the state of being awake

by Skyepilot

Summary

Daisy and Coulson inside the Framework. Post 4x14 fic that will definitely be jossed by a Whedon. ;)

Her mother is talking to the Americas delegation and she's listening intently.

Mostly.

It's warm and humid, and they're under the awning of the hotel's entrance.

Guess they don't get a breeze in this part of the world, but she's not used to the heat.

She's from Wisconsin, after all.

"Daisy."

Her mother is calling her back. Not for the first time, when a car pulls up alongside the curb.

And everything else becomes white noise.

It's just...beautiful. It's a perfectly restored classic car. Like something out of a movie.
The guy behind the wheel just looks like a guy that looks like he wants to be that guy in the movies.

Except, she's seen that face before. Where?

Oh, shit. What is he doing here?

Her mom's people, her people, are going to be onto him pretty quickly.

"Can we go inside?" she says rather abruptly. "It's hot out here, I feel like I'm melting into the sidewalk."

"Daisy," her mother repeats very carefully. "I want you to meet Elena Rodriguez."

She looks up and smiles at the other woman, and extends her hand, releasing a little wave of her powers, and then watching as Elena puts a flower in her hand like it was already there.

"Wow, you're fast," she says with a smile. She loves seeing her people enjoy using their powers. Elena's lucky that she can hide hers in plain sight.

"And you do...shockwaves?" she replies, with a Colombian accent.

"Something like that."

"Elena recently transitioned," her mother adds with smile.

They size each other up and then Daisy takes the flower and puts it in Elena's hair, placing it behind her ear.

"We should go celebrate. How about a drink at the hotel bar?"

She sees her mother turn in the direction of the other object of her curiosity.

"Mom, you want to join us?"

Jiaying considers it while he walks away behind her towards the hotel desk.

"We'll talk later," she replies, touching her hand to Daisy's shoulder. "I have a lot to do."

That's kind of what she's worried about.

##

She orders a drink and then tells Elena she left something up in her room.

Racing back to the lobby, thinking how nice it would be to have Elena's powers right about now, she sees him getting ready to enter the elevator.

"Hi," she says, shoving her arm through the closing doors. "Can you hold it?"

"Guess waiting for the next one was out of the question?" he replies, sounding a little concerned that she's trapped up to her shoulder by the doors.

She stares up at him and he pushes the button on the panel to open the doors again.
"Thanks," she replies, dryly, and sits back against the elevator wall, glancing to see what floor he's pushed on the panel.

"What floor are you on?" he raises his eyebrows at her, and she sets herself into motion.

"I guess I forgot for a moment," she tells him. Then randomly pushes a button for one of the lower floors.

He sighs and wraps his hands around his bag. It just looks plain, not big enough to hide any equipment, or-

"Here on vacation?" he asks, probably noticing her checking out his bag.

"Yes," she nods. "And you?"

"Also. Vacation. Yes." She thinks he sounds a bit nervous when the elevator dings at her floor.

"Have we-"

"What?" she asks, leaning a little closer to him.

"This is your floor," he says, letting go a breath as she turns to exit.

"Oh, I feel so silly," she tells him, slapping her forehead. "I pressed the wrong floor."

She pushes the button for another higher floor before his and the doors start to shut again.

"What were you saying?"

His eyes narrow at her a little, but there's interest in them, she can tell.

"I was going to ask if we've ever met before."

"You mean you wouldn't remember me if we had?" she says with a sharp, flirty laugh.

"Good point," he smirks at her.

"Your car, on the other hand," she says very, very flirty. "Is unforgettable."

"Thanks?" He shakes his head at her, but looks like he might laugh, then holds out his hand. "Phil Coulson."

It is him. It's that guy who posts theories about Inhumans on the network.

"Skye," she says, throwing out her hacker name and shaking his hand.

"Skye," he repeats, and she can't help but liking the way he says it.

The elevator stops again, and this time she gets off. Even though it's not really her floor.

Because one thing she knows about this guy is that he is super nosy.

"See you around, Coulson," she says, trying to be smooth and walks backwards out of the elevator, bumping into another guest.

She helps the old man steady himself.

"Let me get that," Coulson offers, and moves to help her help him inside.
She gives him a little wave of her fingers when the doors shut.

##
"Travis McGee?" she asks, squinting in the sun. "What, are you caught in a timewarp?"
"Hello to you too," he sighs, looking down past his sunglasses to see her blocking his sun.

He scans her pretty quickly but doesn't even oogle a little bit, and she's kind of disappointed because it's a pretty hot bikini.

She must not be his type.

Maybe he's looking for someone to rescue, not someone who could rescue him?

She sits herself down next to him on the sand and then realizes how hot it is.

"Here," he tells her, scooting over. "You could've just asked to share."

Then she checks around for a moment to make sure they're not being watched and scoots over next to him.

"You're not using me to make your boyfriend jealous, are you?" he asks, putting his book aside.

He was paying attention after all.

"No," she says, digging her feet into the hot sand at the end of his towel. "My mother."

"I'm guessing she wouldn't approve," he nods. "You do look like you could be in one of my history classes."

She wants to say something snarky to that, but he leans back on the towel and stretches his arms above his head to rest them beneath it.

He's dressed his age alright, but he definitely doesn't look like any of the teachers she's had.

It's not that he's smoking hot, but there's definitely something attractive about him.

She thought so even when she first started reading his attempts to piece together Inhuman history from a human perspective.

Oh, the things she could tell him. It would blow his mind.

Okay, he's a little hot. He has those indent things on his hips. He must work out.

"Do you work out?" she asks, turning on her side, and propping up her head on one elbow.

"Are you hitting on me?" he asks, seeming puzzled by her interest.

"I haven't decided."

##
"They saw you talking with that human," Elena mentions to her after they've shared a few beers. She nods in the direction of her mother and the other delegation members.

It feels like she is always being watched. Observed. Ever since she was a child.

"So? I talk with lots of humans."

"The kind that write dissertations on the existence of a hidden race of people?" she adds, lowering her voice.

Okay, so, this human is very well known in the community, and not exactly beloved.

"He's pro-Inhuman and thinks we should work and live together."

"How do you know this?" Elena has a point. "The humans make people who are weapons for their governments."

"Who stopped a world war," she points out, scoffing. "Just think of all the good we could do."

"They would register us," Elena says matter-of-factly. "Like they did in Europe and America."

"Or," Daisy suggests. "We could learn to live together and protect our world from people like the Kree. If they came back, what kind of chance would humans have against them?"

Elena mulls it over but then shakes her head and takes another drink of her beer. "What chance would any of us have? Besides they build nuclear weapons. The humans are fine."

"What's all this talk of humans?"

She realizes her mother has been behind her. Listening.

"My father is a human," she says, swiveling on the bar stool to face her. "Why shouldn't I be interested?" she adds, slowly blinking at her mother.

Her father isn't a dirty secret, but she knows that some people in their community view her parent's union as mistake. One that she's spent a lot of her life trying to make up for, despite the fact that she loves them both.

"That's true, but, he's different. Not like the others. And he gave up his life with them to be with us."

It's what she always says when she talks about her father in front of other Inhumans.

Elena looks away, like she's privy to some personal, private conversation. She kind of looks guilty. "We keep our secrets for a reason," her mother tells her.

Like that's the final say.

##

"Coulson...Phil, what happened?"
She's following him down by the water, as he makes his way on the walk towards the hotel, like he's trying to keep steady.

"Nothing. I got jumped when I was out past curfew."

Her mother promised her. Dammit.

"What did they look like?" she asks, taking his hand away from his head to see the cut above his eyebrow. "Did you report it?"

"Just some kids wanting spending money for the weekend," he explains.

"You're lying."

He sets his jaw at her. That she can tell, even by moonlight.

"Don't. Worry. About. It." He starts to walk again, as she follows after him, then stops when he tries to outpace her.

"If you don't say something, I will."

Freezing in his tracks, he turns back on her. "To who?" He seems genuinely curious now, and she's wondering if she made a mistake.

"The cops, okay?" she blurts out to him, hoping he buys it, as he walks closer to her now.

"Is there something you need to tell me?"

Her eyes rove all over his face, and she raises her hand, running her thumb along the split in his lip, and he doesn't pull away, just sighs.

"Why would someone want to hurt you?"

Really she's asking herself. Why does her mother think he's so dangerous?

"Tomorrow night," he says to her, sounding tired and resigned. "Can you meet?"

"Yes," she answers, anger stirring in her. If her mother tries to stop her...

"We can talk more then. I'll pick you up after 8? In Lola."

"Lola is the name of your car," she tells him, just to be sure.

"Yeah," he smirks. He looks sort of sad and cute at the same time with that sweet smile on his split lip.

"And you're really okay?" she asks again. She means it. He seems more vulnerable to her now.

"I appreciate your concern. Just a few bumps and bruises. I'm going to lay low."

"Okay," she answers softly, knowing he's holding back, but that he might finally open up to her.

He puts his hands into his pockets and swivels to head up to the hotel.

"This always happens to Travis McGee!" she calls after him.

He raises a hand and waves his acknowledgment as he continues on.
"When he starts to get too close to the truth," she adds under her breath.

##

"Daisy, you have so many suitors, why this human?"

She's picking out a dress to meet up with Coulson tonight. After discussions all day with the delegation and how Inhumans must remain separate, she's looking forward to it.

"Because he's kind," she says, holding up a red dress. "And he has conviction. Something he passionately believes in."

Turning around she stares at her mother sitting on the bed. Coulson's not even a suitor. She's not even sure he's a friend.

"You want me to date that doctor who doesn't believe in anything, just because he has Inhuman blood?"

"You mean he believes that humans and Inhumans should co-exist," Jiaying answers, getting right to the point.

"You can't stop him from wanting to learn more about us," she says, slipping the dress on over her head.

"I can certainly make it harder for him," she says. "Starting by taking away access to my daughter."

"You're just confirming everything they fear about us. He's different from the other human voices. He's for us."

"He's using you to learn about us. He could work for the government. What do you really know about him?"

"What did you really know about my father when you met him?"

"That he wanted to help people," she says, standing up. "That he risked his life to help us."

She frowns at her mother and walks past her to the bathroom, picks up her curling iron, then leans out of the doorway.

"Coulson has opposed the intelligence community and investigated reports of experimentation. I've been following this guy. He's not trying to make a name for himself. He's concerned about why we disappeared from history."

"You can tell him we have the Nazis to thank for that," she sighs, standing up off the bed. "What is it really, my daughter?"

She doesn't even know exactly how to explain it herself.

"I'm just...drawn to him."

"Your happiness means so much to me. But our community, the future of our people-"

Her mother comes beside her and stares at their reflections in the mirror.
"Means everything to me!" she snaps back. "We shouldn't have to hide what we are."

"You've always been so stubborn," she says with a frown.

"I won't try to stop you."

##

He lets her drive his car, and he tells her the story of how it was passed from his father to him.

"Where are your parents now?"

"Retired. Living in Florida. My mom has a full-time job keeping my dad out of trouble."

"You must be a lot like him, then," she teases.

"Sure," he says, looking out at the surf as the top of his hair blows around. "My mother, too. I can make a mean grilled cheese."

She pulls Lola off the road, and points her towards the beach so they have a view.

"You've discovered my weakness," she says as she shuts Lola's engine off. "You know, my father is from Wisconsin."

"Really? I wonder if we ever met."

"Probably not," she pronounces. "My family didn't exactly warm to outsiders."

"Why?" he asks, as he leans to push a button that pops the trunk and opens his door. "She looks like your sister, by the way."

"Uh, yeah. She's really aged well." Standing and shutting the door, she smooths down the front of her dress.

"Because she's Inhuman, isn't she?" he asks, and then stares up at her when she doesn't answer. Instead, she freezes.

"There is an Inhuman enclave in Wisconsin," he tells her seriously, bringing the basket from the trunk to the hood.

"Your conspiracy theory stuff again," she says as she follows him, hoping to shut it down.

"It's not a conspiracy. It's my life's work, but, whatever," he shrugs, and then twists off the cap of a bottle of wine.

"Okay. You got me," she says, taking it from him and pouring it into one of the plastic cups. "My mother is the leader of the Inhumans. She's actually 2,000 years old."

She shoves the cup back at him, and then he hands her another to pour one for herself.

"So that's her power," he jokes. "Must come in handy on senior discount days."

"You want to see mine?" she says with a frown, trying to not get too cocky. She wanted to hear all
his secrets and here she is divulging hers.

"Don't make fun of me, Skye."

She stares at him, defiantly, and raises her hand at him, as he narrows his eyes, then she points it out towards the line of trees before the shore.

He registers the noise, and then there's a racket as the trees all drop their coconuts to the ground at once.

He turns to her and stares.

"You're serious."

"My name is Daisy, actually," she explains. "Skye is what I use in the network, to keep tabs on anti-Inhuman sentiment, what's going on in shadow governments."

"Why me?" he asks, standing up straighter.

"I-" she doesn't want to scare him off, or sound creepy.

He puts up a hand instead, and tells her. "Since I met you in that elevator, I've had this feeling of déjà vu-"

"Yes!" she says excitedly. "Like we know each other?"

He nods and takes a drink of his wine.

"My people believe that everything is designed, for a purpose. To maintain a balance. Order. But we've remained hidden for centuries."

"No wonder your mother hates the idea of me..." he says, like it suddenly all makes sense.

"She would think you're great, if she got to know you."

"I'm on several watch lists, Daisy. All belonging to terrorists who want to be rid of any alien presence. She's right to be concerned."

That's who beat him up the other night. His lip is healing quite nicely, though.

"But if we worked together, instead of feeding into the lies. My father is human, like you."

"Your mom really confuses me," he says with a deep sigh.

"She's just trying to protect our people. Like you. I'm starving by the way. Whenever I use my powers, I get-"

The way he's staring at her. She stops mid-sentence and watches him back.

"I'm sorry. You're so fascinating. I wish I could make you a grilled cheese right now."

##

He charms his way into the hotel kitchen, late, and makes them and the remaining staff grilled cheese
sandwiches.
She takes a bite of the hot gooey goodness, and it feels like home.

"I got to say," she says through her mouthful. "No doubt, the best grilled cheese I've ever had."

"Thanks," he says, holding back for a moment. "Secret ingredient. Don't ask. I will not disclose."
She feels it, too. Like they've said this to each other before. That this has already happened.

Just like when she saw Lola. And he told her the story about his dad. The way her names sound in his mouth.

"Why did you come here?" she asks.

"To clear my head. And Tahiti, it's a magical place. At least that's what the brochures say."
She watches him try to sift through his thoughts after he speaks.

"I don't really know," he admits with a shrug and pushes his empty plate to the side. "I just felt drawn here. What about you?"

"I'm part of a delegation, that welcomes new Inhumans. And to watch over my mother. I'm kind of her bodyguard."

"This isn't what I thought I'd find here, but I'm glad." He takes a drink of his milk. "You're like an answer to all of my questions."

And that's what's bothering her. That deep down, she knows that he's right.

"I see patterns in things," she starts. "And this is all really nice, but you're the first time I've felt-"

"Like any of this is real?"

"Yeah." It kind of scares her to admit it. There's nothing wrong with her life. She loves her parents, so, so much. And being Inhuman and helping her people.

"What if this is the only thing that's real?" she asks him.

"How would we know?"

He lifts his eyes to hers, and she thinks about their connection, the way they seem to know each other better than anyone else, even though they just met days ago.

Leaning toward him across the counter between them, slowly, their lips almost touch.
She hesitates, can tell he's holding his breath.
Then she closes her eyes and kisses him, carefully. Feeling the rough spot on his lip still healing.
He wraps his fingers around her arm, so she can't pull away.
Kissing her back, and wanting to be closer to her than the space between them will allow.

##
She's wanted to do that for a long time, if she's honest.

The only thing that got in the way were her fears of losing him.

Everything kept pulling them apart, and somehow they always find each other.

It makes her think about how Inhumans were designed to balance each other out.

The GH-325. What was inside of him drawing the map to the Kree temple.

His blue eyes flutter open and he smiles at her.

"Daisy."

The way that he says her name.

She lifts the apparatus off his head, then frees his arms and helps him to step out of it.

"We have to get the others out," she tells him, and he stops staring at her, then looks around the room, getting his bearings.

She squeezes her fingers around his arm, briefly.

So glad they've woken up.

Together.

"Let's wake them," he agrees.

##

"What made you wake up the first time?" he asks her, when they're back on the Z1.

They can't return to the base anytime soon. Things are too much of a mess right now. They still have to fix what the Framework did.

"I guess I just wanted the real thing more," she replies, carefully. "Hive made me believe he was my family, but, it wasn't real."

He smiles at her, almost bashfully.

"Thanks."

"For what?"

"Getting me out. Being the first thing I heard and saw when I did." He looks a little confused for a moment, like he's still sorting things through.

They both had been in and out several times. To get the others out, they had to go back in.

She imagines that they all have a lot of sorting to do.

It was life, in a way. Where things that changed all of them forever were given a different ending.
"Do you remember-" she starts to ask him.

If she begins to think about it in relation to time, it's confusing. She's not sure how much time passed between that first memory and the last.

"Yes."

He steps closer to her, reaches a hand to her face. "You mean so much to me."

"You mean a lot to me, too, Coulson," she replies, and swallows.

Because she can feel her voice shaking. It starts to sink in, what she might've lost. And even if he wants her to be-

"You've made everything worth it," he goes on. "This whole journey. And if this is how you want me to fit into your life-"

"You fit," she tells him, instantly, feels her eyes starting to tear up.

She was starting to doubt, that it was something they both shared and not just her pulling him towards her.

Holding his fingers for a moment she lets his hand slip away, as he moves closer to her, takes her face between both his hands.

Then, he kisses her. It's nicer than the fantasy.

Sweet, but also passionate and needy.

Like he has so much to prove.

*Coulson.*

And for once, she doesn't feel like she has anything to prove at all.

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