" Tony said bitterly.

Bruce looked at him horrified, "All this.. Steve caused this.. Tony why didn't you say something, I could have got Thor and we could have went after him. Stopped this before it got so bad. Why didn't you call me for help, while you were in the hospital! I didn't know you had even had a surgery! And a major one at that!!"

"You just came back home Bruce, I didn't want to risk driving you away again.."

"Oh, that's just fucking bullshit!" Bruce went a little green, his voice deeper, "I came home Tony because that's where I want to be! I'm not going to just fly off to Knowhere anytime you think you might offend me!"

He grabbed Tony's shoulders, "Tony you are my family, you're my brother! I love you and I will do anything I physically can to help you and protect you dumbass!" He hugged him roughly.

"Thanks Bruce," he choked out, "I love you to you know.."

"Please don't keep things like this from me Tony. You are the most important person in this world to me, don't let yourself suffer like this please." He smiled, "It makes Hulk get angry."

"Yea, yea. And we wouldn't like him when he's angry. Tough shit Banner, we love him no matter what."

Bright green eyes stared at him, a clear sign Hulk was listening. There was a deep rumble in his chest, "Hulk love Tin Man too!"

"Thanks big guy..

Bruce hummed, "Told you, always listening. I'll always be here when you need me Tony. Always. And we are going to figure this out. We'll find a way to fix this, and if for some reason we can't then we will make sure you are the best damn wifi router in the universe!"

Tony gave him a deadpan stare, "I am so accessing your search history tonight!"

"In my defense Hulk likes Shrek porn!"

"You're both heathens, both of you."
Bruce looked toward the hall, "I should go check out Barnes. I'm glad that you two didn't try to kill each other."

"We came to an understanding. We both did horrible things, now we just need to move on from it as best as we can. I hope we get there, eventually."

"We all will, I have faith in us." Bruce suddenly looked nervous, "I called Thor.."

Tony cocked a brow, "Isn't Thor in Asgard? How did you call him? Did you develope inter-planetary communication and not tell me? That's low science bro!"

"Actually he's in Norway. Asgard is currently a smoking volcano, it's basically destroyed, there isn't much left. He and Loki have been traveling back and forth through the galaxy, trying to find some way to bring it back. I caught him while he was still on the planet, he'll be here in the morning."

"What?" Tony was near speechless, "The Realm Eternal? Gone? Poof? No more?"

Bruce nodded, "Thor will fill you in on that tomorrow. Asgards gone, Odin is dead and Thor is King now."

Tony gave him an annoyed glare before punching him in the arm, "Please don't keep things like this from me Tony!" he repeated Bruce's earlier words sarcastic. "Really Bruce, you didn't think that might be important?!"

"Not at the time, no. We have enough to deal with. Now I need to go check on Barnes. T'Challa's fine by the way. He was waiting for you, I think he's getting restless with all the bed rest he's had. Oh, he told me about the crates Shuri gave you. Congrats, she must really like you."

"Mother fucker!! I forgot about those! What's in them?"

Bruce just grinned.

"Oh come on! You're just going to leave me hanging with that line?!"

"Yep! Sure am! Now go see T'Challa, he'll tell you about them, and here-" Bruce pulled something out of his pocket, "Take him these. R&D made them up for me this morning."

Tony took the pair of clear..?

What the hell?

"Are these goggles? Why am I taking him goggles Bruce?"

Bruce scoffed, "There not goggles, they're prescription glasses Tony. Made to fit his current vision loss. If it changes more we'll have to make a new set."

"Bruce, these are goggles. Why do they have a stretchy band around them? Don't three year olds wear these?"

"Not goggles! They're-" Bruce took a closer look, "Ok they look a little like goggles, but these are actually made for athletes. I figure in a few more days he's going to be back up to full strength and he's an active guy, sooo."

"So you give him toddler eyes?"

Bruce growled, "Oh fuck off Tony! He's going to be up and running and I just thought regular
frames won't really work for him. He can change them if he wants! At least he'll be able to see for now. Now go play with your cat, I have to go be a doctor."

"If he claws out my eyes over these, I blame you."

"GO!!"

"FINE!! I'm going! Then I'm going to go check out those golden Wakandan crates." he made for the door.

"I think you'll find it's right up your alley.. *Metal Man..*" Bruce smirked.

Tony pondered on that as he went down to the med floor. Brucie really put emphasis on the metal part.

Metal?

Metal, metal, metal?

Metal!!

*Holy crap!*

It was metal..

From Wakanda.

That could only be one thing..

Vibranium..

Chapter End Notes

Awesome story recomendation for this chapter is by DLanaDHZ, JessicaMDawn and it's called Who Really Needs a Bodyguard?

I promise you'll love it :)
As the sound of kittens meowing filled the room once more T'Challa gave a heavy sigh. At least this time it didn't send him into a coughing fit though. That had to be a good sign, right?

"I must ask you. Again! Why aren't you in school? Is it common for American children to not care about their education?"

Peter glanced up from his phone. He'd made himself a swinging web chair in the corner of T'Challa's room and was amusing himself by watching funny cat videos til Tony or Bruce came back. He honestly wasn't trying to annoy the older man, he just loved cat videos. They were the best things on the net. The cat King wasn't amused though. He looked like he was ready to fight. He kept giving Peter angry looks and irritated puffs of air.

Honestly you'd think he'd be happy that he was alive right now. After his past few days of near death experiences. And cat videos were awesome! Maybe he just got a lot of cat jokes. Peter could only imagine some of the names Tony would probably call him. He'd created so many for Spiderman he'd lost count.

Peter glared back, "Why is everyone asking me that? I'll have you know I have the highest GPA in my class right now."

T'Challa scoffed, "Forgive me. I did not know your pre-schools even used a point system. I merely thought they taught you how to socialize politely with other humans. Have you learned that word yet? Polite. For example, It is polite not to try and decapitate someone! And not to constantly play cat sounds to a man who worships cats!"

Peter flicked a web at him, "For the thousandth time!! It was an accident, you were moving to damn slow and that thing was heavy. It slipped! I caught it before it hit you, so just let it gooo!!"

"My nose was touching the bottom of it!!"

"It barely grazed you!!"

T'Challa pointed at the tip of his nose, which was slightly red and a little swollen, "Does that look like a graze to you?"

"It's still in one piece isn't it?"

"You are an insufferable child!" he struggled to sit up in bed, he was damn tired of being in this room.

He was starting to feel hunger again and he could definitely use a shower. Now that he had some sense coming back he could smell himself, it wasn't pleaseant. How anyone could stand to be in close proximity to him was a mystery. He made it upright and set his feet to the floor. He wishes
Tony would come back down, but he was busy dealing with Barnes. This whole trip had turned in to one big fiasco.

He'd love to spend more time with the man. After all the shit T'Challa had a hand in he was suprised Stark had even let him through his door. It just went to show you how truly generous Tony really was. He had planned on coming here to offer him a sincere apology for failing to help the man. To grovel for his appaling actions. For leaving him alone in a hostile environment, badly injured.

And if he was being honest with himself, he wanted to get to know the man on a more personal level. Maybe they could work to an easy friendship together, and maybe after that, maybe something more. Not just as two wealthy socialites or two humans who got their kicks wearing body armor. But just to regular people. He really got way off track here..

"ME!! You're the one moaning about my cat videos and you're wearing Hello Kitty pajamas!"

T'Challa threw the closest thing he could grab, which turned out to be his portable oxygen, and heaved it at Peter.

He was feeling petty, he needed to get out of here. To do something to try and rectify what he could of his situation. He needed to go home, each passing moment Shuri was left alone with Rogers and Co. the more nervous he became. He knew she would be well guarded but he still had that foreboding feeling of doom in his gut.

Peter caught it easily, "Oh that's mature. And you say I'm the preschooler. Well, I may not be a super genius like you, but pretty sure you need this to breathe, dumbass!"

He hopped down and brought the little device back to him with a sneaky smirk. "Here kitty, kitty, kitty!" he taunted, "You want me to hang this from the ceiling for you? Does my little fuzzy wuzzy want to play?! You want some catnip kitty kitty?"

"Arrrrhhhh," T'Challa growled and leapt from his bed, sending Peter running around the room. He chased him for a few minutes before he gave up panting, he fell face first onto the bed.

"Uuugh, forget it, I surrender.." he muttered.

Peter grimaced, he hadn't meant to cause the man any more trouble. He was just having a bit of fun. "Here, put this back on. Tony will kill me if I let you get hurt.." he helped T'Challa roll over and fixed the canula to his nose.

"Oww!" T'Challa grabbed at Peters wrists, "I ask that you be more gentle, my nose is tender from my near decapitation!"

"It.Was.An.Accid-!!"

*thwip*

He was cut off as a web covered his mouth. Looking at his hands he saw that his shooters were gone. T'Challa grinned up at him cheekily, a web shooter attached to each hand

"These weren't as hard to aim as I thought. Ah, so quiet. I may keep these."

Peter ribbed off the web, "How? How did you even? I didn't even sense that.. How did you get them off?" he shouted.

T'Challa scoffed again, "Obviously with my cat like reflexes."
Peter's mouth dropped, and here he was trying to be nice a minute ago, "Oh you son of a bitch!"

"I may be down right now little spider, but I am certainly not out. I am still a highly skilled fighter."

He tossed the web shooters back, "You should be more observant of your surroundings, I took those right in front of your eyes and I'm half blind and you have a sixth sense."

Peter looked at them forlornly, "Was this another test?"

"Not really, but you need far more training if you intend to continue on this path."

"I've been saying that for weeks. Glad to hear someone else agrees with me. Hello, I'm Matt Murdock. And what, may I ask, is going on in here?" The newcomer came forward, his cane tapping the ground beneath him.

Peter perked up at the voice, happy to see his new friend and sometimes nightly sidekick. He helped pull the man's battered body out of a dumpster a few months ago, now Peter had taken to stalking him through Hell's Kitchen most nights. Matt made a game of it, trying to see if he could throw Peter off his trail. So far he was winning but Peter was determined to catch him one night.

"Spiderman." He greeted Peter.

T'Challa eyed Peter in his suit, "Just how many people know of your.. After school activities?"

"Honestly I'm starting to lose count.." Peter deadpanned.

Matt extended his hand as he reached the bed, "You must be T'Challa. Nice to make your acquaintance. I'm Tony's new..Lawyer? Before you ask, yes, I do realize that I am blind."

"Pffft!" Peter sputtered. "Please, you have better senses than I do and I'm the one with the superpower here. Ouch!!" Matt wacked him with his cane.

"Likewise, Mr. Murdock." he shook the hand which had a remarkably firm grip. "I assure you that thought didn't even cross my mind. If you work for Anthony Stark you must be more capable than most. Though you don't sound to sure of your current job title, if I may say so."

T'Challa had a feeling there was more to this man than met his eye. Even though he was blind, T'Challa felt like he would be a violent force to tangle with.

"Heh, well Tony thinks because he put me on his payroll I'll fill the shoes for more than just his lawyer. I just had to face down dozens of reporters outside because of the incident earlier. I'm not PR, I'm not meant to be in front of the camera."

"Heh heh, well you sure as hell shouldn't be behind one or all people would see would be the dead air!" Peter laughed.

*whack*

"Youch! That hurts Murdock!"

"Keep talking then see what happens. I was just on my way to find Laura Barton to start on her divorce case. Friday said Tony was tied up and she refuses to relay my message or help me so I sought you out Pete."

Peter frowned, "That doesn't sound right. Friday always helps you. And you know the building was evacuated right? Didn't you see all those people outside when you Bruce Lee'd your way in here."
Matt sighed, folding the cane, "I just need you to relay a message or I don't know, hack some files, whatever it is you do these days. Tony commented earlier that he'd pay me double if I handled the press for him. Like a total moron, I jokingly, I repeat, jokingly accepted. Friday didn't bother to tell him I was kidding so now I have an extra three million dollars in my account and she won't take it back!"

Peter choked, Aunt May only had a couple hundred in the bank. Peter didn't even an account yet.

"And you expect me to what? Hack his bank account and transfer it back?"

Matt paused dramatically, "Can you?"

"That is illegal, don't you dare," T'Challa warned him sternly.

"Hello, I'm not that stupid! You shouldn't have said you'd do it!" he looked at Matt.

"I was joking!!"

"It doesn't matter! This is Tony you're talking about. He's like a big mothering teddy bear with people he cares about! Come on, I know you see it! With Pepper and Jim! Once he considers you his, that's it. I mean, two days ago he told me if he dies I take over Stark Industries ownership. Me, Murdock!! I've only known him for a month, but he already sees me as his, and he takes care of what's his. It's the same with you!"

"The child does have a point, and if Friday refuses to help you and Tony already paid you, then I would advise just to take it. It is not like he is short on cash. Even if he was he has about 1.4 billion dollars worth of vibranium waiting in his workshop that is his to do as he pleases. He wouldn't have gave it to you if he truly didn't want you to have it," T'Challa told him.

"I don't want his money.. That's not why I'm here.." Matt stated.

"Well, that's not why I'm here either, but Tony seems to think buying me new cars and paying outrageous prices for my lawyer is the way to my heart. How do you think we can convince him otherwise."

Two women walked into the room, one with short dark hair and a slightly annoyed expression. The other was long and dark, curled stylishly around a pretty face, three kids following in her wake.

T'Challa's life came to a halt.. It couldn't be.. He squinted his eyes trying to get a better look, praying he was wrong. But no, these were the faces that haunted his dreams of death. These, these were the two women he kept seeing in his nightmares. The nameless faces he saw lying lifeless on the ground. The taller one with the short hair was wearing the same black and yellow armor she had been in his dreams.

Only now she wasn't staring at him from a pool of blood.

She huffed good naturedly, "Trust me, I have known Tony for years. It's best to just let him do what he wants. He'll likely forget he overpaid you in an hour anyway. Hi Matt!"

He nodded, "Van Dyne.."

She held out a hand to T'Challa, "Hi I'm Hope Van Dyne, you must be T'Challa."
He felt like he was sinking into quicksand. He took her hand, half afraid by touching her it would trigger some sort of premonition, "It is a pleasure Miss Van Dyne," was all he could manage.

The shorter woman spoke up. "Hi, I'm Laura Barton. Nice to meet you T'Challa. Tony talked about you all the way here yesterday," he could only nod. Oh Gods, this was Barton's wife! The woman lying dead with an arrow lodged in her chest was Barton's wife. Suddenly, his dreams made all the sense in the world.

The panthers that had been ripping his throat out every night for the past week were the Avengers.. The odd colors of the fur and eyes now obviously represented their owners..

And the big viscous one was Rogers..

Rogers, Romanoff, Barton, Maximoff and most likely Sam.. He didn't feel as though Scott was represented here because he seemed aloof from the group anyway. But in the most recent vision he had disappeared and a snake had taken it's place. What did that mean?

The snake meant someone. But who could Rogers have brought in with him? And where were they? He recalled Shuri's yelling at him earlier. She mentioned someone in the jungle. Was this who she meant? It couldn't be Barnes. He was no longer in Wakanda.

The only other person T'Challa even knew Rogers to be associated with was the woman in Europe. An Agent Carter. The same woman who had stolen his shield from the UN and gave it back to him so he could fight his way to freedom.

"Shit..."

And he had been to stupid to put it together. Bast had been known to bless certain charges with visions. To give them foresight into the future, as if to ward them away from impending disaster. To change their outcome.. It was considered a great blessing among his tribe.

And he had just ignored it. He felt sick..

She turned to Matt. "You must be Matthew. I hope it was okay to come up here. Friday gave us an all clear. I really don't want to reschedule, I want to get this over with as quickly as possible. Peter? Why aren't you in school?"

"Oh, come on!!"

Matt laughed, "It's fine Miss Barton. Let's go down to the conference room and you can tell me exactly what your looking for in your divorce."

"Thank you.. Is it okay to bring the kids. They already know what's going on and I really don't want to keep anything from them."

"Yeah, Dad went freaking psycho and ran off with a hooker!" Cooper spat. Lila hummed in agreement.

"Cooper!!" Laura scolded. "I never said hooker, sweetie. I believe I said cheap Russian whore."

"Sokovian, actually. Damn, we having a party in here. Why wasn't I invited?" Tony asked as he entered, a huge mug of coffee in his hand. He looked to Laura, "I take it Friday showed you some of the footage from Wakanda then?"

Laura hummed, "She did. It was very enlightening. True there's no actual evidence of him cheating
but.. How else could you explain all this. He just left us. Left his kids. Me. Our home. And by watching him he didn't even seem to care. It looks like we never existed..

Tony grimaced, he still couldn't believe the man would just up and leave like that. He wasn't even supposed to be there. He was retired. He was almost convinced they were all being mind controlled by Wanda but Scott and Sam had already cracked. Shuri said they were already waiting to go back to the states and face the consequences.

He looked around the room and frowned, "Pete, why are you not in class?"

"Urgh! Geez people, come on! If you're that concerned, some nutcase calling himself Rhino destroyed half the building yesterday. Since there were only a few days left in the school year the BOE just shut it down for the summer. Are you all satisfied now?! I'm free for the next two months! It was all over the news. Damn!"

*whack*

"Enough with the cane Murdock!"

Matt didn't bother to acknowledge him, he held out an arm. "Ms. Barton, if you will?"

"Absolutely, let's get this ball rolling. Kids, come on. Hope, it was nice to meet you, I'll see you tomorrow?"

Hope smiled, "I'll be here."

Laura gave Tony a kiss on the cheek and a hug as she left, "Thank you for this."

"You're welcome."

When she left with Matt in tow, Hope looked to Tony, "I got here as fast as I could. I was in a meeting when Friday sent out the alarm. Are you ok?"

"I am perfectly fine.. Somewhat fine. A little fine. I'm not severely injured, let's go with that," he looked at T'Challa who was very pale on the bed, staring out into the abyss. Quiet as a tomb.

"Kittycat here doesn't look so hot though. How bout you two clear out and give him some space. I don't think he's up for parties yet."

"Fine.." Peter pouted as he left, "Just kill all my fun, why don't ya.."

Hope frowned, looking at T'Challa's pale demeanor. The man had looked fine when they came into his room a moment ago. "Sure. I'll see you in the morning at the meeting?"

"Yep, Pepper will be here. She said the meeting with Everett went well. They are already moving the troops, but most of it will fall on us."

Hope let out a long breath, "I'd still feel better if we had more reinforcements. We're run dry here."

Tony sighed, " I know, but we can make it work. We just need the right strategy. We can't lose this time. We have to bring them in."

Hope nodded, "I look around, see if I can find some parties willing to sign the Accords. Better get to planning T. Three days to D-Day." She looked over, "Bye T'Challa, it was nice to meet you. I'll see you again soon."
She didn't get a response. Hope looked at Tony worriedly, he merely shrugged and Hope left. The man had fallen into a sullen mood. There had been so many mood swings in this tower lately, this must be what Britney felt like when she had her meltdown.

Tony sat down on the bed close beside him. He gave a friendly bump, T'Challa looked at him, eyes full of worry.

"You ok kitty? You look like you seen a ghost."

"More than you might imagine.." he mumbled.

"Huh?"

T'Challa stared at the tiles beneath his feet, "I know those women.. Well, I should clarify that, not actually know, I've never spoken to them before today but this is not the first time I have seen them.. Nor the second, and more than likely it wont be the third.. "

Tony took a sip, he had a feeling this was about to move into some deeper territory. Probably some weird revelation that would blow a normal man's mind, but he'd seen and done so much weird shit nothing could suprise him anymore.

"Care to elaborate kitty. Cause I am failing to make a connection here.."

So T'Challa told him, told him of the dreams, now convinced they were visions from Bast, how they started before he left his home. How at the beginning it was just him, speaking to his father, receiving his warning but not fully understanding until today. He told him of being mauled by a group of vicious panthers, ones that he was now sure were the Avengers.

He told him of how the visions changed, about everyone lying dead or dying before him.

Rhodes and Vision, Nakia and Okoye..Shuri..

About seeing the faces he now knew were Hope and Laura, about the man with bright green eyes he still hadn't met but he was sure he would. He told him of the snake that had been hiding behind him and how it slithered down his throat. How the pain in his chest had felt so real.

Now, Tony had never in his life been a religious man, but latley he was far more inclined to believe in every sort of religion out there. He supposed it was because he had actually met an honest to god God. One that had been worshipped long ago. It had really broadened his horizons.

Thor had told him that all the Gods really existed in one form or another, that he had met more than a few himself. Some had a flesh and blood image, some merely appeared as a spirit form and some, Loki being an example, could change their form into anything they wanted.

Male, female, creepy ghost form, animal. Hell they could probably even be a lamp. There could be one in the room with them right now. And well if Thor existed then Bast could indeed exist too.

So if T'Challa had convinced himself that these dreams he kept having were indeed like premonitions of a sort from his cat God, Tony sure as Hell wasn't going to correct him. If anything he was listening even more closely.

"Where am I during all this? I'm supposed to be running this freakshow now. Where the hell am I" Tony asked, confused as to why he was nowhere to be found.

"I know not, the only thing that stays the same is the rage of the panthers. Well except for the brown
one disappearing the last time. I think it may represent Sam."

Tony agreed, "Yeah, Shuri said he and Scott are singing a different song now. They're waiting for their extradition already. We're going to bring them back Friday, hopefully with the rest of them."

"I am suprised you are not simply dismissing my vision as craziness."

Tony laughed, "Well, I have seen alot of crazy shit in my days, so if you say they're visions, then I believe you."

"Thank you," T'Challa whispered.

"Anytime kitty, anytime. Now you want to tell me if those other crates in my shop are full of vibranium or am I hopefully projecting things?"

T'Challa smiled, "Shuri must really like you. Those chests hold about a hundred pounds each of unaltered vibranium. Fresh from the mines. For either of us to even think with parting with that much is usually unthinkable. You have truly earned her favor, I wouldn't be suprised if more is coming."

"Jesus, I haven't done anything to deserve that much! Hell I don't deserve any! That's.. That's over a billion dollars... I can't. It's too much."

"Shuri doesn't think so. It's yours to enjoy, to do as you please. Sell it or use it, but do not refuse her gift. I can guarantee that will end badly for you. She is a force of nature like you have never seen."

"But.."

"Just let it be. You can question her about it in a few days if you are so worried. But it still won't change her mind."

Tony sighed, "Fine, fine! Oh shit. Before I forget, here ya go!" Tony pulled the offending 'glasses' from his pocket and tossed it to T'Challa. "I just want to point out I had no hand in the creation of these monsters."

T'Challa held them up to study, "Are these-"

"Goggles! I told Bruce they were goggles! You totally don't have to wear those. I will come up with something much better! Jesus! What are my R&D techs doing up there?"

T'Challa just laughed, "Well, I was going to ask if these were those lenses that athletes wear. Now I can see they are. They are definitely not goggles. They are to small. Though I would not mind them being a bit more streamlined. Maybe some frameless lenses instead of the black."

He slipped them on, "Oh Gods. Thank you! This is much better. I can actually see, everything is not a colorful blur now. Thank you Tony."

Well how bout that, Tony thought. Those goggles look pretty hot on him.

He felt his face heat up some. He turned away hoping T'Challa wouldn't see the blush. Tony coughed, clearing his throat.

"I still say they're goggles. Thank Bruce, he was the one who thought about it. Maybe eventually your eyes might improve enough to do surgery and you wont need those."

"The doctors are very sure that will not happen."
"Eh, I'm optimistic!" he gave him a friendly bump. They were quiet for a few minutes as T'Challa looked around, taking everything in. Then he closed his eyes and took a few deep breathes. When he opened them, they looked pained.

"Tony?"

"Yes dear?"

"I smell.."

Tony cocked a brow, "Wellll, I didn't want to say anything. You know, you being bedridden and all. But yeah, you kinda do..."

T'Challa slapped his arm, "I am not bedridden!! I am merely not currently functioning on a full nine lives."

Tony gave him a bland stare, "Can you walk?"

"With assistance, yes."

"See, bedridden."

T'Challa was not amused and tried to stand himself up from the bed.

"Jeez!! I'm just playing with you, alright?" Tony shot up to help him.

"I have never tolerated illness well. I was always a terrible patient when I was a child. I just wish to get out of this room and preferably, shower. A bath would be even more preferable, but I will take what I can get at this point. I will crawl my way to a shower if I have to."

Tony threw his arm around him for support, "Well, if you insist upon it, come on then. Let's get you out of here. You're lucky you're with me. I am a man who will make your dreams come true," he promised as he helped T'Challa walk out of the room. "I hope Bruce doesn't kill me for this."

"Where are we going? There was a shower in the room." he placed his free hand on the wall for extra support.

"True, but you're going nuts in there and you said a bath would be better. Not gonna lie, it might take two or three before you smell normal again."

"Ass.."

"We're going to the penthouse. This is an awesome opportunity to show off my amazing new bathroom. You'll love it, I promise. And I have more soap. That rinky-dink crap in the medbay is no match for your current level of hobo BO."

"When I feel better I may kill you.." T'Challa deadpanned as they boarded the elevator. Friday whisking them away to the top floor. Tony would have liked to try it with his new skills, but he didn't want to violate Friday that way without her consent. She had a tendency to get crabby and her paybacks could get nasty.

"Many have tried, all have failed," he laughed as they entered his floor. "Barnes is up here so we need to be quiet. Can you get up those steps?"

T'Challa eyed them warily, "They do not look very promising at the moment," he sighed.
"Oh good! Not a prob, then! Friday, start the bath please."

He scooped T'Challa up much as he had with Barnes earlier. It should be pretty easy to make it upstairs with him. The man was far lighter than James had been.

T'Challa squawked at his abrupt flight from the floor, his arms went automatically around Tony's neck. He gawked, eyes wide at Tony as he carried him effortlessly to the top floor and into the massive master bath. He set him back on his feet beside the raised wall of the tub, where T'Challa sat down on his ass and gathered up a few towels and toiletries.

The huge tub was already nearly full of hot steamy water and bubbles that smelled of sandalwood. He loved the smell of sandalwood. It was what he used back home. He closed his eyes as he waited for Tony to finish what he was doing and nearly fell asleep. He felt himself sway forward and jerked awake just as Tony stopped his near fall on his face.

"Easy kitty, I know you're still weak but I don't need you face planting onto my tiles. Bruce will smash me."

"Hmm, this oxygen pack might be a problem. I don't know if it's waterproof."

"Take it off, my breathing is getting better. I should not need it while bathing. I will put it back on after if I need it," T'Challa told him.

Tony unhooked the canula from around his nose and removed the little case attached to his arm. It was one of Bruce's designs for SI. The case converted the carbon dioxide in the air into oxygen directly inside the little box. It never need refilling, it was all internal. The box could be attached with straps to any part of the upper body.

Tony was hoping to get it mass produced to people who needed oxygen by next year.

"Alright, strip!"

T'Challa raised a brow, his brown eyes shining with jest, "I am truly sorry Tony, but I do not take my clothes off for just anyone. You haven't even bought me dinner. What kind of example would I be giving our youth if I let anyone see me naked."

Tony didn't even blink, "Friday order food! There dinners on the way, you want a movie too cause I have something way better. Friday light it up please! Give it the works this time!"

"My pleasure Boss!" his lovely AI stated as the room fell into darkness and millions of tiny stars glowed into life. This time it wasn't just the ceiling. The walls, the floor, even the cabinetry glowed with starlight. All of them blending seamlessly to give the appearance as if they were floating in outer space.

"Astounding.." T'Challa looked at his feet. It honestly looked as though he could see down through the stars, like he was floating.

He laughed in wonder, then thought about his last shower before he left home and laughed more.

"The morning I left," he told Tony, "I was in my shower. I created my own personal heaven with watertight LED tiles that could portray any image you wanted. At the time I wondered if anyone else in the world had anything like it, and I thought that you probably would. The last one I used was Machu Picchu, but this.. This is much better than mine."

"Are we comparing shower sizes now? Is mine bigger? Are you impressed?"
"Thoroughly!"

"Good! Now I've bought you dinner and a movie, now you can strip!" Tony grinned.

T'Challa batted his lashes behind his glasses, "I still feel so very weak. I feel as though I can not undress myself. I believe I require your assistance."

"Are you being flirty? You are so being flirty! Are you sure you can handle all this awesome?" Tony laughed, but he stepped forward to help him undress. "Arms up Kitty."

Tony helped him remove his shirt and pants, trying not to give any long looks down south as there was nothing under those Hello Kitty scrubs. But the glimpses he got were 'massively' impressive.

He helped T'Challa into the tub and just waited by the side as the young King relaxed. He did a little work on a tablet til Friday said his food was here. "You're not going to drown if I go pick it up are you?"

T'Challa hummed, "No, but if I did go under I'm sure you have some safety mechanisms installed for such situations. Go get your food, I'll be here staring up at Andromeda. It is quite beautiful. But i feel my skin shrinking, I'll be out shortly."

Tony stretched, "Ok, just don't drown! And don't fall if you get out before I get back!"

"Go, I am fine. I feel so much better, just a little sleepy."

"Ok, be back in a few."

He rode down to the lobby to pick up the food Friday ordered. It was from that place on Broadway, Jerusalem Restaurant! Hell Yeah!! They had the best babaganoush ever! Score!

By the time he made his way back up T'Challa had crawled his way from the tub and was dressed in some of Tony's pj's and lying in his bed fast asleep. Oh well, he'd just save some back for him and for James.

He was halfway through his chicken shawarma platter when Thor landed with a thud on his balcony, waving happily. Tony waved back, noticing the Thunder God was sporting an eyepatch and his head was nearly shaved. He was moving to greet him when Loki stepped cautiously out from behind his brother, causing him to choke on his chicken.

Holy shit..

The God of Mischief was back.. At his tower.. Again..

"BRUCE!!"

Chapter End Notes

So this recommendation is actually not on this site. Or at least I have never been able to find it on here. It's over on fanfiction.net and it's by gothraven89. The title is Beneath a Veil of Bitter Ice and it's a Loki fic that is freaking AMAZING!!
OMG you have to go read it if you haven't already!!
Once again I am truly sorry for the long wait!! My current workload is hideous, but I somehow manage.. Once again errors are on me, I feel like there's a shitload in this chapter and I know they're horrible but I am not a professional writer here, just a hobbyist. I also feel like I forgot something :-/ So no judgy please!

"So, it's all gone.. Everything. Ka-blooey, ka-boom, fireball the size of Texas kinda gone?" Tony asked as he dished up an omelet on his little Yes!Chef griddle the next morning. That thing was freaking awesome. Pepper had gotten it for him as a gift to improve his egg making skills. Now he could dish out a five star breakfast in less than five minutes.

"Yes, Anthony. Asgard has fallen. Though I do believe a small ounce of it's magic remains. I still feel it. That tells me not all is lost, and I will not rest until I find a way to restore it." Thor took a gulp of his coffee as Tony placed a plate of what he was calling panegcakes in front of him. Like a pancake but, you know, eggs! Whoever invented the Yes!Chef is a genius.

"So that's why you've enlisted the help of Dr. Weirdo?"

"I am certain his name is Strange, not Weirdo. And yes, he yields one of the Infinity Stones. He also has harnessed the ability to walk into entirely different dimensions. I hope in one of those I shall find what I seek." Thor began devouring the stack of eggs whole heartedly.

"And what exactly is it you seek?"

Thor merely shrugged, "I shall know it when I see it. I did not know you knew Stephen."

"Mmhmm, we always ran in the same circles. At least til his accident then he disappeared. Strange is a medical genius himself. Now he's apparently Mr Wizard. He's always been a good friend of mine, so I'll call him weirdo if I want. After all this shit's over I'm going to ask if wants to come work with me. I want to make SI a future in medical tech and he's just who I need."

"I have no clue what that means but I wish you well in your endeavor. I shall try to keep him alive for you!"

Tony finished his own breakfast and leaned against the counter, tapping his fingers together nervously. "Are you sure you wouldn't rather just, I don't know, maybe stay here and let Loki be the one universe hopping?" Tony pasted on an overly fake smile.

Thor cocked a brow over his missing eye, "I thought we had come to an understanding after your screaming fest this past night."

Last night when Tony had seen Loki on his balcony he may have had a minor freakout where he was screaming at Friday to deploy the suit while Thor tried to calm him down. Barnes and T'Challa sleeping on, oblivious thanks to his soundproofing.
Friday, in all the earlier chaos must have crossed a few wires, instead of his suit he ended up with a wild eyed Happy Hogan trying to save the day with, of all the things, a fire extinguisher. Technically Happy was wearing a suit, it just wasn't the one Tony had asked for.

Dum-E must have been giving him lessons in fire extinguishing.

It ended with all of them covered in foam and an irate God of Mischief stalking off to find Banner, who had Hulked out in joy at seeing Loki again.

Well at least the tower was in one piece this time.

"In my defense, he threw me out my own window."

"He apologized to you."

"I don't feel like 'it wasn't that high of a window' is a true apology.. Squishy human here!" Tony groaned, "I don't know Thor, are you sure he won't try to kill us all? There aren't many left of us as it is.".

"I assure you Man of Iron he will not harm you. He may play some harmless pranks on you but he is here to help you. Banner told me last night about all that has transpired. I cannot believe the good Captain capable of such heinous acts. I cannot fathom what has happened to him. He was never so callous in the past."

"I know Thor, it's like he's slowly been inching toward the dark side. Maybe he always had one, he just never let it out til Barnes came back."

_Plop!

"Youch! What the...?" he turned, rubbing his head, to find a half eaten furry muffin on the floor, the rest was still stuck to his face, and an innocent looking Barnes and T'Challa at the kitchen entrance.

He scowled at Bucky, "Did you just hit me with your spit covered cake?"

"Yes, I did. And it's not mine, I found it on the floor by your massive couch."

Tony grimaced, "Friday, stop letting Peter bring food in this house." he told the ceiling.

Bucky gave him a level stare, "I refuse to be blamed for Steve's stupidity. I am tired of being everyone's reason for why he does the thing's he does. I think there's something else going on with him, he was never like this at all before Rebirth. Sure he was a fighter but he never..."

Bucky paused, contemplating his next words, "I think there's something wrong with him.." He tapped his temple, "Up here. Somethn's not right up there anymore.. He's different. Has been since the War."

Thor looked up from where he was eying the soggy muffin on the floor with glee, "Different how, if I may ask. My apologies, you must be James, I am Tho-"

"Yea yea, Thor thunder God, I know. Please don't try to eat that muffin, I know that look in your eye, so just.. No. It has mold on it."

A sleepy eyed T'Challa made his way to the table, hand extended "It is nice to meet you Thor, I am T'Challa, former King of Wakanda."

"A pleasure, Your Highness." Thor stood to give a small bow.
"Former?" Barnes questioned.

T'Challa hummed and nodded then went to lean against Tony at the counter, "Yes, as of yesterday because of my undeniably stupid choices lately, I have been stripped of the crown. Oh, and exiled from my home." T'Challa sighed softly, his only sign of irritation at his situation.

Thor looked pained, no doubt remembering his exile from Asgard years ago.

Tony gave T'Challa a friendly hip bump, "Good to see you walking upright this morning." He had showered too, and was dressed in some of Tony's clothes. They were a little tight but he managed to make it work.

What is it with muscled, enhanced men and tight shirts? Barnes must have rummaged through his closet as well. He was wearing one of Tony's tees, a joke from Rhodey that had a dinosaur on it. And stretched to the max. It must have been made for a child because it said 'Roar, I'm 4' but Rhodes, God love him, had painted a big white zero making it 40.

The ass..

"Mmmm, I am feeling much better today. I still feel weak but at least I am able to stand on my own feet. I also feel a bit hungry but I am still rather nauseous. I pray to Bast that it passes, Dr Banner has commented that he has some more drinks I can try. I'd rather not, as the last one tasted like bad cheese."

Bucky and Tony grimaced.

Thor perked up, squinting at T'Challa, "You have an acquaintance with Bast? You must be truly blessed my friend!! It has been ages since I have been grace by her beauty, though I do believe Loki has seen her quite recently. Maybe a few hundred years ago. Our last meet did not fair well I am afraid. I unknowingly insulted her in her cat form and she tried ripping out my throat."

Thor smiled at the memory, "I thought she was Loki as he has a fondness for turning into a feline. Ah but she was a gorgeous creature, long raven hair, her overly rounded bosom." He frowned slightly, "Her male form was not nearly as attractive, far to much hair. It was always sticking to your lips and in your mouth. T'was like choking on a hairball.."

T'Challa was looking at Thor in amazement, "You have an acquaintance with Bast...?"

Thor was sliding closer to the nasty muffin with each passing second, "Why yes, my friend. For many moons. Bast has many forms, but mostly stays in her feminine or cat form. She and Loki have been friends for many centuries. Last I saw her she was in what I believe you call Egypt but when the Gods began to fall she disappeared. I know not where. Loki finds her delightful!!"

T'Challa was in awe. "Bast truly walks among us.." he said to himself.

Thor looked amused, "Why yes, my friend!! All Gods exist in one form or another. You mortals are so simple minded sometimes. Just because you can not see it, you assume it is not real. I assure you they are as real as I. Most still walk amongst you. Bast, Ra, Zeus, Jesus, Allah, Krishna, Kuan-Ti, Mider, Vulcan.. I could name hundreds of them that I, myself, have met. They all exist, but they no longer mingle with mortals. They blend in. Now you only believe they exist in your books, which are quite incorrect may I say! I never wore that dress!!"

Tony really wasn't suprised by Thor's admission. He was curious as to how many so called Gods he might pass on the street every day. He just hoped he didn't have any working for him.
Please don't let the mail guy down on 22 be Hades or some shit! He had a creepy smile and was obsessed with bones.

He told Pepper once the guy might be an evil villain but she gave him that look (her trademark Tony you can be such an idiot look) and said to stop being judgy. That he was harmless and lived with his Grandma in Hell's Kitchen.

Hades would go for Hell's Kitchen. Maybe he should have Matt keep an eye out.

Oops! Not an eye! Ear! He totally meant ear!

While T'Challa was grilling Thor on the land of the Gods, Tony was pondering on what Barnes had said.

Was it possible that something could be wrong with Steve? Some hidden ailment no one had picked up on. Steve often flat out refused to see a Doctor, the only reason he had been treated after the fall of SHIELD was because he was unconscious when they drug him in. Then he left soon after waking up. Tony had seen him dig a bullet out of his side by himself before, and stitch up his own stab wounds.

He wasn't judging, no one hated the doctors more than him. He had done the same thing many times, but now he wondered if in avoiding the regular routine health checks Steve may have some hidden harm making him slowly change his behavior.

A chemical imbalance, mental illness, a tumor. Maybe it was more than Steve just being a dick. Maybe Barnes was on to something. But unless they could bring him in they'd never know.

He went to the fridge and pulled out a fruit tray that Pepper kept stocked, no doubt hoping he'd one day actually eat it, and turned around to smack into Loki who was hovering close to his back. The fruit nearly flew from his hands.

Tony sucked in a breath, "You son of a.. Don't freaking do that!! Where the hell did you even come from?"

Loki just gave him that cocky little smirk he always wore and plucked the tray from his hands. "Allow me, Anthony. You seem quite nervous. I would hate to have my meal spoiled by your innate clumsiness. I've been here the entire time. You should pay more attention to your surroundings."

Smug little bastard. There was no other person but Thor in here with him the whole morning. He'd make sure Friday kept a better eye on him. Loki sauntered back to the table like he was the king of the world. It was weird to see Loki in jeans and a tee.

T'Challa and Bucky were seated around Thor, listening to his tales. As he put the fruit down T'Challa glanced up at him and blanched. Nearly choking on the piece of toast he was pecking at.

"You are the man in my vision," he whispered, "your throat. It was cut. You were dead with the rest of them."

Loki was caught off guard a moment, a stunned expression on his face. Thor's smile faded as he took in T'Challa's words and his brother's silence. He went to speak but Loki quickly recovered from his shock. Acting like it had no effect on him.

He sat down by Barnes and primly picked through the fruit tray.

"Well, well. That is interesting," he scooped up some blackberries, "do tell how you came by this
dramatic illusion of my demise."

"He is a follower of Bast," Thor cut in, cocking his brow at Loki.

"Oh dear..."

"Oh dear? What do you mean 'oh dear?'" Tony queried.

Loki continued to eat his berries, not acknowledging Tony in the slightest.

Tony threw his hands in irritation and went to get some juices and a few condiments only to turn back into the face of evil once more.

"Aaaahh. Shit!!! I swear to.. I. Will. Kill. YOU!"

Loki actually smiled, showing off his perfect teeth.

"My death will not come at your hands Stark," he whispered in Tony's ear, "something far darker awaits me."

As he took a bowl of whipped cream from him their hands brushed, causing Tony's body to jolt. Something flashed before his eyes. Loki's eyes narrowed to slits, mouth turned down.

"You know what I speak of.. You've seen him as well. He will come for us eventually, and when he does just know that death isn't the end, merely a new beginning. But there is still time. For now.."

His heart began to beat faster, "Wha..? Did you just look in my head?"

Loki went about his business, "To answer your not really a question, Bast bestowes upon her loyal believers premonitions, or visions as you call them. A glimpse into their future, of what is coming. It is a rarity for her these days, as her followers are very limited. She only does this when her loyal ones began to stray from her righteous path. Her hope is that her visions will lead them to better their decisions and back onto the path she has destined for them."

He offered T'Challa an apple, "Somewhere along your path you have been led astray. It happens to us all, make no mistake, Bast has given you a glimpse of what is coming."

As T'Challa took the fruit, Loki grabbed his arm, causing him to react similar to Tony had minutes ago. T'Challa swatted him away, but seemed unbothered by Loki's snooping.  "It isn't polite to enter another's home without their permission."

"Well, seeing that makes much more sense. Thor, your idiot mortals are going to kill each other and I do not appreciate you dragging me toward death with them." He glared at T'Challa, "Fix your path, mortal, and quickly. I refuse to meet Mistress Death by the hands of such primal creatures." He looked to Tony, "Thor tells me you will be going after them in a few days time?"

Tony nodded, still shaken by Loki's intrusion, "Day after tomorrow."

"Then you all need to make sure the things he has seen do not come to pass. I have no intention of dying among you lot."

"I'm sorry to interrupt Boss, but Dr. Strange is on the roof, he says he's here for Thor. Also Miss Potts is ready and waiting in the War Room."

Tony wiped a bead of sweat off his face, "He couldn't come in like a normal person could he?"
"War Room?" T'Challa inquired.

"Don't look at me, Steve named it that. Alright, FRI let everyone know where to go. I'll see Thor off and be down shortly."

"Do you want me to call Spiderman, Boss?"

"Absolutely not. Not if Kittycat's predicted our demise. May would kill me. Leave him be for now."

"Uum," Barnes piped up, "I don't want to be a part of this. I don't have to go do I? I'd rather not know what's about to happen."

Tony gave a huff, "No Bucky, you are not going. There's no way I'm going to take you into another potential war with Steve. I'm not stupid, he's your friend, brother even. I wouldn't make you do something like that. You are staying here in the penthouse til I find a way to remove your programming."

"Oh thank God," he slumped in his chair, relieved.

"Boss, the Doctor is getting impatient."

"Tell him to fuck off, Thor will be up in a minute!"

Friday must have taken him seriously because a split second later one of Strange's weird holes opened up in the kitchen behind Thor and a set of hands pulled him through. The hole closing behind them. Tony just rolled his eyes.

"Dickhead!"

Tony had known Strange for quite a few years, they used to travel the same social circles. Strange always was a dick, but Tony secretly adored him. His accident hadn't mellowed him at all. If anything he was even more arrogant than ever thanks to his newly found magic power. Tony had asked if he would help them with their Maximoff problem but Strange had declined, apparently he and Thor had already made plans to go galavanting around the universe.

Bucky had been halfway through a plum when Thor vanished, "What the hell was that!!?"

Before Tony could answer the hole opened back and Strange stuck his head through. Ever since he turned in to Houdini, Tony thought he resembled Vincent Price. Theater of Blood came to mind. Must be the cape.

Or the grey hair at his temples.

"I heard that Anthony!" Strange said. He turned his head to Loki, "If you do anything while I'm gone you'll be falling alot longer than thirty minutes!" Loki choked on his berry.

Thor poked his head out beside Strange, "Bye Loki!!"

He sucked his head back in and they disappeared. Then a smaller hole opened and Stephen stuck his middle finger out at Tony, "I'll call you when I get back, we'll do brunch! You're paying! I still have no job."

With that he finally vanished, leaving the rest of them speechless.

Tony clapped his hands, breaking the silence. He slapped Loki on the back, knocking the hazard
Tony and T'Challa were the first to arrive in the conference room (he refused to call it the war room anymore and sent a mental reminder to Friday to stop calling it that) where a perfectly put together Pepper Potts was waiting for them.

Barnes had taken the rest of the plums and retreated to his rooms.

She enveloped Tony in a big hug and began checking him over for any signs of injury. Tony was unsuccessful in his attempt at swatting her away so he just gave in to Momma Bear's poking and prodding.

Finally she seemed satisfied and took his face in her hands, "You weren't lying.. You really did fix it."

He just gave her his sweet smile, "Told you I would. I'm fine Pep. I promise I'm healthier than I've ever been." He decided he wouldn't tell her about his tiny new special effect he was carrying just yet.

"I believe you this time. You even look younger."

T'Challa took a seat at the massive table, still weak he couldn't stand up for long periods yet.

"Good morning Miss Potts. It is a pleasure to meet you in person."

Pepper turned, offering up a tight smile, "Good morning to you, Prince T'Challa. I would say the same but I find no pleasure in meeting someone who hides terrorists! But your sister is delightful. Now she would be a pleasure!"

T'Challa looked properly scolded.

"Pep."

"No, Tony! I don't care! He has no idea what he's caused! They all should be in jail, him included! He's just as guilty as the rest of them."

He sighed, "We'll talk later."

The door slid open and the others started piling in, Tony was surprised to see Laura walk in with them.

"Whatcha doin here? Shouldn't you be mommying?"

Laura poked a finger at him, "I will be a part of this Tony, you can't keep me in the dark about anything involving Clint. I know you're leaving in two days to get them, and I'm going to be with you. I'll go after the son of a bitch myself if I have to! And the kids are still sleeping, Matt and his friend Karen are keeping an eye on them while I'm here. He dropped off a copy of the divorce papers this morning."

"Umm, Matt's bl-"

"If you make a blind joke I'll punch you in the throat!" Laura promised.

"Oookay."
He looked around the room. Hope and Rhodey were talking in the corner, Bruce looked to be meditating by the door, Loki must have teleported into the room unnoticed and was kicked back in the chair by T'Challa, who was watching Tony's every move and avoiding Pepper who had seated herself at the far side of the table with her tablet.

To his shock, Vision floated majestically down from the ceiling.

"Where the hell have you been!? I haven't seen you in weeks!"

"I have enrolled in the local college to keep myself occupied. I do not like being idle."

"You have access to everything! What could you even be studying?" Tony wondered.

"Gourmet cooking."

"You have to be kidding..."

Vision looked offended, "I thought it best after the spaghetti I made gave Colonel Rhodes the trots for four days."

Loki snorted loudly from his seat.

Rhodey wheeled over between them, "Thank you for that Viz. Nice of you to share with the class here."

"You're most welcome Colonel!"

Why was he surrounded by forever five year olds? Tony rolled his eyes and walked to the big chair at the middle of the glass table. The one usually occupied by Captain America but now it was his turn to lead them into battle.

"Enough! Fri, call up Shuri, see if she's ready."

"She's ready when you are Boss!"

The room went silent, all eyes turning to him. He gestured at the empty seats.

"Alright, my fellow Knights. Come join me at the round table. We have a lot of planning to do."

Chapter End Notes

Ok it wasn't until I looked really hard then I realized what I forgot. My chapterly recommendation, duh! I channeled my inner darkness and chose a Doom fic :) It's called Doomed to Love by Comicsohwhyohwhy

Doom needs more love.

Everybody love Doom.
T'Challa looked at the odd little group of people surrounding him in the conference room. He was seated beside Tony, who had taken his place at the head of the big, round table. Ms. Potts had said to Tony earlier that he looked younger. T'Challa thought she may be right, there were fewer lines around his eyes and it appeared he had more muscle mass then he had weeks ago, during the fight with Steve Rogers.

Tony stood with an new air of confidence around him. The confidence of a champion. These new Avengers would now be looking to him to guide them, to be their leader. Here was a man who had been through hell and back far to many times and was still willing to dive headfirst into another battle. To put himself on the line once more to ensure the safety of the world around him. No matter what the cost to himself.

On Tony's left was Colonel Rhodes, his knight in silver armor. A warrior til his last breath. The bond between he and Tony ran deep, so deep that T'Challa thought death wouldn't be able to sever it. He was the only person Tony would truly trust with his life and there was no doubt Rhodes shared that sentiment.

Seated beside the Colonel was the purple skinned, Vision. T'Challa did not have much knowledge about the.. Android? Synthezoid? He wasn't sure what to call him. He knew that Vision was brought into life by Thor and that he was some version of Starks original AI, Jarvis. Given that history, T'Challa assumed he would be loyal to Tony, but you could never be sure where one's loyalties really lie.

Beside Vision, sit Hope Van Dyne. The Wasp, the female version of Scott's Ant-man, only she could fly. He knew nothing of this woman, only that she was seething with anger at Scott's betrayal. In his brief encounters with her she seemed nice, but then, so had Steve Rogers. He couldn't make a clear judgement on her til he knew her more.

Finally, at the end of Tony's right hand, was Pepper Potts. The only other person that Tony had infallible faith in. The protector, the champion, Tony's guardian angel. She was his first line of defense, his shield. No one made it close to Tony without going through her. T'Challa was curious as to how much anger at the ex-avengers was festering beneath the surface at their attempts on Tony's life.

She was a woman who made things happen her way. If she were anything like Shuri then she already had a plan devised to eviscerate the rogues in a court of law. When they were taken into custody, his former teammates would be lucky to see the light of day again.

Today was only his second encounter with her, the first face to face, and she terrified him. He knew that if any harm came to Tony by the hands of these people she would wipe them from existence. No stone would be left unturned. When he looked at her he could feel the power radiating from her.
She looked calm, but her eyes were currently shooting daggers at Laura Barton. Her ever watchful eye hadn't missed Ms. Bartons threat about punching Tony moments ago.

T'Challa had the feeling that after their meeting was finished Laura would be wishing she'd stayed in Iowa.

With Tony on his left, to T'Challa's immediate right was Thor's brother, Loki. The man who had brought terror into the hearts of millions by his attack on New York. No one in the room seemed overly concerned with his prescence, so they must have been informed earlier of his arrival and had the time to process.

He was a real living God who was absently picking at his nails with a defeated look on his face. Obviously wishing he were somewhere else.

Now he was sitting in a room full of Earth's newest saviors.

There were very few images of Loki from his Manhattan attack, but in the ones he had seen Loki had been armored from horned head to toe. Now he was dressed in, of all things, faded jeans and a Hulk t-shirt. He didn't look like he was about to start another invasion but T'Challa was wary of him anyway.

He had his feet resting on the table top, ignoring the heated expression of Laura Barton, who was on Loki's right and seemed to be in a horrible mood this morning. Beside her to finish out their merry group was a putout looking Bruce Banner. The man must have just came down straight from bed as he was still in his purple plaid pajamas.

Friday connected Shuri's call through and her floating image took its place beside Ms. Potts. They smiled at each other happily. T'Challa could almost feel the friendship (and world domination) blooming.

Tony cleared his throat, "Well I know I'm supposed to be the one leading this shindig, but since I had many unforeseen circumstances pop up," he gave T'Challa a wink, "Pepper is going to get the ball rollin and then I'll take it from there. Pep?"

She gave him a warm smile, "Thank you Tony, yesterday I had a meeting with Everett Ross and the members of the UN Accords Council. Since Tony was unavailable, I went as his proxy to fill them in on our current situation with Captain Rogers and his clan."

Pepper pulled up several holo images up from her tablet and flicked one to each member of the table. Except Laura Barton.

"Shuri, you have your file, right?" Pepper asked the hologram.

"Yes, Pepper. Thank you."

"Why don't I get one?" Laura asked hotly.

Pepper, the definition of composure, didn't spare her a glance, "You are neither an Avenger nor an agent, you shouldn't even be in this room. What purpose could you actually serve in the apprehension of the others."

Laura huffed, "Well, last I checked neither were you. Yet here you are getting ready to bark out orders like you're Commander in Chief. And since this involves my husband I feel I have a right to know what is going on!"
"All the more reason you shouldn't be here. Your husband is wanted for treason, domestic and international terrorism, and let's not forget the destruction of property charges to the Avengers Compound and Germany. Everett Ross doesn't trust you and frankly neither do I. For all any of us know you could feed the information back to Clint and make an already dire situation even worse. So no, I'm not giving you a file. You shouldn't be in here, you need to leave."

"I'd like to see you make me leave," Laura muttered. "I am not leaving this room, and even though I filed for divorce, Clint and I are still legally married. I need to know everything that bastard has been doing since he walked out on us. If you wont tell me, I'll go through Friday!"

Pepper gave a small frown, "Friday wont tell you anything, you'd be wasting your time."

"I'll find out one way or another. If I have to dig it out myself I will!"

"Excuse me? Are you implying that you'd violate Tony's trust and hack into his AI?"

"Are you just naturally a bitch, or did you have to work extra hard at it?" Laura needled. She turned and smacked Loki's feet off the table as Pepper's mouth fell open. Audible gasps came from the rest of the rooms occupants. On the screen Shuri's mouth fell open.

The overhead lights began to flicker. T'Challa looked over to Tony who was clenching his fists on the table top. Flecks of blue flashing in his eyes.

"Tony?" He was cut off with a slashing gesture.

"Not now.." he said coldly.

"Get your feet off the table! I thought you were some sort of posh prince. Did your mother even teach you any manners? Or maybe not, maybe that's why your such a psychopath! She's probably just as crazy as you are! I mean, the apple never falls far from the tree does it.. She must be so proud of you! She raised a real winner. You turned out to be such a gentleman."

Bruce slid further into the chair at the mention of Loki's mother, "Oh boy..." he mumbled.

Loki's emerald green eyes glinted with anger. Tony knew from Thor that Loki had been very close to his mother and her death had affected him very hard.

"You should have a care with how you speak wench.." Loki gritted out. "My mother was a queen, a goddess! A thousand times the woman you could ever dream of being. Slander her again and I assure you that it will be the last words you ever utter."

"I'd like to see you try.."

He gave a vile laugh, "You call me a psychopath, based on what? Your husbands tales of my attempted reign. I did not have a choice in the matter of your New York," he spat, "My mind was not my own for many, many moons until Hulk broke me from the control I was under. I had no control, no hope and no choice to comply with the monster that held sway over me, and despite what you all think of me I do regret everything that transpired from that day.."

The floating holograms on the table began to sizzle, their image going distorted by static.

His voice went soft and sweet as he and Laura both rose to their feet, looking ready to do battle, "But I had no choice... Now your dear husband.. I was led to believe that he was no longer under anyone's control, that he was free once again to choose for himself, yet where is he? Ooooh, that's right. He chose to leave you behind, chose to run away to the carnal embrace of another. Now he
truly gives meaning to the word *gentleman*!!"

"You son of a-"

"*Enough!!*" Tony slammed a fist down onto the glass table, shattering a large section of pieces over the floor. "*Enough with the fighting and petty bickering! Just enough!!*"

The holograms exploded into a shower like confetti and two of the overhead lights sparked, causing the rooms occupants to duck and cover.

Shuri's floating image wavered and then vanished.

"Tony-" Bruce began.

"I'm fine!! Bruce I'm fine, I got it reined in. We're ok, we're ok.." He inhaled dramatically, his eyes losing the eerie glow of Extremis. "We're better than this. Better than the childish squabbles. That was Steve's area and I don't want us to end up going down the way he did."

Pepper crawled out from the table, "*Ok? I'm not ok!! What was that? Oh my God what did you do!? Why do your eyes look like your reactor, Tony?!*" She gave him the look, the one that said give me answers now or so help me you will regret this.

He hated that look.

"Holy shit!! That was you?" Rhodey gaped at him. "Yesterday? Was that you to? Friday just said there was a massive system glitch."

Tony huffed, "Yea, in my brain. I guess you all want to know what just happened, right? Fine, I wasn't trying to hide this from you, I just have had so much to deal with there hasn't been a chance to tell you all."

So he gave them a quick rundown, he told his team everything that he had dealt with from his time in the hospital, the arc reactor, Extremis injection and everything up til now. It suprised him that they were all so understanding about it.

"Are you really ok?" Pepper asked again.

"You know me Pep, I'm always ok."

"Honestly, I'm not even shocked by what you do anymore." Rhodey sighed and Tony flipped him off.

He looked around the room at the (luckily very little) destruction he caused this time.

*Friday, you there? Any chance of salvaging the tech in here?*

**Sorry Boss, seems like you fried all the circuitry in the room again.**

"Damn.." he mumbled. "Alright Pep, sorry but I may have cooked all the tech in here. Sorry, sorry, I'll get you all new phones. Apologises. Pep you're just gonna have to talk us through without the files but first..")

Tony turned an angry gaze to Laura, "You know, I brought you here, into my home because during my Ultron screwup-"

Bruce raised a hand, "Technically I had a ha-"
"We know, Bruce. We know, just let it be.."

He glared at Laura, "You took us in, gave us food, a safe place to sleep, gave me something to do to keep my mind from driving me crazy.. You cared, and after it was all said and done you still cared, you let me come back, again and again. Your kids call me uncle Tony."

He licked his lips, "Clint did you wrong! He just up and left you and the kids high and dry and that just rips me up. That he thought a war was more important than his family. So as soon as I found out what your situation was, I came to get you. I wanted to return the same care you showed me the past three years."

Laura looked properly chastised even though Tony hadn't said anything remotely hateful to her.

Tony huffed an irritated breath, "But if you ever, and I mean ever, speak that way to Pepper again I will toss you from this tower so fast Heimdall won't even see you. I'll make sure your assets stay frozen longer than Steve was in the ice and Thunderbolt will have CPS beating down your door and you'll be lucky if you ever see your kids again."

Laura let out a sob.

"I care about you, I really do. You and the kids, but there are things that I have no tolerance for. Now by all means if you think I'm joking feel free to have another go at Pepper, or anyone else here for that matter, please."

Laura cried into her hands, "I'm sorry Pepper.. I do apologize."

Pepper gave her sinister smile, "Maybe one day if I feel like you're being sincere I may think of accepting it." She gave Tony that look again, the one that made him want to run and hide, then gave a side glance at Loki.

"Peppers not the only one you should apologize to. Loki's lost his mother not to long ago, and it's disrespectful to throw your bogus insult at a woman you never even knew. From the stories I've heard from Thor, she was absolutely incredible. She must have been to raise such tenacious, fearless and valiant sons who aren't afraid to stand up for what they believe."

Loki glanced up from where he was scowling at the table with a look of utter shock. He'd never had anyone aside from his mother call him valiant or fearless. He wasn't sure how he was supposed to respond to that.

Laura just cried harder, "I am sorry Loki. I am, I just.."

Tony sighed and shook his head, "Laura I know you're upset, I know you're angry. You have every right to be, but that doesn't mean you can just lash out at everyone. What the hell has gotten into you lately? These ups and downs aren't like you."

She took a deep breath to calm herself and wiped the tears from her face.

"I'm pregnant..."

Chapter End Notes

I switched up the fandom this time and chose a Sherlock fic :) It's called Twisted And
Decayed by corruptedpov

OMG, I think it's one of the best fics I've read! You have to check it out, you won't be disappointed, I promise :)}
Chapter Notes

For some reason I feel like this chapter didn't reach my standards, but I can't get them all perfect. I hope you like it anyway :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Pregnant..?” Tony stammered.

“Yes,” Laura cried, “I just found out last night. I felt fluttery, like I did when I was pregnant with Nate so I went and bought a test.. It was positive..” She wiped her eyes and moaned, “Oh God…”

T’Challa watched as Tony seemed to deflate, at those two words all the anger he was feeling practically evaporated. He fell back into his chair and groaned, pulling at his hair like a petulant child. He was no expert on Tony Stark but the man seemed to be more moody than usual, but then again T’Challa had only known him a week.

“I don’t even…” Tony trailed off. “How?”

It was Vision who decided to speak, “I would think you were most familiar with the concept. When a man and a woman have sexual inter-

“It was a rhetorical question Viz!!” Tony sputtered.

It was comical to watch, T’Challa could have sworn his entire body deflated, even Tony’s hair fell flat. It reminded him of an American TV show he watched years ago, the animated one with the yellow colored people. The Sampson’s or Swanson’s.. He couldn’t remember but there was a clown on the show who ate some bad brisket and his pointed hair had fallen flat against his head. He didn’t know why that was a memory that had stuck with him but watching Tony react to Laura’s announcement made the memory resurface.

Now he was imagining Tony in a clown get-up and had to suppress a giggle, causing Loki to look at him quizzically. It wasn’t very befitting of a King, well former King now. He was being most unprofessional, laughing in the midst of an important meeting.

T’Challa cleared his throat as Loki cocked a brow and leaned toward him, “Is there something amusing you, Prince?” he whispered.

T’Challa cleared his throat again, trying to smother another laugh, he whispered back, “Hmmph, no. Nothing amusing, I just had a funny thought. It was, the hair, it reminded me.” He coughed, “The clown, I apologize.”

“Clown?” Loki squinted, then looked to Tony, “Ahh, yes I can see the resemblance there, he does seem more suited as a court jester doesn’t he, all he’s missing is the red nose.”

T’Challa choked back a laugh, “And the rainbow hair..”

“Hmmm,” Loki contemplated a moment, “It would be a much needed improvement. Very well,” he murmured. “As you wish.”
“What?” T’Challa inquired while Loki made a slow circle with his hand and the rooms occupants let out small snorts of amusement.

“Oh God.” Pepper couldn’t suppress her snort.

“Wow, this might even be better than Tony Stank.” Rhodes deadpanned.

“Who ordered the clown,” Hope snickered.

Laura looked up through reddened eyes and did a double take, “Oh my..” she laughed. “I- thank you, that’s... I needed that!”

Tony was looking at them like they were crazy, “What? Do I have a booger on my nose?” He rubbed at it. “Why are you all smiling?” he squinted at them sternly, however with his neon pink and green hair and the bright red painted nose he just couldn’t pull off that authoritative look.

Rhodes reclined back into his chair, “No reason, carry on then. Where were we? Oh yeah, pregnant Hawkwife.”

“Rhodey, I know you’re lying to me, I swear-! What is it??”

“Not lying. No, it was just…There was a fly.. On your head.. Yeah..” he lied horribly.

“Liar!! What kind of a best friend-? Fine! Bruce? You’ll tell me. What is it? Why are you all creepily staring?”

Bruce sank into his seat, “I don’t know what you mean. I’m still trying to process Vision using the word sexual..”

Vision looked confused, “I am afraid I don’t understand. Mr. Stark asked how it was possible for her to be pregnant, I was merely trying to explain to him how the human body produces-”

“Okay!! Enough, we get it, man plus woman equals baby. We are acquainted with how it works! Please no graphic details!” Rhodes interrupted. “Can we get back to the task at hand? Please!!”

Tony glared, “Some science bro you are… T’Challa? Why are you smiling at me?”

“Brisket!”

Tony looked toward Loki, “You.. You did something! What was it? Spit it out, come on!”

“A vast improvement over the previous model..” Loki gave a sly grin.

Tony groaned from his chair, “Screw it, there’s more important issues to deal with. I feel like everything’s starting to go to shit!” He gave a dramatic exhale. “God almighty, Clint! You picked a hell of a time to fly out of the cuckoo’s nest..”

“I’m sorry,” Laura looked at them with tear stained cheeks. “I’m so sorry, I know it’s not an excuse for my behavior but with everything that’s happened with Clint and then having this dropped on me I’m just.. I haven’t been this bad in a long time.. I truly apologize.”

She looked at Pepper, “Ms. Potts, I’m sorry. That was unacceptable of me. It was never my intention to insult you, or you Loki. I am truly sorry. I don’t know what’s wrong with me… These ups and downs, it’s to early for my hormones to be acting crazy..”

Pepper was watching her waringly, she looked to Tony and she sighed, “I suppose, given the
circumstances that I can let it go. This time, though, I do ask that you please not let it happen again."

“As can I,” Loki spoke up. “I remember when Mother was pregnant with Baldr. Father told her one morning how beautiful she was and she threw Gungnir at his head and cursed him to expel butterflies each time he spoke.”

Tony looked shocked, “My god, there’s more of you! I thought it was just you and Thor!”

“Oh no, there are Hela, Bragi, Thor, myself and Baldr. There may be more, but those are the only ones Frigga birthed. Well, not me, seeing as I’m adopted. Bragi and Baldr are currently in your Norway with the rest of Asgard, and Hela met her death, I hope, during the fiery demise of Asgard.”

“Are they..?” Tony mimicked magic fingers and Thor smashing with his hammer.

“Sadly no, they are quite boring. Baldr can’t even wield a sword and has the stature of a woodland sprite and Bragi prefers the life of an axeman and is twice the size of Thor. Hela was intriguing, had she not been so psychotic we may have got along very well.”

Tony looked unimpressed, “Psychotic? That’s rich coming from the man who led an alien army to earth!”

“Once again, not my fault. I was under the influence of the mind gem as well as the magic of a very sinister creature at the time..” He trailed off in thought, revisiting his torture at the hands of Ebony Maw..

Bruce, who had barely spoken since they all gathered, had been watching Laura. He looked as though he were processing the bits on info he had heard. “I hate to break up your trip down memory lane, Loki but.. Laura? You just said a few things that I don’t understand. You said you haven’t been this bad in a long time, what did you mean?”

“Oh, just.. I used to have really bad mood swings, back before I met Clint. When I still worked with SHIELD.”

Everyone looked shocked, T’Challa could swear he heard horns honking ninety floors below. “You worked for SHIELD?!” Tony exclaimed. “How did I not know that? I went through every single file Romanoff dropped on the internet! There was nothing in there about that, I’d remember!”

Laura looked thoughtful, “There wouldn’t be anything on Laura Barton, Special Agent, in their files… My operations were erased from existence when I got married. As far as anyone knows, I’m just a wife and mother, not an undercover operative who’s as good with a bow as Clint is, though I prefer a crossbow..”

“Ok..” Tony slid fo far down the chair he was nearly on the floor. “My mind is blown.. Kaboom, kapoot. It’s fried. I really need a break.”

Bruce spoke again, “That’s all good to know, thank you for telling us but I’m still confused, you were going to say something about your moods. Would you care to elaborate a bit more, I feel like somethings missing.”

“Oh uh, sorry yes. Some of the missions I was sent out on could rival Nat’s. I didn’t do to well mentally with the things I did and I went through some bad bouts of depression and some severe anxiety. SHIELDs Doctors diagnosed me with a minor personality disorder.”

“Did you take anything for your, umm, issues?” Bruce prodded.
“Yeah, I’ve taken one called Paxil for a few years now, I started out with something else but I don’t remember the name.”

“Are you still taking it?” Bruce inquired.

“Well, I am but.. I took the last one about a week ago and when I tried to see my Doctor to get a refill my insurance no longer was acceptable. I think Ross had something to do with that, and I didn’t have the money to pay upfront so I haven’t had them- and oh, my god I am a complete moron sometimes!!”

Bruce nodded, “It would explain why you’ve been all over the place recently, pregnancy hormones could be a factor as well but not to the extent you’re experiencing.”

“God, I feel so stupid..I can’t believe I didn’t even think about that!”

“It’s ok, you’ve had so much going on..” Bruce reassured her, “It’s not that hard to forget, I’m going to write you a new prescription, something safer for pregnancies, then we’ll do a full check up and make sure everything is ok. Tony I’m going to use your employee pharmacy downstairs if that’s ok?”

Tony, who still looked like he was in shock, just waved it away, “So your saying her abnormal level of meanness is because of drug withdrawal? Huh.. Sure, you know what, go ahead.. Friday already has her on payroll here as my new PA so, yeah, go crazy Laura. Er, crazier. Yeah, it’s good.”

“What!! Tony, you put me on your payroll? Without telling me!! What are you- I don’t even- Ugh..” Laura sputtered.

Hope, who had been scrolling through the files projected in front of her when Tony had his Extremis mini meltdown, spoke up. “I have a, um, question Tony.”

“Sure, more the merrier. How may I assist you madam buzzy?”

“Well I noticed in the file I had earlier, before you blew it to bits-”

“Sorry bout that..”

“-that you have Dr Stephen Strange listed as a..? Sorcerer Supreme, whatever that is. I was just wondering, it seems odd to me, sorcerers do magic, right? So if he has that ability, wouldn’t he be the best choice to restrain Maximoff? Why not use him instead of Loki. No offence meant Loki, I’m just.. I’m curious.”

Tony gave pause, “Actually it was Bruce that had the reason for that. Bruce?”

Bruce looked to be put on the spot, “Oh um.. It was- Thor said- I’m just gonna let Loki explain.” He looked pleadingly at the God, who rolled his eyes, murmuring about mortals.

“Fine! As some of you know Thor left Midgard after your metal human had a tantrum to find out more on the Infinity Stones like the one residing in your Visions head. There are believed to be six in total, and if they are all brought together into a special golden gauntlet their wielder will have unlimited power.”

Loki hesitated briefly, “There is a creature within the cosmos, a monster whose greatest desire is to wield the power of the stones. If what Thor says is true, one stone lies within the planet of Xandar, one in the depths of a wasteland called Knowhere, one which the whereabouts are unknown and three… Three reside here on Midgard.. Tha- the creature already possesses the gauntlet. It was after
he returned home and we went to retrieve Father that Thor learned of the existence of the Time Stone on Midgard. Your Sorcerer wields it.”

“The creature, he hunts the stones, has for an eternity. By sheer luck has he not managed to get his claws onto them so far. When Thor realized what power they possess, he wanted to make sure they were as far from Midgard as possible, so he asked for the help of your Doctor, whose purpose is to guard the stone he carries, to accompany him on his ‘quest’.” He truly used quotes when he said quest.

Bruce looked perplexed as usual, “Thor doesn’t think there’s a way to bring Asgard back, does he? He’s trying to make sure the stones stay away from Earth.”

Loki smiled, “Despite what he seems, Thor is not an imbecile. That was his brilliant idea when he learned of the Stones existence. He knows Asgard has fallen, his purpose was to get your Doctor and his stone away from here, by any means necessary. Thor knows if the monster discovers the whereabouts of the stones here on Midgard, he will decimate this realm. When he learned of the Doctor’s ability to travel into different dimensions he saw a chance, persuading the Doctor to accompany him and leaving me here to assist you.”

“Why not just take the stone and destroy it?” Pepper asked.

“The stones cannot be destroyed, even by us Gods. You see, before the creation of the universe itself, there were 6 singularities that existed. These were, Space, Mind, Reality, Power, Soul and Time. Once the creation of the universe began, these singularities were converted into 6 individual stones by the cosmic entities, which resided before the creation of everything. Only they can destroy the stones if legend is correct.”

“Who are they?” Rhodes asked. “These cosmic entities.”

“They have more power than even I can imagine. They are Entropy, Infinity, Eternity and… Death.” Loki whispered.

Vision was processing this new data he had been given, “You said three resided here. Where is the other?”

Loki gave a pained grimace and held up his hand. The Tesseract shimmered into existence.

“Are you kidding me!!” Bruce yelled, “You brought it here! You just said some psycho alien wants this and you bring it here!! Are you nuts?”

“Well I couldn’t leave it floating throughout the galaxy could I. That would be fun, giving the Titan a free grasp toward his goal!”

“Does Thor know you brought it here?” Bruce demanded.

“....”

“Loki!”

“Not entirely, no.” Loki gave an eye roll, showing he was growing bored with this conversation, “I had to bring it somewhere Banner! If that monster gets his hands on the Tesseract he has the potential to open a portal anywhere in the universe. Anywhere! He could have the rest of the stones in his clutches within days.”

T’Challa had been listening closely to everything, he had seen some very strange things in life, he
himself was an oddity, he ate a magic plant and was given incredible strength, but aliens and
monsters and Gods still seemed like a very far fetched reality. Perhaps he was merely dreaming and
this was all just his illusion. He turned to ask Tony something, the man had been uncharacteristically
quiet while listening to Loki speak.

“Anthony? Are you alright?” T’Challa asked, worried at the pallor of Tony’s skin.

Tony looked ill, “This creature.. Does it have a name?”

Loki focused his gaze on Tony, “You know of what I speak Stark, you tell me.”

Tony’s breathing had sped up, “Thanos..” he whispered.

“Mmmm, I assume you heard the Chitauri speak of their masteron your trip into the unknown?”

Tony gave a shake of his head, “No, I could hear it whispered in my ear when Maximoff gave me
that vision…And I think I saw it, him, when I destroyed your army. Last thing I saw before I lost
consciousness. Big, bout ten feet tall, purple and makes Thor look like a newborn baby?”

“That is an accurate description, yes.” Loki replied. “Fear not, Stark, for he still resides in the darkest
depths of the galaxy for now. But he won’t remain there forever, he will eventually come for these
stones so the longer Thor keeps the Time stone away the better for us all. I requested he take Vision
as well, but he felt that he would be needed here more.”

They fell into a deep silence, each lost into dark thought at the prospect of an upcoming invasion
while the Avengers were practically nonexistent wasn’t a scenario any of them wanted to face in the
immediate future. Pepper was looking more than a little anxious, whether it was the prospect of a
murderous alien or all the current storylines in ‘the daily life of Virginia Potts’ T’Challa wasn’t sure.

“As much as I would love to continue with all these new twists and turns, we really are limited for
time here with our current dilema. Future planetary battles are going to have to go on the backburner
til we resolve our Rogers & Co. issue. Shuri only has til Friday morning and if we don’t do
something, there are many lives at risk. That gives us today and tomorrow, with no room for errors,
that’s not a lot of time. Also, I do have a billion dollar company to run and I’m currently serving as
the liaison between you and the government, Tony. Please can we get started?”

“Sorry Pep, sorry everyone. We got a little sideways there, didn’t we?”

Friday?

I’m here Boss. How can I help?

Is Murdock busy? See if he can come down, and have him bring a couple tablets with him.

He’s on his way Boss.

Thanks baby girl.

Matt came in minutes later, handing Pepper and Tony each a tablet. Tony decided to do more
experimenting with Extremis coursing through his veins and used his new mental connection to bring
up the tablets holo’s for the rest to see.

“That’s creepy Tones,” Rhodes said.

“What, it’s not like I’m in your head.”
He dabbed into Peppers tablet and got Shuri back online. She looked worried, no doubt being cut off from her brother twice in such a short time was unnerving for her.

“Is everything alright?” she asked. “T’Challa? Are you well?”

Hearing his sisters concern for him made his heart warm. Despite the trials life threw at them they always loved and cared about the others wellbeing.

“I’m sorry Shuri. Tony did something incredibly stupid to himself without testing first and then he had a meltdown.” Pepper gave him a stern look which had him cowering.

“Me? I did something stupid. I’m not the one who knocked up my wife!”

“Tony!” Laura chastised him.

“Well you have to admit, it’s not Clint’s best timing.”

Murdock took a seat beside Pepper, “I feel like I may have walked into some weird sitcom.”

Bruce rubbed his temples, “You’re not far off.”

Tony stood, clapped his hands. “Alright, enough of the gooey stuff. We need to get started. Pepper? If you would, please.”

She took them through her entire day with Everett Ross and the UN members, outlying their strategy. The general idea was for the remaining Avengers to enter Wakanda and (hopefully) apprehend their less than civil teammates with minimal problems. Military forces would be standing by as backup should anything happen, and according to Pepper they were authorised to use lethal force if necessary.

The bordering countries of Angola and the DRC had eagerly offered their Army assistance to Wakanda and the UN. Their troops, along with the US and allied forces were already moving into position to make sure the entire border of Wakanda was secured. The UN wanted to avoid mass casualties at all cost, so the Army wasn’t to make a move unless Rogers & Co. made it past Tony and the rest. Their goal was to secure them inside the palace walls, should they get past them, then all bets were off.

Shuri told them of some new tech she had been working on, a forcefield like dome that should contain them if needed, if she got a few bugs worked out. She designed it to protect the cities of Wakanda but (Tony, please tell me you don’t truly believe Wakanda is some third world country? Wait til you get here, your mind will be blown away. T’Challa hasn’t been very chatty about home then, shame.) it hadn’t made it to full test mode yet.

Loki looked around the room and focused on T’Challa, ”I feel I should remind you lesser creatures that one of you has had premonitions of this impending catastrophe, should we not take this into consideration?”

“Shit…” Tony muttered, “I completely forgot.. T’Challa? Why don’t you tell everyone what you’ve been seeing.”

So he told them, Shuri grew pale upon hearing of the mass of death that could befall them. Laura looked peaked as well, hearing that she met her demise by an arrow through the chest made her tear up more.

“And that’s why you’re not going,” Tony told her.
“But what if-?”

“Murdock will be taking your place.”

“What!!” The entire room yelled in unison. The look on Matt’s face was priceless,

“Tony.. We discussed this.”

“Matt, I promise you that anything you say in here, won’t leave this room. They can be trusted, well.. Except Loki, but nobody will believe a word he says outside anyway.”

“Your faith in me is tenacious Stark..”

“Shoosh, daddy’s talking. Everyone, meet Matt, our newest part time Avenger-”

“Tony..” Matt huffed.

Everyone looked lost, not comprehending how a blind man could be an Avenger. Tony preened with internal glee. Never underestimate what any person can be capable of, they will always suprise you.

“You may know him better from his night job, wandering the dark alley’s of Hell’s Kitchen, diving from rooftops like a bat after its prey, ninjaing up the si-”

“Please get on with it Tones!” Rhodey spat.

“Fine, spoilsport. Everyone, say hi to the Devil of Hell’s Kitchen. Better known as, DareDevil. That info doesn’t go beyond these doors, capiche?”

After a split second of group shock, Tony was happy to see them giving Matt an enthusiastic welcome, even Loki seemed impressed as Matt told them of his particular set of abilities. Matt took it all in stride, he looked overwhelmed at the very positive acceptance of the group.

“Now, we can’t all not be there. I know T’Challa saw most of you die but we need to find a way to change the future, so to speak. Laura, you’re not going, don’t even argue.”

“I won’t.. Thank you Tony..”

“Matt, you’re her fill in, avoid any arrows shot at your face.”

“Noted.”

“As for the rest of us.. Everybody get comfy, we’re gonna be here a while. Time to get down and dirty. By the time we’re through, Rogers won’t know what hit him..”

"Tony? May I ask you something?" Shuri said.

"Anything for you, Princess."

"Why is your hair pink?"

"What!!"

Chapter End Notes
Totally recommending you read 'A Bend in the Universe' by twobettafish

Another really great story :)

Ray of the Rising Sun

Chapter Notes

Only five more chapters to go and it'll be finished :) Thanks to those of you who have stuck with it all this time! Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

T’Challa rolled onto his back and yawned loudly, he’d given up on proper sleep around midnight and tossed restlessly most of the night. He was too wired to sleep, tomorrow everything would come to a head and more than likely he wouldn’t be joining the fight. He was still too weak from whatever Romanoff had shot through his veins.

He thought back on yesterday’s proceedings. During their meeting, after he told them about his visions and they all voiced their concerns about dying, the new Avengers had came to what they hoped would be a ‘safe strategy’. Safe being an operative word.

Safe. He didn’t think anything could be safe anymore if it were associated with Steve Rogers..

After Tony’s DareDevil introduction (We agreed to wait till after they were in custody Tony! Better now than never double D, you’re an Avenger now, and my official lawyer, might as well meet your team!) they discussed scenario after scenario to hopefully change the outcome of Bast’s warning. It was tricky, seeing as he had been given two different visions, Loki believed the outcome of one would have an effect on the other.

His vision of the temple, Loki stated, seemed more likely to happen if Rogers & Co. were to escape from the palace, so the palace was where they should start. After hours of debating, they came to a unanimous agreement that they needed to change the setting. T’Chaka’s study/office had been the scene for everyone dead around him, so after conferring with Shuri they decided the best place to arrest them would be the palace throne room. While not as secure as T’Chaka’s study, it was still one of the most secure places within the palace.

Nothing should be able to penetrate the vibranium walls and doors, right?.

T’Challa would meet them there alone, bright and early Friday morning, with the others coming in moments later to arrest them. He had asked for a few minutes alone with them for he had things he wished to say to Rogers and Romanoff.

For Laura’s safety, she wouldn’t accompany them like she originally hoped. She would stay in the tower with the kids and her newly prescribed medication to ‘mellow her back into her happier mommy self’ according to Tony.

Shuri told them of Scott and Sam’s surrender, that they were ready to leave with the Avengers to go back to the US and await trial. They promised they would go peacefully and would be waiting tomorrow morning to be put on the Quinjet where Hope would be standing guard over them and available at a moment’s notice should she be needed.

Hope had firmly declared that she would not be put off by T’Challa’s visions and that she would be in Wakanda to apprehend Scott and PymTech’s stolen suit.
Loki, who was actually very nice for a man who tried to enslave earth *(Once again...Not me!)* was not eager to have his throat slashed by flying debris so he stated that he would remain with Miss Van Dyne and would only make himself known should Vision not be able to handle Maximoff on his own. He also told them by this time tomorrow he would have something ready for each of them to wear into battle that should help greatly with altering their outcome.

Matt, Shuri and the Dora Milaje would remain in the room as would Rhodes and Vision, because Rogers & Co. against two were just horrible odds.

Bruce wouldn’t be a part of their apprehension, but he would be waiting with Everett and a med team just across in the DRC in case things went south.

Tony’s presence was a stumper, he wasn’t in either of T’Challa’s visions for whatever imaginable reason and Loki *(an expert on future exploration, apparently)* determined his presence was needed there at all costs.

Time was beginning to wind down, the hours were ticking away and later tonight they would be boarding a jet to Wakanda, where *(Bast may your will be done)* T’Challa would try to not be arrested by his own countrymen for violating his exile. Shuri assured him that she, along with the Dora would not leak a word of his return to the council. They were expecting the Avengers alone, not their disgraced King of a short time.

Tony wanted to get him in and out as quickly as possible. While T’Challa would have to face the UN for his own involvement in this, Tony didn’t want him to have to face a firing squad *(we don’t have those in Wakanda, Tony)* in his own home. At least with the UN he had a chance for a light sentence, seeing it was a first offence for him.

The main problem was secrecy. If Rogers noticed their arrival before they could corral them together, then there was no doubt they would run, more than likely leaving a path of destruction in their wake. They wouldn’t be able to land at the palace runway but T’Challa told them about an underground tunnel system that was used for emergency situations. There was a connection from there to an emergency runway on a mountaintop not far from the palace. The Quinjet would be landing there while the plane T’Challa came to the States on would touchdown at the palace. T’Challa would have Rogers and the rest rounded up and Shuri and the Dora would escort Tony and the Avengers shortly after.

After that...Well one could hope it would all be easy, but in his experience it never was..

T’Challa looked to the massive panoramic windows, the city of New York still shrouded in early morning darkness. There was no use in trying to sleep more, his mind was to active.

“Friday? What is the time?”

“It is currently 5:13 am sir. Is there anything I can help you with?”

“Would you be able to tell me where Tony is?” he asked as he rose sluggishly from the bed and donned his newly minted ‘goggles’.

“Boss is currently in the workshop, along with Mister Parker. They are arguing about Mister Parkers lack of ‘Avenging’ with this mission. Well, Peter is arguing, Boss is mostly sighing and thinking about coffee. I don’t think he realises he’s currently thinking at me..”

T’Challa laughed, “How does Tony like his coffee?”
Half an hour later he found himself walking into Tony’s semi-destroyed workshop with two thermos filled with coffee and a box of bagels Friday had ordered. Tony was sitting at a low workbench with an open crate of vibranium next to him, he appeared to be working on one of his suits while arguing with Peter about tomorrow.

“-don’t care if May said you could. You are absolutely not going!” Tony bellowed.

“Yip yip, yap, yap! I can help you guys, Tony! How am I supposed to show you what I can do if you don’t give me a chance?” Peter argued back.

“Uh.. How about by listening to what I’m telling you! You can’t go Pete. I already took you out of the country without any authorization, I can’t take you to Wakanda. It’s to big a risk and I’m not willing to take it. Besides, what’ll happen if you and Murdock both go and one of your weird buggy villains shows up?”

“But-” Pete sputtered.

“No! There are no buts, Pete! I can’t have you there for this one, if I had known how dangerous Rogers would be at that airport I’d have never taken you there. Please, just… Stay here, patrol the city, arrest some thugs or actually do some teenage stuff for one night. But you’re not going on this one, and don’t you dare try to stowaway or I’ll have Friday lock you out from your suit for a month!”

“That’s not fair!!”

“Kid.”

T’Challa coughed to make himself known, “Sorry for interrupting but Friday said you were wishing for coffee.” He showed the thermos and bagels.

Tony made a face, “How did she know I wanted- Ohhhh.. Sorry baby girl, didn’t mean to invade your space there.”

“Apology accepted, Boss!”

“You’re up early, I figured you’d be trying to rest up as much as you can for tomorrow,” Tony grabbed a thermos and took a long drink.

“I couldn’t sleep, my mind is to active with worry. I know we have came up with the best possible way to do this, but I cannot help but worry that it will all go wrong.” T’Challa told him.

Tony sighed tiredly, “I know how you feel. I had at most two hours, I gave up and came down here to get some things ready before I was taken hostage by the kid here.” He cocked a thumb at Peter.

“Hey! I’ve been helping.” Peter exclaimed.

“Helping what? Me into an early grave. Hey, does May even know you’re here this early? Have you even been home tonight?”

Peter jumped from the stool where he had been tinkering with his web-shooters, “Oh shit!! I gotta go Mr Stark, she’s gonna kill me!” He quickly gathered his things and shoved them into his backpack before zipping to the door.

“Bye T’Challa! I’ll be back later!”
“Bye Peter.”

He and Tony choked back a laugh as Peter’s backpack managed to hook onto a stray strip of metal sticking out from the earlier and nearly choked him in the process. They laughed till Peter was out of sight then Tony turned to him with a huge smile, “So since neither of us can sleep and we have a hell of a lot to do today, you wanna help me play with my new vibranium?”

“Oh God, yes!”

They spent the next several hours in the lower labs smelting the vibranium so Tony could put two new suits together for tomorrow, one for himself and a new armor for Colonel Rhodes that would be able to fit his leg braces inside. It was nice, working beside Tony and getting an on-hand look at his famous armor. Tony took advantage of T’Challa’s genius and let him work on the more fine parts of the system interface, it had been far too long since he had a chance to sit and create. His own Panther armor was in need of upgrading, it was far too difficult to get into at a moments notice.

Shuri had been experimenting with a form of nano technology recently and he hoped to incorporate into his armor somehow.

He probably wouldn’t have the chance now.

They worked in a peaceful harmony until the broke for lunch six hours later, two shiny new suits ready and waiting for a new day to dawn. He felt better than he had in ages really, his breathing was improving and he’d only had to use the oxygen for about an hour today. His vision was totally shot without the help of the glasses, which Tony poked fun at at every available chance.

All in all, he felt strangely peaceful as they worked into the later hours of the evening. They went back to the penthouse about six that evening, to try and get a few hours of rest in before they flew out to Wakanda that night. As he dozed off in a short nap he hoped this peace that had fallen over him today could remain through the coming days... Just a little light to filter through all the darkness, to give him some hope.

Loki was used to weaving his spells on a short notice, he was after all one of the best mage’s in the cosmos, it was the lack of critical items available here on Midgard that frustrated him to no end. He would have to dip into what was left of his reserves stored in his own version of the mirror dimension. But, needs must. Thor would be very cross if he returned and found all the Avengers dead.

No doubt he would blame Loki somehow.

He despised being blamed for everything, Thor and his idiotic friends never took the blame for anything that happened as children. Loki always ended up taking the fall for their antics.

Nothing ever changes, he thought.

The protection spell would be easy to weave, he had all the necessary ingredients within his grasp. The irritating part was he needed some form of item to attach the spell to, like a pendent of some sort. In order for it to work the user must have constant contact with the blessed item. All these years of
practicing his craft and he had yet to come across a protection spell that he could directly invoke into the person. Perhaps one day he would be able to perfect one of his own.

Thoroughly searching the tower, he hadn’t found one piece of stray jewels lying around anywhere. In Asgard, Frigga had an entire room filled with nothing but jewels and trinkets, open for the realm to see.

Mortals.. So overly suspicious of each other.

After speaking with the wall spirit, she directed him to a local merchant who had become extremely irate when Loki had made the entire stock of items disappear with a flick of his wrist, teleporting them to his space in the tower. Apparently it was frowned upon on Midgard to take things without some sort of restitution. Loki had merely directed him to Tony Stark and hoped the matter was solved.

Returning to the ugly tower, he found seven nearly identical bracelets that he thought would suffice. In a few hours he would have them all blessed and ready to give to the remaining Avengers and hope that they would see fit to wear them. While the charms wouldn’t completely protect them they would ensure that they would all live to see another day.

He had included one for Vision, but was unsure if the stone he carried would have any ill effect on the charms ability.

It probably didn’t matter for him anyway, no one within the galaxy could harm an Infinity Stone, right?

Thoughts aside, he let the power rise up through him and set to work. Tomorrow would come all too soon ..

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Thursday night- Wakanda

The palace was quiet as Natasha made her through the ventilation ducts. She had to go to extreme lengths to make sure she wasn’t followed. She’d searched for cameras throughout her room and while she hadn’t found any she still used a scrambling device to disrupt any signals that could be floating around. She had been very discreet this time, no trace of her actions, and since no Dora had broken down her doors she must have been successful.

Steve had ordered this late night meeting, he was getting unbearably angry over Shuri’s ‘movement’ of Barnes. Their midnight rendezvous last night with Carter had proven fruitless, Sharon had barely left the temple since they arrived. Her two trips into the nearby city had been for hygiene reasons and she had heard no whispers of Barnes or anything else while she was out.

She did note that the Dora Milaje had dramatically increased their number of patrols around the temple the past two days, which had made Steve very, very uncomfortable. It didn’t set well with Natasha either, something was going on, but she had been at the beck and call of Nakia all day and
had no way of finding out what it was. She had barely managed to break away to get a bathroom break and even then Nakia was right outside the door.

After thinking back on it none of them had been without a shadow since the pool incident. Clint and Wanda had a personal guard all day while they scrubbed their entire rooms today. Wanda’s hands were heavily bandaged after her ordeal yesterday and the pain in them made it nearly impossible for her to use her power.

You’d think a telekinetic could just use their mind but Wanda had to use her hands as well to manipulate objects.

She had noted that Shuri’s presence around the palace was non-existent all day. It didn’t bode well for them. A storm was coming, and she felt like it would hit soon.

Finally, after ages of squeezing her ass through the small vents, she found herself over Steve’s room. He had the vent cover open for her and she dropped down without a sound. Clint and Wanda were already there, Sam and Scott however, were not.

“Where are they?” Nat asked.

Steve slapped at thin air, angry, “No idea. No one’s seen them since Sunday. They weren’t in their rooms when I checked today and I couldn’t find their gear anywhere. I’d think they may have snuck away but I can’t seem to find out anything around here!”

Clint nodded, “Everyone around here is pretty hush, hush. I feel like I’m waiting for a funeral.”

“Maybe they are still mad with us,” Wanda stated. “They were very angry after that news broadcast we watched.”

Steve shook his head, “No… No something’s different. Everything feels wrong. I think we may have to make a hasty exit. I don’t like this feeling. Clint’s right, it feels dark, like something’s about to happen. I think we need to leave.”

Natasha sighed, she hoped they would be able to stay here longer but.

“The jet’s secure, it’s cloaked and Sharon’s made sure no one has been able to get close. We can go whenever you’re ready, Steve.”

He winced, rubbing at his head, “Alright, we’ll pack tonight. Be ready to move early in the morning, while the palace is still quiet. We should be able to get out with minimal trouble.”

“Why not tonight?” Wanda asked him.

“Tomorrow will be soon enough,” he rubbed his head again. “Go back to your rooms, get packed and a few hours rest. Tomorrow we move.”

Clint and Wanda crawled back up into the vent, Natasha was ready to follow when she looked at Steve, “Are you ok?”

“Yeah. Yeah I just. I have a headache.” He rubbed his temples.

“You? You have a headache?”

“I’m fine Nat, it’s just having to deal with all this crap. Even super-soldiers need a break once and awhile. I’ll be fine after a nap. Now go get ready. Sunrise is in about six hours, we should be out of
Natasha knew better than to argue with him, with his moods lately she’d be lucky to come out without a new bruise on her throat. She wished none of this had happened, that she was back in her room in the compound or the tower. But wishes were for children, and any hope she had of ever going home was shattered when she let Steve and Barnes go in that hangar.

She crawled back into the vent and shimmied back to her room, hoping that by the dawn of the day tomorrow she could disappear into the rays of the rising sun.

Chapter End Notes

You know you want to go read A Strange Web of Iron by WIX2
Leaving on a Jet Plane

Chapter Notes

Not many more chapters left, soon this monster will be at it's end. I would say I'm sad it's over but it has taken ages to finish. Enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony cupped his palms, filling them with cool water to splash on his face. They were down to the final few minutes before they would board a jet to the jungle, and with luck, have a final, peaceful stand against Steve and the others.

He hated this, these people used to be his team, his family. Why couldn’t they come to some sort of a compromise? Did they really have to let their difference in opinion over things tear them apart. If Steve hadn’t been so stubborn they could have sat down and hashed all this out, there wouldn’t have been a war, no lives had to have been lost, Barnes could have been safe in the tower or the compound eating Ho-Ho’s and plums this whole time.

He saw Barnes just before he ducked into the bathroom for a few minutes alone, to compose himself a bit more. Friday had taken Bucky under her wing and he was living a life most people could only dream about. He was stretched out across the penthouse’s couch, wrapped in Pepper’s humongous pink afghan drinking orange sodas and munching on popcorn while binge watching Supernatural on Netflix.

The only thing Barnes had said about the fact that they were leaving was ‘Please, try not to kill him. I know we all messed up, but no one else needs to die. I still think something’s not right with Steve. Just don’t kill him’.

Tony couldn’t figure out why Barnes thought that. Sure he’d known Steve about a hundred years but aside from his recent lack of consideration for life Steve had always been fairly mellow. Maybe Tony needed to take a deeper look into Steve Rogers.

He made his way to his bedroom and gave a quick tap, it was weird to knock on his own door but as he’d put T’Challa in there he didn’t want to overstep any boundaries.

T’Challa was sitting on the bed, staring out at the skyline. He glanced over with a nervous grin as Tony flopped down beside him.

“You ready Kitty?” Tony gave him a friendly pat on the knee.

“No. I should not fear returning to my home, but if the council finds out a traitor has returned we both know what awaits me..” T’Challa sighed.

Tony reached out and gave his hand a gentle squeeze, “We have everything all figured out. Between Shuri and I they won’t know you’re there, you’ll be in and out in a flash. I’m not letting anything happen to you, or the rest of the team, I promise.”

T’Challa only nodded, “I suppose it is time?”

“MmmHmm. Here, I have something for you. These are fairly new, everyone else has theirs already,
just need to give one to you and Loki.” He pulled a clear plastic strip from his pocket, on it there were several tiny round, clear circular devices.

“What is this?” T’Challa asked.

“Something new I’ve been working on. It’s our new com system, very sleek and discreet, no one will ever know you’re wearing one and I have made it virtually un-hackable so no sensitive info will make it into enemy hands.”

T’Challa took the strip from him, turning it around in his hands. It didn’t look like much, almost as thin as paper and it was slightly squishy like gel. After studying it a few moments he still couldn’t figure out how it worked. “How does it..? I don’t see any components..”

Tony smiled, “Aah, I see I’ve stumped a fellow genius. They’re in there, it took me a few tries but I managed to get everything down to basically nano sized. It works almost like a cochlear implant, it sticks to the skin behind your ear and when one of our voices comes through it pushes the sound directly into the ear. Only you can hear it.”

“Absolutely amazing. How is it so clear?”

“It’s really not, a long time ago I started working on some camouflage that could mimic a chameleon, I never got very far with larger things, but I knocked it out with this. It takes on the shade of whatever it touches.”

He pulled one off and stuck it to the table by the bed, the clear began to deepen in the glossy black hue. T’Challa watched as he tried it on several different things, each time it virtually disappeared before his eyes.

“There’s a tiny mic built in, we’ve tested them here at the tower but this will be their first field run. They won’t fall off either, once they come into contact with skin the nano-tech latches on, totally safe by the way, can’t even feel it. Anywho, when it adheres it picks up your DNA and the wavelengths in your voice and it only releases when you touch it and say ‘weasel out’.”

“Weasel out?” T’Challa asked with a huge grin.

“Friday was playing with an online thesaurus, I wanted disengage but she found it to common..”

“Pull the plug was also an option Boss.”

“Yeah, how bout no. I already got weird looks when I talked to you through my glasses, now with Extremis in the mix me going around saying ‘pull the plug’ might put me in the looney bin.”

T’Challa hummed in agreement. They sat in a comfortable silence for a short time, neither wanting to face the day ahead. As it drew closer to 10pm T’Challa put his glasses on and rose from the bed. “I suppose we had better get started..”

Tony released a long, deep breath, “As much as I don’t want to.. Yeah, we need to get going. Friday, have everybody head up to the hangar, we’ll be up in a minute.”

Tony thought for a minute, “Are you ok? Do you feel well enough to do this? Do you need the o2 tank?”

“No, I am feeling much better. I am still weak but it is nothing I can’t handle, I have only needed one treatment today and I am feeling fine. Well, my eyes are hurting but that can’t be helped.”
“You can always stay here, we have Loki and Vision. Bruce will be a Hulk-out away. Ross is already waiting as backup, Wakanda is surrounded by military. We’ll be fine.”

“I’m not staying behind, Wakanda is my home and I have brought this shame to my nation. If I only get one chance to make things right.. This is that chance, I will be there, I will face them. If I have to crawl my way back to my home to do it then so be it! But I will see their reign of terror end..”

Tony smiled, “You remind me of myself after Afghanistan. I like it, it’s like me, but you know, royalty!” He slung his arm around T’Challa’s shoulder, pulling him close, “Alright Felix, let’s roll!”

They made their way to the hangar, where the new members of the Avengers were ready and waiting. Rhodey approached slowly, still getting used to the braces. This would be the first time back in his War Machine armor, Tony hoped the new AI he installed in the suit would adapt fast enough to make his movements feel like his own.

“Your new suit is onboard, I’m surprised you’re using an older design. I didn’t see any way you could call this one to you. I gave mine a test earlier, the AI you put in is wicked. It feels like I’m me again.”

“Thanks. I didn’t want to risk any weak points with this. Even with Extremis I still feel vulnerable. The man bashed my chest in the last time I saw him. I can’t. I can’t risk it.” He dropped to a whisper, “I still haven’t really tested Extremis yet, soooo. I don’t know, I could still go boom if I get mad enough, and that suit is vibranium so if that happens everyone is safe.”

Rhodey gave him the Pepper look, “We are gonna have words about your lack of self care when we get home!”

Tony mentally cringed, yay another lecture. “So, are we all ready?”

Loki stepped up in his usual princely way, head raised high, hands clasped behind his back, “If I may, Stark, I have something that will be of great assistance to us all.”

With a wave he held out seven nearly identical bracelets, “These should protect you all from any grievous harm. I have invoked them with the strongest spell of protection I am capable of doing, as long as the trinket remains in contact with your skin, well you won’t die. Spells are fickle sometimes, none are perfect, this was a creation of my mother and while it will ensure you shall live, it is still possible for you to be injured. She spent ages working on this when I was a child, after Thor nearly died hunting a Bilgesnipe.”

He handed one to each Avenger, secretly pleased when they all placed them around their wrists without question. When he had made them for Thor’s friends the first time they had accused him of trying to curse them.

When he came to hand Vision his, he declined, “As I do not have human skin I feel as though it would be wasted on me. Her Highness Shuri, will be waiting for us. I believe this would best be served around her wrist.”

T’Challa looked grateful, “Thank you, Vision.”

Tony, who was always wary about magic, eyed it a bit skeptical, “Ok, you said we won’t die but we can be injured. That makes no sense at all!”

Loki merely raised a brow, “Thank Thor for that one. After his row with the Bilgesnipe and Frigga created this spell, she told him that while she loved him dearly, if he chose to go running about doing stupid things he deserved to face some of the consequences. The spell is something of a foresight, it
can sense when grave harm is about to come to the recipient,” he looked to Hope, already in her suit, “May I?”

“Sure,” she stepped closer, engaging the Wasp’s helmet.

Loki let loose a powerful swing that knocked Hope off her feet, “Ooww! You have a mean swing. I felt that through the suit..” She got slowly to her feet.

Loki grimaced, “My apologies, I did hold back. Mother would be appalled if she saw me do that. Now if I may try again. Could the rest of you please stand beside your ship?”

When they were out of the way he looked at Hope, “No matter what, don’t move. I am merely trying to show you how it works. I am asking you to trust me..”

Hope gave a nod and braced herself when Loki conjured a huge spear and heaved it straight at her chest. The others all stepped forward, probably thinking Loki had conned them all, ready to come to the aid of their teammate. Tony had to give her credit, she didn’t budge. As the spear touched right over her heart a bright blast of green shot out from Hope’s body and the spear fell to the ground as if it hit a shield.

Loki looked at the worried faces, his own face falling a bit before he smiled, “As you can see that was meant to be a fatal blow. My mother was always about teaching us lessons but the death of her children was not something she could face.”

He gave Hope a bow, “Thank you, my lady. Your courage in the face of a monster is admirable.”

Hope gave him a beautiful smile and rose up to the tips of her toes to kiss Loki’s cheek, stunning the god.

“Thank you.” She gave him a hug and whispered in his ear, “We have all stood in the face of real monsters, Loki. And you are not one of them, no matter what you believe.”

“As much as I hate to say it, we need to go.” Bruce stated. He’d been quiet since they had been in the hangar, hating what was about to happen. “Ross is in position and we have to drop T’Challa at his plane.”

“Right, let’s get going guys. I feel like I should be singing Leaving on a Jet Plane or something.” Tony said, looking to T’Challa. “I’m glad your jet is as fast as the Quin, otherwise this plan wouldn’t have worked out well.”

T’Challa gave him a sly grin, “I just hope your little toy can keep up. Would you like me to slow it down for you?” Tony heard Loki snort.

“Smartass.. Alright, let’s roll people, three hours to go time! New Avengers, assemble!!”

He stopped on his way up the ramp and turned to Loki, “Wait! Can’t you teleport or something? Why can’t you just zap us to Wakanda and zap us all back?”

Loki sighed, “Despite what everyone believes, I don’t transport other beings. It takes a great deal of my energy to do so and taking us all would be very unfavorable to my health. Especially now that I don’t have access to Asgard’s healing chambers. So no, I will not be zapping us anywhere. I only use that skill on myself, which only causes me a minimal weakness,”

With T’Challa off in his own jet, the next hours saw each of them going through their pre battle rituals, Bruce and Loki meditated, Matt was sitting quietly reading a braille Bible, Rhodey was
Hope was reading through files on all the rogue Avengers, most likely memorizing any weaknesses they had.

Tony was left to pilot the jet, well he sorta piloted. Mostly he let Friday do all the work while he toyed with Extremis and tried to be calm.

About halfway to Wakanda T’Challa’s voice came through the com behind his ear.

“Tony?”

“Friday, private channel please.” Overusing Extremis gave him a slight headache.

“What’s up Kittycat?”

T’Challa paused, “I just.. I just wanted to thank you.. For all you have done for me since I collapsed on your doorstep. I am appalled at my lack of manners, I should have told you this days ago. You had every reason to turn me away, yet you did not. You saved my life, and you are helping to save my home. I feel that is a debt I will never be able to repay..”

Tony gave a sigh. Despite the fact that he was secretly a big softie, sometimes he hated all the feeling talks.

“There is no debt to repay, I helped you, well technically Bruce concocted the antidote,” He heard T’Challa laugh, “but I helped you because you have been a victim on this just like the rest of us. It’s not a matter of payment it’s a matter of doing the right thing. You have been wronged in this whole fucked up situation, you don’t deserve any of this and like I said before, I will do anything in my power to make sure nothing happens to you. Despite the short time we’ve known each other, I consider you a friend. You’re a good man T’Challa, and if the situation was reversed I know deep down you would do the same for me. For any of us.”

“Thank you Tony..” he whispered. “You are a great man.”

Tony felt a flutter run through him. Over the years he had gotten used to people praising his intellect, his wealth and his dashing good looks, but he couldn’t recall anyone ever calling him a great man. Rhodey probably had in one of his many lectures or more often in one of his Tony rants, but hearing T’Challa say it made him all warm and mushy inside.

He knew Rhodey meant it, but since he’d been his BFF since he was fifteen it was basically best friend code to tell said BFF how great he was. Having T’Challa say that after only knowing him for a little over a week made Tony’s chest want to puff up with pride. Maybe it was because of the short conversations he’d had with Shuri about her brother. From what he gathered, T’Challa wasn’t one to give praise easily

It just made him feel that much more happy.

“Well you have only known me around a week, it’s during the second one you’ll sing a different tune. Or meow one, in your case. You should try to rest, we still have almost two hours to go and after that.. Who knows.”

“I am feeling a bit peaked. I suppose you are right, I will see you soon, Anthony.”

“Not much longer now kitty.. Take a nap, alright. We’ll talk later.”

A little over an hour later, as T’Challa’s jet crossed over the Wakandan border the Quinjet hovered just on the edge near where Ross should be down below.
“Friday, find me a good landing zone, we need to drop Bruce off.”

At hearing his name Bruce zoned back into reality, “Hmm, wha.? No, no I’m good, just stay airborne Tony. You can let me out here.”

“Bruce we’re ten thousand feet up!”

“No it’s ok. Just open the bay door, I’ve done this before. Just make sure I’m near Everett, Hulk doesn’t have good directional sense sometimes.” Hulk grumbled in his head making Bruce’s eyes roll.

“Are you sure? That’s a uh, long drop there Mean Green.”

“Yes Tony, I’m sure. Are we close to Ross?” Bruce yawned.

“He’s about 30 yards to our left Doc.”

“Eh, close enough. Friday open the bay door please.” Bruce started taking off his jacket and shirt. He hesitated at the pants, “Not a word Tony..”

Bruce pulled his pants down to reveal a pair of dark grey stretchy pants.

With Tony’s face on the ass..

“Friday! I told you those were for a special occasion.”

“Sorry Boss. Doc saw them in R&D and knew they were for him.”

Bruce adjusted his stretchy pants, “Yeah, I just couldn’t pass up the chance of one of Hulks massive rank farts hitting you in the face!”

“Dude!” Tony cried, “Supposed to be a bro, here!”

Bruce grinned over his shoulder at Tony as he made his way to the open hatch, “Come on Tony. you know it’s funny. Now somebody get a picture of me on the way down, Pepper and I have a bet-”

“What !?”

“-going on about what Tony’s face is going to look like stretched across my ass. Pepper thinks Rosie O’Donnell.”

“Who’s your money on?” Rhodey asked.

“Dom Deluise!” Bruce called as he leapt from the ramp. Hope rushed forward to watch as he plummeted to the jungle below.

“Hey, it does look like Rosie O’Donnell..”

Tony furrowed his brows, “My friends are assholes..”

Twelve minutes and twenty-three seconds later, the Avengers touched down on Wakandan soil for the first time. Shuri stood waiting for them, behind her were two dozen Dora Milaje in a tight circle around Sam Wilson and Scott Lang.

Shuri moved toward them but her face was grim, “I’m afraid I won’t be able to give you a royal Wakandan welcome, Avengers. Time is of the essence, tight before you arrived the Dora were sent
to round up Rogers and the rest to meet with T’Challa. The rooms were empty.”

“*What*!!” All of them called in unison.

“Please be calm, it appears as though they were getting ready to leave, all of them had flocked into Rogers room. You have arrived just in time, they are in the throne room with T’Challa now but we need to hurry. Their bags were packed and waiting and despite all our efforts we still haven’t found Miss Carter or their jet.”

Tony nodded, “Alright just.. Can you give us a minute.” He gestured to Sam and Scott.

Shuri smiled, “Of course Tony.”

She moved aside and the Dora parted like water, the two Avengers who had the most common sense walked slowly to them. Sam paused in front of Rhodes and started to speak but no words came forth, he finally just shook his head and wrapped Rhodes in a bear tight hug.

“I’m so sorry..” He cried into Jim’s shoulder, “I’m sorry Jim, I’m so sorry..”

Rhodey, to his credit, returned the embrace. Whispering something in Sam’s ear that none of them could hear. Sam nodded in agreement. “We’ll talk later, ok?” Rhodey told him.

Scott walked over to Hope with his sheepish grin, “If you’re going to slap me please get on with it.”

“Mmmm, if you insist. Wrist’s forward please.”

Scott held them out and Hope slapped a set of red bands around his wrists. At the contact, the bands spread down to cover his hands making them completely immobile. Rhodey did the same to Sam but was more gentle than Hope had been, she must still be really pissed. They each had five more sets on them, waiting to wrap them around the others hands and feet. If they tried to escape the bands in some way a powerful volt of electricity would knock them off their feet.

While Hope secured them in the jet Loki approached Shuri to give her the last bracelet. Nakia and Okoye moved forward to hold him at bay. “It is fine,” she told them, “T’Challa has already informed me of this gift. Thank you Loki, it is greatly appreciated. Do you not have one for yourself?” She looked at his empty wrist.

“It is on board with my other belongings. I am afraid I have miscalculated, I had forgotten about your two warriors that will be with you. There is no protection for them.”

A flicker of uncertainty flashed across Shuri’s face, but she quickly smiled, “It is fine Prince, I assure you the Dora are the finest warriors on the planet. We should be fine.”

“One of them could have mine, my mission is to stay with the prisoners unless trouble arises.”

Okoye made a face, she must have thought Loki’s suggestion for more protection for the women was some jab at their skills.

Hope came out of the jet, the Iron Man armors walking alongside. “Prisoners secure. You should get moving, T’Challa has been with them a while.”

Tony’s armor encased around him, the new vibranium model was a sleek and shiny black that could go into stealth mode like the Quinjet.

“Alright guys, coms on, stay alert. Lead the way,” he looked to Shuri.
After reaching the underground tunnel, a very slim hovering car was waiting for them. Tony was undeniably impressed, grilling her with questions all the way to the palace. Shuri answered them all without hesitation, pleased to have a common ground with the genius billionaire.

Tony would have loved to have the time to explore the centuries old halls of the royal palace, but as they approached the throne room raised voices could be heard.

“Oh dear,” Shuri murmured.


“I’m fine Tony, it’s just weird, I’ve never left New York before.” Matt replied.

“I am ready, Tony. We have to stop this madness soon.” Vision acknowledged.

As they reached the door Shuri turned to Nakia and Okoye, “Stay outside these doors. No matter what, don’t come in! Do you understand?”

“My Queen...?” Okoye began to protest.

“Remain here!” Shuri ordered.

Shuri opened the doors and led them in to see Rogers and T’Challa nearly nose to nose. Natasha, Wanda and Clint were off to one side, watching. She quickly shut and bolted the doors.

Natasha was ghastly white, T’Challa must have cornered her on the drug she’d fed into his body. Good, Tony secretly hoped she felt like shit. Wanda looked enraged and Clint’s neck was bulging with veins. Hmm, so they must know the New Avengers were here.

“How could you !?” Rogers was screaming, “I trusted you! We trusted you! And you just let Bucky fall into enemy hands.”

T’Challa laughed a bit evilly, “Ah yes, the enemy. Where he’s currently enjoying popcorn and cupcakes and hasn’t moved from the couch in two days.. Yes, that’s enemy hands. Bucky said hi, by the way..”

“You bastard!” He moved to strike.

“Stand down Captain.” Tony called, repulsors raised. “There’s no need for more violence Cap, you and your merry misfits have done enough.”

Steve huffed, “We only did what was right Tony, you’re the one who sold the team out to the government. You tore us apart!” He rubbed his head.

“No.. You did that when you ran Steve.. Stand down. We are here to take you back to the states. Do you want me to read you your rights, I totally learned them just for this.”

“You think this is funny!” Steve yelled.

“No, Rogers. I don’t, do you even care about all those people you left to die? The kids that were killed in that tunnel? Do you? This isn’t a game Steve. You are all wanted terrorists! Do you know how serious this is!!” Tony screamed at him. “Fine. You don’t even give a shit. I get it. I’m wrong, You’re not a murderer… You’re a monster.. And that’s why, we are bringing you in. There’s nowhere to run Steve.. Please, let’s do this peacefully..”

Clint glared him down, “Peaceful? There’s no peace when you’re involved Stark. Once the
merchant, always the merchant.. Who’s your new friend there, some other poor sap you’ve bought out with your billions.”

Matt did his weird head move and smiled at Clint, “You’re scared. You know it’s over, that there’s nowhere to go. You should give up Clint, nothing else needs to happen here. Your kids don’t need to see you all over the news again,” he paused. ‘Cooper said hello, and Lila’s upset that you missed her birthday.”

“What? When was that? How’d I forget? Friday pick out a gift!” Tony ordered.

“Two weeks ago, you were in the hospital. It was before they moved in.” Matt said.

“Why is my family in your house Stark!?” Clint barked.

Natasha looked ill, but like she was on the verge of making a break for it. Rogers was ready to brawl, his fists clenched so hard a thin line of blood could be seen. T’Challa was leaning against the throne, his back to the panoramic windows. Wanda on the other hand, was livid, her bandaged hands glowing red and beginning to spread up her arms. They needed to get her out now.

“Viz.. If you will,” He gestured to Wanda, ignoring Clint and his continued raving.

Vision moved to Wanda, “Miss Maximoff, please give me your-”

She jerked back violently, sparks of rage shooting out. Everyone took a step back.

“Stay the hell away from me..” She hissed, gritting her teeth, “Traitor.. Betrayer.. You snake..” Red began to move up her body.

“Viz?” Tony inquired.

Everyone backed up, T’Challa closer to the window as did Rogers.

“It is fine, we are fine. Right Wanda? There’s no need for this, we are not going to hurt you.” He held out a maroon hand to her, she stared blankly at it as the red moved over her torso and around her legs.

She laughed maniacally, red eyes roaming over them all as she glowed brighter and brighter.

“ Vision !!” Tony screamed.

Wanda laughed, and laughed. “You will never, take me. Back there..”

She looked at her rogue teammates, “You should start running.”

Rogers eyes bulged and he turned to move, but there wasn’t time. As Vision aimed the Mind Stone to try and subdue her, Wanda’s rage exploded outward. The room was engulfed in a sea of red, the vibranium walls strained outward with a groan. The huge windows at the back shattered into dust, the force of the blow taking Rogers and T’Challa out with it.

Vision, being the closest to her had taken the brute force of the blow. He was sent flying into the wall with hurricane force wind, leaving a huge dent behind as he slid lifeless to the floor.

Matt had grabbed Shuri and shielded her with his body, Loki’s protective spell shooting out a green light from him as a broken mirror flew at him like a spear, had it not been for Loki the glass would have nearly decapitated him. He and Shuri were knocked to the floor, woozy but alive.
Tony and Rhodes were thrown back, the shielding he input into the reactors not strong enough to withstand Wanda Maximoff’s rage. Rhodes was flat on his back, the weight of the vibranium suit and his leg braces making him immobile but Tony could hear through the com still behind his ear and fully functional.

The reactor in Tony’s suit was dead as well, but the second reactor housed in his chest was still active. He wondered briefly if it was because of Loki’s spell. He was stuck on his back, his team was stunned, Vision was out cold and T’Challa was thrown violently through the window.

Oh God..

He looked around through the darkened eye slits of the suit, in time to see Natasha and Clint sway to their feet. Clint pulled a bow from somewhere and nodded to Nat, who had her batons ready.

“Split up, meet at the rendezvous, ten minutes tops, then we’re gone.” Nat said. “Go”

Clint nodded and hobbled to the throne, in the ceiling above a vent could be seen, barely large enough for a person to fit into.

Tony watched, helpless as Clint shot a rope and pulled a grate down and leaped from the throne to the ceiling with ease. Natasha walked to the doors, pushed out slightly from Wanda’s blast, and pulled the bolt. She looked back at Tony, sadly as she readied her batons.

“I’m sorry Tony..”

She opened the door and he heard her fighting her way past the Dora Milaje before there was quiet.

Wanda was the only one left, still glowing red with her rage. Her eyes were fire, burning Tony with their glare as she walked slowly over the debris to stand over him.

“Stark.., “ she smiled happily. “I have waited so, so long for this moment. How does it feel? At the feet of the woman who beat you.”

She walked closer, anger and desperation making her normally youthful face look old and haggard. “I am going to savor this.. I finally have you in my grasp, at my mercy. How does it feel?”

Tony lifted his faceplate and smiled at her, “It feels like you’re about to get your ass kicked!”

She stopped, her wicked smile faded in confusion, “What?”

That was the only word she managed before her entire body seized up, the red being replaced by the green glow of a more powerful force. Her feet hovered a foot above the floor as Loki moved beside her and whispered in her ear, “Well this is rather disappointing, I was under the impression you would be a challenge for me.”

“Please don’t taunt her,” Tony tried rolling to his side but he was a beached whale at the moment, he couldn’t get Extremis to connect with the suit so he was going to have to hook it directly into the reactor in his chest. Thank God for small miracles. He manually worked himself out of the suit.

“Do you have her, I need to find the others?” He asked Loki. Matt and Shuri were getting to their feet, running for the door, Shuri shouting orders into her own com and Matt flying off in the opposite direction. He had no doubt Shuri was going after Romanoff, that woman had a hard grudge.

“She’s not going anywhere. It really is disappointing, but her power is merely borrowed, It can easily be taken away.” He walked circles around her, satisfied with his work.
Tony rewired the suit to the chest reactor and got ready to fly, “Good job, Loki. You know what to do with her. I need to find Rogers and T’Challa. See if you can help Vision, Rhodey should be fine in there til I get back-” he heard Rhodey’s cursing inside the suit.

“I gotta go.” he flew out the shattered window and out of sight, making Loki roll his eyes. He looked around the room and noticed the big golden throne in the center.

*Well, I am a prince*, he thought.

He sat down, much like he was sitting when Thor left Asgard for Earth, and looked at Wanda.

“Well since we’re all cozy,” he squeezed his fist making her body seize even more,”let’s get acquainted, shall we?”

“I am Loki, Prince of Asgard, rightful King of Jotunheimr, Brother of Thor and the newest member of the Avengers. And you, my dear, have pissed off every single one of them.”

He remembered Tony’s words to him years ago, and he had to say it. It felt like he was starting a new age of his life and closing the old one. Last night, when Tony had approached him about becoming an Avenger, like Thor, it was one of the happier times he had felt in this life. He rarely felt happiness. That feeling of Tony actually trusting him, based on the words of Thor and Banner, was the same feeling he had whenever Frigga had praised him.

His first task with these warriors had been successful, and he felt more pride with this one act then he had in a millennium as Asgards prince. He kicked back in the throne and contemplated what he could do to help Vision, but was pulled from those thoughts by the sound of thunder outside.

Oh dear.. Thor was back already.

Well that didn’t bode well..

Chapter End Notes

Recommendation for this chapter- Trapped in a Nightmare of My Own Design by MotherOfBeardedDragons :)
From their vantage point on the mountain above, Hope could barely make out the outline of the palace in the early morning darkness. The sky was beginning to lighten ever so slightly but the rising sun had yet to show its face over the treetops. So far, everything was quiet, there hadn’t been any requests for backup over the coms and she couldn’t hear any sounds of violence in the palace below.

Sam and Scott were sitting in the makeshift cells Tony had installed in the Quin, a three by three forcefield like device they could alter when needed. They looked hopeless, Sam’s head was tilted against the wall and his eyes were unfocused and bleary. Scott had attempted to speak several times before he decided that it would be better if he just stayed quiet.

Loki was crouched just outside the cargo door, staring out into the valley below. Every few moments he’d wiggle his fingers and shoots of green would spark against the early morning sky.

She was about to ask him what he was doing when a deafening boom sounded from the palace below, causing all their heads to jerk toward the sound. She could see Sam and Scott pressing their faces against the impenetrable shield of the tiny cells, trying to see what was happening.

Hope saw spirals of red raining out of what had to be the throne room. In the crimson glow she saw several trees ropple from the force of the blast.

“Oh God..” she said, preparing to fly to her team’s side.

“Oh dear..” Loki said with his usual lackadaisical charm, “I do believe that is my cue.”

“I’m going with you,” Hope moved forward, only to stopped by his outstretched arm.

“No, you need to stay here with the prisoners. There is a chance the rest of them could find them and this jet and we cannot leave it unattended. If anything happens, alert me and I shall return post haste.”

“What if I need- aaaaand he’s poofed. Great.” Loki disappeared in a shower of green glitter, leaving her talking to the air.

“Hope!!” Scott called from the jet, “What was that? What’s happening?”

She walked to their tiny cells, both were pressed against the invisible walls of a miniaturized force field, eyes wide with terror.

“He’s runnin, isn’t he..,” Sam shook his head with disbelief, “He’s actually gonna run away.. That coward!!”

“Hope?” Scott gave her a pleading look. “What can we do? We can’t let them just-”
“You can’t do anything Scott.. Just sit down and let us handle this..”

“We can help! We have the suit and my wings-” Sam pleaded.

“No you can’t! You’re in your current situations for your method of helping. There’s nothing we can do now but wait.”

She looked out onto the horizon, in the eerie glow of the sun’s first rays she saw Iron Man fly out a window and two people in what looked to be a brutal fight on the palace roof.

Hope hoped her team could handle this, she hoped the rogues would come to their senses. There had been enough destruction and death, why couldn’t there be joy and happiness for a change.

“All we can do is wait..” She murmured miserably to herself.

Her misery only increased when a few seconds later a gunshot rang out across the forest.

This wasn’t good, Matt thought as he painfully climbed to his feet, deep down he knew that what they were doing would not be easy but, jeez. The Maximoff girl packed the mother of all punches. The initial blast was massive, he could hear the power building inside her, how that much energy could exude from such a small body was beyond any natural laws of mankind.

He heard the vibranium walls groan with effort as even they struggled with whatever Maximoff had thrown at Vision. He felt the floor under his feet sway ever so slightly, felt the cool morning air from the shattered windows breathe across his face. How any of the rogues survived with such little protection was astonishing.

He assumed that was Maximoff’s doing.

Speaking of natural law.. Loki’s spell, he had felt the energy from that course through his body as shards of glass and debris careened towards him. He was only human, his meek gifts nothing compared to what some of the others housed. But he knew he would have met a fatal blow had it not been for Loki.

He wasn’t at all surprised when the man (or God) of the hour suddenly appeared out of thin air near him. There was a hum to his power that Matt could feel, almost like the vibrate setting on a phone, that felt rather pleasant. Whereas Wanda’s gave him a feeling of deep tension, a tightness in the chest that made it difficult to breathe.

His ears were ringing loudly, but he could feel Loki easily subdue Wanda and exhaled in relief. That almost seemed to easy but Loki was far more experienced with such matters. Matt hoped he knew what he was doing.

Shuri was climbing to her feet alongside him, racing for the door shouting orders through her com unit, the rogues were running. His first instinct had been to shield her, even knowing she was somewhat protected there was still that chance she could be injured by flying projectiles. Tony and Rhodes were down, Tony seemed to be trying to reboot his suit and the Colonel was down and out it seemed.
Matt stumbled out through the door Shuri just opened, his ears still feeding him a high pitched whine. He cocked his head, trying to listen. There were several bodies lying in the hallway just outside, he could hear their heartbeats so they must have been knocked out. Romanoffs work, no doubt. One of the fallen warriors had some internal bleeding it seemed, she would need attention ASAP.

More Dora were pounding down the hall toward him, Matt turned gesturing to the wounded woman, “She needs medical help now !! Internal bleeding in the abdomen, possibly more than one place, it’s hard to get a read. Hurry!”

He turned in the opposite direction in which Shuri had fled, he knew she was on the heels of Romanoff so he had to find out where Barton was going.

He angled his head, letting his senses guide him, Barton had gone up into the vents. Tiny as they were he still managed to squeeze in, but he would still make a lot of noise. If he could just…

There !! Matt took off in a mad sprint. There was just a slight ding of metal and a manically racing heart, Barton had worked his way up and seemed to be headed for the palaces roof.

Shit..

He ran down the twisting turns of the massive halls till he reached a stairwell, he was on the top floor now, just above him was the roof and Barton was almost there.

There wasn’t time to try and find an exit so he’d have to make one. He used the vibrations around him as his guide. There was a window at the end of a long hallway, outside it seemed as if there was enough of a ledge to hook his billy club onto.

Well.. Needs must, he thought.

He took a breath and ran, it wouldn’t be the first time he’d had to jump out a window. He readied his club, hoping his aim with the grappling hook would be true. Barton was nearing the end of the vents shaft, one more small turn and he’d be on the roof.

Matt put on a burst of speed, he couldn’t let Clint escape. With a growl he leaped, crashing through the glass and turning in mid air he aimed the hook. It hooked securely on the tiny ledge and he pressed a button that pulled him swiftly upward. He heaved himself over the top just as Barton popped out of the exhaust vent on the roof.

Matt aimed his club and threw but Hawkeye was swift, he pivoted last moment and the club hit him hard in his shoulder, causing him to stumble. Clint drew a tiny bow and let loose an arrow that Matt felt whiz by his face.

Christ.. He was aiming for my head , he thought.

Matt rolled and dodged more arrows as he worked his way to Barton, picking up his fallen club along the way. One final arrow Clint sent his way Matt caught inches before it hit him in the face. Barton appeared to be smiling.

“Something funny?” Matt asked

“Yeah. I can’t believe people still fall for that one.”

Matt furrowed a brow but before he could drop the arrow it exploded in his face, coating him in some sort of powdery substance. It was enough to distract him just for a second, and he heard Barton shoot an arrow at the trees in the jungle and attached his end to the roof.
Barton hooked his bow over the makeshift zipline and leaped from the roof. Matt pounced, he fired the grappling hook at Barton and it wrapped around his neck, pulling him backward and causing the bow to fall to the ground below.

Matt held tight as Clint swung back into the side of the palace, trying to loosen the temporary noose. He retracted the cable, as soon as Clint was topside he wrapped both arms tight and hauled him over the side. Matt threw him roughly to the ground, Barton was still trying to get his breath back after nearly being strangled.

Matt brought out the cuffs, securing them around both hands and feet. Clint rolled to his side and spat a little blood, he would need to be checked by a Doctor to make sure there was no severe damage.

“I don’t.. Don’t.. Under..” he sucked in a breath, “Understand.. That shit. Didn’t work. Nat was wrong. I owe. Her. For this. One..”

Matt panted as well, his suit wasn’t meant for sweltering jungle heat. He needed to get out of this thing before he had heat stroke. Maybe Tony could put in a cooling system.


“It was. Supposed. To blind you..”

Matt couldn’t help it, he broke down in manic laughter. Of all the things Clint could have tried, he tried to blind him.

His laughter cut off abruptly as a gunshot echoed through the jungle.

Shuri raced the halls, following Romanoff’s trail or terror. The bitch had nearly killed them, had she not made Nakia and Okoye wait outside they would have been dead. The Black Widow was holding nothing back on her escape attempt from the palace it seemed. Following her scent into the servant quarters Shuri found several women huddled against a wall, most of them bleeding and scared.

Nkiru, the oldest member of the staff and basically like a grandmother to she and T’Challa, was bleeding from a head wound. Her eyes however, were filled with fire.

“She has found the tunnels, Highness. We couldn’t stop her. I am sorry.” Nkiru hissed angrily, pointing at a cracked opening in the wall.

Shuri smiled, this was too good to be true. The tunnels under the palace were virtually an endless, twisting maze of confusion. It was Wakandas version of that house in America, the one with doors and stairs that led to nothing. It had taken her and T’Challa years as children to figure out where each corridor led to. And they all led to the same place. The tunnel the Avengers had come through was built only recently under her grandfathers reign and were not connected to these.

One could end up lost for days if one did not know where they were going. She went in, at the first cross section she turned left. If her assumption was correct, and she knew it was all she had to do was wait about…
Five, four, three... She heard feet pounding up the stone floors toward her.

Two, one.. Now!

She threw her arm out with all the force she could muster. And considering she had the power of the panther in her that was a lot of force. Her arm made contact with Romanoff’s ribs, knocking her back against the far wall where she slumped to the floor.

Shuri stepped from her hiding place and walked to her, Natasha was holding her ribs, Shuri knew they were broken, she packed a mean punch.

“It’s sad really.” Shuri stated. “The famous Black Widow, you take down half of my Dora Milaje, go so far as to attack my palace employees, one who is a seventy year old woman.. Yet you are brought down by a single blow, All because you have no sense of direction. I’m curious as to where you thought these tunnels would go, even the Kings past had no clue why they were here. A Wakandan mystery, they are. ”

Shuri sighed, “I’m disappointed, I was hoping for a brawl.”

Natasha coughed weakly, “I won’t fight you.” She held up her wrists, “I give up. I can’t do this anymore.”

“Oh now you see sense. It is a bit to late for that Agent Romanoff.” Shuri clipped the bands around her wrists and ankles. She called for an extraction on her com and several Dora appeared, pulling Romanoff to her feet. Without the use of her feet they were forced to carry her to a temporary holding cell in the palace.

Shuri, meanwhile ran outside. T’Challa had been blown out the throne room windows, and in her chase to apprehend Romanoff she had to force her terror for him to the back of her mind. She paused looking around at the top of the terrace steps, but there was no sign of her brother. Only some extremely irritated ducks flapping about by the pond.

She was running down the steps that led into their mothers garden when she was shocked to stillness by the unmistakable crack of a gunshot.

“Oh God..” Shuri whispered.

“T’Challa..”

Chapter End Notes

Recommendation:: Tomorrow will be kinder by Readingfanfics
Of all the places I had to land, T’Challa thought, It had to be in the damned duck pond.

Well, it could have been worse, he could have been impaled on one of the numerous statues of Wakanda’s warriors past as he had flown from the throne room, their vibranium spears would have easily pierce his flesh without his suit.

At least the landing was somewhat soft.

He pushed his way to the surface, accidentally sucking in a huge gulp of pond water as his body betrayed him on the way up for air. Luckily the pond was on the deeper side, he had hit the water head first and if it had been shallow he’d probably have broken his neck. Shuri’s jabs at him about cats always landing on their feet were not entirely correct. Maximoff’s magical blast had disoriented him enough that he couldn’t tell which way he was flying.

T’Challa broke the surface and floundered his way over to the pond’s edge, where he just lay his head to try and regain some strength. His already weakened body fought for air, trying to grasp onto a deep breath and pull it into his damaged lungs.

A fit of coughing expelled murky brown water with small specks that he hoped was dirt (Bast be with me, don’t let that be duck shit) and a dark yellow phlegm, a clear sign of infection.

Not good, he thought, his ordeal with Romanoff’s poison must have left his lungs more debilitated than he had previously thought. His body wasn’t usually prone to infections, the herb keeping him in amazingly great health, only an occasional sniffle here and there.

He could feel pain in his chest as he struggled to inhale, like sharp pricks with a needle. Bruce would need to do a thorough checkup to make sure his body wasn’t regressing, more of the antidote may be needed. He hadn’t felt to terrible on the jet, mostly just a feeling of weakness. His breathing had been better than the past few days in any case, with only a small tightness in his chest that he had foregone mentioning to Bruce.

Probably should have mentioned it now, he thought. T’Challa wished he had brought Bruce’s portable o2 device with him but at the time he thought he wouldn’t need it.

He moaned weakly as he dragged himself away from the waters edge. The ducks honking angrily at their early awakening. He hated those ducks, they were the only thing in his mother’s garden in which he despised. When he was younger some of the very large geese tormented him to no end. He hated his ass...

M’Baku had been present at the palace that time and had mercilessly teased him for days afterwards. The ass..

His body ached as he clawed forward, there were dozens of cuts covering every inch of skin that was exposed as he was launched from the throne room. Why the hell hadn’t he took two extra minutes to put his suit on? The suit was something he never forgot, wherever he went the suit followed, yet this was twice he had forgotten it now.

He wondered if he should take that as some sort of omen. It definitely wasn’t a good one with the...
way his life was going lately. He now wished he had taken Shuri up on her offer of an upgrade. Apparently she had been working on a new version that could be contained inside the Kimoyo beads they carried.

Next time.. Definitely next time. Well, if he survived the current morning.

On a slightly positive note, the glasses *(he could hear Tony correcting him on their name)* Bruce had created for him had stayed securely on his face. They also had to have been treated with some sort of water repellant, not a drop had stuck to the lenses. He would have to compliment Bruce on his foresight later.

T’Challa rose shakily to his feet and began stumbling back toward the palace, his waterlogged clothes nearly bringing him to his knees several times. He could hear no noise from the shattered windows above, the vehement silence made his skin crawl. No sound over the coms either.

“Tony? Shuri? Can anyone hear me?!” he pleaded into his com unit. But he heard no response.

What had become of the others during Wanda’s rage? Were the injured? He knew with Loki’s charms they should live, but there were too many variables with this magic for his liking.

Just how much was to much for injury? How could the magic determine if a blow would be fatal? What if an injury wasn’t fatal at first, but if not treated promptly could one still die from a minor one while wearing the charm? There were just to many questions.

T’Challa was wobbling his way down a stone path to the terrace, praying a goose didn’t see him when he saw a figure limping swiftly into the jungle.

Rogers..

T’Challa paused momentarily, contemplating what course he should take. This could be the only chance they had to apprehend Rogers and the rest, but the dead silence within the palace above was screaming for his attention. Shuri was up there, she could be hurt, as could Tony and the rest.

He looked between the jungle path where Rogers was disappearing into the trees and the blackened windows above, and made up his mind. Despite his desire to help the others he could be the only man standing (partially standing) right now. He could not let Rogers get away. With no time to get into his suit, he turned away from the palace, channeling what strength he could muster and jogged as fast as he could to the jungle.

He sprinted down the path for a short distance before he veered off into the thicker forest. Rogers had been heavily limping, T’Challa thought. If he took the shorter route through the jungle, foregoing the actual path he should be able to intercept him as he neared the sacred temple. Provided his lungs kept functioning and his legs didn’t give way.

He pushed forward through the trees as fast as he could, barely making a sound with his cat like grace. Even in his ill state his enhancements were still pushing him forward. Birds flew from their perches as he passed by, angered by the early morning wake up. It was still slightly dark in the forest, the rising sun had yet to shine its bright beams through the thick foliage. Luckily T’Challa had spent his entire life roaming these grounds, he could navigate blinded if he must.

He put on a burst of speed, his legs burning like fire. In front of him he could see the top of the sacred temple jutting out above the treetops. To his right he could hear the sound of Rogers feet pounding up the path. The man’s gait was very uneven, the sound of his limp overpowering the sounds of the jungle coming to life that morning. T’Challa could hear his grunts of pain and
wondered what injury Rogers had suffered as he was catapulted from the throne room.

As they approached the clearing that surrounded the temple T’Challa veered sharply to the right, channeling every ounce of strength he had left he burst out of the trees just as Rogers came off the path. T’Challa slammed into him with the force of a hurricane, both of them flying across the clearing. Rogers gave a horrendous scream as he landed, clutching at his thigh.

T’Challa groaned, pushing himself up away from the sandy jungle floor, his skin and clothes colored in a pale purple hue (nowhere near as bright as their heart shaped herb) from the sands that surrounded the temple. He turned to Rogers, who was pulling himself to his feet using one of the ancient panther statues that were spread around the clearing. It was then that T’Challa noticed the blood covering the front of the Captain’s pants, along with a very large shard from the throne rooms windows sticking out of his upper right thigh.

He could not help but grimace, that shard was unnervingly close to the family jewels, so to speak. It looked as though it was embedded near the joint where the thigh met the pelvis area, the pectineus if he remembered correctly. Rogers better have hoped he was hanging to the left that day or it may have been bye, bye, Mr America’s Pies.

T’Challa may have once felt bad for his horrendous injury, but due to the events of the recent weeks he honestly couldn’t muster up any sympathy now.

He wobbled on shaky legs toward Rogers, who was red with rage as he glared at T’Challa.

“How could you?! You betrayed us!! We trusted you, and you turn on us for no reason! To Stark, of all people..” Rogers spat at him.

“I betrayed you? You nearly killed me, and if I hadn’t decided to go to America to see Tony, I would be dead! Because of you! I had a thousand reasons to turn on you Captain, but I didn’t have to. Stark already knew you were here ” he pointed angrily at Steve as he advanced forward. “There is no version of this where you will come out on top Captain, surrender now, to me, and you will be spared. The task force won’t be so forgiving, as I am.”

Steve’s breathing was rapid, “You son of a bitch.. All this time.. You’ve been working with Stark haven’t you?” he screamed at T’Challa. “Lying bastard..” Steve began to back away, toward the open center of the clearing, in the direction of the temple.

“Captain Rogers.. Stand down now!” he ordered, moving to intervene.

The Captain only backed farther away. T’Challa made to lunge, prepared to bring Rogers down at any cost. He should have realized what was happening, Rogers pulling them out into the open where they were in full view from all directions, but he didn’t, not until a shot rang out and he felt the pain of hot metal piercing his thigh.

He fell to the ground with a scream, clutching at the bleeding appendage. Slightly delirious from the pain he searched for the source of the gunman as he tried to scoot his way behind the nearest statue for cover. He barely registered the shimmer of blonde hair running across the top of the temple, and the gleam of gunmetal on her back..

Carter..

He cursed his stupidity, he had forgotten Carter was in Wakanda somewhere. They had assumed she was hidden in the nearby city somewhere, but she must have been in the temple this entire time. And because of the Wakandans’s respect for Bast and their culture no one had dared to search there..
He clawed his way behind the nearby statue. It felt as if his entire thigh was being burnt with acid. The bullet (so primitive, but still hurt like hell. Damn magic couldn't just stop the thing.) must have shattered into pieces on impact. He hoped there were no evil SHIELD poisons laced on that bullet. His body couldn’t handle much more.

T’Challa had to turn his head as a blast of hot air descended from above, blowing sand around him like a cyclone. He risked a glance to see a distorted section of sky swaying above. It took a moment to register that it was a jet, an effectively cloaked jet. Not as good as Wakanda’s but to a civilian eye they would never notice.

A hatch opened and a very unkempt Sharon Carter ran down the ramp, “Steve! We have to go! Now! He’s coming! The rest are compromised!”

Rogers nodded, looking back at T’Challa bleeding onto the ground, “One day you’ll realize we are not the bad guys. We did the right thing. Deep down you know that.”

“Steve!!” Carter demanded, turning back inside, “Come on!”

Rogers limped back up the ramp and the jet started lifting off.

“No.. No, no, no, no, NO!” T’Challa tried to regain his feet but he was just too weak. “No..” he whispered.

He startled when a heavy clang rang out behind him. Iron Man had landed.

Tony lifted his faceplate as he ran forward, “Shit! T’Challa! Medic!!” he screamed into his com, “I need a medic now!”

He knelt beside T’Challa trying to assess the damage but T’Challa shoved him roughly away, “No! Jet!” he rasped, “Stop.. The jet!”

“Jet? Shit!” the faceplate came down once more, “Friday! Scan now!”

“Directly above you Boss! It’s getting ready to clear the tree line!”

“Damnit! All right then..Let’s see what I can do..” The faceplate peeled back one last time. Tony was glaring at the sky, his eyes now sparking with the now familiar glow. He smiled, a bit wicked.

“Enough games, Rogers. No more hide and seek.”

In the sky, gracing the trees, the cloaking on the jet suddenly disappeared and it jerked to a standstill. Oh so slow, it turned, the nose facing the clearing. T’Challa looked at Tony, his eyes were moving rapidly in every direction. No doubt he was taking control of the jet with Extremis.

It began its descent downward, back to them. As it hovered just above the ground Tony killed what systems were left and sent it crashing to the ground.

“Time to pay the piper, Captain.”

Chapter End Notes
Without Words by InADifferentLife Go read, it's an awesome story!!
Sometimes people can be so mean when they comment on things. Not on here, but ff.net. There’s like nothing but bitter assholes over there, jeez. If you can’t be decent with a review just don’t write one, there’s no need to be an ass because you don’t like my story, just don’t read it!

I try not to let the hate bother me, but sometimes it makes me not want to write anymore :'(

I don’t have a recommendation this chapter either, sorry, I’m bummed..

I hope you enjoy, if you don’t.. well, at least I can say I tried my best..

Sharon started the lift off procedure just as Steve was limping his way up the ramp. She turned, noticing for the first time the large shard of debris in Rogers leg. She cringed, it was large, about the length of her forearm and twice as wide. How the hell he was even able to stand was a miracle. He joined her in the copilot’s chair with a moan and while her instinct told her to help him, she knew she couldn’t stray from her mission.

The mission…

Even Aunt Peggy could have never topped this one. This was the hardest mission she had ever been assigned, nothing she had done before had been so secretive, it was also her last. If she made it to the endgame, her days of being an Agent were through. She had decided after this retirement from field work was necessary. If she did make it.. Well, her cousin had promised her the most posh job a woman could want.

But it had been so hard.. Only two other people on earth knew what she was doing. Weeks without contact with anyone but the rogues, but the Boss had been stern, all those weeks ago after Peggy’s funeral, after a vicious chase in Romania. The three of them alone in a secure location trying to devise a way to keep the Avengers together. (“I know we’ve never seen eye to eye, but I need you Shay, we need you. You know he won’t stop, you remember what Pegs said. There’s no changing his mind, once it’s made up he’ll die before he gives in.”) She had been living with constant terror for weeks. Terror that they would somehow find out, that she would end up slipping up, making a huge mistake. That she would fail.

One wrong move, an odd facial expression.. And everything would have ended for her. But she persevered, and she knew she had made the right choice when she agreed.

(He seems to trust you. And honestly, I think you may get through to him. Do whatever is necessary to stay by their side, but you have to be careful, I won’t have any way of pulling you out if it goes south. After I leave, absolutely no contact, with me or Everett, they can’t know. Romanoff thinks she knows everything, but she never knew about us. Please, you’re my only living family. Help me Shay.. He is going to tear us apart. Help me.. Help him.. Help us..”)

So she did. She swiped the shield and Falcon’s wings, and handed them over, she’d even got a sweet
kiss out of it. She had considered following them to the airport but bided her time, she waited in the shadows and when the US declared her a fugitive for her assistance with Rogers she reach out to Romanoff, begging her to bring her to Steve for safety.

Natasha had been skeptical, refusing to help until she cleared it with Steve. Steve had happily agreed, citing that she could be their escape route if they were found out, and she found herself on a stolen jet inbound to Wakanda. There Natasha had hidden her away in a temple, the jet cloaked and resting on its roof. But everyday she had watched them, she was good at hiding in shadows, no one saw her. No one knew.

All the news footage, Romania, the Raft. It was almost over.

“Sharon! Get us airborne!” Rogers called out.

She was scared, she had hoped they wouldn’t get to this point. She knew what was waiting on the other side of these borders. Where the hell was everyone else? Where was Boss!? He should have been here by now.

Her hands shook as she lifted them up to the treetops and began to inch forward, she had been trained to fly these jets, Aunt Peggy made sure she knew the ins and outs of SHIELD before she’d been to sick to remember, but now her brain was stalling. She felt as though she was stuck in quicksand, her movements sluggish, soon they would be too far gone and there would be no way back.

As she made it over the trees, a sharp crackling sound filled the cockpit and the jet dead halted. It made a slow, almost sinister turn facing back to the temple.

What the hell! Sharon pulled her hands away, stunned as the jet flew back toward the clearing without her help.

“What are you doing!?” Sharon sputtered, unsure of what was happening.

Lights flickered and dimmed before extinguishing completely. One console shot out an array of sparks and smoke. The jets engines grinded to a halt, all the systems powered down and the jet crashed down with a bang. She hadn’t yet strapped in so Sharon was tossed harshly to the floor.

She pulled herself up on the console, out the cockpits window she could see Tony, eyes glowing bright (*what in the name of*), his trademark smirk across his face. Beside her, Rogers looked enraged. No doubt he was ready for a fight.

“Steve? Now might be a good time to-” she tried.

“Stay here. Be ready, when I tell you to run, then run.”

“Steve, maybe you should just do-”

“All they want to do is persecute us, and we did nothing wrong. I can’t stand a bully, and that’s exactly what they are. This has gone to far. Be ready, this won’t take long.” He grabbed one of the metal storage cabinets and ripped the door off as a makeshift shield, then limped to the back and slapped the hatch release.

“Steve! Listen, for once just do the-” but he was out of sight moving down the ramp before she could finish.
“Just do the right thing..” she whispered to the air. She reached up, underneath the pilot's chair and pulled out a small tranq pistol, she knew without a doubt she would be using it soon.

Tony watched, repulsors ready as Steve made his way out of the jet. He looked like shit, he had a bit of a beard growing, his hair looked shaggy, and the legs of his pants were doused in blood. He was carrying what appeared to be a.. Door? Holding it in front of him like his shield. He was heavily limping and Tony could now see the glass in his leg.

This was not the same man he had met on the Hellicarrier four years ago.

“Steve..” Tony called, repulsor raised, “There’s still time Steve, we don’t have to do this. Just stop fighting and come with me. Please. Just stop fighting for once, Rogers.”

“You know I can’t do that Tony. They want us caged, on a leash that they control. That’s not what I fought for, that’s not freedom. How can you stand behind this!??”

“Freedom.. Steve you crossed over a dozen international borders. Illegally, may I add, you had no passports, no paperwork, no US approval and caused mass amounts of death and destruction. There was no reason for you to even be near those places. Steve that freedom you love, it’s not welcome across the globe. You can’t just go wherever you want and do whatever you want! What we have here, is hated in other countries. They don’t appreciate us interfering with them. You can’t do anything you want Rogers. We have laws for a reason!” Tony yelled. “What you did to those innocent people is called terrorism!”

“I can’t make you understand Tony. One day I hope you’ll realize what a mistake you’re making. But from where I’m standing, you never will.” Steve limped forward.

“Steve..Last warning.. Surrender, please. I can still help you..”

“I’m not the one who needs the help, Tony.”

Steve held up his makeshift shield and rushed forward. Tony fired a blast from his palm but it only knocked Steve back a few feet before he rushed forward again, bashing the door into the armor. Tony, with his new found strength combined with the suit didn’t budge an inch. Steve rained several more blows upon him, but Tony didn’t feel a thing.

Well.. That was handy.

As Steve moved for the next strike Tony dealt him a backhand that sent him sprawling. He was crawling back to his feet (the man just wouldn’t stop) when a new shot rang out. T’Challa, from his place behind the statue, jerked at the sound. Probably thinking he was shot again.

Steve grabbed at the back of his neck and pulled something from his skin, “What the..”

He turned, behind him stood Sharon with a gun in her slightly shaking hand. “Sharon? What are you-?”
“Captain Rogers, please stand down. I will fire again if necessary. Lower your weapon, and get on your knees, put your hands behind your head.” Sharon calmly stated.

“Hey Shay!” Tony waved, "You look horrible. Good to see you in one piece, but my God when is the last time you showered? Surely there was a rainstorm or something you could have used.”

Steve looked back to Tony, “Shay?”

Sharon kept her tranq gun leveled at Steve, “Now is really not the time Boss.”

“Boss..?” Steve looked between Sharon and Tony. From his place on the ground T’Challa was doing the same, wondering what was happening.

Tony huffed, “Yeah, she’s always called me that. Gave me that nickname when she was about five, it just stuck. I’m surprised she remembers my actual name sometimes.”

“Captain” Sharon repeated, ready to fire, “Stand down, I’m not going to ask again.”

“Boss..? How do you know Tony?” Steve demanded as he moved toward her. His movements were a bit sluggish, the first dart must be kicking in allowing Sharon to shoot another tranq into his leg. Steve grunted in frustration as he removed the dart.

Sharon backed up a step, gun held, waiting.

It was Tony who answered, “Steve, sorry, where are my manners. Steve meet Sharon, beautiful niece of one Margaret Carter, my godmother, niece to one Howard Stark, and sometimes a pain in the ass cousin to me.”

T’Challa looked bewildered, “Cousin? She is your cousin? But is this not the same woman you called a sneaky bitch a few days ago?”

Sharon cocked a brow at him.

Tony raised a finger at her, “In my defense, I only said that so your infiltration with the rogues wouldn’t be compromised. But yes, sometimes you can be a bitch.”

Steve nearly leveled her with a deadly glare, “A cousin.. He’s your cousin? And we were what, just your mission? You’re his spy, a double agent just like Nat...” He appeared to be processing the info and looked more angry by the second. "No matter where we could have went they would always find us because of you..” Steve started toward her.

Sharon fired her last dart, but Steve in his anger swatted it away with ease. She backed away with wide eyes as Rogers advanced toward her. Tony took off to intervene just as a deafening crack of thunder rang from above and Steve was sent flying into a nearby tree with a blast of lightning. Thor stepped through a portal with Doctor Strange on his heels.

Doctor Strange came to stand beside Tony, he looked like a pissed off fortune teller, minus the turban, “I am very, very cross with all of you right now!”

“In my defense, I didn’t know what was happening til after you left.. Hey Thor! How’s it going?”

“Man of Iron,” Thor greeted as he moved to check on Rogers. He eyed the Sorcerer warily and gave him a wide berth. Tony noticed he was missing one eyebrow and one ear was the size and shape of a grown mans foot, complete with toes. Strange’s doing no doubt. The wizard must be angry.
“Sooo, uh..” Tony struggled for something to say as the toes wiggled and Strange smirked, "Nice axe!"
I Need A Vacation

Chapter Notes

This chapter was supposed to be much longer but I grew tired of writing. I may go back and add a few things to fill it out more, but I was basically happy with how it turned out. Only three more to go :) Please enjoy, and ignore my obvious errors :)

Tony ambled through the vast halls of Wakanda's palace, (well, one of Wakanda's palaces) keeping an eye out for the door he needed. Shuri had told him that this was merely one of the family dwellings, they had several more scattered throughout Wakanda and the largest was in the heart of the capital city, but this was where the royal family spent most of its time. It was a little out of the way, nestled on top of a mountain range but still close enough to Birnin Zana should they be needed in a pinch.

Tony wondered if that was one of the reasons T'Challa put Rogers clan here instead of down in the city. Despite his emotional turmoil, deep down he knew having them inside Wakanda's heart could prove to be cataclysmic. Well that was just what Tony was speculating, who really knew what was going on in T'Challa's mind at the time.

He let his eyes roam as he sought his destination. The palace was absolutely stunning, a mix of what he assumed was classic Wakandan architecture with a flare of modern style mixed together with breathtaking results. Shuri had mentioned that vibranium was worked into the walls, floors and doors here, making parts of everything glow. The main palace in the city was filled with vibranium, even the glass. Apparently the mines were directly underneath Birnin Zana. He wished he had more time to explore and enjoy it but their current situation was more pressing at the moment.

Maybe after it was all over Shuri would let him come for a visit, maybe a mini-vacation. God knows he hadn’t had one in ages. It would be nice, just to play tourist, maybe rent a little villa or cottage, (whatever they were called here) browse through the shops and buy Pepper some pretty trinkets. She loved those unique hand carved boxes that she could hoard her jewelry in. Maybe a new pair of shoes.

After what seemed like hours, he stopped in front of what he thought was the right door Shuri had directed him to. Like everything he had seen so far, it was dramatic. Carved with a mix of wood and metal, (vibranium, he assumed) it pictured the sacred temple he recently laid eyes upon with finely carved trees and foliage. Five large panthers were scattered around the temple looking very menacing, and twining sinuously around the bottom of the temple was a rather large snake.

"Huh.." he muttered. He wondered if this could have had anything to do with T’Challa’s dreams. Visions , he corrected himself silently, visions Tony.

But no, Shuri mentioned that this wing of the palace (the same one the Rogues were in) had not been used in many years. Visiting council members from the other tribes of Wakanda often stayed in Birnin Zana now, so T'Challa probably didn’t even remember this door existed. It was strange though, it was like seeing the images T'Challa described right in front of him. He wasn’t a religious man himself (maybe he should start because according to Thor all Gods were real which probably meant he was going to Hell) but he would not discredit another’s beliefs just because he didn’t
believe it.

Then there was Loki, who strongly believed that Bast had given T’Challa those visions. Loki, with all of his horned wonder, who had actually met Bast in the flesh. So Tony had no clue what he should believe. It was disconcerting, he knew he should have more of an open mind seeing as he knew two Gods himself, but having believed his entire life that Gods were just myths and religious propaganda was making him feel off kilter.

He hoped he didn’t go on some religious kick in the future and end up a magical monk like Dr. Strange..

Forgetting about the miniscule amount of manners he did have, he just pushed open the door and walked inside at the same time Sharon walked from the ensuite bathroom.

Oh good! Mission Find Shay-Accomplished.

“Well you look better,” he sniffed, “Smell better to.”

She apparently hadn’t caught sight of him coming in. She let out an inhuman shriek and stumbled over her own feet nearly losing the towel she was wrapped in in the process.

“Oh my God!! Tony! Can’t you knock?” She heaved a pillow from the bed into his face. “Jesus! I could have been naked, you ass! Don’t you know you shouldn’t sneak up on a SHIELD agent! I could have shot you!”

Tony rolled his eyes, “Yeah, I’d love to see where you’re hiding the gun right now.”

“Kiss my ass.. Please don’t be crass right now Tony, I’m too tired and too stressed to deal with you..” She sat on the bed.

She did look tired, the past weeks ‘on the run’ had been hard on her. Despite the recent shower and shampoo she looked weary, older than the happy thirty-two year old he spoke to in Vienna over a month ago. He knew how hard it was, playing both sides, he’d seen Aunt Pegs do it on more than one occasion. Hell, even Howard had played both sides once back in WWII, or so he had been told.

He sighed, moving to sit beside her, he gathered her in a warm embrace. “You ok, Shay?” He mumbled to her hair.

She gave a nod, “I’m fine.. Just.. Is T’Challa hurt badly. I didn’t want to hurt him, I was just trying not to blow my cover til backup arrived. Is he ok?”

“He’s fine, as far as I’ve heard. Nothing vital was hit. Bruce and Stephen are giving him a thorough check in the infirmary. What kind of a bullet was that any way? It didn’t seem to do much damage.”

She gave a tiny smiled, “I loaded salt rounds into my rifle instead of regular bullets. Enough people have been hurt lately, it still penetrates the skin but not with enough force to do much damage. It will burn like Hell though, and he may have bled quite a bit. It shatters once it hits its target. I was aiming for the lower legs but I was off and he got hit in the thigh. I just… I hope he’s ok, he didn’t look well from what I saw.”

Tony hugged her tighter, “Yeah we’ve all been through the ringer lately. Wait til I tell you what you’ve missed while you were a hermit.” Sharon sniffled and Tony saw tear tracks on her cheeks.

“Hey,” he told her gently, “ It’s ok, it’s over now. Nobody died, we’re all ok, now we can all move forward and put all this crap behind us.” He wiped the tears from her face.
“I know.. I know we can.. It’s just.. We know them.. You’ve fought beside them, lived with them, spent holidays with them.. You know, I went to the movies with Natasha and Clint when I was still with SHIELD. A group of us, we all went to this matinee in DC a few years ago. I’ve met Clint’s wife and I lived beside Steve for Christ’s sake.. We went out for coffee! It just makes me feel ten times worse because I know they aren’t truly bad people, but..”

She sighed, “They were supposed to be better than this.. I feel like a horrible person. I mean, I know we did the right thing, we couldn’t just let them go, but... I mean, come on, it’s Captain America. It just feels..” she trailed off.

“Wrong? I know Shay. I know.. I wish now that we hadn't been told all those stories as kids, might make this easier.” He hugged her tight, he didn’t know what else to tell her. They were supposed to be good, not whatever this was..

"Yeah, it might,” Sharon frowned, "So what exactly happened to you? I've pieced together some of it from news clips, I know Steve put you in a hospital, but you seem fine. And what was that thing earlier I saw with your eyes? Did you create some new tech?"

Tony huffed, "Yeah, you could say that."

"Well," she pressed, "Are you going to tell me?"

He started to tell her everything but they were interrupted by a knock on the door, which was immediately opened by a harassed looking Everett Ross, decked out in tactical gear instead of his usual business style. Tony thought this look suited him more, from what he knew of the man from their brief meeting he didn’t seem like the type who was happy behind a desk. He was more suited for the field. Obviously the man had lost more than a few nights of sleep lately, the ever prominent bags were now joined by dark purple circles and a few extra lines. He really wasn’t that much younger than Tony, but then Tony was rich and kept his under eye bags expertly concealed.

Sharon quickly jumped to her feet and a few paces from Tony with a guilty look about her. Everett paused, eyeing the two of them and gave a lingering look at Sharon’s towel. No doubt he thought he'd walked in on some intimate moment if the lovely shade of tomato he was beginning to sport was anything to go by. He didn't seem embarrassed though, more like irritated, and he kept clenching his fists at his sides. Yep, definite irritation.

“Everett! When did you get here?!“ Sharon exclaimed, wrapping her towel tighter.

“Sorry, am I interrupting something. I can come back later if you-” his gaze kept flicking between the two. Tony could tell he was trying to maintain a tough facade, but the way he kept glancing at Sharon spoke differently. Tony gave him a quick once-over. Everett had been stationed on the outer borders of Wakanda with armies from neighboring nations as backup in case something went drastically wrong. It would have taken him about twenty minutes to get here by plane or heli after being informed about the rogues apprehension.

He looked rough, his hair was sticking out in a dozen directions, so he had been running his hands through it constantly. He had a slight tremor in his right hand, a sure sign that he was nervous or worried about something. There was a sheen of sweat on his face and arms, it was cool in the palace so he must have been running at some point. So, in a hurry to be somewhere. He would have seen to the security of Rogers and Co. before making his way here, to this room where he had just barged inside without being invited. So whatever it was that had him ruffled had to be very important.

Then there was the way he kept glancing to Sharon, but quickly caught himself and averted his eyes. And giving Tony a stern glare.
Hmmm…

Tony spared a glance at Shay and noticed that she, while trying to maintain an air of professionalism in front of her boss, seemed to be vibrating in her skin. She also wasn’t overly concerned about the fact that she was in a skimpy towel, that wasn’t leaving much to the imagination, in front of her Commander.

Oooh, could it be, Tony thought with glee!

Well, well, well. What an interesting little development here.

Tony was feeling a tad petty after the weeks of hell he’d just had, so he thought he’d give his theory a bit of a test. He sauntered over to Sharon and pulled her close, letting his hands wander down to cover her ass. It was weird, he’d never in his life thought of Sharon that way, they were not blood related, but still. She was family to him. But! For science. Well, not in this case, this was for the potential of love.

“Tony, wha-” he shushed her with a kiss, “Mmmph!”

Yeah, ok. That was just too weird. But the look of rage on Ross’s face was worth it. He decided to press his luck a bit more and gave Ross a dirty smirk as he extended the kiss. Everett looked ready to explode, Tony could see a vein pulsing in the man's neck.

Theory confirmed.

He pulled back and received a hearty punch to the shoulder, “Idiot! What the hell are you doing?!”

“I’m sorry, babe. I know how you hate PDA’s but I just can’t resist you right now.. I need you..” Tony panted. He knew she’d kill him for this later but he was feeling petty. And he also wanted to see just what Ross’s intentions were for Shay. It was strange though, that the man wasn’t moving in to defend his lady. He looked pissed, but he made no move to stop Tony.

Oooh, could it be forbidden love?

He pulled her close once more (“What the fuc-” Sharon exclaimed.) into another steamy kiss and saw that Ross’s rage was deflating. The longer Tony kept being touchy, and the longer Sharon went without stopping him made the man now look sick, Ross averted his gaze from them to stare heartbroken at the floor. Tony felt like a dick, he thought the mans eyes may actually be tearing up. Everett probably thought he’d lost the battle already and was just throwing in the towel. After all, the rumors were that no woman could resist a Stark.

Well it wouldn’t be the first time a man had walked in to find his woman in Tony Stark’s arms. Or the second, or the third. Probably not even the fourth. Sharon wasn't really helping his situation, all she could do was gape at him like a fish, to shocked at his new behavior to do anything.

Everett cleared his throat, “Well, I- I'll just,” his voice cracked, 'leave you two alone then. Agent Carter if you could meet the rest of us in the conference room when you're ready.” He made quickly for the door, looking like a kid who lost the championship game.

Tony gave another eyeroll, he really should copyright that, and said, “Oh for- Everett get back here! I know everyone thinks I’m still a manwhore but I draw the line romancing my cousin!”

“Well, that’s not true,” Sharon said with an annoyed look on her face.

“Cousin?” Everett turned to Sharon, looking more than a little confused and relieved, “He is your cousin? Tony Stark is your cousin? Him? Why are you kissing your cousin?”
Sharon gave Tony a soft smack to the head, "Because he's a moron apparently!"

"Ouch! I'm recovering from a grievous injury you know!"

"Oh, I barely tapped you!"

"Cousins? I don't- What?" Everett asked.

Tony hummed, “Yeah, that’s kind of our big family secret, nobody knows. I mean technically we’re not blood, but that’s just a DNA thing. Pegs never really cared about that. Family is family to her.” Sharon nodded in agreement, she was being uncharacteristically quiet for her.

“So,” Tony began, grinning like a mad man at the two, “How long have you two been together?”

“What- we’re not.” Sharon sputtered.

“Come on Shay, don’t lie. He looked ready to kick my ass earlier when I grabbed your ass. And when I said cousin, come on.”

Ross remained stern, “You're clearly mistaken, I can’t date agents who work under my command Mr. Stark. The number of complications that it could cause are not worth the risk.”

“Just because you can’t, doesn’t mean that you won’t.”

“Tony-” Sharon started.

Everett stood stoic, “Any fraternization with agents under my command will result in immediate termination of my position and relocation of the agent. I signed a contract with the CIA, the UN and the JCTC that prohibits that.” His jaw clenched so hard Tony was surprised he didn’t break teeth.

Annnnd Yahtzee!!

Tony looked at Sharon, “Do you trust me?”

She frowned, “Yes. I will get you back for that kiss later, I promise you that, but I trust you completely.”

“Then trust me when I tell you I would never do anything that would hurt you or your career, or your boyfriends unless they deserve it. I can see that the two of you are dying to get to each other so please,” he pushed her forward, “Go get your man!”

Sharon stood frozen, unsure, but Everett was either smart enough not to look the gift horse in the mouth or just couldn’t take it anymore. Giving up on any pretense of their being nothing between them, he walked up to her slowly and pulled her close to him, wrapping her in his arms. His embrace was warm, and his arms seemed very protective when they wrapped tight around her small frame. They let the world around them melt away, neither of them caring that Tony was even in the room.

Sharon buried her face in Everett’s neck and inhaled deeply as he caressed her hair and whispered something Tony couldn’t hear, but made her give a small sob.

He looked up through moist eyes at Tony, “So were you just trying to make me jealous?” Everett asked as he held her.

“Not really. I just wanted to know how you’d react to Shay half naked and kissing another man. That was weird for me, by the way. I couldn’t figure out why you weren’t trying to kick my ass. I assumed it had to do with your jobs but- I wasn’t sure, now I know that it's beyond your control. It’s
a lot to risk for both of you, so.. Well.. How long?” he asked.

Everett sighed, “About six months after SHIELD fell.”

Tony’s brows shot up, “That long! How have you kept it quiet for two years!?”

“It wasn’t easy, we haven’t been able to be alone with each other much at all, but the time that we have had we make the best of it. Most of the time we get is when we’re out doing field work together, and even that’s sparse.” he nuzzled her cheek. Sharon was clinging to him like a lifeline. “Lunch in the office is our idea of a date night. Without the fun parts.”

“So when the three of us worked out her infiltration… How could you do it, knowing she would be surrounded by super-enhanced murderers?”

“I’ve barely been keeping it together these past weeks. You have no idea.. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do.” Everett looked pained. “Tony please, you have to keep this between us. I can’t afford to lose my job and she still hasn’t decided if she’s leaving the CIA or not. Please…”

“I am.” Sharon sniffed, raising her head, “I been given another offer that’s too good to let slip by. I’ll tell you all about it later.” They looked into each others eyes, the desire evident on their faces.

And that’s my cue to skedaddle, Tony thought.

“Well,” he clapped his hands, “I don’t know how you lovebirds, feel but I need a vacation. Shay what do you think of the Maldives? I’m thinking Como Maalifushi. A month. That sound good to you. Villa on the water, private, I could even rent out the entire island if I need to. What do you say?”

Sharon sighed, “It sounds like a dream, but I am not spending another vacation with you. Remember the Fiji fiasco?”

“Hmm, rude.. And I never said I was going. Everett, you should have an unholy amount of vacation days saved, care to take a trip?”

“I..? What? With you?”

Trademark eyeroll, “Do I confuse everyone? How would you like to spend a month or two at a secluded, romantic resort in the Maldives with her, your future Mrs. Ross?”

“You- you want to send us on a vacation? I’d love to but I can’t. Tony, if they find out-”

“There not going to find out anything, and soon it won’t even matter at all. You heard her, she’s leaving the CIA, another month, two at the most to get everything settled and you’re both free from your stupidly non-negotiable shitty government contracts. Just-just think it over, let me know.”

Tony started to leave, “By the way, that new job she mentioned will be based in upstate New York, not DC. I’m going to be starting negotiations with the UN, the Accords panel and the CIA to have you placed as a full time official liaison for the Avengers Project, which will probably require you to stay in New York as well. So you should be prepared to move your base of operations there, but I’ll go over the details later, after everything else is dealt with. Right now, I’m going to bide you two a little alone time. I think, oh an hour and ten should do. After that hour you’ve got ten minutes to haul your asses to the conference room.”

He opened the door and looked back, they were both staring at him. Sharon with happiness and Ross with a look of amazement at the prospect of being with Sharon full time. Tony would never get used
to people who were shocked by his simple gestures. But as long as his little family was happy he just ignored it.

“Thank you, Tony.” Everett whispered,

He gave them a wink and closed the door, as he walked down the hall he could hear Shay’s peal of happy laughter.

Mission accomplished.

Now, he had to find a way to occupy the others for an hour.
Is anyone else angry at the ending to Endgame? I just.. Ugh, I can't even.. 😒 😒

It's all winding down now.. I'll be sad when I finish it, I've worked on it for so long.. But.. I'm in the endgame now 😊
And once again I apologize for my horrid spelling and punctuation..

When he walked into the conference room around forty-five minutes later, Tony had to wipe at his eyes to be sure what he was seeing. Memories of a pie eating contest Rhodey had talked him into when they were fresh out of college sprang to mind. Half of his teammates were already there, scattered haphazardly around the room trying their luck against everyone’s favorite deadly sin--gluttony.

Shuri must have had lunch sent up for them while they waited. Was it lunch time? Or was it nearing dinner by now? He really needed to keep better track of these things. But anywho, his teammates must have been on the verge of starving, cause it was like watching pigs eat slop at the state fair. The room was filled with sounds of chewing, gulping, belching (Thor) and gnawing (also Thor).

He’d hate to be the unfortunate soul who had to clean up this mess. Food, plates, cups, shoes and socks, War Machine standing by in a corner, Thor’s new hammer on a side table. The Wasp suit on the back of a chair. Doctor Strange’s cloak flying back and forth, trying to annoy Thor. They sure made themselves at home.

There was a buffet set up at the far end of the long, rectangular shaped room, Thor hadn’t even bothered fetching a plate, he had just rolled a chair over to the buffet stand and dug in. He was currently gnawing on a large leg of some meaty Wakandan beast and had procured a gigantic spoon to eat directly from a vat of beans which he kept dropping on the floor below. As Tony watched, he gulped down a glass of beer which immediately refilled itself. Magic, no doubt. Loki or Strange had a hand in that.

Every few moments the Cloak would make some flappy maneuver at his magically mutated ears that had Thor swatting it away.

Murdock had ditched the devil for his law attire and was halfway through the first of two footlong sandwiches and an entire gallon of milk. Stray bits of vegetables had fallen off onto the table and floor, but in the beginnings of a food coma Matt didn’t notice.

Even Hope, with her usually prim and proper Pepper-like appearance had a heaping plate of fruits and veggies accompanied by a bottle of wine. She was shoveling food in like the apocalypse was coming. Pepper did the same thing if curry was around, that woman could guzzle curry down like an alcoholic and still want more.

Rhodey had skipped real food it seemed, and had devoured the dessert portion of the table single handed. Most of the evidence was smeared on his face. The man could never resist chocolate, it was
his food weakness, and there were half dozen brownies piled high on his plate. Coffee was his drink of choice.

_Huh.. Maybe I should feed my teammates better_, Tony thought. _That buffet looks like it should feed 40 people, and four starving Avengers were obliterating it._

Vision was sitting quietly off by the window, watching the others with curiosity since he had no need for food. Tony was glad he had regained conscious, he hadn’t been down for long but admitted to them after waking that he felt much more weak than was normal.

Tony was happy to see he wasn’t the last person to arrive. Shuri, Stephen and Loki hadn’t yet arrived. Or Ross and Sharon. Pepper would be proud of him, arriving on time. Total adult move, it was.

“Where ya been?” Rhodey mumbled around a mouth full of cake, “You’ve been gone almost two hours.”

“Uuuh, I was talking to Sharon about some things.”

“Hmmph,” Rhodey laughed, “I can’t believe you had your cuz playing a double A.”

Tony’s jaw dropped, “How the Hell did you know that!?”

“Dude, I’ve known that for like twenty years. Remember? It was during one of your drug induced hazes. You were blabberin on about Shay this, Shay that, told me flat out she was your cousin.”

“....”

“Really? No? No bells ringin? Tony, you even introduced her to me at Edwin’s funeral. So did Peggy. I believe her words were, ‘James, this is my niece, and Tony’s cousin, Sharon’, remember that?”

“Uuuhh..”

Rhodes rolled his eyes, “Damn.. I’m glad the 90’s are over. I think half your brain cells died back then from all the shit you did!”

“Well shit.. I have no recollection of that at all..”

“Yeah, well you never mentioned her again so I just never brought it up. I only met her the once though. I didn’t ask about her involvement with this mess cause I wasn’t sure if she was a touchy subject or not.”

Tony snorted, “What? Afraid it may send me on a downward spiral?”

“No, but I try not to interfere with with anything to do with Peggy or Howard. I learned from experience.”

Tony slid in the chair next to him, “So where’s everyone else? The UN will be waiting to hear from us soon.”

“Nah, we’re good. Ross has already handled the UN side. He’s just waiting for the rest of us to gather up so he can tell us what’s going down. Apparently due to the circumstances we have no say in what happens to them now. Our job was to capture, now it’s out of our hands and their problem. Even Matt agreed we don’t have a say now. Right Matt?”
“Hmmm?” Matt asked sleepily, he had his head resting on his arm and appeared to be in the midst of a nap. “Oh yeah, it’s out of our hands for now. They’ll be taken into custody, processed and then moved to secure locations til their trials. Most likely they’ll be denied bail given the threat they pose to the public. Not to mention the deaths and property damage.”

“But what about T’Challa?” Tony wondered aloud.

“I’m not completely sure about his situation. If they can prove he had no direct hand in the deaths in that tunnel things would be much better for him, but he still has to have a bail hearing. I figure the UN will speed things up, most likely all their bail hearings will be tomorrow. If they can’t disprove his actions his fate will be more or less like the others. Some countries want the death penalty for them but I don’t believe that will happen, most of them will get life for sure, Wilson and Lang might get 10 if they’re lucky” Matt told him.

“I have a direct link into the data of Caps’ suit, I have some footage. If I combine that with the footage from the tun-” Tony started.

Matt sighed, “Tony, this is the part where you need to step back and let the law work. Your best option would be to cooperate with the prosecutors who will work the case. As your newly appointed legal counsel to the Avengers I will inform them of your data and that they have out full cooperation. But you have to let them do this, if you put the evidence together yourself it could seriously compromise T’Challa’s case. We’ll turn it over to the UN and we will cooperate accordingly, within the law.”

“But.” Tony sputtered.

Matt stopped him, “Ross assured me they will all be treated fairly and humanely and all their rights will be honored. That’s all we can do for them now unless one of them wants me for a lawyer. Let’s let the system work.”

Rhodey looked curious, “Would you? Defend them, if they asked.”

Matt debated with himself for a moment before answering.

“Well, I won’t under any circumstance defend Rogers or Maximoff. Barton is a no because I’m serving as Laura’s divorce attorney, plus he did try to blind me and while that was funny it’s a turnoff to me as a lawyer. Ross told me earlier the new division of SHIELD is trying to get their hands on Romanoff but I wouldn’t feel comfortable defending her anyway given her history.” He paused.

“I’d have no trouble defending Wilson or Lang though. They both realized what they did and how bad things really were, a bit to late but still, they’re not too far gone. I’d accept if they needed a lawyer,” he told them.

“So the rest will likely end up with a public defender then?” Tony squirmed in his seat.

Matt hummed, “Unless they have the money to pay for a lawyer.”

Rhodey narrowed his eyes, “Don’t you dare even think it Tony!” He scolded.

“What? I wasn’t—”

“I know you! You were thinking about paying for lawyers for those idiots! I forbid it, after what they did to you! Absolutely not! Hell no!! Not to mention if Pepper found out.. HmmMmm, that new Extremis stuff won’t stop her wrath if she gets wind of it.. So, no, don’t even go there!”
Tony heaved a breath, “I know, I just-”

“Nope, or I’ll tell Mama you want to spend a month with her in Philly this summer.”

Tony froze, “Oh ho hoooo.. You wouldn’t dare?” He hissed at him.

“Try me and find out Stark.” Rhodes threatened.

Tony groaned, “Fine.. No way in Hell I’m going to spend even a day in Philly,” he muttered.

“MmmHmm, s’what I thought. And that’s just rude, that’s my home you know!”

Tony scoffed, “Please, you hate it as much as I do.. So where is the rest of our happy few?”

Rhodey chomped on a brownie, ”Well, Bruce, Stephen and Loki are all in with T’Challa.”

“Brucies here to? Why didn’t he come find me?”

“Yeah, came in with Ross’s entourage. Apparently Wakanda has some new med tech that can almost instantly heal a wound. So they’re off having a nerd-gasm, which is why he didn’t find you, NerdTech makes you second best. Shuri was with them to, last I heard, she’s trying to make sure the Wakandan council members don’t know T’Challa’s here so she’s the one working on him. I think she wanted to speak to him privately to.”

“Really? Does she have a med degree?” Tony asked.

“Yeah, according to Bruce she’s wicked smart, has all kinds of degrees. Maybe as many as you. She had a hand in making the tech, so… Stephen was looking giddy when Shuri was explaining the tech. I think he may hope that it can fix his hands, but… Oh and Ross is around somewhere. Went off in a hurry lookin for Carter after he put like ten agents guarding each Avenger.”

“Yeah, I saw him. He found her. They’ll be here after Sharon finishes de brief ing him.” Tony snickered at his internal joke. “How about you? Are you ok?”

“I’m fine Tones, we all are, I wasn’t hurt, only the suit was knocked out.”

“The braces-”

“Are fully functional. Thor gave me a boost with his magic lightning rod (don’t say it) and it’s all good. Visions fine too, just a little weak. We’re not sure why, but Loki or Strange couldn’t find any bad mojo in him.”

“Matt said there was an injured girl. One of the Dora. Is she ok?” Toni asked.

“She should be fine, last word was she was in urgent healing, whatever that is. Apparently she had some underlying condition and when Romanoff hit just the right spot the girl went down. She’s young, she’ll recover. Shuri said she hadn’t been a Dora very long. The rest were minor injuries, Romanoff didn’t hold anything back on them, but she didn’t kill anyone. M’Bali, the girl that went down, was the only serious one.”

Tony nodded, making a mental note to check on her before they left. “Ok, that’s great.. God, this could have been so much worse.. When I think about everything.. It could have gone horribly wrong. I didn’t expect Maximoff to explode, I thought Viz could handle it.”

“That is my fault, I am afraid.” Vision apologized as he lowered gingerly into the seat across from
Tony. “Once again I let emotions cloud my judgement. This could have been avoided if I had not been internally distracted.”

Rhodey actually growled, “Viz how many times do I need to say this? What happened to me was not your fault. Hell, I’m glad you hit me and not Sam, at least I had armor. If it had been him, he would have died on impact.”

“He is right you know,” Tony chimed in, “It wasn’t your fault, neither was what happened in the throne room.”

“But I hesitated.. I could have taken her instantly. I feel.. Disconcerted, when it comes to Wanda and that feeling has led to nothing but the pain and suffering of others.”

Tony huffed, “When it comes to people we love and care about our judgement will always have a cloud. Their well being means more than our own and we will hesitate every single time. Love is simultaneously the best and worst thing that happens to us. It’s just a natural human emotion.”

“I, however, am not human..” Vision replied.

“No, you’re not, not completely,” Rhodey chomped, “but you have pieces of Jarvis in you and Jarvis was more human than you’d believe. Jarvis knew how to love, hate, joke.. Hell he used to turn on the TV in the Malibu house and make me watch sappy chick flicks with him even though he was an AI. That part of you that feels, that’s him. You should embrace that, he was more human than any of us.”

Vision seemed to contemplate this before looking to Tony, “Should it be possible, Tony, I would like to review the makings of Jarvis’s code. Maybe it will help me clarify things about myself.”

Tony shrugged, trying to seem indifferent. The loss of Jarvis still aches even after three years. He’d tried looking for the backup files he knew Jarvis kept but either Ultron had found and destroyed them or Jarvis had hidden them so deep in one of their thousand servers even Tony couldn’t find it.

“Sure, Friday can compile all the data that’s left when we get home. I hope it helps..”

“Thank you Tony.” Vision spoke softly.

“Eh, don’t mention it. It’s what family is for.”

Tony got up and was trying to grab a bite to eat (fighting Thor for what looked like an ostrich leg) when Ross came up beside him. His face was flushed and there were a few stray water droplets clinging to his shirt collar. Glancing back, Tony saw that Sharon had also made her way in and had settled down beside Rhodey who was eagerly chatting her up. Her pale hair, still damp from a shower, was pulled back in a simple braided updo. Someone (had to be Shuri, Tony was really starting to like her) had given her a beautiful blue and gold dashiki dress encrusted with tiny jewels. She looked stunning.

Tony smirked at Ross, “Good shower was it?”

“Uuuhhh..”

“I take it Shay-” he wiggled his brows, “debriefed you.”

“Oh God.. You’re never going to stop teasing me, are you?” Ross whispered.

Tony’s grin widened, “Not an icebergs chance in Hell. You’ll get use to it, being part of the fam and
all. You have some water clinging to your shirt, might wanna take care of that. If you’re determined
to keep it hidden from everyone else you may want to wipe that just got laid look off your face to."

“Shit.. ” Ross absently rubbed his neck, “Thanks. I thought I dried it pretty good but I always miss
something.”

“I wouldn’t know how to hide anything, my sexual adventures have always been pretty well
advertised.” He held up his plate, “Ostrich? Apparently it’s a delicacy in Asgard, Thor tried to punch
me over it.”

“Oh, no. I’m good, thanks. Listen I need your help with something. The UN is asking me for proof
that Sharon wasn’t truly involved with Rogers gang. I was hoping you could give me a statement
about what we set up that day.”

Tony tore a huge chunk of meat off with his teeth, “Sure, I can do that. You want the video footage
to?”

Everett looked perplexed, “What footage? We made sure there were no cameras or recording devices
anywhere just in case Romanoff might go looking.” Tony took another big bite (this thing was
actually pretty good) and pinned Everett with his best ‘don’t you know who you’re talking to’ look.

“Oh please. I’m Tony Stark, everything I do gets recorded somehow. Tie pin, my glasses, a button
on my jacket.. Don’t forget who you’re talking to Ross.”

“But what if one of the-”

“Everything was saved in Fridays private server, there’s a DNA access panel as well as a full body
scan, voice recognition and a retinal scan I have to go through. Three DNA verifications, any attempt
to enter her server without blood, saliva and hair sample and she shuts down. Oh, and a fingerprint
from a specific finger… And toe.”

Ross just stared.

“What?”

“Isn’t that a bit.. I don’t know, a bit much?” Ross asked.

“I’ve had to many people try and steal my ideas, I got paranoid..” Tony mumbled around a bite of
bird. “Here,” he shoved a plate at him, “better feed the misses, if she goes to long without food she
might start shooting at me. How about a nice meaty wing?”

Ross smirked, “She’s vegan.”

Tony rolled his eyes, “Why am I not surprised. Thor’s got a vat of beans if you can pry it away from
him.”

Hearing his name, Thor looked up from his personal buffet table, his still magically altered ears
twitching. The Cloak was creeping up behind him.

“Try it little man and you shall face the wrath of my- Stop pulling my ears you evil red menace!!
Thor bellowed.

He grabbed the vat and heaved the entire contents of the beans at his new flying nemesis, Rhodey
and Sharon ducked, but at that exact moment the rest of their crew decided to make their entrance.
The Cloak dodged, and the vat sailed across the room to splatter right into the face of Doctor
Strange, the large bowl hanging precariously from his head, raining down his robes and pooling onto the floor. Behind him, Loki snickered and Bruce was doing his customary face palm.

Ross surveyed the mess, “Maybe I’ll just take her some fruit."

Thor looked at Strange and panicked, “By Odin’s beard. \textit{Shit}.. Not again.."

Shuri peeked around them, “Well, this is one instance where I’m glad the lady didn’t go first.”

Stephen tossed the bowl to the floor, he was covered in a wet, gooey ooze. He wiped the dripping mess from his eyes and licked a bit from his lips. “Well, the beans were delicious,” he told Shuri.

She made her way to the table, “Hmm, yes, I’m sorry you didn’t get to actually eat any. Those are only grown here in Wakanda.”

“Apologises my lady,” Thor stammered, “I will of course-”

“Ah ah ah!” Strange wagged a dripping finger at him.

“If I could-”

“No. No no no, not a word Thor.” He snapped his fingers at his Cloak, “You, over there! Now! And stay there till I summon you.”

“Stephen, I-” Thor tried again.

Strange’s sea green orbs narrowed to slits. With a few flicks of his wrist Thor’s ears changed from wiggling toes to over sized, Dumbo like appendages. Another flick and Thor was gifted with an enormous set of horse like teeth and his hair disappeared to reveal a cone-shaped head.

“I must say brother, it is a vast improvement.” Loki snickered.

‘Fud up Foki.. Oh fear..’ Thor only sighed, realizing his horse teeth impaired his speech and leaned back in his chair, he’d probably be stuck with his new look for the foreseeable future. At least until the good Doctor calmed a bit.

With another few flicks, Strange was now completely clean and the damaged beans floated to a nearby garbage can. Tony watched in amazement (cause magic still blew his mind) as the vat appeared back on the table and refilled itself. Strange moved to grab a bowl. “Yes, I believe I will try these, they were very tasty,” he smirked at a scowling Thor as he passed.

“Please, everyone. Please grab a meal and sit,” Shuri looked around at the mess, “Well, I see most of you have, but please. I believe Mr. Ross has much to discuss.”

They gathered, they ate and chatted meaningless chatter till their stomachs were full to bursting. Tony had seated himself next to Dr, Strange and had a detailed discussion about Stark Industries opening a new med-tech research program. Strange recommended a friend, Christine Palmer, who would love to have some input for improving equipment for easier use. Tony didn't yet tell him that he wanted his input as well.

“So,” Tony leaned in, “I know, and you know that I know, that you could have dodged that food Thor tossed. You could have just turned it into butterflies or popped it off somewhere else. Why did you let it hit you?”

“In all honesty?” Stephen quirked a brow.
“Well, if you don’t mind.” Tony motioned.

“Honestly,” Strange preened. “Honestly, it’s partly because he lied to me and plus I just love messing with him. Wong is great but he’s like a brick wall, I can barely get a word out of him. Thor, he just makes it to easy!”

“....Are you serious?”

“What?” Stephen asked. “Despite what people think I do have a sense of humor. You’ve known me for years, you know this..”

“You know he could probably kill you, right?”

Stephen pondered this a moment, “Eh, no he really couldn’t.”

“Cocky much, Doc?”

“No, just confident in my abilities. And I’m not hurting anyone.”

“Thor has horse teeth..” Tony deadpanned.

“Well, he shouldn’t have tried to pull myself and the stone off world.”

Tony was intrigued about this. He wanted to ask Stephen more questions about where they had disappeared to for the past two days but Ross cleared his throat to get everyone’s attention.

Well he tried to anyway. Tony gave an eye roll at Everett, “If you want to get this groups attention you need to be a little more rude than that.” He put two fingers in his mouth and let out an ear splitting whistle, “Everybody SHUT UP !!”

“Um, thank you,” Everett said, as Tony faced down the irritated glares. He pulled out a StarkTablet. “So um, it’s getting a bit late and there are a few things I need to go over with all of you. Basically it’s just the next steps in what will probably be a short process.”

“Short how?” Shuri asked.

“Well, the UN is under tremendous pressure from the countries that were devastated from the.. Incidents, we’ll call them, so once we transfer them to holding their case will take priority over everything else.”

“Meaning?” Hope inquired.

“They’re speeding it up,” Matt stated.

Ross sighed, “Yeah, that sums it up. Once we leave here we head for New York, they’ll be taken into custody by the UN, appointed a PD or a lawyer if they can afford one and tomorrow morning they’ll have a bail hearing. Most likely they’ll be denied given the circumstances.”

“I assume the trial dates will be soon as well?” Matt questioned.

“MmmHmm, probably within the next two to three weeks. The UN and the JCTC have been compiling evidence since before their Raft breakout, they’re ready, they’ve just been waiting on the apprehension. Those that don’t receive bail will be held at Rykers Island til their trial, with the exception of Maximoff. Dr Strange has agreed to hold her in the cells underneath, uh..” Ross looked to his tablet.
“Kamar-Taj.” The doctor cut in, “Wong and I have already cleared it with the elders there. They agree that she needs special accommodations given her power. The cells are thousands of years old, designed to hold the most sinister of magic wielders. She’ll have no chance to try and escape, Loki has her under a spell that temporarily subdues her power.”

Loki smiled, “Yes, it was of my mother’s making. She used it on me as a child when I would be particularly troublesome.”

“How long will that hold?” Sharon asked Loki.

“I’ll need to perform it every few days, but the doctor has informed me he will have her under a powerful sleep spell as well. Between the two of us and the magic in the cell she won’t go anywhere.”

“Is that safe?” Tony asked.

“It’s basically like sleeping beauty,” Stephen replied, “she’ll be in a form of stasis. She’ll be completely fine. I promise”

“What of my brother...?” Shuri looked worried.

Everett sighed again, “I have to bring him into custody along with the rest, he’ll go through the same process as them but his chances fair far better. All you can do now is wait, you don’t want to make the UN angry. If you try to hinder his arrest in any way could hurt his chances. Immensely.”

Shuri nodded in agreement, “I would not try to, I am just worried about his outcome.”

“Honestly, he has better chances than the rest of them, at most with the evidence they’ve compiled he may have to serve some time. I’d estimate five years at most.” Matt told her.

She sighed, defeated, “I assumed as much...”

“Speaking of evidence, most of you will likely be called in for testimony. Tony, you more than the others. I’d be expecting a subpoena for any footage you may have acquired since this began.”

Tony waved it away, “It’s ready and waiting. As long as Thunderbolt Ross isn’t the one knocking down my door to get it then we’re good.” Bruce looked squeamish at the mention of his tormentor.

Ross smirked, “No worries, he’s under suspension. Something about unethical treatment of prisoners on the Raft..” He looked at Tony inquiringly.

“Wasn’t me. I swear.”

“Hmmm..”

“I have some questions,” Rhodey, like a first grader, raised his hand.

“Yes?”

“What about Barnes and Loki?”

“Well, they currently aren’t aware of Barnes location. If I were you Tony, I’d inform them about that myself. Be honest with them, you’re already in their good graces, maybe you can work out a deal on Barnes behalf. He’ll eventually have to face some kind of justice, but he’s actually not the main priority right now.” Ross stated.
“And Foki? Thor neighed.

“What?” Everett stuttered.

“Fot afout Foki?”

“Oh for..” Loki facepalmed, “What about me Mr. Ross?”

“Oh. Well, they are aware that you’re here so you will be required to go before the UN for an inquiry. Basically they’ll ask you questions everyday for weeks to determine what they’ll do with you. Some may even demand you serve prison time but I don’t see a cell on Earth that might hold you. Truthfully, I have no idea what will happen. The Rogues are their concern right now.”

Loki nodded, he would deal with the outcome when it came, but he wouldn’t let it spoil his good mood.

“Is that everything?” Vision questioned.

Ross checked his notes, “Uh, yeah, that’s it for now. Just remember the UN will be contacting all of you so please stay available. Doctor if you’re ready, I’d like to get Maximoff secured first.”

"Agreed, I’ll feel better once she’s secure. Wong is waiting for us there. Loki, are you coming with us?"

“Yes, I believe I shall like this Kamar-Taj you speak of. It sounds similar to Vanaheim, and with no bifrost I’m afraid I may never venture there again.”

“I too, wish to accompany you.” Vision spoke up. “Perhaps I shall find more about the stone I carry. I know so little bout it.”

Stephen nodded, “If anyone knows, it would be Wong. He’ll be glad to help. Ross? Will you be coming as well?”

“No. No, I’ll be accompanying the rest back to New York. Magic is your domain, so I’ll leave you to it. The UN will be in touch and please just keep me updated and tell me if you have any problems. Please…”

“Very well, if that’s all then. Gentleman, if you will follow me we’ll be on our way.” He stood up and retrieved his Cloak, “Ladies, gentleman.” He glared, “Thor..”

“Fizard..” If looks could kill.

After they left to fetch Wanda, Tony stood as well, “I’m gonna go talk to T’Challa before we head out. Where is he?” Tony asked Shuri.

“He is in his rooms, resting. He is still very weak from his ordeal. I admit he was worse than I thought. I must thank you Tony, he would not be alive if you had not been there.” Shuri stood to leave as well, “I have already said my peace to my brother, so I shall take my leave. It was a pleasure to meet you all. I do hope you will come back and enjoy Wakanda under better circumstances.”

“Thank you, Your Highness.” Tony bowed.

“Stand up idiot,” Shuri laughed, as she made her exit, “we don’t do that here!”

“But Rhodey said.. Oh you bastard…” He swore at Rhodey’s evil smirk.
“As amusing as you two are, it’s almost 4pm,” Ross said. “I’m going to get ready for transfer. Will you bring T’Challa back with you?”

Tony looked away, “Yeah, I-”

“You know we have to Tony. Look, I’m letting him walk out of here on his own power, without cuffs. He already knows what’s happening, I spoke to him before I found you. He’s fine, and you’ll see that yourself when you talk to him.”

“Ii just seems like a shit situation for him.” Tony stated.

Ross huffed, “It is for all of us, but he knows what he did, Tony. He’s knows he has to face the consequences. You better go now, we don’t have much time left. The jet will be waiting out on the runway when you’re ready.”

Tony gave a defeated sigh, knowing there was no way around it without causing more damage. He set off on his quest to find the disgraced, former King. Ready to bring about the consequences of a choice gone wrong.
Chapter Notes

Sorry to all my amazing readers who have been waiting for an update. Summer is winding down which means farming season is as well. So now I should have more time to write 😊. I hope you still enjoy this story, only 2 more chapters to go.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

T'Challa sat nervously in his (not anymore) suite inside the palace, he looked heavy-hearted at the rooms that had once been sanctuary. A safe space, his escape. But most of all it was home. Home for all of his 37 years, and now, now because of one horrible misplaced decision he would never be home again. He shouldn’t even be here now, the only thing keeping the Council from beating down the door of the exiled King was Shuri’s intervention.

She had stood firm before the Council members that morning, T’Challa by her side, after the apprehension of the Rogues, firm in her stance that no matter what her brother had done, he was still her brother and a prince of Wakanda. Regardless of Wakandas views of T’Challa’s crimes she would not allow him to suffer death at their hands. Such old views were barbaric, inhumane and she had stood tall and proud as she fought the elders down. It was her firm promise to the Council that T'Challa would be leaving permanently in the custody of Ross and the new Avengers team. Her promise that the once beloved prince would no longer be allowed inside Wakanda’s borders, ever again.

She had managed to appease them, stating that his justice would come by those he had harmed elsewhere, that it was not up to Wakanda to decide his fate. Wakanda would wash their hands of him, turn a blind eye to what the rest of the world saw fit as his punishment. Should that punishment be his head, then so be it. And for any reason should T’Challa find himself on Wakandan soil ever again.. Well then, and only then would they exact their punishment upon him.

Later, after Shuri had repaired his leg with the new tech she had been refining for the last few months, after Doctors Banner and Strange had gotten over their childlike glee at witnessing such a marvel of modern medicine, she had shared a long, tearful goodbye to her brother. Shuri informed him that after today, due to the circumstances, she could no longer have any contact with her brother. It was best for Wakanda if she didn’t associate with him again, best for her as a newly crowned Queen to put the people of Wakanda before all, much like their father had done. She then escorted him to his chambers to rest (Nakia and Okoye guarding the door) while she attended a briefing with the others.

The door closed behind her with a soft click and that was when reality sank in… Once he walked out those doors, he would never be home again. Never sleep in his own bed again, never run through his jungles ever again. He would never walk the streets of the capital city, never again share a meal with Wakabi in his favorite restaurant..

Never walk his mothers gardens again..

He had no idea what his future held, and that, that terrified him. He had no idea what was going to happen, how many years of jail would he serve? Would there be a possibility of death? Matt and Tony had told him that would not happen but how could they be sure. T’Challa had been racing
through that tunnel on Romania along with Rogers and Barnes, several people died in that fight. Would he be held responsible?

Would he spend the rest of his life behind bars or would his life be cut short by the hands of a court judge?

There were so many questions he had, but there was no one who could give him a definite answer. Why, why had he let himself do this? What was he thinking?

I wasn’t thinking, he told himself. He had been so lost in his grief over his father that whatever rational thoughts he had had disappeared. It was like turning off a light switch, one moment everything is nice and bright and beautiful, then the next… Darkness, confusion and a complete sense of helpless. Human emotions were such complicated things, their ability to make one lose their mind was astounding.

T’Challa stood and looked longingly out his window, at Birnin Zana in the distance. His land, his backyard. To an outsiders glance it looked plain, like any other city skyline you might see anywhere in the world. But he knew better, what you saw before you was just an illusion, a smoke screen made to disguise the real gem hidden behind. The real center of Birnin Zana was nearly twice the size of America’s Big Apple, with vibranium buildings that rivaled the height of Burj Khalifa. Everything hidden from view by a nano vibranium green screen.

He supposed he should be lucky that Rogers or Romanoff had never found themselves that far into Wakanda. Shuri had told him they made it down to the city, but thankfully never made it far beyond the shops. Knowing Romanoff, it wouldn’t have been hard for her to notice something amiss. The cloaking sometimes had a distinct shimmer in certain light, which caused a brief glimpse at the wonder hidden behind.

Wakanda had created its cloaking tech ages ago, back in his grandfather’s day, it was a safety precaution developed after several successful attempts of outsiders stealing vibranium. Hidden behind the cityscape that was visible to the naked eye was Wakanda’s very own version of Oz.

And the largest vibranium mine on the planet...

Of course the Wakandans knew it was there, it was the true heart of their country but to everyone else Birnin Zana was just another dot on a map.

It would have been wonderful, T’Challa mused, to show off the real Wakanda to Tony, one who would truly appreciate it in all its glory. Tony who would without a doubt have a never ending rain of questions about the city its people and their technology.

T’Challa looked away with a frown, that would never happen though. Maybe one day Shuri would invite Anthony back and show him the real wonders of the modern world. But not him, never again could it be him.

What would become of his life here? Would they remember him as he was? Would he be erased with time? A forbidden subject of discussion, an example used to teach children how not to act.

When he left was he even allowed to take any of his things? Could he pack a bag or would they consider that stealing? He was exiled, banished, would all his possessions from before still belong to him or were they now property of the palace. While he would have loved to pack a bag with a few of his treasured belongings, photographs of his family, he thought better of it. Best not to try his luck.
Besides, if he was going to prison or even facing death what use would he have for a photo.

He sighed as he turned away from the city, why was he even thinking about material possessions. His life was now held in the hands of an international justice system. With the way his luck was currently going he would be executed by the age of 40, so why even bother.

He felt his heart flutter at the thought, it had been doing that several times since this morning. He had been about to bring it up to Bruce but Shuri had shooed them out before he had the chance. It started in the throne room, while he was staring down Rogers, and as they day progressed it had continued. Maybe he had some heart damage that Bruce hadn’t found. But no, Shuri’s scans would have picked that up, like it had with his lungs and eyes.

Unfortunately Wakandas outstanding medical miracles couldn’t erase the effects that nasty poison had left him with, whatever it was SHIELD created there was even out of Wakandas league. T’Challa wondered if it may have other worldly ingredients as well, he was still feeling weak and his breathing was labored but there was nothing more to be done. He would just have to suck it up and deal with it.

Just like everything else..

T’Challa was moving to sit back on the bed (his leg, while healed would still be tender for a few days) when the door creaked open and Tony stepped through.

“Hello Kitty,” Tony closed the door, looking him over, “How you doing?”

T’Challa froze, he didn’t know why, or what about those three words triggered it, maybe it was the genuine sincerity in the way Tony spoke, or maybe it was the fact that no one else but Tony had asked him if he was ok, but he froze.

“I…” he tried, but his vocal cords weren’t cooperating. “I.. I..”

Suddenly every overwhelming emotion he had felt since this started became too much. The reality of the situation crashing down on him. The flutter inside made him feel sick, he darted forward and sat heavily on the bed, the room tilting in front of him, “Oh God…” He bit into his fist to try and stave off the sickness that crawled into his throat.

Tony, having had way to many panic attacks in the past recognized the signs immediately. He sped forward, placing his hand on T’Challa’s chest. Yep, his heart was racing. He knew he shouldn’t touch a person who was in the midst of an attack but T’Challa latched on to Tony’s hand like a tether.

“Hey! Hey, hey! T’Challa, hey it’s ok.” Tony gathered him into a tight hug. “It’s ok. It’s ok.” He repeated over and over all the while gently rocking them back and forth. “It’s ok T’Challa, it will be ok, I promise.. Just breathe, take a deep breath, can you do that? Deep breath Kitty, come on.”

He had no idea how long they sat there, Tony trying valiantly to calm him down, offering comforting words and encouragement while simply holding him in a warm embrace. The erratic heartbeat slowly calming, the nausea fading away.

“What… What was that?” T’Challa whispered.

“It’s alright, you had a bit of a panic attack. Just try and relax, breathe through it. I’m here, I have you. Everything will be ok..”

The sincerity in Tony’s voice, the way his arms were wrapped protectively around him, made
T’Challa wanted to weep. He didn’t deserve the kindness, he had taken the man’s tormentor, his former ally and friend who turned into a red, white and blue raging monster, into his home. Harboring a known murderer, a hero turned terrorist, willingly in his home.

Yet even doing that Tony had still helped him, repeatedly. When he had no real reason to. Tony could have handed him to the UN so much sooner but he had not. He had saved him from dying, he was even trying to help him now, as he was about to be taken in to UN custody. But why?

“Why?” T’Challa asked.

“Why what, kitty?”

“Why do you insist on helping me? My acts are not deserving of forgiveness, I was in that tunnel where children died! I left you alone in Siberia, I didn’t even check to see if you were injured. What kind of person does that? Why do you want to help me?” T’Challa mumbled against Tony’s chest.

Tony huffed, “You know, people always have this impression of me, that I am an insanely rich, narcissistic asshole who only cares about himself, who’s incapable of love. Incapable of being a human being. And well it’s mostly true, I mean, I am rich and an asshole but I do have feelings you know. I care. Probably way more than I should, I care about my little family of misfits. I care about this big round rock and all the worker bees who live here. I care! About a lot more than people give me credit for. I care that the rainforest is on fire, I care that 22 kids were killed in a terrorist bombing in Somalia, I care that hundreds of thousands of people die each year from cancer and we still haven’t found a cure… I care!”

“And I care about you, it doesn’t matter what you think you’ve done to me, what matters is what I think you did to me. You didn’t hurt me, Steve did. That’s on him not you. I want to help you because I like you dumbass, and I care about you. So just,” Tony gestured, “let me.”

“Even when I don’t deserve it?”

“In my vast experience those who think they deserve nothing are usually the ones who deserve it the most.”

“I don’t understand your way of thinking..” T’Challa spoke softly.

“Eh, get in line, nobody does. Well Jarvis did, but technically he wasn’t human, so..”

Tony continued rocking them, he knew he had to get up, they had to go get on the jet with Ross and T’Challa would go face his fate but he felt like T’Challa needed this moment. No matter how small.

T’Challa was the one who broke the silence, “We need to go, don’t we?”

“Yeah, Ross is probably wondering where we are.”

He pulled back and held out his hands to Tony, “What are you..?” Tony started, realizing that T’Challa was expecting to be cuffed. “No, no no, I’m not cuffing you. I trust you not to cause any problems. I can’t guarantee that the UN is just gonna let you walk in as free as a bird but for now we’re not doing that. You are walking out of here by your own power.”

T’Challa looked around the room once more, his eyes shining through his glasses, “I can never come back home..” He whispered.

Tony pulled him into another hug, “Never say never. One day you might come back. Your sister loves you, and I can’t see her kicking you out of your home forever. She’ll fix this, I know.”
“It is the law of-”

“Ah ah ah! None of that! Give us time, you’ll be home before you know it.”

T’Challa gave a sad shake of his head, “We should go..”

“Yeah.. Do you wanna pack a bag or..” Tony thought for sure he would want to take a few things at least.

“No. The items in this room no longer belong to me,” he sighed. “I’m ready.”

“Are you?”

“As ready as I can be..”

Tony draped his arm around T’Challa’s shoulder as they left his rooms, Nakia and Okoye trailing silent behind them. None of the Dora had made an attempt to speak to him. They had all remained very stoic, barely sparing him a glance, even Okoye whom he had grown up with. It was unnerving, those he had once been so close to seemed to be so unaffected by his impending doom.

The halls of the palace were clear, no other guards or servants to hinder their way to the jet. T’Challa felt as though he was walking the last mile to his execution. He rubbed once more at his fluttering heart. If he felt that way now he could only imagine what it would feel like walking in to UN headquarters in New York… His heart may give out before they can officially arrest him.

Tony noticed his rubbing and gave his shoulder a comforting squeeze, “You good? Are you gonna panic again? Do you want to sit down?”

“No.. I just… Never thought I would create my own demise..”

“Just try not to think about it too hard. Matt will do everything in his power to help you. Oh yeah, I hope that’s ok? I kinda made Matt your official lawyer for this thing. Shuri said the council refused to offer you any legal representation so… Kinda pushy of me, I admit, but you know if you didn’t have anyone else lined up and the court would stick you with some public defender douche who could end up hating you… Yeah no go kitty. But you can totally pick someone else, I was just-”

“Tony.”

“What?”

“Thank you..”

Tony as usual, seemed stunned whenever someone offered him a thank you. He was silent the rest of the way to the airstrip behind the palace but left his arm around T’Challa’s shoulder. After walking ages, they stepped through the sliding doors that led to the runway.

Ross was sitting in some nearby shade waiting for them when they stepped outside. The older man was looking tired. Tony vowed to make sure the guy take some time off after this was over. Maybe a month or two before he officially took the role of the Avengers liaison, maybe the Maldives, maybe Bali. He’d figure something out.

“Hey, can you wait here for a minute?” T’Challa nodded and Tony went over to join Everett.

“Where’s the other jet?” Tony asked, looking around. There was only one Quinjet on the runway.

“Rhodes and the others already left, we’ll meet them there in a few hours. I thought it might be better
“for T’Challa if he doesn’t have a whole plane full of people watching his every move. I know how hard it is to be arrested—”

“Wait, you? Arrested? Does Shay know?”

“Don’t judge Tony, I’ve seen your record. You want to talk about Japan in 03?” Ross smiled, smug.

“Uuuh.. Carry on good chap,“

“Really..? That was the worst British accent I’ve ever heard..”

“I can only speak fluent Brit when I’m drunk..”

“…”

“Anywhoooo, you were saying.”

“You’re good at making people lose their train of thought Stark,” Everett shook his head. “I was trying to say I know how hard it will be for someone like T’Challa, to be arrested in front of all those people. He was a King, however briefly, and now he’s nothing. So I thought it might be better for him if he goes in separate from Rogers and the rest. I don’t think he’s a bad man, he just… Got off on the wrong exit. He seems to trust you so I thought that if you bring him in the blow won’t be as bad.”

“And you think I’m the right person for this? Why”

“Because you two are similar. You’ve been knocked off your pedestal a few times, and you always manage to climb back up. This is his first time falling, I can look at him and tell he already believes there’s no way out, that this is his end, don’t let him Tony. If anyone can show him that this, no matter how bad, is only temporary then it’s you.. He’s already hit the ground, don’t let him fall into the pit.”

“How do you-“

“I have faith that you’ll figure it out. Now come on, go get T’Challa, we need to get airborne. Sharon’s waiting in the jet, she’s flying us back. I was going to but she says I need sleep. You should to, the next couple of days are going to be hard.”

Tony laughed, “True, but I’m sure she just wants a little more alone time with you in the cockpit.”

“Well, I can’t say that I mind.. Alright, let's load up, it’s a long flight to New York.” Ross said.

“Yeah..” Tony went back to T’Challa’s side as Ross went to get ready for takeoff. T’Challa was standing beside Okoye with his head bowed in shame. He appeared to be barely holding himself together.

“It’s time to go,” Tony told him. T’Challa merely nodded and walked away to disappear inside the waiting jet just as the engines started up. He didn’t look back once.

Tony sighed then turned to the two Dora, both stood tall and unblinking, “Ladies, it’s been a pleasure to meet you,” he bowed politely, “til next time, then.”

“Likewise.. Mr Stark.” Okoye tried but her voice cracked painfully.

“Are you..?”
“We are fine. Do not trouble yourself, you should go.” Nakia replied, trying her hardest to mask the tremble in her lips.

Looking between the two Tony could see that they were barely holding it together, he knew they were on the verge of a breakdown. Everyone had been doing so well at hiding it, at putting up a strong front, but now that it was actually happening the walls were starting to crumble.

Tony huffed, God save him from all these strong, incredible women..

He started to walk away, but turned back before he reached the jet, “I promise you, I will do everything in my power to make sure he’ll be safe. I promise.. Please tell Shuri I’ll be in touch.”

Nakia and Okoye stood proud as he entered the jet, the ramp rose up cocooning them inside. They stood as the repulsors whined to life, the heat from them blowing back in their face. They stood as the jet lifted toward the sky, before giving one last piercing whine and shooting off toward the horizon.

They stood, unmoving, until the jet was nothing but a shadow on the horizon, then it was gone completely.

Okoye bowed her head, “Nakia…”

“He.. He is gone…Our Prince is gone…” she cried.

“Why did this happen?” Okoye looked up, tears finally leaking from chocolate eyes. Only to see Nakia crying as well.

“I believe Bast is testing us,” Shuri spoke from behind them. They turned, Shuri was crying as well, her will only allowing her to hold on for a short time. She had been in agony over her brother since she walked out of the briefing with the Avengers. Behind her, Okoye saw dozens of others making their way from the palace.

Nkiru was there, wiping her tears with a handkerchief, she had often thought of T’Challa as her own son. Wakabi was there, family in every way but blood, staring at the horizon, whispering a prayer to Bast, many of T’Challa’s friends, every member of the Dora, everyone who had wished to say goodbye but feared the Council’s wrath now stood alongside them.

Shuri reached out to them, pulling them to her, “I promise you my sisters, I will not stop until I find a way to bring our brother home again.” she cried

“He will come home to us..”

“The council be damned.. If I have to seek out Bast herself, I will bring our brother home.. Count on it..”

Chapter End Notes

You Can Keep Holding On by NortherSparrow
Incredible story!! Go check it out, it's in the Supernatural fandom ❤  ❤

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